

SERIAL STORY
CARIBBEAN CRISIS

EATON K. GOLDTHWAITE

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BROWDOWN WITH STRUTHERS
CHAPTER X
Halsey seemed completely taken aback, and Bill Talcott, studying him intently, was unable to decide whether his astonishment was feigned or real. "Back to New York?" Halsey stammered. "But I just got here—I'm to stay on as the new manager."

"You were the new manager," Struthers said coldly. Struthers glanced significantly at the door. "Where is Mr. MacDowell?" he demanded. June Paterson's ready ire manifested itself. "He's in bed recovering from a stroke. You nice people have said so many things about him going around here the poor man just couldn't stand it."

Faint color crept through the auditor's cheeks. "Please don't be sarcastic," he said. "This is quite a serious matter—Halsey, I thought I heard shots. What happened?" Halsey left off looking puzzled long enough to give a rapid transcription of events, wound up with, "I looked in your room but couldn't find you."

"Which is only natural, since I spent the night at work," the auditor smiled. "Very well, if MacDowell can't come to us we'll go to him. Halsey and Talcott, if you'll come along."

Talcott arose silently. So Struthers had been spending the night in the office, patching up his case. Increasingly clear was the indication that Struthers was making every effort to discredit him. But why? What possible motive could the man have for such a course? Did he hope to gain; was he in a conspiracy to defraud the company? Surely as auditor he must have known about the duplicate vouchers. He must have known that the vouchers themselves were of no value; that all billing and collecting was done by the New York office; that the only money to pass through Bill Talcott's hands was in the form of payroll checks. Yet forcibly Struthers' words came back to him—"entirely possible you haven't sold chemicals without reporting to New York"—and with them a new reason for alarm. No shortage could be proved unless an actual shortage in inventory was discovered. If Struthers was a conspirator, left alone on the island he could write any inventory he liked without regard for facts.

The thing was deep, treacherous, and in its unfolding told there had as yet come no indication of the end. A beautiful break, Struthers had had, in the arrival of the stranger and the two passengers. That had given him time aplenty to work unhindered while the rest of them were engaged in a battle which really was meaningless. Were the new arrivals, the professor and the refugee, participants in the larger pattern?

MacDowell was asleep, propped up by pillows, an ice pack lazily askew on his unkept head. Strange noises poured from the spaces above and beneath his mustache, and unceremoniously Struthers prodded his back.

"Wake up, MacDowell!" the auditor called sharply. MacDowell swung his left in a wild arc, moaned, "Ow—sagh, my head!" and sat up.

Struthers said, "Forget your head. You're to arrest Talcott on charges of fraud and embezzlement. In addition to the missing vouchers I've discovered evidences of payroll padding. I've made a transcript of evidence for you to take to New York. As soon as my survey is complete I'll send it in."

"So it's payroll padding, too, is it?" Bill Talcott said coldly. "I'm getting to be a dangerous character."

"You are the one that's saying it," Struthers returned with equal coldness. "Well, MacDowell, are you going to get up?"

"Get up—" MacDowell muttered thickly. He thrust one leg over the side of the bed, sought the floor with his toes, groaned and said, "I think my neck's broke!"

Leonard Halsey had crossed to the other side of the room. His lean face was wrinkled in concern. "Look here, Struthers," he said. "It seems to me this could be handled in a much nicer way. So far as I know, nobody has heard Talcott's side of the story. He has an excellent record with the company. Why not give him a chance to defend himself?"

The auditor's thin lips curled. "His side of the story is in the records, Halsey, I'm an auditor. I don't like these scenes any better than you do. But there are regulations which I must observe. One of those regulations is that whenever a shortage occurs, the auditor is to remain in complete charge until a full inventory has been made. At the auditor's discretion, the affected unit may be thrown into bankruptcy. Mr. Talcott, I believe you will agree that those are the company rules."

Talcott smiled grimly. "Yes, and very convenient for what you intend to do, without a doubt."

PAINT red faced the auditor's

he was to remember that swift revealing change; to remember and regret that he had uttered any word at all. For it suddenly occurred to Bill Talcott that his honor was not the only thing at stake; his very life itself was in utmost danger.
(To Be Continued)

he snipped. "Careful, Mr. Talcott!" he snipped. "I'm a bonded representative of one of the largest firms in New York. Halsey knows that it's his duty to carry my report in full, together with whatever observations he himself may have made, back to the home office. That is absolutely clear, and I'll thank you not to make any insinuations!"

Some of the seriousness of the situation seemed to have penetrated MacDowell's aching head and he stared questioning at Talcott. Halsey, too, stared with grim eyes in an expressionless face.

