

THE BOOMERANG CLUE

BY AGATHA CHRISTIE

SYNOPSIS: Bobby Jones and Frankie Derwent are trying to discover whether the man Bobby found murdered was Alan Carstairs, and whether the murderer was Dr. Nicholson, or Roger Bassington-French. Bobby has explored Dr. Nicholson's drug store, and found suspicious circumstances, not the least of which is the woman in distress who now is calling on Bobby—whom she knows as Frankie's chauffeur. Frankie just has returned to the Bassington-French house from a trip to London.

Chapter 26

LADY IN DISTRESS

"YOU said you said you'd help me," the woman declared. "Perhaps I shouldn't have come—"

Here Bobby broke in, finding words and assurance at the same time. "Shouldn't have come? Nonsense! You did quite right to come. Of course you should have come. And I'll do anything—anything in the world to help you. Don't be frightened. You're quite safe now."

The color rose a little in the girl's face. She said abruptly: "Who are you? You're—you're not a chauffeur. I mean you may be a chauffeur, but you're not one really."

Bobby understood her meaning in spite of her confused words. "One does all sort of jobs nowadays," he said. "I used to be in the Navy. As a matter of fact I'm not exactly a chauffeur—but that doesn't matter now. Anyway, I assure you you can trust me and—tell me all about it."

Her flush deepened. "You must think me mad," she murmured. "You must think me quite mad."

"No, no."

"Yes—coming here like this. But I was so frightened—so terribly frightened—" Her voice died away. Her eyes widened as though they saw some vision of terror.

Bobby seized her hand firmly. "Look here," he said. "It's quite all right. Everything's going to be all right. You're safe now—with a friend. Nothing shall happen to you."

He felt the answering pressure of her fingers.

"When you stepped out into the moonlight the other night," she said in a low hurried voice. "It was—it was like a dream—a dream of deliverance. I didn't know who you were or where you came from. But it gave me hope and I determined to come and find you—and—tell you."

"That's right," said Bobby encouragingly. "Tell me. Tell me everything."

She drew her hand away suddenly. "If I do, you'll think I'm mad—that I've gone wrong in my head from being in that place with those others."

"No, I shan't. I shan't really."

"You will. It sounds mad."

"I shall know it isn't. Tell me. Please tell me."

She drew a little farther away from him, sitting very upright, her eyes staring straight in front of her. "It's just this," she said. "I'm afraid I'm going to be murdered."

"Murdered?"

"Yes, that sounds mad, doesn't it? Like—what do they call it—persecution mania."

"No," said Bobby. "You don't sound mad at all—just frightened. Tell me who wants to murder you and why?"

SHE was silent a minute or two, twisting and untwisting her hands. Then she said in a low voice. "My husband."

"Your husband?" Bobby thought a whirl round in Bobby's head. "Who are you?" he said abruptly.

It was her turn to look surprised. "Don't you know?"

"I haven't the least idea."

She said: "I'm Moira Nicholson. My husband is Dr. Nicholson."

"Then you're not a patient there?"

"A patient? Oh, no." Her face darkened suddenly. "I suppose you think I speak like one."

"No, no, I didn't mean that at all."

"It sounds mad, I know. But it isn't—I can't see it in his eyes when he looks at me. And queer things have happened—accidents."

"Accidents?" said Bobby sharply.

"Yes. Oh, I know it sounds hysterical and as though I were making it all up."

"Not a bit," said Bobby. "It sounds perfectly reasonable. Go on. About these accidents."

"They were just accidents. He backed the car, not seeing I was there. I just jumped aside in time. And some stuff that was in the wrong bottle—oh, stupid things. She swallowed convulsively.

"Why does your husband want to do away with you?" asked Bobby.

Perhaps he hardly expected a definite answer—but the answer came promptly.

"Because he wants to marry Sylvia Bassington-French."

"What? But she's married already."

"I know. But he's arranging for that."

"How do you mean?"

"I don't know exactly. But I know that he's trying to get Mr. Bassington-French brought to the Grange as a patient."

"And then?"

"I don't know, but I think something would happen." She shuddered. "He's got some hold over Mr. Bassington-French. I don't know what it is."

"Bassington-French takes morphine," said Bobby.

"Is that it? Jasper gives it to him. I suppose."

"It comes by post."

"Perhaps Jasper doesn't do it directly—he's very cunning. Mr. Bassington-French may not know it comes from Jasper—but I'm sure it does."

