

SERIAL STORY 5 WOULD KILL

BY TOM HORNER

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Yesterday Mrs. Benthorpe admitted ownership of the car, explains her actions and the portion of Benthorpe's note mentioning the car. After she admits quarreling violently with her husband, Dawson accuses her of plotting to kill Benthorpe, to make it look like suicide. While he traces her possible actions a shot shatters the stillness of the room.

CHAPTER XXIV

"In here! In here!" Flynn yelled as he leaped toward Alston's door. Dawson pushed past Helen Benthorpe and followed.

There was a thin, blue wisp of smoke over the bed as they crashed through the locked door. Alston lay there, face down, as if asleep, just as Dawson had seen him before. His right arm hung down to the floor, and his fingertips rested on a small blue-black revolver. A vivid stain spread over the white pillow as blood flowed from a wound in his temple.

Dawson bent over Alston, pressed his ear close to the old man's back, but it was a futile gesture. As he straightened up, he noticed a paper, tightly clenched in Alston's left hand.

"There's nothing we can do, now, Flynn," Dawson said in a low tone. "Call the coroner."

It was not necessary. He was standing directly behind Helen Benthorpe, in the doorway. As Dawson turned away from the body, Alston's daughter rushed toward the bed, but Dawson caught her in his arms and led her, gently, to a chair.

"Dad!!" she screamed, again and again, and then wept hysterically.

The coroner entered on Dawson's unspoken order, made a brief examination of the body. He removed the paper from Alston's hand, read the address and handed it to Dawson. "It's for you, Captain."

Krona, the coroner's deputy, filed into the room and Ara and John, still handcuffed, followed. All were watching Dawson as he read Alston's message. Mrs. Benthorpe's sobbing was the only sound in the room.

Dawson bent, whispered to Mrs. Benthorpe. Her sobbing subsided a little. He cleared his throat. "You all are interested in this letter Mr. Alston has left for me. It concerns all of you."

"Dear Captain Dawson," he read. "I trust my decision to solve your case for you will not upset too many of your excellent theories. It was inevitable that you should ultimately reach this final conclusion, and I have taken it upon myself to anticipate you."

"I killed Arnold Benthorpe. Any man who strikes my daughter forfeits his right to live. Helen's happiness has been my sole aim in life, since her mother died, and if killing Benthorpe will remove a cause of unhappiness I am glad I was able to do it."

"It was not difficult. I came in the rear entry, went directly to Benthorpe's study, killed him and then ran to the rear stairs. I was in the upper hall as Helen went down the front steps."

"Much of the time I was supposed to be asleep, I spent in Arnold's room, directly over the study. Your voice and those of the others were easily heard—Arnold had special openings just for that purpose—so I knew far more about the progress of your investigation than you guessed. What you did not know, or possibly overlooked, is that there is a communicating bath between Arnold's room and my own. That simplified matters considerably. It would have been even easier if I could have entered Helen's room by the same route, but her door was always kept locked."

"I chose di Torio as my most likely suspect and tried to fasten suspicion on him by finding one of his cigarettes in the passageway. But he had obliged me by carelessly dropping one there himself. I was listening upstairs, when he started to tell you that he had seen me, so I had to kill him too. I probably would have done the same for the girl—Ara—if she had not suggested a better way by telling you to look for the gun under Mrs. Benthorpe's mattress. You shouldn't have let her scream that so loudly. But you arrived just in time to prevent my putting it there."

"You've been searching all over for the gun that killed Benthorpe and di Torio. It will be found in my hand with three of its five shells fired."

"I had hidden it in a most convenient location immediately after I killed Benthorpe. . . . The laundry chute. Your man didn't find it when he searched through the clothes because I hung it within easy reach inside the chute. Even if he had looked up, from the bottom of the chute, he could not have discovered it, unless the door on the second floor were open—and I paid particular attention that it remained closed. He might have seen it had he flashed his light up, but I doubt it. Anyway, that was one of the chances I had to take. You would have found no fingerprints on it, at any rate."

"How did I hang it there? I thought you might guess when you saw me with the wire clothes hanger in my hand. Simply insert the hanger upside down diagonally in the laundry chute, push it downward, well out of sight. The spring of the wire keeps it from slipping down. Then hang

the gun by the trigger guard on the hook of the hanger.

"It was simple to get the gun out, shoot di Torio and return it after you had gone downstairs. If I had been caught, I would have said I was merely disposing of a used towel."

"But I've been afraid, through some trick of circumstantial evidence, that you might try to blame Helen for killing Arnold. That is why I chose this way out."

"Full control of Alston Motors will revert to Helen. Perhaps she will forgive me, as she has always insisted she already had, for suggesting her marriage to Benthorpe. I urge her to make some restitution to the girl and boy for the damage Arnold has done them."

"And by the way, Captain, if this case has given you any headaches, please try those sleeping pills I gave you. You'll find they are just ordinary aspirin. I will have a long, and peaceful sleep now."

