

THE CLOUDED MOON

By MAX SALTmarsh

Chapter 43 Forest Fire

CAUGHT up with Fleuriot just as he reached the office. "You'd better inform your bureau that Geiss is wanted for one recent murder, as well as complicity in the others," said I, perching myself on the table as he wrestled with the telephone. "He bumped off Henrietta Adams last night in his villa, and I saw him do it."

He gaped at me like a codfish, recover in hand. "And may I ask if you have any more of these interesting details to communicate?" he demanded bitterly.

"Lots!" said I, grinning down at him, and added a short résumé of the events of the night before. "But get on with your telephoning, man," I finished. "The news will keep, and Henrietta, poor soul, can't run away, but Geiss can and will."

Fifteen minutes later it was all over. Instructions were being flashed across the length and breadth of France to hold the yellow car and its occupants. We met in the hall, four worried, disgruntled men. "Where to look?" asked Fleuriot, his round, red face all creased and puckered with anxiety. "I have done what I can, executive," I have ordered the detention of Monsieur le Baron Stahl, as soon as he can be found, and I do not think he can be far away; my bureau is requesting the Italian police to keep an eye on the interesting Monsieur Vladimir Rakovsky, and I have given instructions for the villa of the miscreant Geiss to be watched until I have leisure to examine the corpse of Mademoiselle Adams. It was in the room where she lies, was it not, that you discovered the rum which may have killed the lamented O'Donnell? But what a pity that you were not similarly fortunate in finding the other gun with which the poor little Monet was shot, and the weapon which struck down Monsieur Venner! He broke off to laugh heartily. "I make the joke, that's all!"

"And a very funny joke too," I commented dryly, "but in this case you happen to have hit the nail on the head. The gun which killed Eve Monet is in the possession of Mr. Dunning. There are no fingerprints on it, but I can tell you that the man who fired the shot is Rakovsky's chauffeur. He's dark, medium-sized, with the first finger of his right hand missing. As for the weapon which killed Venner, it's a serviceable kind of wrench, and you'll find it and the old man's wallet, under the loose tile outside my bedroom door in the Château la Vague."

I paused for a moment, to savor to the full the ludicrous astonishment that spread over his face and even as I did so, a great light dawned upon me. I sat down heavily on the nearest chair.

"Merciful heavens!" I groaned. "Why didn't I think of it before? The Club des Sans Nom men! They meet in the cellars under the chateau. Ten chance to one that's where they've taken Otilie."

Fleuriot gaped at me. "This club, I have never heard of it," he said dazedly. "But then, it seems to me I have heard of it before. But before he could finish his complaint, Hugo had gripe him by the arm.

"You'll hear of a lot more before this night is through," he retorted grimly. "Come on, we're going to the chateau."

Night was falling. The sinister smoke-cloud had lifted, but to the west the opal sky was flushed and angry; we could not see the doomed cape, but the wind that blew strongly down upon us was fiery, and I heard a rumble for any living thing that might be left in the glowing furnace that was once the Estérel.

Into Custody

THE gardens were dusky and deserted, and the only people abroad besides ourselves appeared to be a party of half a dozen sailors, strolling arm-in-arm a little way ahead of us. I wasn't paying much attention to them, but suddenly there was a chorus of angry shouts, and above the dark clustered shapes, I saw an arm shoot high, and the hand at the end of the arm held a glittering knife.

On a swift, ungovernable impulse I shook myself free of Fleuriot's grasp and sprinted towards the shouting, milling group.

In a couple of seconds I was upon them and knocked down the knife. Instantly they were running for their lives, scattering into the darkness, all except one.

"Monsieur," said the voice of Jean-François, slightly tremulous. "I thank you from the heart. That knife was intended for me."

I gasped, a gasp of sheer amazement. "And what the devil," said I, "have you been up to?"

