

CRUISE TO NOWHERE

by Deck Morgan

BEGIN HERE TODAY
JANE WESTON feels her dreams have come true when she sets out on a three week sea cruise, accepted in payment for the salary due her when the magazine for which she worked as travel suspended publication.
On board the ship, expert ski jumper, an penniless as Jane, who was left to him from the parents of a child whose life he saved.
Dirk introduces Jane to his friend, SNOWSHOES, a detective. Others on board are: NORRIS LANE, famous actress and owner of the Kokoiar diamond; wealthy, eccentric MADAME DOREMUS; DUTCH LENS and MANNIE JACKSON, blackmailers; TINO ROSAL, once singer; KEN MARTIN and LINDA BAYES. Soor show entertainers.
Dirk and Jane spend much of their time together. Then a misunderstanding comes between them. Dirk meets Nora Lane and is attracted to her. Tino Rosal becomes Jane's constant escort. Snowshoes persuades Nora Lane to turn the Kokoiar diamond over to the pursuer. They go to her stateroom to get it and find Mannie Jackson, head from a bullet on the floor. The diamond is missing.
Snowshoes takes charge of the investigation. He asks who had keys to the room. The pursuer says to Dirk and says, "You have one."
NOW GO ON WITH THE STORY

CHAPTER XVI

DIRK flushed, put his hand in his pocket and drew out a key. He handed it to the detective. "I forgot to turn it in," he said.

"Look here," the pursuer began, "this young man is a lot to explain. He had a fight with Mannie Jackson and he had a key to this suite."

Nora Lane said, "But that's ridiculous. He was with me all evening."

The room was silent. Suddenly Tino Rosal laughed and Jane turned to him.

"That's how much human testimony is worth," Tino said. "Miss Lane, you say Dirk was with you all evening, but I saw him on the promenade deck at 11 o'clock, just about the time of the murder. I saw him standing against the rail and a second later he lit a cigarette. I could see his face plainly. I'm not saying this to make trouble, you understand. I'm Dirk's friend. As a matter of fact, anybody with a hairpin could have entered the stateroom. You don't expect a key to solve the murder. The pursuer has a pass key in his office. There are pass keys around all over the ship."

The detective said, "The man who came into this suite didn't need a key. The trunk was unlocked as easily as the door."

The doctor went away with Nora Lane to give her a sleeping powder. Dutch Lens, after submitting to a search of his person, went to his room which had been gone over thoroughly. The jewel had not been found. Ken and Linda went back to the bar, leaving Dirk with Jane and Tino Rosal.

Snowshoes looked at the pursuer and said, "As a ship's officer, you'll have to question Dirk Strom. He's a friend of mine. I've known him a long time."

The pursuer looked at Dirk. "What time did you leave the ballroom?" he asked.

"I don't remember exactly. It was around 11 o'clock. My leg had gone to sleep and I came out to walk up and down the deck. I must have been there 20 minutes. It was the sun deck. I didn't come on Deck A."

The pursuer faced Tino Rosal. "You saw him on the sun deck?" Tino smiled. "Yes."

"And after that?" the pursuer looked at Dirk again.

"I went back to the ballroom and joined Nora Lane," Dirk said finally.

The pursuer seemed satisfied with Dirk's account. Jane, who appeared to be disturbed, started for the door and Rosal followed her.

WHEN the three men were alone Snowshoes turned to Dirk. "You're on a spot," he announced.

"I advise you not to go ashore at Nassau in the morning. Let the others go, but you stay on board. Maybe you can help me."

The pursuer went through the form of searching Dirk for the jewel. Then he sat down and they discussed the crime from all its angles.

The pursuer said, "I hope something breaks. The one thing that is poison to a ship is a murder. I'll have to report to the Captain. We'll have the body ashore before daybreak."

Snowshoes didn't move. "I'm stumped," he said, "but I've got my own theory about the murder. The guilty party won't dare quit the ship at either Nassau or Bermuda. To desert ship would be admission of the crime and not to rap him on an island. He couldn't very easily escape. So we're sure to have a corpse, a murderer and a stolen jewel with us until we reach New York."

Dirk said, "What's to keep him from disposing of the jewel ashore?"

"Every person going ashore will have to submit to a search," Snowshoes cracked his knuckles. He said, "Getting that diamond through the customs and police net at the pier in New York will be a first-class smuggling feat. Somehow I feel sure the jewel will turn up before the cruise ends."

