

THE CLOUDED MOON

By MAX SALTSMARSH

The Characters
Archibald Lumsden, myself, visitor to the French Riviera.
René Geiss, master mind behind a murder plot.
Venner, one of Geiss's confederates in crime.

Yesterday: We take Otilie from Geiss's studio. A yacht will be available for Geiss's getaway, should the plan fail.

Chapter 29 A Warning

VENNER laid a wrinkled, trembling hand on my wrist, and looked sharply about him. The servant Amédée had retired, but the big black dog had settled himself with a grunt of satisfaction at my feet, looking up at us through sleepy, half-closed eyes.

"Lock the door," he said sharply. "No, not that one, ye fool, the outer one and leave the other open. We'll soon know then if anyone's trying to overhear us."

I did as he bade me. "And I think, if you don't mind, sir," said I, with a vivid recollection of the events of the morning, "we'll have this side-window closed, too." And I suited the action to the word.

He waited till I had reseated myself and then leaned forward, lowering his tone. "Young man," he said, "before I say what I have to say, I want you to remember that I'm your friend, and I should be sorry—very sorry indeed—if anything should happen to you; but you've got to be frank with me. Tell me, what do you know of Eve Monet?"

I stiffened. "Why do you want to know?"
"Because," said he, "I know that the police suspect you killed her."
The cards were on the table with a vengeance, but I had to play my own hand with circumspection. "Look here, sir," I answered, "I don't know what right you have to question me, but I've nothing to conceal. Until that morning on the Carlton terrace I had never seen or heard of Eve Monet in my life."

"I was about to agree with him, when suddenly he sat bolt upright. 'What was that?' he gasped. 'I heard a sound in the bedroom.'"

A Killer
"I DIDN'T hear a thing," I told him, but he waved me aside. "Go and look—quickly; on the balcony!" And to quiet him I returned to the bedroom. Nothing stirred. The heavy furnished room was empty and the shutters were closed. I opened them and stepped out, realizing for the first time that while his sitting-room balcony had no communication with any other, this window opened on a wide terrace that ran the whole length of the house above the portico.

I came back to the sitting-room. "Not a soul to be seen," I announced cheerfully, and was relieved to see that he had regained control of himself.

"Very well," he said testily. "That will do for tonight. I will see you in the morning, and in the meantime will very kindly tell Amédée I am ready for bed!"

I took my way down the staircase, moved by a queer sort of pity for the old scoundrel, though there was no getting away from the fact that the main cause of his aversion to my sudden demise was the effect it would have on his own health. A man was sitting behind the office counter, immersed in a newspaper, and I paused to deliver the old man's message. As I did so, he looked up sharply, and I saw a pale, flatfish face, with queer, light eyes, set slanting under inevitable brows, and topped with a halo of wavy, tow-colored hair.

There was something familiar in the sight—some memory that it stirred in the recesses of my brain. "Hello," said I, "where have I seen you before?" and next moment I could have bitten my tongue out, for it was the pale-faced lad who had quitted the Caves des Muettes in company with Baron Stahl the night before.

"I have never seen Monsieur before," he answered, with a thick-lidded, guttural stare that told me he was no Frenchman.

"What part of the world do you come from?" I asked, trying to indicate a harmless, idle curiosity, but he shook his head.

"I come from Paris, monsieur," he told me. His voice was of a piece with the rest of him, flat, toneless, completely without character.

"From Paris?" I echoed. "But you weren't born there, I'll swear. Hold on a minute; I'll have a guess. Somewhere east of Vienna, Serbia? Rumania? I've got it—Slovakia!"

I had spoken without thinking, but as I finished I saw him stiffen slightly. His small, pale eyes retreated behind the pasty lids, becoming mere dangerous slits. I had hit the nail on the head, that was evident, and it was still more evident that it had alarmed him, but for the life of me I couldn't see why; and then a sudden memory came, of Dunning's big, booming voice telling of a strange story, of a Czechoslovak statesman, shot down in cold blood as he left the opera-house in Prague. I knew in that instant, without the shadow of a doubt, that the killer of Dr. Radich stood before me, staring at me inimically with those dangerous, slitted eyes.

is that I've made a pact with myself not to clear out until the business is settled and my name is cleared."

