

THE BOOMERANG CLUE

BY AGATHA CHRISTIE

SYNOPSIS: It looks to Frankie Derwent and Bobby Jones very much as if Dr. Nicholson is the murderer of Alan Cartwright, and as if they are hot on his trail. But Bobby has disappeared, while re-considering the Nicholson drug cure, and Frankie is desperate until she receives a letter from him, saying that she must come at once to Tudor cottage, Chipping Somerton. The letter also says she must not bring her large and expensive car, and must tell no one where she is going.

Chapter 27 CHLOROFORM

"Anything interesting in your letter?" Roger inquired casually.

For a moment Frankie hesitated. Surely Bobby had not meant Roger when he asked her to tell nobody?

Then she remembered the heavy underlining—remembered, too, her own recent monstrous idea. If that were true, Roger might betray them both in all innocence.

"No," she said. "Nothing at all." She was to regret her decision bitterly before twenty-four hours had passed.

More than once in the course of the next few hours did she regret Bobby's dictum that the car was not to be used. Chipping Somerton was no very great distance as the crow flies, but the journey involved changing three times, with a long, dreary wait at a country station each time, and to one of Frankie's impatient temperaments this slow method of procedure was extremely hard to endure with fortitude.

It was getting dark when Frankie's train, an extremely deliberate and thoughtful train, drove into the little station of Chipping Somerton. It was just beginning to rain, too, which was additionally trying.

Bobby's directions were quite easy to follow. Frankie saw the lights of the village ahead and turned off to the left up a lane which led steeply up hill. Presently she saw the little cluster of houses that formed the village lying below her and came to a neat wooden gate with "Tudor Cottage" written on it.

The door of the cottage opened and she saw a figure in chauffeur's dress peer cautiously out. Bobby! He made a beckoning gesture, then withdrew inside, leaving the door ajar.

Frankie stopped gingerly over the threshold into a dark hall. She stopped, peering about her.

"Bobby!" she whispered. It was her nose that gave her warning. Where had she known that smell before—that heavy, sweet odor?

Just as her brain gave the answer "Chloroform," strong arms seized her from behind. She opened her mouth to scream and a wet pad was flapped over it. The sweet, cloying smell filled her nostrils.

She fought desperately, twisting and turning, kicking. But it was of no avail. Despite the fight she put up she felt herself succumbing. There was a drumming in her ears, she felt herself choking. And then she knew no more.

When Frankie came to herself the immediate reactions were depressing. There is nothing romantic about the after-effects of chloroform. She was lying on an extremely hard wooden floor and her hands and feet were tied. She managed to roll herself over, and her head nearly collided violently with a battered coal-box. Various distressing events then occurred.

A few minutes later Frankie was able, if not to sit up, at least to take notice.

Close at hand she heard a faint groan. As far as she could make out she seemed to be in a kind of attic. The only light came from a skylight in the roof, and at that moment there was very little of that. In a few minutes it would be quite dark.

The groan seemed to have come from the corner.

Frankie's bonds were not very tight. She wormed her way across the dusty floor.

"Bobby!" she ejaculated. Bobby it was, also tied hand and foot. In addition he had a piece of cloth bound round his mouth. This he had almost succeeded in working loose. Frankie came to his assistance. In spite of being bound together her hands were still of some use, and a final vigorous pull with the teeth finally did the job.

Rather stiffly Bobby managed to ejaculate, "Frankie!"

"How did they get you?" demanded Frankie. "Was it after you wrote that letter to me?"

"What letter? I never wrote any letter!"

"Oh, I see!" said Frankie, her eyes opening. "What an idiot I have been!"

He described his adventures at the Grange and their sinister sequel.

"I came to in this beastly hole," he said. "There was some food and drink on a tray. I was frightfully hungry and I had some. I think it must have been doped for I fell asleep almost immediately. What day is it?"

"Friday." "And I was knocked out on Wednesday evening. Now tell me what happened to you."

Frankie recounted her adventures beginning with the story she had heard from Mr. Sprague and carrying on until she thought she recognized Bobby's figure in the doorway.

"And then they chloroformed me," she finished.

"The thing is," said Bobby, "what are we going to do now?"

"If only I'd told Roger about your letter," lamented Frankie.