"My bank will attest my signature. I am sound in mind, and know what I am writing."

"WILLIAM ALSTON."

DAWSON was back at the desk in the study when Ara and John entered.

"How about taking off these bracelets?" Douglas asked, laughing. Dawson smiled at their happiness.

"I'll give you the key, Ara, at the City Hall, when you're Mrs. Douglas. Then, if you're afraid you'll lose him, you can throw away the key." And as they turned to go, he called after them: "You'll find Nick Smith and his cab out front. Make him take you downtown." He stepped to the window to watch them go out the front gate, out into the sunshine. He smiled again as he saw Douglas

kiss his bride as the taxi sped away.

"WELL, Captain, that winds up another one," Flynn said as the front door closed behind them. "Yeah," Dawson agreed. "Now maybe I'll get that vacation. But you know, Flynn, this one had me puzzled. With this suicide and written confession, we'd never stand a chance in court, but, personally, I'm not convinced that Alston killed Arnold Benthorpe." (THE END.)

Says Blueblooded Hubby Socked Her



Jeanne Jordan, ex-"Vanities" girl, dances scantily clad in a New York night club. Her Philadelphia socialite husband, Frederick Steelman Bain, 45, didn't like it. So, she declared in an assault complaint, he burst into the club, punched her, tore out a handful of hair, later followed her home and repeated the performance.

FLAPPER FANNY

By Sylvia



"Bring him over sometime. Mac gets awful lonesome—all the other dogs in the neighborhood are too big for him to lick."

SUPER SLEUTH

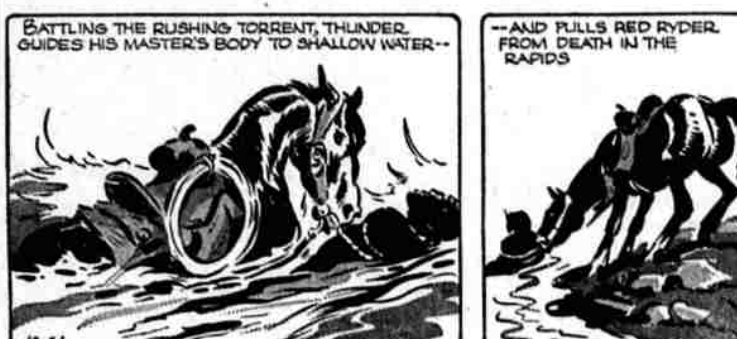
Crossword puzzle grid with clues and answers. Includes 'HORIZONTAL' and 'VERTICAL' sections with words like 'Senior', 'Pit', 'Opposed to', etc.



OUT OUR WAY BY J. R. WILLIAMS



RED RYDER



LITTLE ORPHAN ANNIE

BY HAROLD GRAY



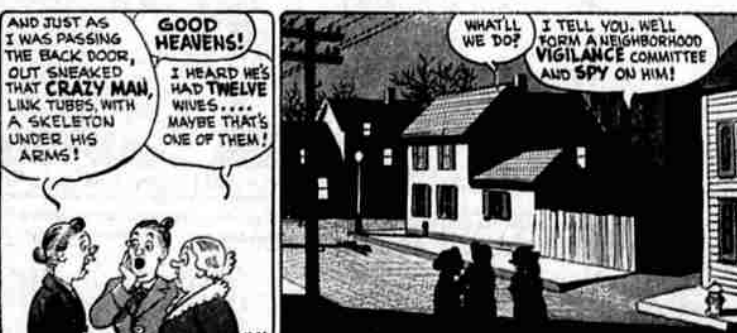
FRECKLES AND HIS FRIENDS

BY BLOSSER



WASH TUBS

BY CRANE



BOOTS AND HER BUDDIES

BY MARTIN



ALLEY OOP

BY V. T. HAMLIN



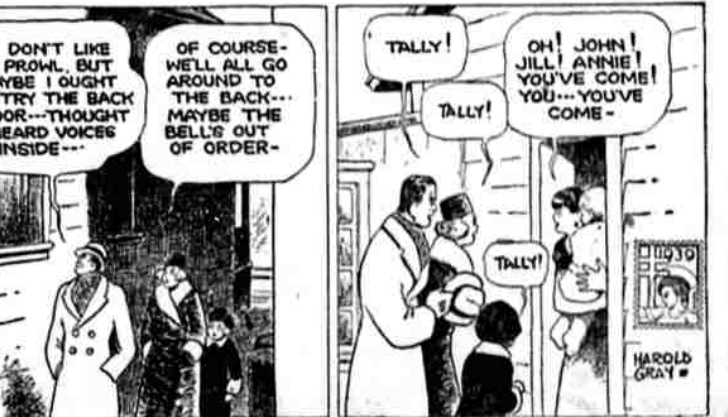
OUR BOARDING HOUSE With MAJOR HOOPLE



BY FRED HARMAN



BY HAROLD GRAY



BY BLOSSER



BY CRANE



BY MARTIN



BY V. T. HAMLIN