As she spoke Bobby was aware of a glimpse into a strange evil atmosphere.

He said abruptly, "You say your husband wants to marry Mrs. Bassington-French?"

Moira nodded. "He's crazy about her."

"And she?"

"I don't know," said Moira slowly. "I can't make up my mind. On the surface she seems fond of her husband and little boy, and content and peaceful. I've wondered sometimes whether she is an entirely different woman from what we all think she is... whether perhaps she isn't playing a part and playing it very well."

"What about the brother Roger?"

"I don't know much about him. He's nice, I think, but he's the sort of person who would be very easily deceived. He's quite taken in by Jasper, I know. Jasper is working on him to persuade Mr. Bassington-French to come to the Grange. I believe he thinks it's all his own idea."

She leaned forward suddenly and caught Bobby's sleeve. "Don't let him come to the Grange," she implored.

Bobby was silent a minute or two, turning over the amazing story in his mind.

"Haven't you ever thought of leaving Nicholson?" he asked at last.

"How could I? I've nowhere to go. I've no money. If anyone took me in, what sort of story could I tell?"

"Look here," Bobby said bluntly. "I'm going to ask you a question straight out. Did you know a man called Alan Carstairs?"

He saw the color come up in her cheeks. "Why do you ask me that?"

"Because it's rather important that I should know. My idea is that you did know Alan Carstairs, that perhaps at some time or other you gave him your photograph."

She was silent a moment, her eyes downcast. Then she lifted her head and looked him in the face. "That's quite true," she said.

"You knew him before you were married?"

"Yes."

"Has he been down here to see you since you were married?"

She hesitated, then said, "Yes, once."

"About a month ago, would that be?"

"Yes. I suppose it would be about a month."

"He knew you were living down here?"

"I don't know how he knew—I hadn't told him. I had never even written to him since my marriage."

"But he found out and came here to see you. Did your husband know that?"

"No."

"You think not. But he might have known all the same?"

"I suppose he might, but he never said anything."

"Did you discuss your husband at all with Carstairs? Did you tell him of your fears as to your safety?"

She shook her head. "I hadn't begun to suspect them."

"But you were unhappy?"

"Yes."

"And you told him so?"

"No, I tried not to show in any way that my marriage hadn't been a success."

"But he might have guessed it all the same," said Bobby gently.

"I suppose he might," she admitted in a low voice.

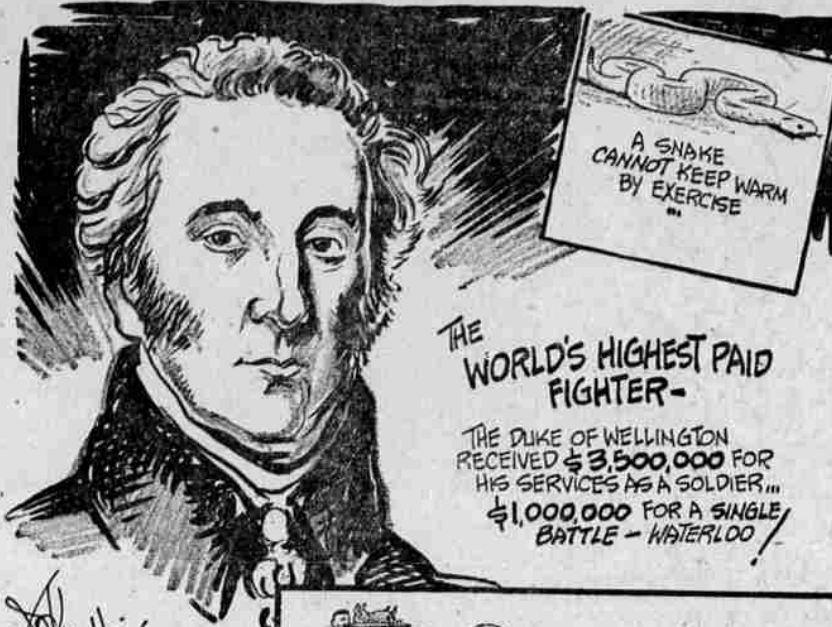
"Do you think—I don't know how to put it—but do you think that he knew anything about your husband—that he suspected, for instance, that this nursing home place might not be quite what it seemed to be?"

(Copyright 1935-36, Agatha Christie)

Moira makes a rendezvous with Frankie, tomorrow.

