

THE CLOUDED MOON

By MAX SALTmarsh

The Characters
 Hugo Stern, handsome author, living on the French Riviera.
 Archie Lumsden, myself, Hugo's friend.
 Otille Wills, American heiress, whose sister was murdered.

Yesterday, we bring Otille to the villa and find Dunning there. She runs into his arms, sobbing.

Chapter 18

The Big Swindle

HE held her as he would a child, patting her shoulder with a slummy tenderness. "There, there," he soothed her. "The girl! Cry it out, honey! Sure I've heard about it all, but only yesterday." He stared across her bowed head at Hugo, with somber indignation. "Mr. Stern," he said, "was this necessary? Couldn't you have left the telling to someone nearer her? It's cruel to get news like that from a stranger."

Hugo shrugged, his face a dusky red; but before he could answer, Ada provided a diversion. She had been standing staring from one to another of us, her eyes round and startled; but now she caught her brother's arm.

"Hugo," she said, in an all too audible whisper, "who is this girl? She's like—"

Hugo laid one brown, muscular hand across her mouth. "Ada, my dear," he said, "this young lady is Miss Otille Wills. She has come here to have tea with us, but she has just received some rather disturbing news, and I think she would like to be alone for a few minutes. If you'll have tea ready for us on the terrace in half an hour, I think everything will be straightened out by then."

Ada went reluctantly. "See here now, Otille," Dunning was saying. "Look things in the face, like a good girl, and show your grit. You're not helping Mearns any by crying yourself sick!"

The chestnut head shook violently; a muffled sob was the only answer. Hugo poured out a stiff tot of brandy, laid his hand on one limp, dark-blue shoulder, and shook it. "Here, stop that!" he said harshly. "Drink this up at once!"

She lifted her head, drowned dark eyes stared at him resentfully. "I can't," she said, in a voice between a sob and a choke. "Go away—leave me alone, can't you?"

"If you haven't drunk in one minute," said Hugo, "I'll force it down your throat."

A sudden flash of anger sparked through the tears, but she drained it at a gulp.

Hugo sighed and dropped into the nearest chair, like a man suddenly tired. "If you feel able," he suggested, "we might begin our discussion."

The girl disengaged herself and crossed to an old, gilt-framed mirror, exclaiming at sight of her less-stained face. "When a result of the brandy or her sudden flare of anger, she was completely restored to self control, and she even achieved a wry sideways smile at her own passed."

Applying a powder puff with vigor, she whispered to me, "May Heaven help the woman he marries!"

She perched herself on the arm of Dunning's chair and laid a hand on his knee, which he covered instantly with one big paw. "Just how much have you told them, Otille?" he queried gently.

"Nothing that matters," she said. "Only how Sis ran away from home and Pat came over to find her. Oh, Cuthbert! have you heard about Pat too?"

"Sure, sure," he soothed her. "But how much do you wish we should tell them?"

I suddenly realized with dismay that the weapon we had proposed to use for bargaining was at that moment lying, presumably in the big man's pocket; and that, as he had unquestionably read it, its market value was now precisely nil. From the look on Hugo's face, I fancied the same thought had occurred to him.

Cards On The Table
 "BEFORE we go any farther," Hugo broke in sharply. "I should like to know Mr. Dunning's exact status. I understood he was a journalist."

The girl gave a little breathless chuckle. "Oh, Cuthbert!" she said. "You've never been pulling that gag again? Gentlemen, I assure you that Mr. Dunning is no journalist. He's a detective—in fact, he was Uncle Virgog's bodyguard, 'way back before I was born. Then, when he got tired of working for hire, he quit and founded the Dunning Detective Agency in New York."

"With branches in St. Louis, Chicago, and San Francisco," but in her subject drily. "Don't you go leaving out my background, Otille!"

"And it's like this, Cuthbert," the girl went on, "this gentleman, Mr. Lumsden, has a letter from Sis, written just before—just before her death, that he's promised to show me if I tell him things."

Mr. Dunning looked from Hugo to me with a grim little smile. "I'm sorry, gentlemen," he said, "but all's fair in love and detec-

tion. Otille, that letter was loaned to me by Mr. Lumsden this morning. I came here for the purpose of giving it back to him, but I must tell him, and you too, that its contents are inextricably engraved on my memory. You don't have to give away a thing unless you want to."

In her turn she looked from one to the other of us, with dark eyes that were wide and questioning and considering. Then very quietly she folded her hands in her lap and sat upright.