"The only thing I can't make out is why they didn't knock us both on the head straight away," mused Bobby. "I don't think Nicholson would stick at a little trifle like that."

"He's got a plan," said Frankie with a slight shiver.

"Well, we better have one, too. We've got to get out of this, Frankie. How are we going to do it?"

"We can shout," said Frankie.

"Ye-es," said Bobby. "Somebody might be passing and hear. But from the fact that Nicholson didn't gag you I should say that the chances in that direction are pretty poor. Your hands are more loosely tied than mine. Let's see if I can get them undone with my teeth."

The next few minutes were spent in a struggle that did credit to Bobby's dentistry.

"Extraordinarily how easy these things sound in books," he panted. "I don't believe I'm making the slightest impression."

"You are," said Frankie. "It's loosening. Look out, there's somebody coming."

She rolled away from him.

"AND how are my two little birds?" said the voice of Dr. Nicholson.

He carried a candle in one hand, and though he was wearing a hat pulled down over his eyes and a heavy overcoat with the collar turned up, his voice would have betrayed him anywhere.

He shook his head at them playfully.

"Unworthy of you, my dear young lady," he said. "To fall into the trap so easily."

Nicholson put the candle down on a chair.

"At any rate," he said, "let me see if you are comfortable."

He examined Bobby's fastenings, nodded his head approvingly and passed on to Frankie. There he shook his head.

"As they truly used to say to me in my youth," he remarked, "fingers were made before forks—and teeth were made before fingers. Your young friend's teeth, I see, have been active."

A heavy, broken-backed oak chair was standing in a corner.

Nicholson picked up Frankie, deposited her on the chair and tied her securely to it.

Frankie found her tongue. "What are you going to do with us?" she demanded.

Nicholson walked to the door and picked up his candle.

"Shall I tell you? Yes, I think I will. Lady Frances Derwent, driving her car, her chauffeur beside her, mistakes a turning and takes a disused road leading to a quarry. The car crashes over the edge. Lady Frances and her chauffeur are killed."

There was a slight pause, then Bobby said:

"But we mightn't be. Plans go awry sometimes. One of yours did down in Wales."

"Your tolerance of morphia was certainly very remarkable, and— from our point of view—regrettable," said Nicholson. "But you need have no anxiety on my behalf this time."

"He enjoys this," thought Bobby. And aloud he said in a casual voice. "You're making a mistake—especially where Lady Frances is concerned."

"Yes," said Frankie. "In that clever letter you forged you told me to tell nobody. Well, I told Roger Hastington-French. If anything happens to us he will know who is responsible. You'd better let us go and clear out of the country as fast as you can."

(Copyright 1935-36, Agatha Christie)

Tomorrow, their murderous visitor calls their bluff.

HEAVY MAIL RECEIPTS SWELL TAX HARVEST

Heavy mail receipts and a belated rush of taxpayers inaugurated the final day for payment of first quarter taxes without interest penalty in the tax collection department of the sheriff's office.

The final day, March 15, fell on Sunday, and gave an extra day for payment.

The California Oregon Power company Saturday paid its quarterly tax, amounting to \$31,223.33.

A large consignment of mail is expected today and tomorrow from out of county and state residents.

Factory style workmanship thoroughly guaranteed. You watch or jewelry repairing receives my personal attention. Jno. W. Johnson.

EAGLE POINT P. T. A. WILL MEET MARCH 23

EAGLE POINT, P. T. A.—(Sp1)—The Eagle Point P. T. A. will meet Monday evening, March 23 at the high school building. All parents are urged to come.

This program is planned particularly to entertain the "dads." The subject for discussion is "Fathers Are Parents."

Weather
Northern California: Partly cloudy and mild tonight and Wednesday; unsettled at times; moderate changeable wind off the coast.

Oregon: Generally cloudy tonight and Wednesday; probably rains in northwest portion; moderate changeable wind off the coast, becoming southerly.

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FEEBLE-MINDED INMATES IN PANIC

SALEM, March 17.—(AP)—Five inmates of Oregon's Fairview home, excited by recent statements concerning a mercy death for feeble-minded, escaped from their ward last night, Dr. Roy Byrd, superintendent, reported today.

