

# THE CLOUDED MOON

By MAX SALIMARSH

## The Characters

Archie Lumsden, myself, visitor to the French Riviera.  
 René Geiss, master mind behind a murder plot.  
 Venner, one of Geiss's confederates, who objected to killing me.

Yesterday: The hotel servant comes out of Venner's room with bloody hands.

## Chapter 31

### Circumstantial Evidence

THE door was locked. I room next door, unlocked it, and entered Venner's room from the balcony. The bed lay directly before me, and a tumbled heap of blankets upon it showed me that for once Mr. Venner had overslept. But as I took a step forward, something brought me up with a jerk, and wave after wave of cold terror swept over me.

It was a human leg. With one stride I was beside the bed and had dragged aside the shrouding blankets. Blood was everywhere.

My nerve cracked. I made one bolt for the door, tore it open, wrestled with the lock of the ante-room, and flung through into the corridor, sending the tray crashing from Amédée's hands.

"What is it, monsieur?" he gasped.

"It's death," I said soberly. "Listen man; your patron has been murdered. I'm sorry for you, but you must come and see."

I gripped him by one shaking arm, dragged him into that dreadful darkened place, and showed him what lay there. Next minute we were both back in the corridor, staring at each other's gray faces.

"The police," I said, "you must telephone at once for them, and a doctor, but first the door must be locked."

After he had locked the door and pocketed the key, I drew him into my room and gave him a pull from my flask.

Then I propelled him gently from the room, but as I turned to follow him, something caught my eye, and halted me sharply in my tracks. My room was small and bare; apart from the bed, a dresser, and a couple of chairs, the only furnishing was the somewhat lurid floral decoration of the walls, but now, as I took a step towards the door, my eye lighted on a peculiarly gaudy rose, half-hidden by the wooden head-board of the bed. Straight across it showed a long scratch of white, and as I looked more closely, I saw the narrow silver of torn paper hanging from it. It was a fresh scratch, and it seemed to me that it had been made by shifting the bed from its accustomed position.

I gave the bed an experimental shove, and something heavy fell with a muffled thud on the polished boards. In a flash I was on my knees beside the bed, and next instant I held it in my hands—a foot-long roll of brown paper that held something heavy. I unrolled it carefully and found myself staring at a formidable-looking wrench, whose end was clogged with dried blood.

I laid the grisly thing on the floor, still in its paper wrapping, sprang to the door, and shut and locked it; then I sat down on the edge of the bed and took my head between my hands. Here was between my hands. Here was Geiss's final effort, the murder that I should, as he had told the judge d'Instruction, inevitably commit. Here was the damning evidence that would, if it hadn't been for that single scratch on the wall-paper, infallibly have sent me to the gallows. But I didn't think that the weapon alone would be considered evidence enough. There would be something else, something to suggest a motive for the crime.

## Framed

I TORE open the drawers of the heavy walnut dresser and found them empty. I flung wide the doors of the hanging cupboard and found nothing. The bed was quickly examined, but it was equally unproductive, and there remained only my suitcase. I dragged it out, unsnapped the locks, and there, neatly tucked into the folds of a clean shirt, was a thick morocco wallet with a gold "V" stamped in one corner.

It was full of notes, English and French, of all denominations, but it was not its contents that worried me; I had to find some safe hiding-place for it and the wrench—and find it quickly, for even now Amédée must be wondering at my absence.

I could not tell which of the other bedrooms were occupied, and I dared not take the risk of opening strange doors. There was only one solution—the loose tile in the corridor. I peered out cautiously, found no one in sight, and slipped wallet and grisly weapon into the friendly hole.

Amédée was emerging from the office as I came down the stairs.

"They are coming," said he. "The police chief himself and the police surgeon and the rest—He broke off, looking at me with a troubled face.

"Well," I said impatiently, "what's up, man?"

"Monsieur," he answered hesitantly, "I do not understand it! The first question they asked was if you were in the hotel."

"Oh, well," said I, "they doubtless wanted to be sure of having a reliable witness," but though I

spoke cheerfully enough, I was conscious of a distinct uneasiness in the pit of the stomach.

