

CARIBBEAN CRISIS

BY EATON K. GOLDTHWAITE

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THE PLOT THICKENS

CHAPTER XVI

"You are William Talcott!"

"Yes."

"You are the manager at Abas Island?"

"I was. I have been relieved and am on my way back to New York."

"But you were in charge when the launch left the island?"

"Yes."

"How long was Sebastian in your employ?"

"Five years. He came to us from San Juan to operate the distillation apparatus. I made him foreman three years ago."

"Did he have any enemies that you know about?"

"No."

"Can you tell us where he got that stab wound in his arm?"

"Yes. The night before last a smuggler named Jackson attempted to land on Abas and we attempted to stop him."

"Jackson?" The chief of police became apoplectic. "Is he mixed up in this?"

"I don't know."

The chief appraised the group with a sour eye. "Which of you is Miss Paterson?"

She stepped forward. Smartly attired, she was, in a suit of gabardine, a flaring blue bonnet confining her ash blond hair. Cool and self-possessed, with not the slightest tremor betraying her emotion.

"You were one of the guests on Abas Island and a passenger on the launch. You arrived at two o'clock this morning. After clearing customs, where did you go?"

"Miss Swenson and I went to the home of my friends near Estate Cantante."

"Were you a witness to the attempted landing of the self-styled 'Captain Jackson' on Abas Island?"

"Yes."

"Would you say that the results were successful?"

"No. After one of the crew struck Mr. MacDowell, Mr. Halsey grabbed a pistol and forced them to return to the schooner."

THE chief scowled. "Mr. Halsey, I understand you and Professor Constantine spent the remainder of the night at the Grand. Did you go there directly after clearing customs?"

"Yes."

"Did you at any time during the night or this morning see any of Jackson's crew in Charlotte Amalie?"

"I can't say that I did. Things happened rather fast down there, you know. I doubt if I would recognize anyone outside of Jackson himself."

"Would you say that Jackson had sufficient desire to get even by knifing this man?"

"It would be possible, yes."

The chief quelled an uprising in his liver. "We have every reason to believe that Jackson was here last night. He left his calling card, a dozen natives smuggled in from Tortola. It is just possible also that he despatched a man to take care of the unfinished business of Abas Island. As I understand it, you are all passengers on the Blue Petrel. I see nothing to prevent your departure."

So it was over. Jackson's name had done it. Guilty or not, his reputation was enough. If they ever catch him, Talcott thought grimly, they'll hang him to the Postoffice flagpole before they start their investigation.

But it couldn't have been Jackson or any of his men who had murdered Sebastian. If it was revenge they wanted, they would have taken it on him or Halsey. And after unloading his freight, Jackson wasn't one to stick around. No. Of one thing only was Bill Talcott positive: the murder was directly connected with his frameup and the intrigue on Abas Island.

June Paterson came to him as they were leaving. Her hand rested on his arm, and softly she said, "I'm sorry, Bill. You were very fond of him, weren't you?"

He didn't answer. His eyes, hard and faithless, were on Halsey. For he, despite his worldliness, was acting most strangely. Pulling away to walk by himself. Jumping at shadows. Scared, that was it. Did he know more than he wanted to, or was he beginning to have misgivings about his auditor friend Struthers? Whatever it was, the man was frightened to death.

TALCOTT checked out at Hotel 1829, refused one of the proprietors' famed pianist's punches, and with MacDowell rode to West India wharf. MacDowell had changed; wasn't cocksure any more. He kept his thoughts silent behind a puzzled face, and once on board the Blue Petrel, disappeared in the throng of basket-laden passengers.

Talcott sought a lonely spot forward, his mind filled with fat, faithful Sebastian. The man had feared violence and death, had offended no one. Yet a covert knife-thrust had finished him while in sleep under the stars he loved. Why had he been killed?

He recalled the words of the quiet, gray-eyed man. Sinister, suggesting a web reaching out across the blockaded European Continent to envelop Abas in its

toils. Intrigue for the control of a tiny, smelly speck in Anegada Passage. Not for migrants alone. Something bigger. Some enterprise that could be carried on under the guise of a legitimate American business. Right under the guns of the destroyers at Saint Thomas. Right under the nose of Old Man Winters.

Why had Sebastian been killed? Were the plotters prepared to remove everyone of authority so that their work could be carried on unhindered? It didn't make sense. Surely Struthers must know that as soon as Bill Talcott reached New York all hell would break loose. The frameup would dissolve in thin air. But was it so simple as that? Had Struthers purposely played up the obvious so that his true machinations would go undetected until too late?

Halsey had the auditor's report. Perhaps in that report Talcott would find what he was fighting. Those carefully worded pages must contain more than a charge of shortage and payroll padding. For now sudden, violent death was in the cards; murder had become a part of the hand.

Talcott's eyes turned from the long concrete wharf. In five days he would be in New York. What awaited him there he could not fathom. He'd been sure of himself when Struthers, he thought, was playing a lone dangerous game. Now—

"Have you seen Halsey?"

"Eh?" He turned, startled, to confront Professor Constantine. So deep in thought had he been he hadn't heard the odd little man's approach. "Oh, Halsey? Can't say that I have."