"I'd like to hear your story," Halsey said. Bill Talcott's wrath had been mounting steadily and his fingers itched to take the ridiculous little auditor by the neck and shake some of the pomposity out of him. But that would be no good. "I haven't any story," Talcott said flatly. "I've conducted this job and discharged my responsibilities to the best of my ability. If there is any shortage, as Struthers claims, it's not of my making. As for the charge of payroll padding, that's a joke. You know damn well I've given a certain amount of money to produce a certain amount of work. We pay 40 cents a day for labor and we've got 400 men working; you can count 'em if you want to. I don't know what's behind this, but I'm beginning to get some ideas and if Struthers, or whoever is behind him, thinks I'll take it laying down he's crazy."

A strange light flashed then in Struthers' eyes; just the briefest revelation that Talcott had landed solidly. His words were thrust in the dark, but at last he had struck something solid in all the hazy mass of doubts and suspicions surrounding him. Later on

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UHLIG'S

THIS CURIOUS WORLD By William Ferguson



THE PACIFIC OCEAN
HAS MORE SQUARE MILES OF WATER THAN THERE ARE SQUARE MILES OF LAND ON THE ENTIRE EARTH!



OLDING ODDS
DURING WAR TIMES IT IS PERMISSIBLE TO FLY THE FLAG TWENTY-FOUR HOURS A DAY!

"LIQUID GOLD"
NEXT: Are humming birds poisonous?

Answer to Previous Puzzle

HORIZONTAL

1,4 Pictured structure.
11 Hot and arid.
14 Glove.
17 Article.
18 Recognize.
20 Wagers.
21 Proceed.
22 Obtain.
24 Charm.
26 Self.
27 Sink.
29 Flemish war vessel.
32 Indigenous.
34 Transgression.
36 Those who bake.
37 Verso (abbr.).
38 Choice part.
40 Fasten with thread.
41 Written form of mistress.
42 Burst forth.
44 Motor coach.
46 River (Sp.).
48 Prop of a ship.
51 Like.
52 Eastern title.

Answer to Previous Puzzle

VERTICAL

1 Either.
2 Irritate.
3 Connection.

Answer to Previous Puzzle

STAFF CORPS
MARINE DISTRICT
CIVIL ENGINEER
CORPORAL
ARTICLER
VIA
INGO
L
R
STAFF CORPS
ASK SYSTEMS
NEAT OTOES
SEATANTION
RELICT
RETTIA
HARRIS

Answer to Previous Puzzle

25 Beside.
28 Scottish highlanders.
29 Sew loosely.
30 Metal peg.
31 Decline.
33 Three (prefix).
35 Present time.
39 Roving.
40 Blot.
41 Tropical herb.
43 Ut, infra (abbr.).
44 Sack.
45 Dutch island.
47 Opinion.
49 Lyric poem.
50 Its product is a vital need.
52 Serpent.
53 Coal receptacle.
55 Into.
56 Hearing organ.
59 Street (abbr.).
15 Hen's product.
16 Also.
19 Sheep's hair.
23 — carry its

ALLEY OOP
AND KING GUILZE, DETERMINED TO SEE ACTION IN THIS GLOBAL WAR, HAVE THROWN IN WITH G. OSCAR BOOM, RENEGADE SCIENTIST WITH A SIMILAR IDEA

WE NOW FIND THE PARTY SHOOTING THE RAPIDS OF A MOUNTAIN STREAM HEADED FOR THE PACIFIC OCEAN

FORWARD MARCH!

—TO WEST POINTERS—

RODE BEHIND YOU THRU THE ROUGHEST, SAW YOU WHERE TH' GOINGS TOUGHEST, KNEW YOU WHEN TH' BEANS WERE SCANTY AND YOU TIGHTENED UP YOUR PANTS WITH MEN LIKE YOU IN FREEDOM'S BATTLE, HITLER HASN'T GOT A CHANCE!

Out Our Way By J. R. Williams

GENERALS NOW J.R. WILLIAMS 6-1

SHOOTUM... THEY STEAL-UM OUR HORSES?

DON'T WORRY, LITTLE BEAVER!

PHWEET PHWEET

THERE ISN'T A MAN LIVIN' THAT CAN RIDE THUNDER WHEN HE DON'T WANT TO BE RODE... LOOK!

Red Ryder

IF YOU'RE LOOKING FOR PROSPECTS TO BUY WAR STAMPS FROM BIG OTTO, HOW ABOUT WORCESTER DEPLASTER? HE'S GOT SO MANY DIMES IN HIS POCKETS HE SOUNDS LIKE SLEIGH BELLS!