My chief desire at the moment was to get some clothes on, for I was still sketchily attired in bathing shorts and a damp towel, but I had a feeling that the farther I kept away from my room until the arrival of the police, the better, so for the next half-hour I kicked my heels in Amédée's little pantry, until, with a grinding of brakes, two big cars pulled up on the gravel sweep outside.

They came pouring into the hall, the commissaire in the lead and a stout, cheerful-looking man at his heels to whom he followed to pay a certain debt. Seeming them came the doctor, and after him a horde of men in uniform, men in plain clothes, men with cameras, men with attaché-cases.

The commissaire bowed formally to me, but it was to Amédée he turned.

"The key of the room?" he demanded, and when the big fellow handed it over: "You, my friend, will accompany us upstairs, but you, on the police case, Monsieur Lumsden, will remain here until I send for you."

After about half an hour I saw a uniformed gendarme coming down the stairs, and when he beckoned me to follow him back to the first floor, I obeyed with as good a grace as could be.

The windows of the bedroom were flung wide. The blanket had been decently drawn over the huddled shape on the bed, but as I pushed my way through the crowd of men who seemed to fill the room, I saw something black stretched on the floor beneath it, and paused on my way across the window, where the commissaire sat installed behind a table, to drop on one knee and see what it was.

## Fingerprinted

IT WAS the big black dog, Lulu, and he lay on his back, glazed eyes half-closed. But as I laid a hand on his big chest, I felt the heart still faintly beating, and when I lifted his head I saw that, though he had a nasty crack over one eye, he was otherwise untouched.

"Great Scott!" I said wrathfully. "This poor brute is still alive, and you leave him lying there! Amédée, get a man to help you carry him down to the kitchen and tell the women to look after him."

The commissaire signed to me to be seated, and in the same gesture indicated the stout man who had entered with his right. "This is Monsieur Fleuriot, head of the police mobile of Marseille," he explained. "All we wish from you at the moment, Monsieur Lumsden, is to tell us your story and to allow us to take your fingerprints."

"Surely," said I, and in a few words as I could, I told him what had happened from the time I had returned from my swim.

He nodded. "That will do," he said indifferently, and added, with a certain emphasis: "for the present." And so, after I had read through my statement and signed it and allowed my fingers to be pressed on a black, oily pad and several sheets of paper, I made my way once more down the stairs.

It was more than an hour before I was sent for again, and as I followed the gendarme up the stairs for the second time, I reflected that I must watch my step and keep a curb on my tongue if I didn't want to land myself deeper in the morass.

My room door was open as I passed it, and a hasty glance inside showed me the bedclothes tumbled untidily on the floor and the content of my suitcase strewn over the uncovered mattress, but the broken tile cracked reassuringly under my tread as I walked on, and I entered the place of inquisition with my head held high.

I realized, with an unpleasant shock, that the judge d'Instruction was also present. We exchanged formal bows, but I saw by the glint in his eye that he had not forgotten our last exchange of compliments and bore me no love for it.

"Monsieur Lumsden," he said, and tapped a closely written sheet of paper on the table before him. "I have here your account of your movements this morning, from the time that you went for a bath, but I find that Monsieur le Commissaire has omitted to ask what you were doing yesterday evening and through the night."

"That's easy," said I. "I started the evening by calling, with my friend Mr. Stern, on Monsieur René Geiss at his villa."

My eye was upon him, and I saw him start at the cartoonist's name. "Indeed," said he, "and may I ask what took you there?"

I grinned at him. "Merely!" I retorted. "A friend of Mr. Stern's, Mr. Virgoe Willis, was alarmed because his niece had not returned from a sitting she was giving to Monsieur Geiss. He did not altogether care for Geiss's reputation, and asked us to fetch her which we were delighted to do. After that I returned to the hotel here, had a short talk with Mr. Venner, and went to the Chalet d'Amour where I remained until ten."

"And the subject of your conversation with Monsieur Venner? What did you speak of during the half-hour you spent with him?"

The subject of that conversation was the last thing I was prepared to disclose.

