

# THE CLOUDED MOON

By MAX SALTmarsh

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

Yesterday, Geiss murders Henrietta Adams, and Ottillie and I are locked in the secret room. There we find the gun that killed O'Donnell.

## Chapter 39 A Girl Vanishes

I TOOK another look at the inert body on the floor. Beside it was a woman's handbag, and at sight of it I knew in a flash just what kind of a fool I had been.

I snatched it up and tore it open. There were keys there, as I had known there would be; the big latchkey of the Chateau la Vague, the Yale of Geiss's front door, and a smaller, queerly shaped bit of metal that I knew without telling would unlock our prison door and set us free.

I whooped with joy like a schoolboy and raced down the room to the farther door.

"Come on, Ottillie!" I yelled, and she came flitting the key into the little hole and heard the welcome sound of the wards turning. One minute later we were dragging open the garden gate, staring into an outer world that we had hardly dared hope to see again.

The sun was high in the heavens. I rubbed my knuckles across my heavy lids, and as I did so, heard a familiar voice. "May I ask," said Hugo dryly, "if this has been an all-night party? Or were you merely sleeping off the effects?"

The girl had been clinging, half-dazed, to my arm, but at the sound of his voice she wrenched herself free and, running to him, flung herself on his breast, twining her arms round his neck.

"It's you!" she sobbed. "I knew you'd come, but oh, I've been so frightened! Hugo, I was so terribly frightened!"

He put his arms about her, awkwardly, like a man who is half-afraid, and then suddenly strained her to him and pressed his lips to her hair.

"Dearest," he said, very low. "Dearest, you're safe now. You're with me."

I stood there with my hands in my pockets, feeling slightly resentful for, when all was said and done, it was I that had done the dirty work, and he was getting the thanks. But after a minute he raised his head and grinned at me in a shamefaced way.

"Sorry, old man!" he said. "Unaccustomed as I am to public love-making, I forgot all about you for the moment!"

"Don't mind me!" I retorted bitterly. "Carry on as long as you like—but when you're through, it might be as well to get into the hotel. Dunning must be throwing hysterics by now."

He looked suddenly conscience-stricken. "You're absolutely right!" he declared. "Actually, it's past eight already. Ottillie, my dear, we'll have to get a move on, but first, tell me how you got here and what you've been doing. If I hadn't run into Fleuriot and heard that the last he'd seen of Archie was when he turned in a purposeful way up this street, I might have been searching for you till Doomsday. As it was, I was just pondering the best way of breaking into the villa."

"Fleuriot?" I echoed, startled. "What had he been up to, I wonder?"

"I don't know," said he, "but his car was inches thick with dust, and he looked as if he hadn't slept for a week. He asked me to tell you, though, that he would be calling your bluff shortly, whatever that may mean."

"Well," I said, "I'm ready when he is—but taking it by and large, we've certainly had a full night. Ottillie and I've both had the same idea of breaking into Geiss's villa, and we met on his balcony. Following that, we witnessed Geiss murdering Henrietta Adams, and we've been locked in with her corpse for the rest of the night, but we did, at least, locate the missing gun."

**I Love You A Lot!**  
THE Carlton terrace was empty when we arrived. As we halted just inside the door, Hugo turned to the girl and gently unlinked her arm.

"Sweet," he said, "we're too dirty and disheveled to go through another day without cleaning up, but there's obviously nothing wrong so far, or Dunning would be in evidence. Will you let him know you're safe, and tell him we'll be back as soon as we've had a bath and shaved? After that I want you to promise not to stir from your room until I give you leave."

She looked at him, and for a moment I saw a flat refusal trembling on her lips; then slowly her expression softened, and a second time she reached up and kissed him softly. "You're a medieval relic, my precious," she murmured, "but you're terribly sweet, and I love you quite a lot."

"Hugo," I said, as we turned down the ramp to the deserted Croisette, "are you going to marry that girl?"

"If she'll have me," he answered self-consciously. "She'll have you all right," I retorted, and added gloomily, "in more ways than you think!"

He looked at me, startled and resentful, but made no protest, though his tone, when he spoke, was a trifle frigid.

"I suppose," he suggested, "that the next thing is to notify the police about that woman's murder?"

"Well," I said cautiously, "it depends what portion of the police you're referring to. If we report to the juge d'instruction, he'll be obliged to hold his inquiry right away; if we tell the commissaire, he'll want to know how we broke into the villa, and may feel bound to arrest us for breaking and entering."