"You know, Cuthbert," she said, "I think we'd be wise to trust them. I believe they could help us a lot."

"Well," he drawled, "it's a strange thing, but I have the same impression; only this time, gentlemen, it must be agreed that all the cards are on the table. Is it a bargain?"

"It's a bargain," said Hugo dryly. Mr. Dunning crossed to the empty hearth, stood up with his back to it, and looked down on us with a large benevolence.

"Well," he said, "I guess it's up to me to start the ball rolling, but to do that I've got to go 'way back to a certain night in Prague, three and a half years ago, when Dr. Raditch, Vice-President of the Czechoslovak Republic, was shot down and killed as he left the opera-house. The shooting caused a flutter in the chancelleries of Europe, and an almighty slump in international securities."

He beamed at us with the complacency of a conjurer who has produced a particularly fine rabbit. "An interesting situation," he commented. "The most interesting bit of it was the amount of insurance against just such a fatality that was collected by a number of innocuous people in various parts of the world. Gentlemen, that was the beginning of what, from now on, we will call the Big Swindle. And here's the continuation of it, right up to date."

Then he proceeded to spin the queerest yarn that I had ever heard.

Foretelling The Future
 THE assassination of Raditch, he said, was the first of a series of strange fatalities, involving men of even conceivable nationality and calling, but, in each case, men of such outstanding importance in commerce, finance, or politics, that their sudden demise caused a considerable slump or panic in their particular sphere of activity; and in each case, it was subsequently discovered, the possibility of their deaths had been heavily covered with a number of insurance policies, taken out by a variety of seemingly unconnected people in all quarters of the globe.

There were, however, intervals between the first three or four deaths, but latterly they had followed each other thick and fast. But nobody ever dreamed of tracing any connection between the various deaths.

The men involved were of such widely different races and professions, their deaths were so easily and naturally explained—in the case of accidents, the accidents were such as might have happened to anybody where murder or assassination were involved, the killer either escaped or, when caught, was found to have a legitimate political or personal grievance against his victim—that no one, Dunning said, smelled a rat.

But the people taking out the policies were so completely unconnected and so widely scattered that the most fantastic flight of fancy could not have imagined a connection between any two of them; but—and here was the one weak link in the chain—although the insurance companies involved were seemingly as unconnected as the policy-holders, they were actually bound together by the vast, impalpable spider's web that holds together the world's finance, for over a certain sum the bulk of their liabilities was carried either by Lloyd's, the Bureau Veritas of France, or the American Bureau.

One day, by a fortuitous coincidence, a gentleman Edward Poekett by name and a Lloyd's underwriter by profession, took his summer holiday in the south of France and there made casual acquaintance with an elderly Frenchman.

They had been discussing the news of the day, the main item of which happened to be the sudden deaths of two prominent men. One of these, a middle-European railway magnate, had come to his end by a fall from an aeroplane. The other, the President of a South American republic, had met with an even more natural and understandable death, for he had been shot down in the course of a revolution.

But, said the elderly Frenchman, the point which interested him was this: in the current number of a certain small almanac, the Grimoire astrologique, published somewhere on the Côte d'Azur and purporting in its crude, unlettered way, to foretell the future, both these fatalities had been predicted, not only with uncanny accuracy of detail, but actually in the very months in which they had subsequently occurred.

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Monday, Marked for murder.
 codes from their demand for a master contract, crucial issue of the struggle. The peace meeting was at Bridges' invitation.

Though unionists have rejected several distributor offers, claiming they all provided the warehousemen sign a contract covering the entire industry with a single expiration date. Bridges expressed the opinion the matter could be settled by compromise.

Fire Fighter Hurt
 Volney S. Oden of Trail was brought to Medford today for treatment of an injury he suffered while helping to mop up the 800-acre Trail forest fire. His injury was considered not serious.

Oden was hurt this morning when a limb of a dead tree he was falling flew off and hit him in the right arm and side.

A pound of soap dissolved in a gallon of hot water and added to five gallons of whitewash will give the whitewash a glossy appearance.

BRIDGES KEY TO WAREHOUSE PEACE

SAN FRANCISCO, Sept. 20.—(AP)—Harry Bridges, president of the CIO Longshoremen and Warehousemen's union, left Seattle by plane today to meet here with warehouse employees in an effort to settle the tie-up of 120 bay area warehouses, while peace hopes in the big department store strike were pinned on a meeting Wednesday.

Bridges was expected to arrive at 1:30 p. m. with the meeting set for 3 p. m. (P.S.T.)

