

• SERIAL STORY

'I AM A MURDERER'

BY MORRIS MARKEY

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THE STORY: This is the story of the "perfect crime"—the murder of Col. Wesley Hop. Merriwether in the library of his Long Island estate—and of the events leading up to it. The Colonel's daughter Cynthia has a half-brother, a polo-playing Mitchell Grace, the Colonel's secretary, a close friend in Henry Prentiss, another polo player. But Cynthia seems most attracted to a foreign correspondent, Vaughan Dunbar, who appeared unbidden one night with a message from Cynthia's old friend, Bill Stewart.

THREE MEN ON HER HANDS

CHAPTER IX

COLONEL MERRIWETHER picked up a card from his desk, and examined it quietly, and handed it to Grace. "Will you please telephone Mr. Vaughan Dunbar at the hotel he indicates here and ask him to dine with us this evening?"

Mitchell Grace said, "Certainly, sir," while chemical changes of a deplorable nature occurred in his blood stream.

He walked out with the card, and made his telephone call, and received word that Mr. Dunbar was out but would be given the message promptly upon his return. He sat then, at the window of his room, and looked down at the pool where he saw not only Cynthia Merriwether but also Henry Prentiss. They sat together on the stone bench, and between them there was laughter.

At the pool, the gravest matter to fall into the talk between Cynthia and Henry Prentiss was the disgusting fact that he could not go into the water.

"It wouldn't hurt the mitt," he said, "but think what it would do to all those nice, clean bandages."

"I could put on new ones. Hey! That's the way for a gentle maiden to capture the hero's heart, isn't it? Binding up his wounds! I could even tear a strip off my petticoat. That would make it perfect."

"Granting the maiden, I don't grant the gentle," he said. "And Cynthia Merriwether blushed.

"Furthermore," he said, "where in the name of Harper's Bazaar would you find a petticoat? Tell me that, Miss Pretty, and I'll do a half-gallop off the high board—and now!"

"Rat," which, for the ridiculous reasons that obtain in such encounters, brought on laughter, and Cynthia went swimming, and Prentiss sighed. But then he got himself a cocktail from the glass-topped table near his chair, and drank it with plebeian swiftness.

WHEN Cynthia came back to sit beside him on the bench with water dripping down from her legs to make small puddles on the ground, he got her a cocktail too, and admired her while she lifted it, and said with a detachment and perspicuity which were not of his usual when he was speaking. "Something troubles you, pretty. Tell the old boon companion what it is."

"Poor Grace," she said. "The devil is head over heels for you, isn't he?"

"Is that it? Is that really it, Hank?"

"You talk like something out of 'Little Women.'"

"You make me feel like something out of 'Gone With the Wind.'"

In such trifling manner (though surely with no unkindness) the soleful plight of Mitchell Grace was discussed. And the discussion waned because there seemed nothing that anybody could do about it anyway. And the discussion died because Henry Prentiss suddenly remembered.

"People dance at the club tonight. For the sake of my prestige, I cannot afford to appear with anything but the loveliest and the best. Meaning you. If you want a sprig of posies, you'd better decide which of those two dresses you're going to wear."

"Thanking you just the same, but Fred West is in by a neck." "All right, then, Miss Pretty, goodbye. I'll see you at the dance—if I'm permitted to look."

"Permitted is the word for it, after last night."

"I can explain!" He said this with an exaggeration of mockery, but she was trotting away up the lawn and it is doubtful whether she bothered to hear him.

Mitchell Grace, from his window, watched her approach. Pain was upon him.

WITHIN the languid course of the afternoon, Vaughan Dunbar telephoned, and spoke with Mitchell Grace, and said that he would be pleased to dine at Stone House. When this word was dutifully delivered to Cynthia, she put in a call for Fred West:

"We've got to call signals again." "If this is another runaround, my dear, I'm off to join the Canadian Air Force."

"You'll have to blame the Colonel. He has invited Vaughan Dunbar for dinner, and according to the rules I've got to be here for dinner too."

"All this just after I've called the club and reserved the best table in the joint."

"Why don't you come here for dinner yourself?"

"That's better. Not much, but a little."

"And how's for this—bring Anne along if she hasn't got a

date."

"Anne never has a date. Nobody's cousin ever has a date. But why drag her in on it?"