He went out with Dirk and they walked once around the deck. "You're in a spot, son," the detective repeated, "but don't let it spoil your cruise."

Dirk said good night and went on alone.

HE was up in time to watch the passengers go ashore in the morning.

When he came on deck, gay parties were already in the dories. They didn't seem to mind the search of their persons in the pursuer's office; they regarded it as a kind of lark. The famed Kokoiar diamond did not appear, however.

Only one person objected strenuously to the search and that was the old dowager, Madame Doremus. She went ashore in the same boat with Jane and Tino Rosal, breathing loud deprecations against the ship's crew. "Manhandlers!" she raged.

Dirk watched Jane and the opera

star until their heads, close together, passed out of sight. Thinking about Jane, enjoying himself on the famed coral beach with Tino Rosal, Dirk knew he was jealous. His imagination followed them, conjuring up romantic scenes with Jane laughing up into Tino's face, dancing with him.

When Snowshoes came up to Dirk, with a hearty slap on the shoulder, the young man felt actually ill. But he didn't want part or parcel of that girl now.

The detective had stayed on board to keep an eye on Nora Lane's new quarters. Close to a nervous breakdown, Miss Lane was to remain in strict seclusion for the rest of the cruise.

The fact that he couldn't see the actress made Dirk more forlorn than ever. He had reached for the stars on this cruise and got worse than nothing.

"Don't look so gloomy," Snowshoes said. "I wanted to go ashore, too. I've never set foot on an island. Come on and have coffee with me."

They went down to the dining saloon and stayed there for almost an hour. Occasionally Dirk let his eyes sweep the low-lying coral beach out there on the palm-fringed shore. The detective was immersed in his job. The pursuer came over and sat down with them.

"Dutch Lens stayed on board," he announced. "He's in the bar, drinking and talking to the bartender. Better drop in some time and talk to him. Something might break while he's jittery."

"You don't know that yet," Snowshoes said tersely. "He'll squall like a trapped rat if he gets hurt, but he won't talk. I'd like to find out what he knows about this. It looks as if the Kokoiar diamond is still on board. It'll be with us, all right, until we reach New York. The murderer, too."

The pursuer looked down at the table. "The old man—the Captain—didn't like the look of my report. He's wild! It's the first time he's ever had a murder on his ship. He's radioed details to New York and the company's lawyers and the police are on the job."

"So the old boy's riled!" Snowshoes said.

"Hopping mad. He's on shore now, burning up the cables. He's had reports on Mannie Jackson's extortion threats—and he has the hope on Dutch Lens. Same count."

The pursuer looked at Dirk. "I'm under orders to keep a watch on you. He wants you turned over to the police the minute we dock in New York."

"Don't bother about the watch," Dirk said. "I'll be there!"

SNOWSHOES found Dutch Lens drinking at the bar. He walked up casually and took his elbow. "Good morning, Dutch!" he said.

The other man jumped as if a gun had been stuck in his ribs. The glass went clattering to the floor. "Jitters this morning," Snowshoes said amiably.

Slowly Dutch's features composed themselves. "Any man would have the jitters," he said. "I didn't sleep a wink. When they lowered the corpse to a boat, it swung past my port-hole. Manny was my pal."

"Sure, he was your pal," Snowshoes said. "Why didn't you go ashore with the body? You might have stayed on that lovely beach all day—for your health."

Dutch was still shaken. "Give me another Scotch, Joe," he said. "I didn't go ashore because I didn't want to meet nobody there. They got dark alleys in Nassau, ain't they? There's goin' to be a night. With a murderer loose on this cruise, I ain't goin' ashore to give him a chance at me in the dark."

"You think the guilty party is ashore?"

"He might be and he might be right outside this bar. I'm not goin' to budge. Say, you're a private dick, ain't you? Want a job acting as my bodyguard? I'd trust that sanctimonious pan of yours anywhere."