(Copyright, 1938, Max Salimarsch)

Tomorrow: Suspected!

# STRANGE AS IT SEEMS—By JOHN HIX

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

**"WIGWAM" IS NOT AN INDIAN WORD! IT IS THE WHITE MAN'S CORRUPTION OF THE INDIAN "WETJUMUCK," MEANING "HOME"...**

**GEORGE SANTAYANA, AT 73, WROTE AND PUBLISHED HIS ONLY NOVEL-- "A BEST SELLER," ("THE LAST PURITAN," 1936)**

**TEN HORSES CAN FINISH A RACE OVER 300,000,000 DIFFERENT WAYS!**

**A LIGHTNING BOLT**

**LASTING BUT A FRACTION OF A SECOND, CAUSED \$93,000,000 DAMAGE at Lake Denmark, N. J., DURING A SUMMER STORM IN 1926...**

**IT STRUCK A HIGH-POWER U.S. NAVAL AMMUNITION DEPOT THERE, STARTING A SERIES OF EXPLOSIONS THAT COST 31 LIVES... -July 10, 1926-**

John Hix 10-5-38

**\$93,000,000 Bolt.**  
 Coastal lightning bolt on record was a flash which struck the U. S. naval ammunition depot at Lake Denmark, N. J., on July 10, 1926. The terrible consequences of this flash, which occurred at 5 o'clock in the afternoon, were a series of explosions that shook the countryside for 30 miles and cost 31 lives. Shells from the depot exploded in the Picatinny army arsenal, one-half mile away. For five miles around the landscape resembled a battlefield. Entire villages were destroyed; damage was estimated by a board of inquiry at \$93,000,000.

**First Best Seller.**  
 George Santayana, Madrid-born professor of philosophy at Harvard, came to the United States at the age of nine. Educated at Harvard, he later returned there to teach. Santayana won quite a reputation as a verse and sonnet writer, but not until 1935-36, at the age of 73, did he attempt a novel. Called "The Last Puritan," it achieved immediate success and was a best-seller for the 1936 season. Tomorrow: How much of Louisiana did the Louisiana Purchase add to the U. S.?

**Horse Race Finish.**  
 Off in a cloud of dust, a field of 10 horses racing against each other can finish no less than 319,841,385 different ways, according to D. Victor Stead, head of the University of Southern California's mathematics department.

**More Allens Enter Canada.**  
 OTTAWA, Ont. (UP)—More than 8,000 people from almost every country in the world entered Canada as immigrants during the first six months of 1938, a report issued by the immigration department here disclosed. Only 6,877 aliens entered during the first half of 1937.

**Freight Birds to Be Exhibited.**  
 TORONTO (UP)—One of the freaks of the bird world, a family of emus will be exhibited at the coming Canadian National Exhibition here. The emus reverse nature when nesting. Instead of the mother bird bathing the eggs, the male does it. Nine baby emus and their paternal keeper are to be brought here from Australia for exhibition.

## SALEM GETS NEW TRAFFIC WARNING

SALEM, Oct. 5.—(AP)—A little girl stand at Salem street intersections in school zones. The little girl will be quite modern in her dress, but a bit old-fashioned, too, for she will carry a slate. On the slate will be written "school zone—please be careful." She will stand at those corners where children cross the streets when they go to school. It is a device of the 20-30 club to prevent accidents. The little girl is 44 inches tall, but made of wood, not flesh and blood.

## TAILSPIN TOMMY—But Jerry Doesn't Know—There's Another One!

THE COMET HAS GAINED ON THE MERCURY IN NEXT TO THE LAST LAP OF THE GREAT MIAMI AIR RACE, BUT THE RADIO ANNOUNCER CALLS THAT "ANYTHING CAN HAPPEN BEFORE THE RACE IS OVER" AND SOMETHING DID! JERRY TRAILED THE MAN WHO GAVE HIM THE OMINOUS LETTER, ADDRESSED TO TOMMY, AND HE RETURNS TO TELL SKEETER.

YOU SAY YOU TRAILED THE BIRD WHO GAVE THAT THREATENING NOTE TO YOU FOR TOMMY? WHERE'D HE GO?