Two were captured shortly after officials noticed they were missing, and three others are still at large. Officials reported that inmates of the home were thrown into panic by published reports of Dr. S. B. Laughlin's statement advocating the chloroforming of feeble-minded and socially inadequate state charges. The scenes were described as "pitifully excited" by recent statements by Mrs. L. D. Idleman, head psychologist in attendance. "The patients are repeatedly asking whether they are to be chloroformed," she said. "They are badly excited, and we may have more trouble unless they can be calmed."

Ground for Divorce
DEDHAM, Mass., March 17.—(AP) Mrs. Marjorie Dow Bancroft was granted a divorce yesterday from her wealthy Cobasset sportsman husband Hugh Bancroft, Jr., for whom she testified, she refused to pose for nude photographs.

STRANGE AS IT SEEMS—By JOHN HIX

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



THEODORE DREISER— Well-known American novelist, wrote the words of "ON THE BANKS OF THE WABASH" HIS NAME NEVER APPEARED ON THE PUBLISHED MUSIC...



Pedro de Valdivia, Spanish soldier and conqueror of Chile, met death in a horrible way at the hands of Indians who treasurers he had stolen and whose lands he had ravished. With all the cruelty at their command, the Indians contrived to slay their oppressor with the thing he had taken from them—gold. When the Indians captured Valdivia in December, 1553, they gathered up some of the golden treasures that he had taken from them. This gold was melted in a large pot, and the molten gold was poured down the throat of Valdivia.

TAILSPIN TOMMY—Bob Puts "Two and Two Together!"



BEN WEBSTER'S CAREER—The Doctor's Orders



THE NEBBS—Welcome Home



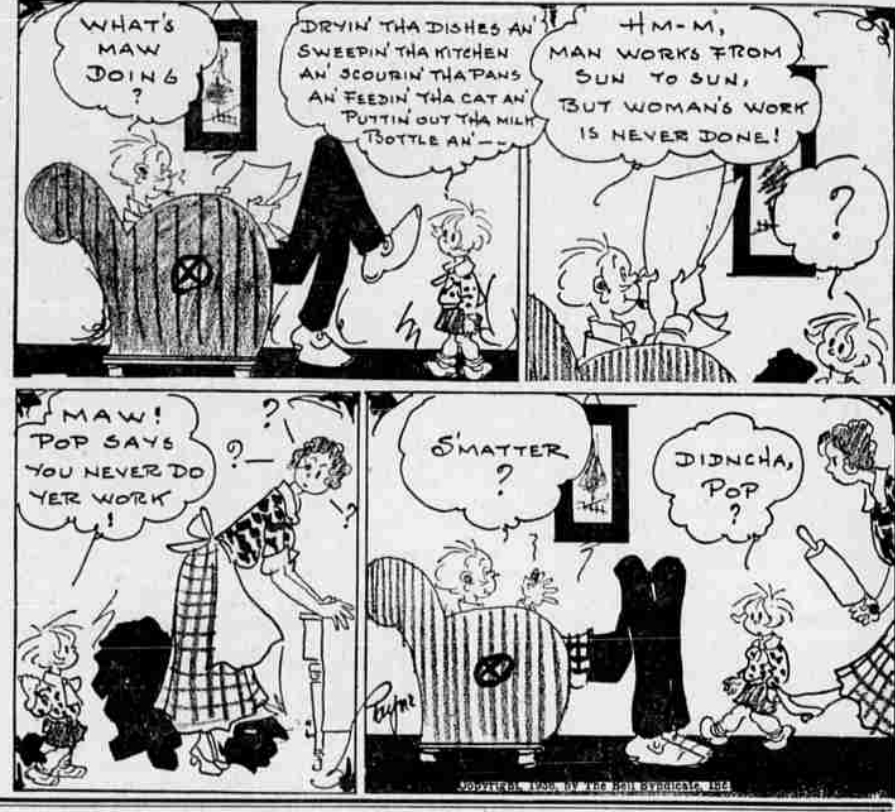
THE WORLD AT ITS WORST

By GLUYAS WILLIAMS



'SMATTER POP—

By C. M. PAYNE



By HAL FORREST



By EDWIN ALGER



By SOL HESS

