

THE BOOMERANG CLUE

By AGATHA CHRISTIE

SYNOPSIS: Bobby Jones and Frankie Derwent have two promising candidates for the murder of Alan Carstairs—at least, they believe the murdered man was Alan Carstairs. One is Roger Bassington-French, the other is Dr. Nicholson, who runs a drug cure near the Bassington-French house. But Roger seems such a nice young man to Frankie, and now Moira Nicholson, the doctor's wife, is confirming their suspicions of Nicholson by confessing that she herself is afraid of him. Her story is so creative, partly because she is very beautiful indeed.

Chapter 27 NEW ANGLE

MOIRA'S brow furrowed as she tried to think. "It's possible," she said at last. "He asked one or two rather peculiar questions—but no, I don't think he can really have known anything about it."

"Would you call your husband a jealous man?" Bobby asked. "Rather to his surprise she answered, 'Yes, a very jealous man.' 'Jealous, for instance, of you?' 'You mean even though he doesn't care? But yes, he would be jealous, just the same. I'm his property, you see. He's a queer man—a very queer man.'"

She shivered. Then she asked suddenly, "You're not connected with the police in any way, are you?"

"I'm not, I mean—"

Bobby looked down at his chauffeur's livery.

"It's rather a long story," he said. "You are Lady Frances Derwent's chauffeur, aren't you? So the landlord here said, I met her at dinner the other night."

"I know," he paused. "We've got to get hold of her," he said. "And it's a bit difficult for me to do. Do you think you could ring up and ask to come and meet you somewhere outdoors?"

"I suppose I could," said Moira slowly.

"I know it must seem frightfully odd to you. But it won't hold if I've explained. We must get hold of her as soon as possible. It's essential."

Moira rose. "Very well," she said. With her hand on the door-handle she hesitated. "Alan," she said. "Alan Carstairs. Did you say you'd seen him?"

"I have seen him," said Bobby slowly. "But not lately. And he thought, with a shock, 'Of course—she doesn't know he's dead...'"

He said, "Ring up Lady Frances. Then I'll tell you everything."

MOIRA returned a few minutes later.

"I got her," she said. "I've asked her to come and meet me at a little summer house down near the river. She must have thought it very odd, but she said she'd come."

"Good," said Bobby. "Now just where is this place exactly?"

Moira described it carefully, and the way to get to it.

"That's all right," said Bobby. "You go first, I'll follow on."

They adhered to this program. Bobby lingering to have a word with Mr. Askew.

"Odd thing," he said casually. "That lady—Mrs. Nicholson—I used to work for an uncle of hers. Canadian gentleman."

Moira's visit to him might, he felt, give rise to gossip, and the last thing he wanted was to let gossip of that kind get about and possibly find its way to Dr. Nicholson's ears.

"So that's it, is it?" said Mr. Askew. "I rather wondered."

"Yes," said Bobby. "She recognized me and came along to hear what I was doing now. A nice, pleasant-spoken lady."

Feeling that he had achieved his object, he strolled on.

He reached the rendezvous successfully and found her there waiting for him.

"There's an awful lot I've got to tell you," he said, and stopped awkwardly.

"Yes."

"To begin with," said Bobby, plunging. "I'm not really a chauffeur although I do work in a garage in London. And my name isn't Hawkins—it's Jones—Bobby Jones. I come from Marchbolt in Wales."

Moira was listening attentively, but clearly the name Marchbolt meant nothing to her.

"Look here, I'm afraid I'm going to give you rather a shock. This friend of yours, Alan Carstairs—he's—well, you've got to know—he's dead."

She was silent a moment or two, then she said in a low thoughtful voice, "So that's why he never came back. I wondered."

Bobby ventured to steal a look at her. She looked sad and thoughtful—but that was all.

"Tell me about it," she said.

"He fell over the cliff at Marchbolt—the place where I live. I and the doctor there happened to be the ones to find him." He paused and then added: "He had your photograph in his pocket."

"Did he?" She gave a sweet, rather sad smile. "Dear Alan, he was—very faithful. When did all this happen?"

"About a month ago, October 3rd, to be exact."

"That must have been just after he came down here."

"Yes. Oh, hullo! Here's Frankie." Frankie came hurrying along the path. Her face, at the sight of Bobby and Mrs. Nicholson sitting chatting together, was a study in conflicting expressions.