TO AN OLD HOUSE NEAR THIS FIELD.

COME ON! I'LL SHOW YOU!

UH, DID YOU SAY TWO OF 'EM?

THIS IS THE PLACE, SKEETER! HE AN' ANOTHER GUY WENT IN THERE!

9-12

## BEN WEBSTER'S CAREER—Danger Ahead!

OOOPS! THIS GUY DRIVIN' THE BUGGY SURE KNOWS HOW TO COAX MOTION OUT OF IT!

BUT WE AIN'T GOIN' TO JAIL 'CAUSE BEN AIN'T ON BOARD—GOSH! I GOT IT! I'LL BETCHA BEN WONDERS IF PRO ADIT'S ON THE UP AN' UP AN' IT'S MY JOB TO FIND OUT!

GEE, BEN'S SMART! AN' IF—WOW! WE'RE CURVIN' AN'!

10-30

10-28

10-26

By EDWIN ALGER

## THE NERBS—The Banker

SAY, THAT BROTHER STEVE OF YOURN' CAME IN AND TOOK UP YOUR MORTGAGE. I TOLD HIM IT WASN'T DUE SO HE SAID HED PAY UP ALL THE INTEREST TILL IT WAS DUE.

WELL, WHAT'S WRONG WITH THAT?

IT WAS ONE OF THE BANKS GOOD SAFE LOANS AND I DONT LIKE TO SEE THAT KIND GO OUT.

I DONT SEE WHY NOT. IT'S BEEN DRAGGING ALONG FOR A LONG TIME. I SHOULD THINK YOU'D BE GLAD TO SAY BYEBYE TO IT!!

THAT WAS ONE OF THE FEW I WISH HED KEEP HIS NOSE OUTTA OTHER PEOPLES AFFAIRS BUT NO NERBS EVER LIVED COULD DO THAT!

10-3

(Copyright, 1938, by The Bell Syndicate, Inc. Trade Mark Reg. U. S. Pat. Office)

# SUBURBAN HEIGHTS

By GLUYAS WILLIAMS

IN RUMMAGING AROUND FOR AN EXTRA CHAIR ON THE DAY OF THE FALL TEA PARTY AT THE COMMUNITY CLUB, THE COMMITTEE CAME UPON THE BROWN BAG IN WHICH THEY HAD SEEN FRED PERLEY STUFF THE NOTICES THE DAY HE HAD PROMISED TO MAIL THEM

10-4

(Copyright, 1938, by The Bell Syndicate, Inc.)

GLUYAS WILLIAMS

# MATTER POI

YA SEE, I ALWAYS SEE THE FUNNY SIDE OF EVERYTHING

O-H-H-H! LIKE WHEN SOMEONE PUTS A TACK ON YER CHAIR—

OR DROPS A BEETLE IN YER CAWFE?

HITS YA IN THA FACE WITH PIE?

OR PULLS YER CHAIR OUT FROM UNDER YA!

WELL.

HO, WILLYUM! WANTA KNOW HOW TO MAKE POP LAUGH?

Copyright, 1938, by The Bell Syndicate, Inc.

# By HAL FORREST

# PLANE HUNTS FOR MISSING HUNTER

PLACERVILLE, Cal., Oct. 5.—(AP)—Two airplanes today joined in the search for James Mortimer, 21, missing for 48 hours in the heavily wooded Cat Creek country, 25 miles southwest of here.

The planes, piloted by two local men, Jack Glasgow and Dr. D. W. Baddock, were sent out to circle over the area in which Mortimer had started out on a hunt.

A ground crew of 100 men entered the area on a search they estimated would take seven hours. It was feared Mortimer had suffered an injury and was unable to make his way to a ranch or town.

Show at Timberline GOVERNMENT CAMP, Oct. 5.—(AP)—Two inches of snow covered Timberline lodge today. Forest officials said the fall was heavier at higher elevations on Mount Hood.

Two airplanes today joined in the search for James Mortimer, 21, missing for 48 hours in the heavily wooded Cat Creek country, 25 miles southwest of here.