STRANGE AS IT SEEMS—By JOHN HIX

For further proof address the author, enclosing a stamped envelope for reply Reg. U. S. Pat. Off.



THE WORLD'S HIGHEST PAID FIGHTER—

THE DUKE OF WELLINGTON RECEIVED \$3,500,000 FOR HIS SERVICES AS A SOLDIER... \$1,000,000 FOR A SINGLE BATTLE—WATERLOO!



DINNER FOR THREE—\$10,000...

LICULLUS OF ROME SPENT THAT AMOUNT FOR A SINGLE MEAL FOR HIMSELF, CAESAR, AND POMPEY!

Strange as it seems, a snake cannot keep warm by exercise—it is always as cold as the weather around it. Like all amphibians and fish, snakes are "cold-blooded." Their blood is no warmer than the air or water that surrounds them, and they are at the mercy of their environment whether it be hot or cold.

Man, and all warm-blooded animals, however, have special physiological functions that tend to maintain the body temperature in spite of external conditions. In cold weather the circulating warm blood tends to spread an even temperature. Everyone knows that a brisk walk on a cold day stimulates blood circulation and keeps the body warm. Every movement of every muscle changes some energy into heat.

Warm-blooded animals also have the ability to reduce body temperature when the weather is too hot. Glands secrete perspiration on the skin, this in turn evaporates and produces a lowering of the temperature. Snakes, which are without the ability to maintain their own body temperature, hibernate during cold weather in self-defense, for when the mercury drops snakes become sluggish and finally entirely helpless.

The Duke of Wellington changed



WRIGLEY'S SPEARMINT THE PERFECT GUM THE FLAVOR LASTS

the course of European history, and with it the course of the history of the world when, in 1815, he defeated Napoleon in the latter's last great battle. For this he was rewarded with \$1,000,000. He also got \$2,500,000 for his Peninsular campaign. A little more than a century later, in Chicago, Gene Tunney was paid \$900,000 to defeat Jack Dempsey for the boxing championship of the world.

Tomorrow: "Coals to Newcastle"—at a profit.

WINDOW GLASS—We sell window glass and will replace your broken windows reasonably. Trowbridge Cabinet Works.

DOOR-BELLS

GLUYAS WILLIAMS

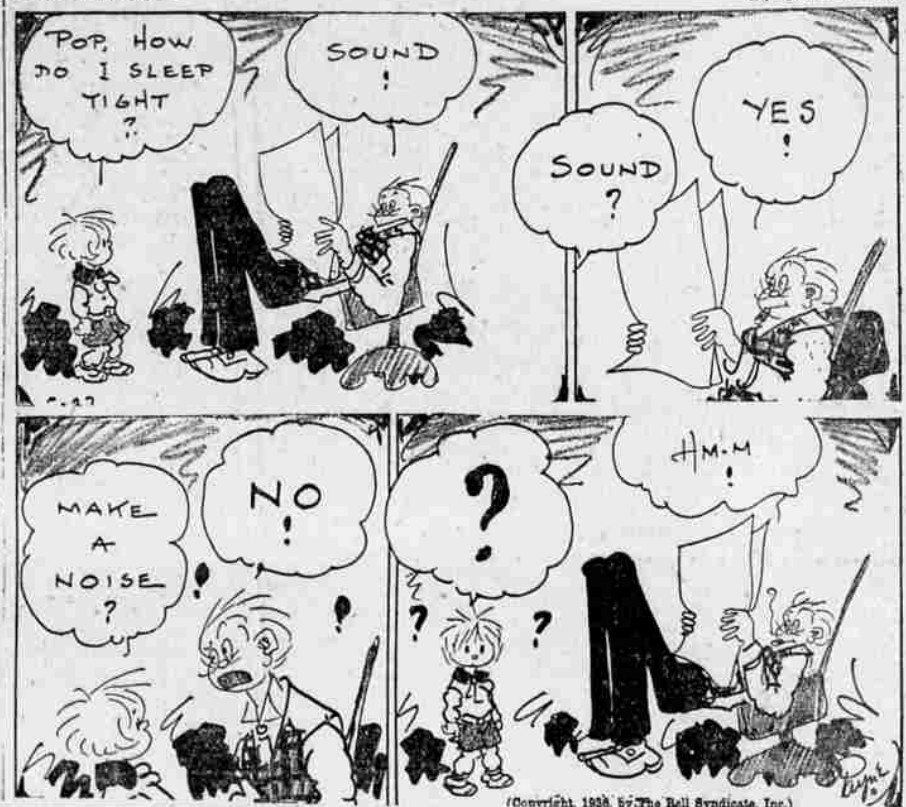


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S'MATTER POP—

By C. M. PAYNE



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By HAL FORREST

TAILSPIN TOMMY—A Clue—Or—?