"Because there's got to be another gal, that's why." "I get it. Somebody for me to talk to while you disappear somewhere with the great Dunbar. Well, I've already heard everything Cousin Anne has to say. Too often."

"Can't you trust me?" "No."

"Then I'll expect the pair of you about half-past 7."

"Okay." "Buy her a posy."

"I'll see you."

Thereafter, with the warmth of her well-designed ear still upon the telephone receiver, Cynthia dialed the number of Henry Prentiss. She knew perfectly well that she was being rather silly and childish, but that knowledge did not deter her in the least. Henry Prentiss was altogether too cocksure, and so she said to him when he answered:

"It may be, friend, that I will not make it to the dance after all. Just called so you wouldn't brood."

"Why aren't you going?" "You needn't be so gruff about it. It's a damn fine thing for me to call you at all."

"Much obliged. But I would still like to know what you're up to."

"The Colonel is having Vaughan Dunbar to dinner. If he wants to go to the club after, I'll take him. Or he may go home early, and I'll come on with Fred. Or he may want to stay and talk."

"Personally, you prefer him to stay and talk."

"On the contrary, Mr. Know, I prefer to show him off at the club, if he'll go. A new face is a

kind of treat around these parts."

"How's for putting up a place at the table for me too, and letting me show the guy up?"

"No good. I've got only one other gal, and it wouldn't work."

"Well—wishing you a very pleasant time."

"Write soon."

"Love and kisses."

"Very truly yours."

(To Be Continued)

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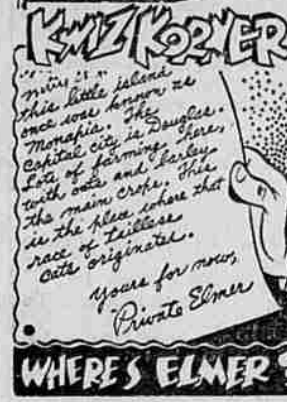
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THIS CURIOUS WORLD

By William Ferguson



THE CENTER OF YOUR EYE IS BLIND AT NIGHT! THEREFORE, IN BLACK-OUTS, AVOID LOOKING STRAIGHT AT OBJECTS YOU WISH TO SEE! LOOK A LITTLE TO THE RIGHT OR LEFT.



WHERE'S ELMER?

ANSWER: Isle of Man, in the Irish Sea.

NOVELIST

HORIZONTAL

1 Pictured writer, —

12 Upholstery gimp.

13 Seine.

14 Woody plants.

16 Hastened.

17 Sedate.

19 Seasoning.

20 Insurance (abbr.).

21 Trades.

23 Lady Littere in Arts (abbr.).

24 Giant king of Bashan.

25 Numerous.

26 Ooze.

28 Either.

29 Suffer.

31 Permit.

33 Exists.

34 Electrical term.

36 Order of Merit (abbr.).

37 Symbol for erbium.

38 Make slower.

40 Landed

Answer to Previous Puzzle

JAN SMUTS LAG

AMEND LED STERE

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Out Our Way

By J. R. Williams

THE LONG AND SHORTAGE



Red Ryder



Little Orphan Annie



Freckles and His Friends



Wash Tubbs



Boots and Her Buddies



Alley Oop



Our Boarding House

With Major Hooplo

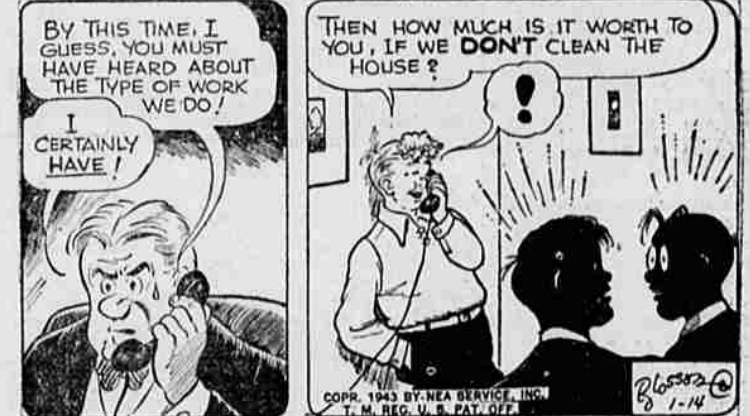


22 HORSES' RIGHT

By Fred Harmon



By Harold Gray



By Blosser



By Crane



By Martin



By V. T. Hamlin