

# THE CLOUDY MOON

By MAX SALTSMARSH

**The Characters**  
Hugo Stern, handsome author, living on the French Riviera.  
Archie Lumsden, myself, Hugo's friend.  
Otilie Wills, a beautiful American heiress.

Yesterday, Hugo finds the name "Melanie Wills" engraved on Eve's lucky penny. She was Otilie's sister. At the Carlton Bar I receive a mysterious note Eve wrote me the day of her death.

## Chapter 13 A Bluff Called

THE little doctor had taken his leave and Hugo was alone, and as I approached he glanced up at me and whistled softly. "Great Scott, man!" said he. "You're green about the gills."

I halted a waiter and ordered a double Scotch. "And what local gossip have you been listening to?" I asked, anxious only that he should go on talking and give me time to collect my thoughts.

"Ah!" said he. "Now you're asking something! I have acquired various spicy morsels which may be useful. Ricketts is a good little soul. He hastened to pass on to me all the information he thought might be of service to us."

"Well," I retorted, "so what?"  
"So this," said he, "first and foremost there is a strong desire on the part of the police to side-track O'Donnell's death. The deliberate murder of an American citizen would have too many international repercussions to be pleasant—especially if they can't find the murderer. They propose, therefore, to work on the theory that poor Pat, having witnessed the murder, saw a man whom he believed to be the assassin making his escape, pursued him, and was shot down in cold blood."

"If that's the view the police take," I said, "it lets me out as the possible assassin."  
"Not a bit of it," said he dryly. "You forget the different calibers of the bullets. To enlarge on their theory the man who fell happened to be standing behind you when you did the dreadful deed. He was, they surmise, a crook of sorts who saw his chance to make a haul in the general confusion after the shooting. That version, you see, neatly eliminates the only two men who left the casino after the killing, and it therefore follows that the murderer remained inside. From there on, everything is beautifully simple. A girl has several wealthy admirers. A young man shoots her. The motive? Jealousy!"

"Have they tumbled to O'Donnell's real job?" I asked Hugo.

He shook his head. "Not a whisper of it, but they've checked up on his movements since he arrived in France. It seems he crossed in the American Freighter six weeks ago and, since he landed, has spent most of his time in Paris, with the exception of flying trips to Deauville and Le Touquet and his last excursion down here." He paused. "Does that say anything to you?"

I whistled softly. "It certainly does. It looks as if he'd been following the girl around. But there again, Hugo—supposing that the girl was Melanie Wills, adopted daughter of a famous banker—wouldn't it be the natural thing, if she disappeared, for her uncle to send a private detective to look for her?"

"It would, and I shouldn't wonder if we're nearer the truth than in all the rest of our guessing. Why," he demanded, suddenly and violently, "in the name of all that's holy, did you leave her family, come over here, take a name that wasn't her own, and associate with men like our friend the Baron?"

"If there's any answer in the world to that," I told him, "you'll find it there," and I tossed the letter into his lap.

"August 30th"  
HE UNFOLDED it and read it through, his face as expressionless as a bronze image. Then he looked up. "And where did you happen on this?" he demanded.

"Just now," I said, "in the hotel office."  
"It's beyond me," said Hugo. "The Grand Grimoire I know of course—it's the would-be magical text-book of black magic, but the Grimoire Antiquaire is a new one on me, and I'm afraid I know what l'Amourie means. It sounds like old French. By the Chateau la Vazue I presume she's referring to that respectable family hotel, but I never heard of the Caves des Muettes, and the only Club des Sams Club I know of is an association of the innkeepers of France."

He examined the letter again, wrinkling his brows. "August 30th is the date," he read slowly. "That's a week from today. 'Warn him if you can. Who the devil is he, and what are you to warn him of? Archie, my young friend, there's only one possible explanation, as I see it. The young woman was suffering from an overdose of blood—and a thunder reading. And that's that," he concluded, getting to his feet heavily. "If we don't get a move on, we'll be late for dinner."

On our return to the chalet, a very pretty tableau met our eyes.

## 2 BON VIVANT BANDITS PICK LOCK WITH CARE

NEW YORK, Sept. 14.—(UP)—Police today were looking for the two "bon vivant bandits" who, after spending half an hour trying on suits in a clothing store, selected two, held up the salesman and escaped in their new suits with \$100.