"That's absurd," he retorted sharply, "but I'm not going to have my wits put aside in this manner." He glared at me, a febrile flush spotting each hollow cheekbone. "I won't be checked like this," he went on excitedly. "I tell you, I dislike it very much when people I know meet with violent deaths. It keeps me awake at night, and I am too ill to be upset. I have myself to consider, and I have been very seriously unwell ever since poor little Eve was murdered, if anything happened to you, so soon after, why, I might not survive."

"And I probably shouldn't either!" I commented dryly as I got to my feet. "I'm sorry, Mr. Venner, but I can't do it. Here I am and here I stay, though of course you're perfectly at liberty to turn me out of your hotel. The tragedy wouldn't touch you quite so nearly then."

He glared at me, impotently furious, and I saw his bony chest begin to rise in great convulsive heaves. "My heart!" he gasped. "Quickly—get me the drops on my bed-table!"

I stared about me and saw a door in the opposite wall that I guessed must lead to the bedroom. When I pushed it open I found, directly facing me a narrow, white-painted bed, with a headboard, by the head-board. I snatched up the little bottle that stood on it, seized the water-carafe and glass and dashed back to the sitting-room. The old man was leaning back with closed eyes, fighting for breath, but as I approached he looked up at me. "Five drops, no more," he gasped, and I measured out the dose and poured it down his throat.

The effect was magical. In a bare couple of minutes the troubled breathing grew easier. "That's better," he whispered. "But you see how it is? I must not be upset, for the consequences are very serious. Anyway, we will talk about it later, when I have rested."

He was about to agree with him, when suddenly he sat bolt upright. "What was that?" he gasped. "I heard a sound in the bedroom."

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STRANGE AS IT SEEMS—By JOHN HIX

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



BEAVER HATS WERE FIRST MADE WITH SQUARE TOPS!

TOMMY THEVENOW, WHO HAS ONLY ONCE BATTED OVER 300 DURING HIS 13 YEARS IN THE MAJORS— HIT .447 IN THE FIRST WORLD SERIES HE PLAYED IN! Cardinals vs. Yankees, 1926



PAUL PAVELKA -- AMERICAN VOLUNTEER IN THE FRENCH FOREIGN LEGION AND THE LAFAYETTE ESCADRILLE DURING THE WORLD WAR, WAS STABBED WITH A BAYONET, BUT RECOVERED; WAS SHOT DOWN IN FLAMES, BUT LANDED UNINJURED; THEN WAS KILLED WHEN THROWN FROM A HORSE! (November, 1917)

FLOWERS FROM THE PAST! THREE PINK ORIENTAL LOTUS SEEDS, OVER 300 YEARS OLD, WERE RECENTLY MADE TO GROW IN CHICAGO... THEY HAD BEEN DORMANT IN A DRY MANCHURIAN LAKE BED...

Grandmas Given A Special Day
CHICAGO, Oct. 3.—(AP)—The National Grandmothers club in its first annual convention today selected the first Sunday in October—that's tomorrow—as "grandmother's day."

Tailspin Tommy—Victory Means—Death!
NOT LOST HIS NERVE, AS HE TRIED TO FORCE TOMMY'S SHIP TO CRASH AGAINST A PYLON, AS BOTH SHIPS WERE BANKED FOR THE TURN.



BEN WEBSTER'S CAREER—By Sundown Tonight!



THE NEBBS—Maybe You'll Be Happy, Too



PARTING GUESTS By GLUYAS WILLIAMS



SMATTER POI By O M PAYNE



By HAL FORREST



By EDWIN ALGER



By SOI HESS



NORTHWEST SEEKS BILLIONS OF PWA
PORTLAND, Oct. 3.—(AP)—Nearly \$45,000,000 in funds of the Public Works Administration were sought by northwest communities at the close of September 30, regional PWA headquarters said today.

Liberalize Wheat Bonus
WASHINGTON, Oct. 3.—(AP)—The agriculture department announced today liberalized wheat loan regulations designed to allow farmers to obtain benefits of wheat premium on high protein wheat and high quality durum wheat.