The Professor clutched tighter to a voluminous book and trans-

ferred a bottle of pills to his left hand. "I thought he was right behind me. He complained of a headache so I secured this aspirin—Likable chap, isn't he? Pure Nordic. Very reliable—I do hope he doesn't miss the boat." (To Be Continued)

If a worker refuses to accept suitable employment in a war industry without reasonable cause it would be the duty of the United States Employment Service to report it to the selective service system.

—Paul V. McNutt, chairman of War Manpower Commission.

HARDENED LEAVES

Unlike those of the rose, some thorns, or spines, such as those of the barberry, are hardened leaves, and those of the hawthorn are hardened shoots.

Fluorescent Lamps

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THIS CURIOUS WORLD



THE TOP OF WYOMING'S DEVIL'S TOWER, CURIOUS 867-FT. VOLCANIC ROCK STRUCTURE, IS LITTLE DIFFERENT IN APPEARANCE FROM ANY OTHER ACRES AND A HALF OF WYOMING PRAIRIE BEING COVERED WITH CACTUS, SAGE BRUSH AND GRASS.



IN SOME OF THE EGG-LAYING SNAKES, THE YOUNG HATCH OUT WITHIN A FEW MINUTES AFTER THE EGGS ARE LAID.

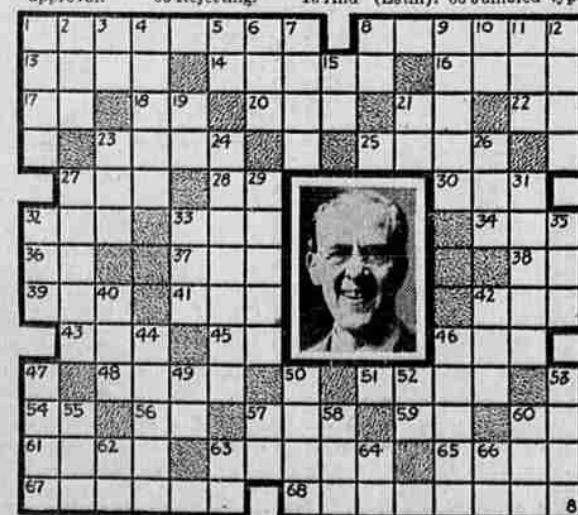


FOR A HOUSE TO BE COMFORTABLE, IT MUST BE COOL WHEN IT'S WARM AND WARM WHEN IT'S COOL. Says Mrs. S. M. HOOPER, OCALA, FLORIDA.

NEXT: Are moon and sun equal in size?

ENGLISH STATESMAN

Answer to Previous Puzzle									
1.8 Pictured English statesman, Sir	2. Carry	3. More uncommon	4. Roman emperor	5. Half-em	6. Any	7. Still	8. Paid notice	9. Chemical suffix	10. Small particle
11. Nest	12. Twice	13. That one	14. Help	15. Tree	16. Arid	17. Each (abbr.)	18. Greek letter	19. Id est (abbr.)	20. Perform
21. Metal	22. Cured thigh of a hog	23. Stamp of approval	24. Rejecting	25. Mineral rock	26. Groan	27. Rave	28. Electrical engineer (abbr.)	29. Bone	30. Brother
31. Measure	32. Atmosphere	33. India on an important	34. In the middle	35. Bathing area	36. Ponder	37. Propel	38. Legume	39. Suitable	40. Yes
41. Beret	42. Skill	43. Temper	44. Vegetable	45. Close to	46. Like	47. God of love	48. Morindin dye	49. Chant	50. Rattle bird
51. Foot (abbr.)	52. Air raid precautions (abbr.)	53. Males	54. Exists	55. South America (abbr.)	56. For	57. Only	58. Greek letter	59. Jumbled type	



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Out Our Way By J. R. Williams



Red Ryder



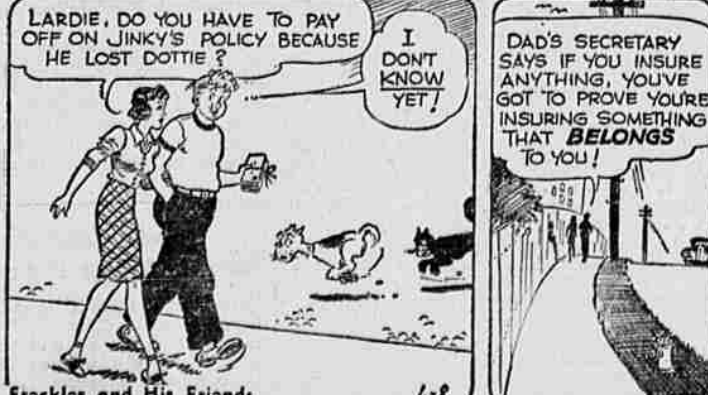
Little Orphan Annie



Boots and Her Buddies



Wash Tubbs



Freckles and His Friends



Alley Oop



Our Boarding House With Major Hoople



By Fred Harman



By Harold Gray



By Martin



By Crane



By Blosser



By V. T. Hamlin