"Fleuriot, then?" he suggested. "Fleuriot or no one," I agreed.

The reception clerk at his hotel informed us that Fleuriot had not been in all night. "It is possible of course," he added, "that the gentleman has gone to view the conflagration!"

"What conflagration?" I echoed stupidly, for the seemingly chronic condition of the Esteres had for the moment slipped my memory.

He raised a shrewd eyebrow. "The chapel!" he explained. "It is possible that Monsieur has not observed? Villages are threatened, boats are standing by to take off the inhabitants of the coast towns, and troops have been rushed from Nice and even from Marseilles to fight the flames. It is a most interesting spectacle, but a pity that it should chance to coincide with the brigade. It will be difficult for our visitors to witness both."

Back at Hugo's, I had almost forgotten the fire, when I saw a sight that halted me, gasping, in my track. The cape itself was invisible, covered with a great pall of brown smoke that stretched half across the sky, but every other second a shower of fiery sparks would shoot upward, followed by a searing tongue of flame.

An hour later we took the road again, and during that time the whole town seemed to have wakened to excited life. The main road was crammed with jostling motorcars, carrying sightseers to the scene of the fire, and through them, demanding right of way with shrieking horns, tore great lorries loaded with troops, shirt-sleeved and steel-helmeted and armed with pick and shovel to fight the flames.

"Where is she?"

AS we worried and twisted our way towards the Croisette, signs of the rival festivity began to emerge. Flags and bunting fluttered gaily on all sides and when we came to the main street, it was to find it closed to traffic by a whitepainted barrier.

Every shop had its stall outside, piled with a strange jumble of merchandise. The street was a seething mass of people, and as the wine-shops were doing a brisk trade, I imagined it wouldn't be long before the fun became fast and furious; but the Croisette was still folded in an aristocratic emptiness, and when we entered the Carlton lounge, it was to find Dunning in solitary possession.

He was haggard, crumpled, and unshaven, and I felt a momentary pang of compunction that we had dallied so long before joining him; but after all, I reflected, he had known for some considerable time that the girl was safe, and could have made his own toilet, too, if he had wished. Even as the thought came to me though, his greeting dispelled it.

"Where is she?" he demanded sharply. "Holy smoke! I must have you'd bring her along with you."

I gasped. "What the devil do you mean?" I demanded blankly. "We left her here a couple of hours back and told her to let you know she was safe and well."

"She let me know all right," the big man answered bleakly. "Sent me a note saying she was all right and would see me and tell me all the news as soon as she'd cleaned up. But no word came, and when she never got there, I found she'd never got to her room; all that greeted me was Cassandra Chubb, running around like a demented thing. The only consolation I had was that Cassandra'd had sense enough not to alarm the old man."

He broke off and wiped his wet forehead. "Gentlemen," he said solemnly, "Ottillie Wills wrote me that letter, standing here in the vestibule, and stepped into the elevator to go to her own room, but she never got there, and from that moment to this, there's not a soul in the hotel that's seen her again. I've asked 'em all; hall-porter, who saw her come in with you; reception clerk, who gave her paper to write her note; elevator boy who saw her get out at her own floor; and not one has set eyes on her since. She didn't come down again, either by the elevator or the stairs, and short of having a room-to-room search of the two hundred and fifty apartments in this hotel, I'm at my wit's end. All I could hope for was that she might have slipped out by some back exit to join you."

"She may have done that," I said doubtfully, but Hugo broke in sharply.

"Good God, man! She'd never do such a thing. She promised me to stay in her room, and I'm not disposed to doubt her word. She's been kidnapped, or worse, by that devil Geiss. What are we waiting for?" he finished harshly. "Come on, Archie. We've got to get to the police and have the town combed for her."

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Tomorrow: Ready for the killing.

working mediators today.

In the dispute which has closed down more than 100 warehouses, throwing 2,800 CIO union men out of work, hope of a quick peace flared high, sputtered and then dwindled, as Paul C. Smith, newspaper executive mediator, announced wearily:

"The two parties appeared to me (after Wednesday conference separately with distributors and union leaders) to be about as close together as the north and south poles."

Smith said he would continue to shuttle back and forth between the two sides, hoping to get positions nearer together by a joint session scheduled for late today.

In the department store strike,

Mayor Angelo J. Rossi's special committee of ten doggedly continued its conference, with another one scheduled for this afternoon. Meyer Lewis, AFL representative, was reported on his way here from Houston, Tex., to aid peace efforts.