OKAY, ALVIN! IF HE'S GO DIRTY RICH, YOU BRING HIM OVER AND WE'LL GIVE HIM OUR PATRIOTIC TREATMENT! IF HE DON'T COME CLEAN HE'LL THINK OLD MAN RIVER OVERFLOWED!

BUY WAR STAMPS

BUY WAR STAMPS OR BIG OTTO WILL CRY!

WORCESTER IS ON THE PREFERRED LIST

Our Boarding House With Major Hoopla

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WOW! WHAT A BLAST! MY HEAD IS STILL RINGING— AN IT ALL HAPPENED SO QUICK!

AS IT WAS, THE LINE SLID AROUND THEIR PERISCOPE AND SMACKED THE MINE AGAINST THEIR STARBOARD SIDE!

LUCKY WE TOOK A TUSH! AND THOSE OLD PILINGS WITH OUR END OF THE LINE—

YES! THAT MINE WEIGHED LOTS MOREN US— IT COULD HAVE SMASHED US AGAINST TH SUB-

AS THE BLACK SUBMARINE ROSE FROM THE DARK WATER, ITS CONNING TOWER FOULED THE LINE WITH WHICH ANNIE AND PANDA WERE TOWING THE FLOATING MINE—

I WAS MIGHTY GLAD TO SEE THAT SMASHING ON THEIR CONNING TOWER— OF COURSE, WE WERE PRETTY SURE BEFORE THAT—

BUT NOW WE KNOW! HEY— LOOK OVER THERE—

YES! WHERE THOSE BLINKER SIGNALS WERE COMING FROM— THEY'RE COMING OVER HERE TO INVESTIGATE—

YEAH! THEY'LL HAVE GUNS AND A SEARCHLIGHT! AND HERE WE ARE IN A TIE HALF FULL O' WATER—

WHA— WHOA!

By Fred Harman

Little Orphan Annie

HEY, BOOTS— THIS IS MY NIGHT THOU' ON TH AIR PATROL! WANNA COME WITH?

YOU'RE DOGGONE RIGHT

AFTER MY EXPERIENCES RECENTLY—

SAY, MERU WAS TELLIN' ME ABOUT THAT

I SUPPOSE I WAS A DOPE FOR NOT SEEING THAT SUCH A CODE WAS PHONY

NAW— YA DID JUST RIGHT TO CHECK, HONEY CHILE

TH' WAY I FIGGER NOWADAYS, ANYTHING THAT AIN'T GOT 'DO WITH LOUE WILL BEAR LOOKIN' INTO

Boots and Her Buddies

By Harold Gray

Wash Tubbs

LET THE AMERICAN SPEAK!

I'M NOT MUCH AT MAKING SPEECHES, BUT I RECKON IT ISN'T NECESSARY... YOU'VE SEEN THE JAPS... YOU KNOW THE HORRORS OF INVASION. YOU'VE LEARNED THAT FREEDOM ISN'T JUST A WORD, BUT IS THE MOST CHERISHED THING ON EARTH! SOMETIMES WE AMERICANS FORGET THAT...

SURE, I'VE SOLD FORTY POLICIES AT TWO-BITS A HEAD!

GET YOUR PANTS, AND FISH OUT FIVE BUCKS! I LOST MY GAL! LOVE WENT PHT-T-T-T! SO PAY OFF!

GOSH, YOU TOOK OUT YOUR POLICY AT NOON AND YOU'RE COMING BACK AT TWO O'CLOCK FOR THE PAY-OFF!

WILL YOU KINDLY EXPLAIN THE DELAY?

AND THEN— WHO KNOWS?

AND THEN— WHO KNOWS?

By Crane

Freckles and His Friends

HOW MUCH LONGER D'YA THINK IT'LL TAKE US TO REACH THE OCEAN?

IF OUR LUCK HOLDS, WE SHOULD MAKE IT TONIGHT

AND THEN WHAT?

AND THEN— WHO KNOWS?

By Blosser

Alley Oop

ALLEY OOP FOZY AND KING GUILZE, DETERMINED TO SEE ACTION IN THIS GLOBAL WAR, HAVE THROWN IN WITH G. OSCAR BOOM, RENEGADE SCIENTIST WITH A SIMILAR IDEA

WE NOW FIND THE PARTY SHOOTING THE RAPIDS OF A MOUNTAIN STREAM HEADED FOR THE PACIFIC OCEAN

By V. T. Hamlin