He smiled up at me with simple pride. "It was the yacht," he explained. "The gentleman, Monsieur Dunning, will have told you. I was able to obtain a post on board her as cabin steward, and when news came that she was to be ready, I sat immediately. I judged it my duty to delay her, I waited until the engineer was on shore, and did a little work with a wrench."

"And then?" said I.

"Monsieur," he said simply, "I fear that they suspected me, for they knew I was no sailor; but

they did nothing. I think they were watching me, biding their time, for when I asked leave to go on shore, I was refused. I had seen nothing of Monsieur le Baron since yesterday evening, but tonight, as dusk fell, a small boat came up by our bows, and with much secrecy he crept on board. I could not hear all that passed, but I gathered that he will remain hidden on the Rendezvous until the small hours of tomorrow morning, when a fisher-boat will take him over to the Îles de Lérins. This news was so important that I judged it my duty to come on shore at all costs to report to Monsieur Dunning, but I was overtaken by these men, who, under the guise of friendship, forced me to stroll along with them. Two, who were unknown to me, then started an argument—the excuse for the quarrel and the knife, you will understand—and had it not been for the arrival of Monsieur, I should not be telling this story."

"Fleuriot," I said, "did you hear that?"

"Certainly. We will now, if you please, Monsieur Stern, proceed in your car to the police-station, where I can make what arrangements are necessary."

At the police station Fleuriot revealed himself as a master of swift action. Before I could realize what was happening, orders had been given, police mobile, reinforced by the local gendarmerie, had piled into two cars, and a couple of men had wheeled out powerful-looking motorcycles into position behind the Hispano.

"It is possible we shall need extra help at the chateau," he explained.

We whizzed on to the quay. Uniformed men hurriedly scrambled into rowboats, while others trotted silently along the jetty towards the dark and silent Rendezvous and I knew that it would not be long before the yacht was encircled and her obese owner in safe custody.

The Second Door

"AND now," said Fleuriot, setting himself comfortably beside me in the tonneau of the Hispano, "we will have the rest of the story, if you please, Monsieur Lumsden; but we will begin at the end and work backwards, for time is short."

I did as he bid me, collecting my scattered thoughts and trying to give him some coherent account of what had been, taking it by and large, the most hectic week of my life; but before I had got any appreciable distance, the car turned with a grinding of brakes into the familiar empty lane, and next minute we were pulling up at the gates of the hotel.

The great building loomed before us, shadowy, unlighted, an indescribably dark, the next minute I had led them through the lounge and under the curtained arch to the door with its battered poster: "Club des Sans Clubs."

The door was a heavy slab of wood, solid and immovable as the house itself. Fleuriot shook his head.

"I do not like it," said he. "This door has not been opened for a long time—see, the paint fills the cracks—and I fear there are bolts on the other side. Skeleton keys are useless against this door. Monsieur Archee, is there no other entrance?"

"There is," I answered dubiously, "but I doubt if it will be any better than this. It is under the arches below the terrace."

"Show us the other door," I led the way on across the sunken garden.

At the farthestmost darkest end was something that looked like torch on it. I saw that it was indeed a decaying, decrepit door. I did not seem possible that any living thing had passed through it in the last decade, but Fleuriot, stepping up to it, gave a sudden, stifled exclamation.

"We have it!" he whispered. "See, the lock has been freshly oiled and there are no cobwebs!"

He bent to his task, inserting first one, then a second fantastical implement in the rusted lock, and again, as the wards clicked, Hugo and I took a step backward and huddled ourselves against the door.

There was a cracking noise, a crash of breaking wood, and next minute we shot forward, sprawling, on to wet stone flags, with Dunning at our heels and Fleuriot close behind. I got up dazedly and looked about me, to find that I was standing in a vast, vaulted place lit only by a flickering lantern at the far end. At first glance the cellar seemed to be completely empty, and then suddenly I saw crouched against the further wall a huddled, shuddering form.

In one bound I had taken the floor and had him by the throat. "Noah More!" I said between my teeth. "Tell me, man, before I wring the life out of you—where has Geiss taken Miss Wilis?"