SHORTLY AFTER PANCHO PISTOLA, HARRY GOAKES AND BOB LLOYD SAT DOWN ON THE ISLAND IN THE SKY, IN SEARCH OF TOMMY AND SKEETS, BOB DISAPPEARED! HOURS LATER HE LANDED AT THE SMALL VILLAGE OF TAXOLAN—



I DON'T KNOW—PERHAPS A CLUE TO THE WHEREABOUTS OF TOMMY AND SKEETS—PERHAPS—JUST MY IMAGINATION!

AFTER I TOOK OFF FROM THE ISLAND IN THE SKY—I FLEW OVER A VALLEY—A LIGHT BELOW BLINKED—

I KNOW THAT VALLEY—IT'S UNINHABITED—



BEN WEBSTER'S CAREER—Telling Grip

LISTEN, CRIP, MR. THORPE WANTS US TO DO A JOB FOR HIM AND IT SOUNDS LIKE A MONEY TO ME!



AS RAPIDLY AS POSSIBLE BEN SKETCHED FOR CRIP THE STRANGE STORY OF DR. NOR KLOVITCH, MYSTERIOUS SCIENTIST, AND HIS SECRET LABORATORY IN THE SHADOW MOUNTAINS—



WHAT ABOUT REPORTIN' TO SHERIFF MORGAN WHAT WE FOUND AT JEWEL LAKE? WHAT ABOUT CAL PANHARD? WHAT ABOUT THE RANCH? AND WHAT ABOUT ME? AM I IN ON THIS?



WELL, WHAT'RE WE WAITIN' FOR THEN? LET'S GET GOIN'!



THE NEBBS—Grief

THE NEW HIGHWAY HAS BEEN COMPLETED AND THE HIGHWAY DEPARTMENT IS CELEBRATING THE EVENT WITH A BANQUET AT THE HOTEL



YES AND THE GUY WHO OWNS IT WILL MAKE PLenty OF DUGH WITH THIS NEW ROAD GOING BY IT



THIS NEW ROAD IS GOING TO GIVE ME A LOT OF EXTRA WORK BUT YOU CAN'T GET RICH SITTING ON A BENCH



WELL, ALL THIS WON'T HELP ME. THE NEW MANAGEMENT WILL BE IN SOON AND THEN THE YOUNG MR. NEBB WILL BE ON HIS WAY SEEKING FAME AND FORTUNE IN THIS BIG WIDE WORLD AND I'LL BE LEFT BEHIND ME!



WELL, ALL THIS WON'T HELP ME. THE NEW MANAGEMENT WILL BE IN SOON AND THEN THE YOUNG MR. NEBB WILL BE ON HIS WAY SEEKING FAME AND FORTUNE IN THIS BIG WIDE WORLD AND I'LL BE LEFT BEHIND ME!



By SOL HESS

WASCO FARMERS PLAN COMMON SALT AN AID COOPERATIVE SELLING IN GOLD RECOVERIES

THE DALLIES, Ore., March 4.—(P)—

A group of Wasco county fruit and vegetable growers, seeking more orderly marketing of crops through a joint program, began preparation today of papers to incorporate a cooperative organization.

An effort will be made to develop standard grades and uniformity of packing among garden truck growers primarily. Peach and apricot growers may join the organization later. No immediate plans have been made for establishment of a central packing plant.

Add to liveness by using "Shammar" Perfume by Guerlain. At Young's Drug Co., Main & Central.

SALT LAKE CITY, March 4.—(P)—

Use of common salt in roasting gold and silver ores has resulted in higher recoveries. Dr. B. P. Ravitz, director of the experiment station of the University of Utah engineering department, announced today.

The method has been given extensive tests at the station, following preliminary experiments at the El Paso, Texas, smelter of the American Smelting and Refining company. Dr. Ravitz said. Company metallurgists conducted the tests over a period of several months.

BUCKINGHAM'S Ice Cream, Candy and Party Specials. The Crest, 236 So. Central.