**Pickpocket Relents**  
KLANATH FALLS, Sept. 14.—(AP)—C. J. Van Duser, from whom a pickpocket recently fished a wallet, today received a wallet in the mail. The pickpocket, Van Duser told police, had no money in it either before or after its disappearance.

Ada was sitting on a low upright, flushed, and a trifle self-conscious, and opposite her, comfortably outstretched in Hugo's own chair, reclined a vast man in loose-hanging gray flannels.

"Why, Hugo!" his sister remarked in the tone of a little girl surprised at the lam-cupboard. "I never heard you come in! Mr. Dunning has been so instructive, all about American history."

The big man got slowly to his feet and advanced, holding out his hand. He was a huge fellow, with shoulders that wouldn't have disgraced a prize fighter. His face, though, square, white, and heavy, was not what one associates with an ex-bruiser, for it was both shrewd and wary, and I had the impression that his pale gray eyes almost hidden by myopic spectacles, were staring up carefully.

"Mr. Stern," he said, "I was a friend of poor Pat O'Donnell's. His death has touched me very closely."

Hugo shook the proffered hand. "I'm glad to meet you, Mr. Dunning," he retorted a trifle dryly. "I hope my sister has been looking after you. This is, I take it, a visit of condolence?"

The big man inclined his head solemnly. "I hesitate to intrude on your grief, Mr. Stern," he said seriously, "and my own sorrow, I may say, is still fresh, for it was only this morning that I heard of the tragedy, when I arrived in Cannes on a short vacation. I feel that in view of the strangely apathetic attitude of the local police regarding the crime, it is up to poor Pat's friends, to see that justice is done."

**A Good Loser**  
"YOUR sentiment," do you credit it," said Hugo. "But just how, may I ask, do you propose to set about achieving this desirable end?"

"That, sir, is what I would ask you," Mr. Stern, who killed Pat O'Donnell, and why?"

Hugo drew back a step, and as he did so, I noticed a certain tightening of the jaw that spoke of coming trouble. "One moment, my friend," he retorted. "Before we go any further in this interesting discussion, do you mind telling me just why you come to me in this matter? Mr. O'Donnell was the merest acquaintance of mine. I met him in a hotel in New York, found him a likable fellow, and asked him to look me up if he was ever on this side. It is my lasting regret that I did not do so before his death, because it is just possible that then I might have been of some assistance to you. As it is, I can do nothing."

The big fellow shook his head. "No, no, Mr. Stern," he said regretfully. "I know you were closer than that to Pat. He was your friend, and he confided in you quite a lot."

"You lose, Mr. Dunning," Hugo said laconically. "And now that we've regrettably called your bluff, there are one or two queries I'd like to put to you."

"Just a minute." There was a hard and menacing ring in the big man's voice. "How is it, if Pat was nothing but a hotel acquaintance, that you were aware of his real job? And how is it, furthermore, that the first thing he does, on reaching this town, is look you up and give you a rendezvous at Palm Beach last night?"

Hugo threw one swift, oblique glance at Ada. "Mr. Dunning," he said dryly, "I see that you have made good use of your time in my house; but let me tell you that the information you gathered from my sister is all you are going to get. Just what is your real interest in this affair? And the truth, if you please, if you don't want me to refer you to the police."

The American shrugged and cast a rueful glance at Ada and me. "For the first time, I found myself liking the fellow. Whatever he might be, he was a good loser."

"Well, as well," he said, "this is the first poker game I've lost in twenty years. You called my bluff, Mr. Stern, but I can't call yours, for I'd certainly hate the police to know I'm interested in Pat's death. Well, here's the truth of it, I'm reporting for the Chicago Express."

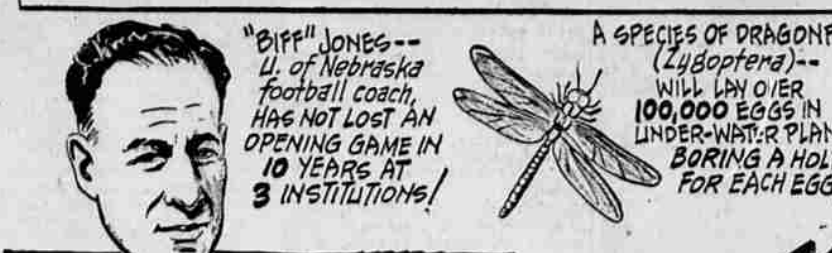
Hugo moved to the door and held it open. "Mr. Dunning," he said, "I'm afraid we have no information that could help you. We'll have to be excused."