The strategy committee of the Association of San Francisco Distributors, employer group, met to prepare for the parley with Bridges, but a spokesman said they would not re-

STRANGE AS IT SEEMS—By JOHN HIX

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



BARNEY GARLAND--
 New York City,
 since 1902
 HAS TRAVELED
 OVER 408,000
 MILES--WITHOUT
 GOING ANYWHERE

JOY HAWLEY--
 Northwestern
 University co-ed,
 WAS CHOSEN
 BEAUTY QUEEN
 OF CHICAGO UNIVERSITY
 BY MISTAKE!

HE OPERATES AN ELEVATOR
 IN THE WALDORF-ASTORIA
 HOTEL...

THE CONTEST JUDGES
 GOT THE WRONG PICTURE...
 -1938-

THERE ARE NO
 POLAR BEARS AT THE
 SOUTH POLE...

JAMES DOUGLAS--
 4th Earl of Morton,
 INTRODUCED THE
 "SCOTTISH MAIDEN"
 GUILLOTINE INTO SCOTLAND--
 THEN BECAME THE
 FIRST MAN TO
 DIE ON IT!
 -Edinburgh, 1581-

The Scottish Maiden
 Direct ancestor of all sovereigns of England since 1603 was Lord Henry Stuart Darnley, second husband of Mary, Queen of Scots, and father of James I.

His mother, Lady Margaret Douglas, had arranged his marriage to Mary in hope that Darnley might become King of England on the death of Elizabeth. However, court intrigue and marital trouble foiled Darnley's plans, and in 1567 he learned of a plot to assassinate him.

In Edinburgh, a house at which he had stopped was blown up; his body was found some distance away with evidence of death by strangulation. One of the men implicated in his death was James Douglas, Fourth Earl of Morton and one-time Lord High Chancellor of Scotland.

Douglas, in 1574, had introduced into Scotland from Halifax, England, an early form of guillotine known as "The Maiden," for use against Scottish nobility.

Strange as it seems, this same machine was first used in Scotland to behead the Earl of Morton himself on June 2, 1581, when he was condemned for taking part in the Darnley murder.

Elevator Traveler
 Strange as it seems, Barney Garland, elevator operator at the Waldorf-Astoria, New York, has traveled over 408,000 miles without leaving the building.

Garland has worked 8 hours a day for 312 days of the year since 1902. He averages 40 complete up and down trips daily, 600 feet to a trip, making a total of 2,156,544,000 feet or 408,438 miles, a distance more than 16 times around the equator.

Tomorrow: Who was the first woman to preside over the U. S. senate?

TAILSPIN TOMMY—Danger... At the Banyan Pylon!



EIGHT SUPER-SPEED PLANES, HIGH OVER THE MIAMI AIRPORT, JOCKEY FOR POSITION, EACH POSITION ASSIGNED BEFORE THE TAKE-OFF, ALL WAITING FOR THE GREEN FLASH FROM THE CONTROL TOWER THAT WILL SEND THEM ALL HURTLING FORWARD ON THE RACE OF THE CENTURY. WITH NERVES OF STEEL TOMMY GRIPS THE THROTTLE. WILL HE BE KILLED? THAT IS THE CHANCE HE IS TAKING. BUT THERE'S THE GREEN FLASH! THEY'RE OFF!

BUT AT THE SECOND PYLON FOUR PLANES BUNCH UP CAUSED BY THE COMET CROWDING.

FINISHING

By GLUYAS WILLIAMS



WHITE BLANC MANGE WITH PINK SAUCE APPEARS FOR DESERT AT AUNT LOTTIE'S. WHISPERS TO MOTHER DOES HE HAVE TO EAT ANY?

SIGHS HEAVILY, AND TAKES A BITE OR TWO, WONDERING IF THERE'S ANYTHING HE LIKES LESS

STIRS UP PLATE, TRYING TO MAKE IT LOOK AS IF HE HAD EATEN QUITE A LOT OF IT

BUSIES HIMSELF TAKING SIPS OF WATER, SO NO ONE WILL NOTICE HE ISN'T EATING. MOTHER WHISPERS IT ISN'T POLITE NOT TO FINISH

RESUMES EATING, BEING AS SLOW AS POSSIBLE IN HOPE THE SIGNAL TO RISE WILL BE GIVEN BEFORE HE HAS HAD TO EAT MUCH OF IT

AUNT LOTTIE BEAMS AT HIM AND SAYS NOT TO HURRY. THEY WILL WAIT UNTIL HE HAS FINISHED. SIGHS, SHUTS HIS EYES AND BOLTS IT

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S MATTER POE

By C M PAYNE



LEARNIN' TO SNORE!