His hands feebly plucked at my grip on his throat. "He has taken her," he said, and swayed as if he would fall, "he has taken her to the Estérel, to the Auberge des Allouettes." And with the words he fainted dead away in my hands.

I turned and looked through the open door, out towards the west where the crimson sky was shot with darting flames, and as I did so, I heard Hugo groan like a man in torment.

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Tomorrow: Into the fiery furnace.

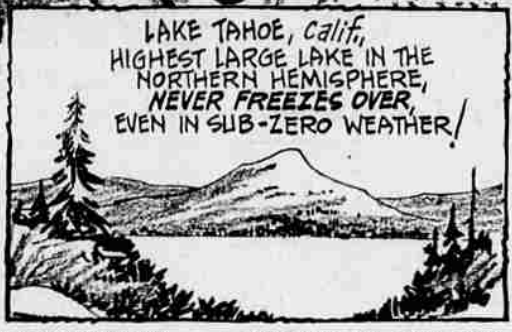
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QUARTER DIME, OR
NICKEL...
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10-19-38

PLANE MECHANICS TO CAST STRIKE BALLOT

SEATTLE, Oct. 19.—(AP)—A strike vote will be taken Saturday by the members of Aeronautical Mechanics' union 751 as result of the union's rejection last night of a wage proposal presented by the Boeing airplane company, I. A. Sandvigen, union business agent, said today.

The union by a vote of 432 to 85, refused to accept the proposal, the terms of which were not made public.

FOREMAN CHOPS FOOT IN CCC DEMONSTRATION

BEND, Oct. 19.—(AP)—"This is how it should be done," remarked Robert Wakefield, forest service foreman, as he swung an ax for CCC boys at an accident-prevention demonstration.

The ax slipped from his grip and gashed his foot.

His troubles continued. While receiving medical attention someone stole a checkbook and \$150 from his automobile.

DISCOVER NEW PLOT FOR BRAZIL TERROR

RIO DE JANEIRO, Oct. 19.—(AP)—The ministry of justice today announced discovery of a revolutionary plot to assassinate "high authorities" and establish a reign of terror in Brazil.

The two men now in prison on charges of participating in the abortive fascist uprising May 11 were accused of being involved in the new plot.

TAILSPIN TOMMY—Safe, for More Villainy!

BEN WEBSTER'S CAREER—That Man Again!

THE NEBBS—Want to Buy a Diamond?

SUBURBAN HEIGHTS By GLUYAS WILLIAMS



FRED PERLEY WAS THE CENTER OF AN ANIMATED SCENE ON THE STATION PLATFORM WHEN, SEEING A WOMAN BOARD THE TRAIN LEAVING HER SUITCASE BEHIND, HE PUT IT ON CAR PLATFORM FOR HER, DISCOVERING TOO LATE THAT SHE HAD MERELY HOPPED ON FOR A SECOND TO GET HER FORGOTTEN UMBRELLA

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10-18

MATTER POS



10-12



10-13

Theater Operator Asks Appeal Time

SALEM, Oct. 19.—(AP)—Attorneys for Harry Pool, Klamath Falls theater operator, today asked the state supreme court today for 90 days' time in which to file their appeal.

Arthur H. Benson, court clerk, said Haidin C. Blackmer, Klamath county district attorney, would oppose the request, and that the court probably would rule tomorrow on the application.

Pool is free on \$5000 bail on a supreme court order.

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Big Lady Jumps To Death In Bay

SAN FRANCISCO, Oct. 19.—(AP)—An unidentified elderly woman, who weighed more than 300 pounds, leaped to her death today from a deck of the ferryboat Tamalpais as it passed opposite Alcatraz island federal prison.

The body was recovered after being carried more than 3000 feet by a strong tide.

Salem Plans Meters
SALEM, Oct. 19.—(AP)—The first move for the installation of parking meters in Salem was made at the city council meeting last night when an ordinance bill for the purpose was introduced by the police committee.

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