"Sorry," Snowshoes said. "Miss Lane has already retained me." (To Be Continued)

'Prosecutors' in Senate Trial



Summers



Hobbs

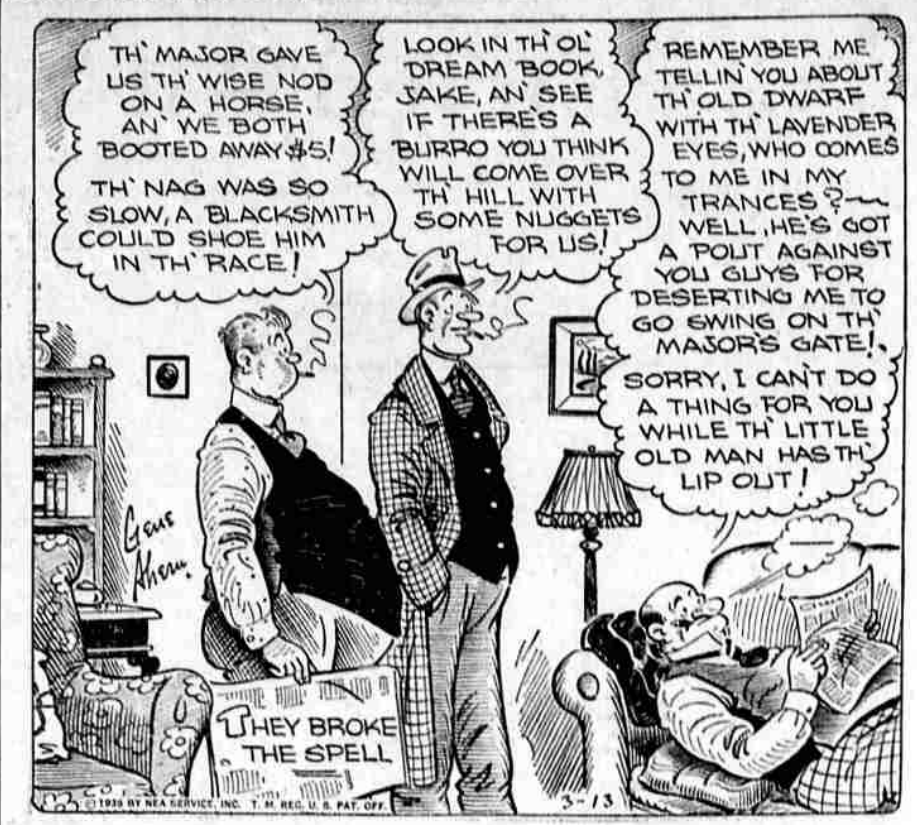
When the Senate sits as a jury to try Federal Judge Halstead L. Ritter, Fla., on charges of benefiting from alleged excessive recidivism fees set by himself, Hatton Summers, chairman of the House Judiciary committee, Rep. Sam Hobbs (D., Ala.), and Rep. Randolph Perkins (R., N. J.) will act as "prosecutors." Ritter's impeachment recently was voted 181 to 146 by the House.

OUT OUR WAY



THE WORRY WART

OUR BOARDING HOUSE



MYRA NORTH, SPECIAL NURSE



LITTLE ORPHAN ANNIE



FRECKLES AND HIS FRIENDS



WASH TUBBS



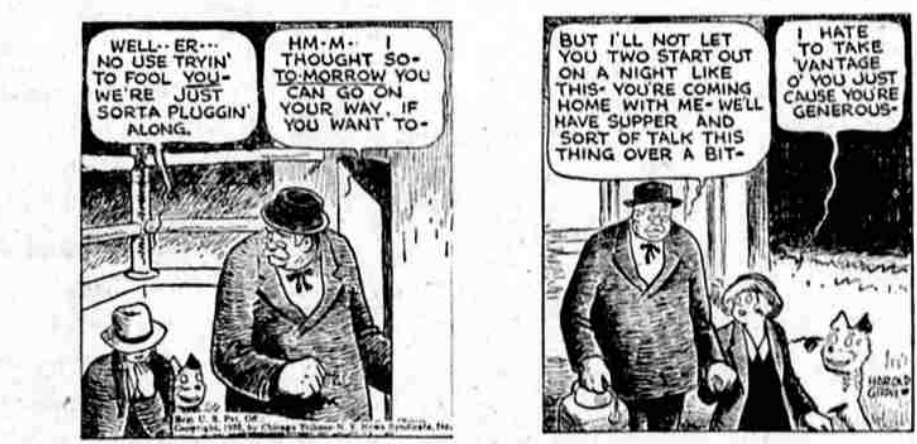
BOOTS AND HER BUDDIES



BY THOMPSON AND COLL



BY HAROLD GRAY



BY BLOSSER



BY CRANE



BY MARTIN