22-22-22, PFF-FF-FF, 22-22-22 PFF!

WHATTA DOIN'?

WHATTA DOIN'?

22-22-22, PFF-FF-FF, 22-22-22, PFF!

WHATTA DOIN'?

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BEN WEBSTER'S CAREER—Government Caller?

By EDWIN ALGER



HMMM, A VISITOR! CLASS TOO! LOOK AT THAT BUGS!

MAY I HELP YOU, PROFESSOR?

THANK YOU MY GOOD MAN—

YOUNG MAN, ARE YOU IN CHARGE HERE?

YES SIR, FOR THE TIME BEIN' THAT IS—THE BOSS IS IN TOWN—I'M SECOND IN COMMAND—

THIS WILL INTRODUCE ME—

GEE! YOU'RE FROM THE GOV'MENT, EH?

THE NEBBS—Poor Steve?

By BOB HESS



HELLO, SLIDER I'M A BROKEN MAN... LIFE HASN'T A THING LEFT FOR ME!

IF IT'S PHYSICAL TROUBLE YOU'VE GOT, THEN DRINK NOXAGE - IF ITS MENTAL MAKE UP YOUR MIND YOU'RE THE ONLY ONE WHO CAN CURE IT

I COULD TELL YOU - BUT I WON'T - THAT THE TURN-DOWN YOU GOT FROM THE WIDOW IS THE FINEST THING THAT EVER HAPPENED IN YOUR LIFE

NOXAGE A JIG IN EVERY SWIG & BOUNCE IN EVERY OUNCE

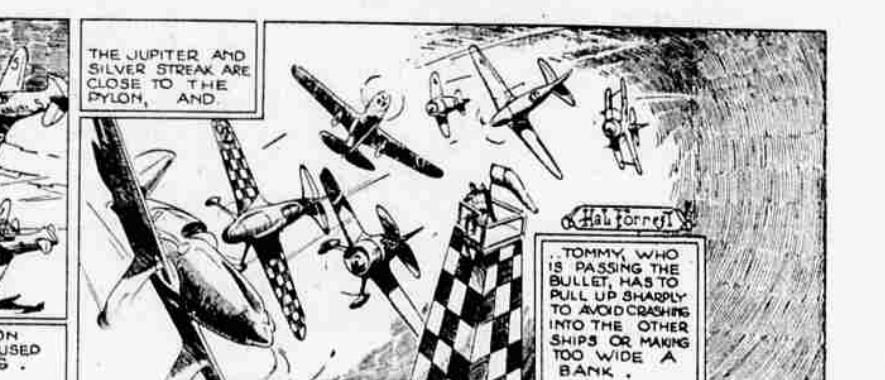
BUT YOU WOULDN'T BELIEVE IT - YOU'VE BEEN TALKING THISTHING OVER WITH YOURSELF AND YOU CAN'T CONVINCCE YOURSELF SO HOW IS AN OUTSIDER GOING TO HELP YOU?

THATS RIGHT - SCOLD ME, SLIDER - YOU CANT ADD TO MY MISERY - ITS PERFECTLY COMPLETE

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By HAL FORRESTER

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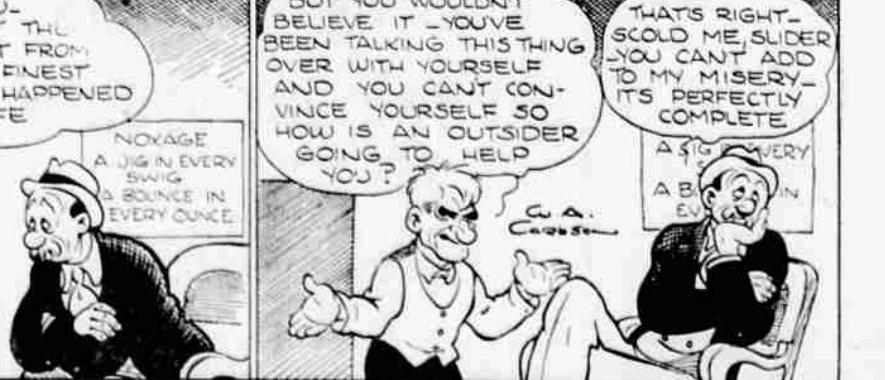
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