Conference also continued today to seek a quick end to a strike in Seattle against two Bwayne and Hoyt vessels, the Point Lobos and Point Estero. Almon E. Roth, president of the Waterfront Employers association of the Pacific coast, said he would insist on performance of contracts by all unions which have left the ship in support of the CIO Marine Engineers Beneficial association.

Closing time for Too Late to Classify Ads is 1:30 p. m.

## SMATTER POT

By C M PAYNE



## TAILSPIN TOMMY—Skeeter Isn't 'Foolin'!



## BEN WEBSTER'S CAREER—Congratulations!

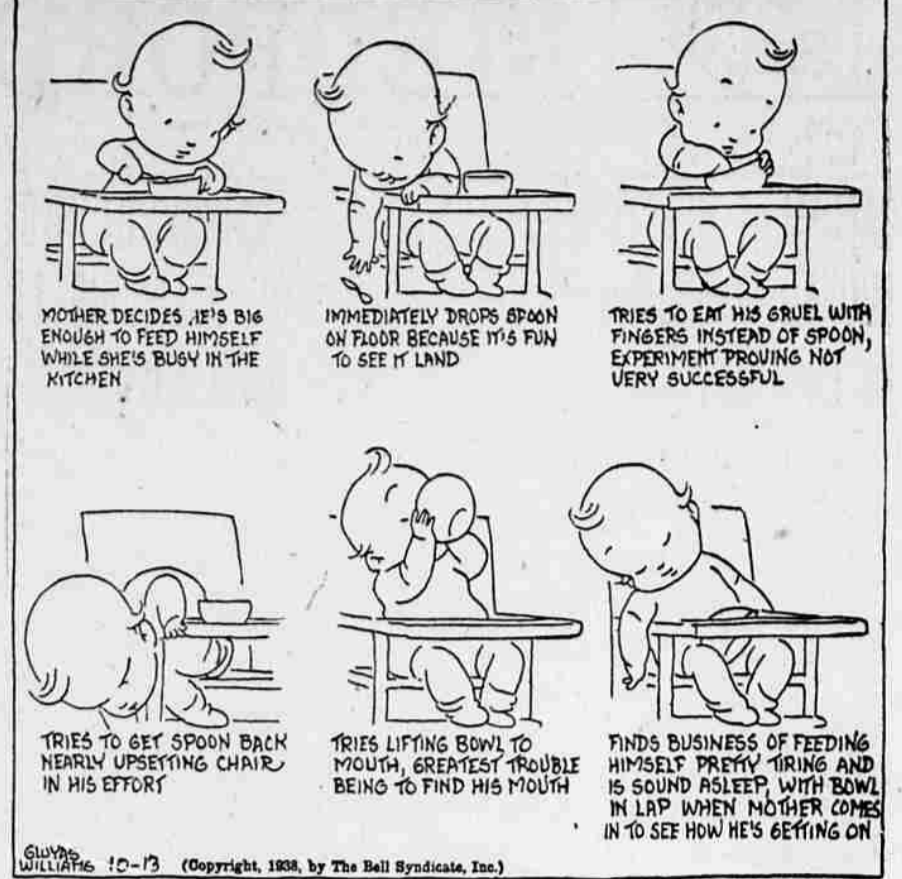


## THE NEBBS—Sh-h-h-h!



## SELF-FEEDER

By GLUYAS WILLIAMS



## TAILSPIN TOMMY—Skeeter Isn't 'Foolin'!



## PEACE FADES IN SETTLEMENT BAY CITY LABOR WAR

SAN FRANCISCO, Oct. 14.—(AP)— Outlook for settlement of the department store strike and the warehouse shut-down was discouraging to hard-

working mediators today. In the dispute which has closed down more than 100 warehouses, throwing 2,800 CIO union men out of work, hope of a quick peace flared high, sputtered and then dwindled, as Paul C. Smith, newspaper executive mediator, announced wearily: "The two parties appeared to me (after Wednesday conference separately with distributors and union leaders) to be about as close together as the north and south poles." Smith said he would continue to shuttle back and forth between the two sides, hoping to get positions nearer together by a joint session scheduled for late today. In the department store strike,

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BOEING Flying Fortress  
WINGSPAN 13 INCHES

### FLYER ORTMAN DEMONSTRATES THRILLING ALLSWEET OFFER

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