The big man bowed. "I accept your ruling," he said sadly. "Miss Ada, I have to thank you for a most enjoyable afternoon. Mr. Stern, I am indebted for a valuable object lesson on how to be unobtrusive in the pleasantest way. Mr. Lumsden, I have a feeling that you and I have certain interests we share in common. That last letter, for example, that Eve Monet wrote on the morning of her death, sitting outside the Bar Alcazien—if I could discover to whom she wrote it and where it is now, I believe you would be as interested as I."

I looked him full in the face. "Mr. Dunning," I said, "when you acquire that information, I'll be glad to discuss it with you."

# STRANGE AS IT SEEMS—By JOHN HIX

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



**"Biff" Jones--**  
U. of Nebraska  
football coach,  
HAS NOT LOST AN  
OPENING GAME IN  
10 YEARS AT  
3 INSTITUTIONS!

**A SPECIES OF DRAGONFLY**  
(Zygoptera)--  
WILL LAY OVER  
100,000 EGGS IN  
UNDER-WATER PLANTS,  
BORING A HOLE  
FOR EACH EGG!

**205 1/2 MILES IN A STRAIGHT LINE!**  
A SECTION OF THE BUENOS AIRES AND  
PACIFIC RAILROAD IS PERFECTLY LEVEL  
AND WITHOUT CURVES FOR THIS  
DISTANCE--  
-Argentina-

**EARL AND LARRY--**  
"THE SKATING THRILLERS,"  
WHIRL AT TOP SPEED ON ROLLER SKATES  
WHILE EARL PASSES HIS ENTIRE BODY  
THROUGH A STANDARD SIZE  
TENNIS RACQUET!

**Curveless Railroad**  
Strange as it seems, for a distance of slightly more than 205 miles, the railroad of Argentina's Buenos Aires and Pacific railroad is perfectly straight, without a single curve or grade.

**"Biff" Jones.**  
In ten years of coaching football at three different institutions, "Biff" Jones has not lost an opening game.

**Dragonfly Eggs.**  
With incredible speed, the female dragonfly will lay as many as 100,000 elongated eggs, boring a tiny hole in some under-water plant to receive each one.

**SCHOOL BURNS DOWN JUST BEFORE OPENING**  
LOS ANGELES, Sept. 14.—(UP)—The Ramona grammar school in Norwalk burned to the ground yesterday, two hours before it was to have reopened after the summer holidays. Fire department investi-

**Polish Prince Sees Eventual Conflict**  
PORTLAND, Sept. 14.—(AP)—War will come eventually to Europe but the current impasse is largely "bluff"