"Hullo, Frankie," said Bobby. "I'm glad you've come. We've got to have a great powwow. To begin with, it's Mrs. Nicholson who is the original of the photograph."

"Oh!" said Frankie blankly. She looked at Moira and suddenly laughed.

"My dear," she said to Bobby, "now I see why the sight of Mrs. Cayman at the inquest was such a shock to you!"

Moira was looking bewildered. "There's such an awful lot to tell," said Bobby. "And I don't quite know how to put it all."

He described the Caymans and their identification of the body.

"And then," continued Frankie, "Bobbie was poisoned."

"Eight grains of morphia," said Bobby reminiscently.

"Don't start on that," said Frankie. "You're capable of going on for hours on the subject, and it's really very boring to other people. Let me explain."

She took a long breath.

"YOU see," she said, "these Cayman people came to see Bobby after the inquest, to ask him if the brother (supposed) had said anything before he died, and Bobby said 'No.' But afterwards he remembered that somebody called Evans—so Bobby wrote and told them so. And a few days afterwards he got a letter offering him a job in Peru or somewhere, and when he wouldn't take it, the next thing was that someone put a lot of morphia—"

"Eight grains," said Bobby.

"In his beer. Only, as Bobby has a most extraordinary inside or something, it didn't kill him. And so then we saw at once that Pritchard—or Carstairs, you know—must have been pushed over the cliff."

"But why?" asked Moira.

"Don't you see? I expect I haven't told it very well. Anyway, we decided that he had been, and that Roger Bassington-French had probably done it."

"I see," said Moira thoughtfully. "And then," continued Frankie, "I happened to have an accident just here. An amazing coincidence, wasn't it?" She looked hard at Bobby with an admonishing eye. "So I telephoned to Bobby and suggested that he should come down here pretending to be my chauffeur and we'd look into the matter."

"Are you telling me the truth?" Moira asked. "Is it really true that you came down here—by accident? Or did you come because—because—her voice quavered in spite of herself—"you suspected my husband?"

Bobby and Frankie looked at each other. Then Bobby said:

"I give you my word of honor that we'd never even heard of your husband till we came down here."

"Oh, I see," she turned to Frankie. "I'm sorry, Lady Frances, but you see I remembered that, on the evening when we came to dinner, Jasper—my husband—went on and on at you, asking you things about your accident. I couldn't think why. But I think now that perhaps he suspected it wasn't genuine."

"Well, if you really want to know, it wasn't," said Frankie. "Whoop—now I feel better! It was all camouflaged very carefully. But it had nothing to do with your husband. The whole thing was staged because we wanted to—to—what does one call it?—get a line on Roger Bassington-French."

"Roger?" Moira frowned and smiled perplexedly. "It seems absurd."

"But he must have taken that photograph," said Bobby stubbornly. "Listen, Mrs. Nicholson, while I go over the facts."

"I see what you mean. It seems very queer," Moira paused a minute and then asked unexpectedly. "Why don't you ask him?"

(Copyright 1935-36, Agatha Christie)

Frankie takes steps to find out about the photograph, Monday.

AIR MAIL NEAR DOUBLE IN 1935

WASHINGTON, March 5.—(AP)—Post office department figures showed today that 1935 air mail poundage nearly doubled that of 1934.

METHODIST STUDENTS DEFY NO DANCE RULE

DALLAS, Tex., March 5.—(UP)—It's strictly against the rules for my students to dance on the campus at Southern Methodist university here. So a furor was created at the institution last night when some 300 college boys and co-eds entered the university gymnasium, seated a hired orchestra at one end of the room and held a dance.

COAT HELPER

WIFE CALLS TO GET HER COAT OUT, SHE'LL BE RIGHT DOWN

GETS COAT AND HOLDS IT READY FOR WIFE TO SLIP INTO

NOTHING HAPPENS, WIFE CALLING SHE'LL BE DOWN IN A MINUTE, SHE HAD TROUBLE WITH HER HAIR

WIFE APPEARS AT LAST, FUMBLES HURRIEDLY WITH COAT TO GET IT RIGHT WAY UP TO HOLD FOR HER



STRANGE AS IT SEEMS—By JOHN HIX

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



TIMOTHY DEXTER—
THE MAN WHO COULDN'T LOSE—
HE MADE A FORTUNE BUYING "WORTHLESS" STOCKS, AND ADDED TO IT BY SHIPPING MITTENS AND BED WARMERS TO THE TROPICS! HE EVEN MADE MONEY SHIPPING COAL TO NEWCASTLE!

3-3-36 McVanecht Syndicate, Inc.

TAILSPIN TOMMY—Tommy Has a Hunch!

TOMMY AND "SKREETER," AND THE GOLDEN GIRL, WITH THEIR FRIEND, PRINCE CALTUMAC, WHO BELIEVES THE BOYS TO BE SOON SENT TO HELP HIM GAIN THE THRONE OF AZTECO, HAVE JUST EMERGED FROM THE SECRET PASSAGE UNDER THE TEMPLE OF THE SUN—

SOUNDS LIKE SOMEONE BEATING DRUMS!

GUESS THEY DISCOVERED WE ESCAPED, TOM!

I MUST RETURN TO THE TEMPLE AT ONCE, TEXCOMAC MAY BECOME SUSPICIOUS!

LET'S TRAIL HER, SKREETS! I'VE A HUNCH SHE'S HEADING INTO TROUBLE!

AN' WE'RE IN TROUBLE WITH-OUT HER-WE CAN'T SPEAK THIS LINGO!

BEN WEBSTER'S CAREER—On the Way

AT THE LITTLE SETTLEMENT OF LONE PINE, WHERE BEN HAD LEFT THE CAR, THE BOYS BADE FAREWELL TO JABEZ THORPE BUT FIRST OBTAINED LAST MINUTE INSTRUCTIONS FROM HIM—

I'M TAKING THE GREAT DANES BACK TO AN ESTATE NEAR THE CITY AND—

IF YOU BOYS COME INTO MY PRIVATE CAR FOR A MOMENT I'LL GIVE BEN A LETTER TO DR KILOVITCH SO HE WILL KNOW THAT YOU REPRESENT ME—

GEE, I WAS THINKIN' THERE WAS MAYBE SOME BALONEY ABOUT OLD THORPE, BUT A PRIVATE CAR MEANS JACK, BEN!

I AM ALSO WRITING A CHECK THAT WILL COVER YOUR EXPENSES—AND REMEMBER, ALL I WANT IS A COMPLETE REPORT OF JUST WHAT THE SITUATION IS—

YES, GIR—

THE NEBBS—Good-bye and Good Luck

GOOD MORNING, FLINT!

IT'S A GOOD MORNING FOR ME BUT YOU DON'T LOOK LIKE YOU ENJOY IT VERY MUCH

RUDY, HOW ABOUT FRIDAY FOR YOUR GOING-AWAY PARTY? I'LL GET THE BUNCH FROM THE STUDIO OVER

OH, I GUESS IT'S ALL RIGHT, ANYTHING IS ALL RIGHT FROM NOW ON

I'M GOING TO HAVE A GREAT TIME AT THIS PARTY—IT'S GOING TO BE LIKE A GUY'S FUNERAL—HE'S THE CENTER OF ATTRACTION, BEING EULOGIZED BUT—IT'S A BIT LATE TO DO HIM ANY GOOD

PEAR RECIPE BOOKS SOUGHT FROM AFAR

Exactly 29 letters asking for pear recipe books were received in the morning's mail by the Jackson County Chamber of Commerce.

Five of the letters came from England, four from Canada and 20 from Wisconsin, New York, Illinois, Massachusetts, New Jersey, Rhode Island and Nebraska.

The chamber receives requests for the recipe books almost daily but this was the largest number to be received in any one mail. The letters are forwarded to the Oregon-Washington Pear Bureau from where the books are distributed.

BUCKINGHAM'S Ice Cream Candy and Party Specials, The Crest, 436 So. Central.

FOREST CONFERENCE DISCUSSES POLICIES

Representatives of four national forests met in the federal building in Klamath Falls today to discuss the new forest service policy under which ten-year grazing permits are to be issued to qualified stockmen. Officials of the Southern Oregon Grazing association, comprised of stockmen, also attended the conference.

Karl L. Janouch, supervisor; H. C. Obye, assistant supervisor, and Hugh Ritter, ranger, represented the Rogue River national forest. Others attending included executives of the Umpqua, Siskiyou and Fremont national forests.

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SMATTER POP—By C. M. PAYNE