**TAILSPIN TOMMY—Disaster!**

**BEN WEBSTER'S CAREER—Rush Is On!**

**THE NEBBS—Too Late?**

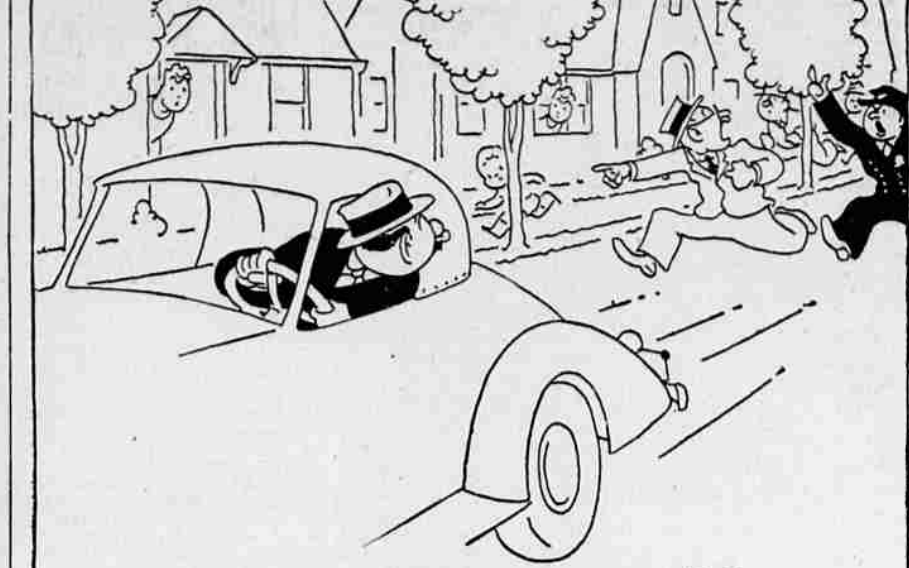
**2 BON VIVANT BANDITS**

**CLINKS FROM BLOUSE**

**SOUNDS FIRE ALARM**

# SUBURBAN HEIGHTS

By GLUYAS WILLIAMS

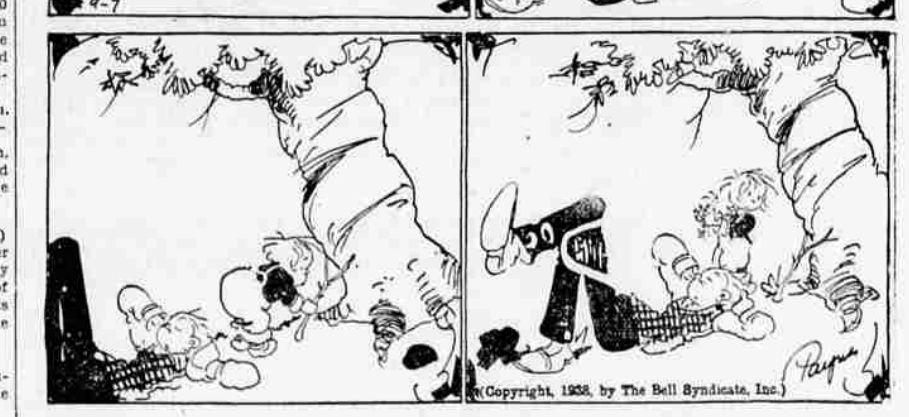
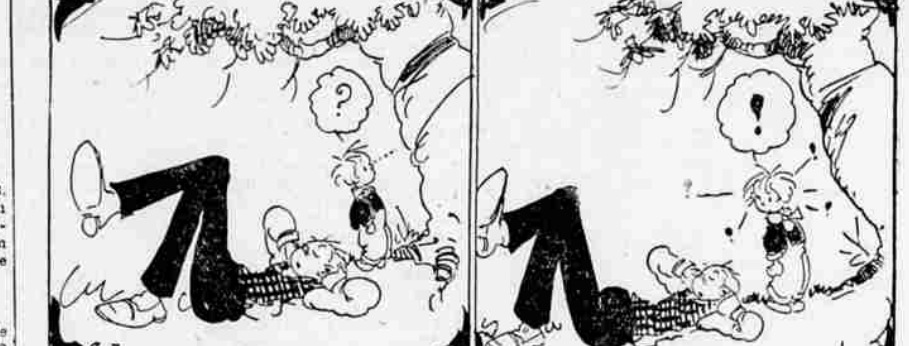


WHEN FRED PERLEY NEEDED TO GET HIS CAR OUT OF HIS GARAGE TO DO AN ERRAND, THE FRIEND OF HIS WIFE'S WHOSE CAR WAS BLOCKING HIS DRIVEWAY SUGGESTED THAT INSTEAD OF MAKING HER MOVE, HE BORROW HER CAR, WHICH WOULD HAVE BEEN SIMPLE IF HE HAD NOT ON THE WAY HAPPENED TO MEET THE WOMAN'S HUSBAND, A STRANGER TO HIM, WHO ASSUMED THE CAR WAS BEING STOLEN

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# S MATTER POI

By O M PAYNE



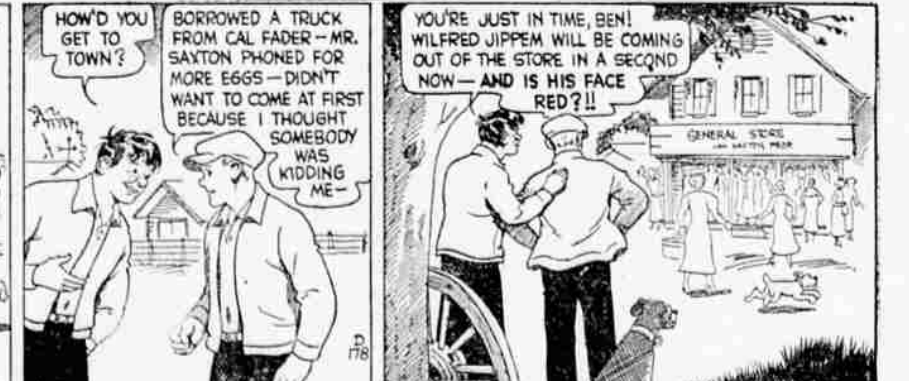
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