

'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 Hope Merrivether in the library of his Long Island estate—and of the events leading up to it. At the moment the Colonel's daughter, Cynthia, has just finished telling the story of her life to Vaughan Dunbar, a foreign correspondent and a new acquaintance—how she was taken from a California convent by the Colonel when she was 10, and how little she knows of the Colonel's life before then. Meanwhile two attentive friends, Fred West and Henry Prentiss, have vainly sought her company at a dance that evening.

SECRET MISSION

CHAPTER XII

VAUGHAN DUNBAR regarded her for a considerable moment before he replied to her. Then, more quietly than ever, he said, "May I, please? You see, Cynthia, I have gone far over the world, into many places. I have seen a great many human beings. And all of them, of whatever land or breed or station in society, have one thing in common: It is easier for them to talk to strangers than to friends. The stranger, you see, will be gone tomorrow, and all secrets, all confessions, are gone with him. The stranger is the ship that passes in the night, and when the ship drops down behind the horizon, the ocean is the same old place."

She laughed suddenly and very gaily, and said, "You make me want to giggle." But then, in the light of an instant, she was grave again.

"That's what's the matter with me," she said firmly. "Everything seems such a huge joke, and it should not be like that. Since you came here, telling us about Bill Stewart and all the important work he is doing, and telling us on in this terrible world, well, I feel so worthless and useless. And everybody here, everybody at Gull Point, seems worthless, too—people living in a cozy dream."

She stood up and stretched her hands toward the stars. "I want to do something," she cried softly. "I want to be of some good in the world. How can I? Tell me, please, how can I?"

His voice had a touch of cynicism when he answered, "Your complaint is not unique, you know. Men and women all over the world, my dear, are asking, 'What can I do? How can I work to make the earth a more decent place to live?'"

"What can they do? What can I do? You know. You must know. Please. Tell me."

He shook his head, and now his voice sounded sad in the darkness. "I have told you," he said, "that I am the ship which passes in the night. Soon, I shall be gone, and I assure you that I shall be gone forever—to return never again. If my passing by leaves anything of value to you, let it be this—"

He took her hand, and held it quietly, and was silent for a while. "No matter what happens, and perhaps things will happen to change your way of life a great deal—but no matter what happens, let nothing on earth disturb your loveliness and your rare, fine honesty. Demand of all the world about you that it meet you with that same honesty and fairness and lack of guile which you are so ready to give. That is enough, my dear, for you to do in this world of men."

SHE seemed moved, and when she spoke at last her words came low and slowly. "You are always talking about going away."

"Rather soon, now, I am afraid."

"Where to?"

"I can't say."

"How do you know you will never come back?"

"It is so ordained."

"But," she laughed a little, "you talk in such riddles. I know. You're on a secret mission."

He turned his head away from her and looked over the water toward the rising moon. "Yes," he said, "I may call it that. A secret mission. And tonight, for the very first time, I doubt a little whether it is worth carrying out."

"Oh," she cried, "but you will not waver! I know you will let nothing stop you."

He seemed quite shaken for a moment, and walked away from her along the pool's edge. She moved to follow him, and suddenly called, "Hey—look! We're getting a fine spell of the glooms. Let's drop it and tool off to the dance. Come on!"

She caught his arm and turned him about and started toward the house. "Sorry," he said, walking beside her, "I can't make it to the dance. Must get back to the city."

"Tut, my fine friend, I'm showing you off to those cats tonight, or I'm not my favorite snob."

"You can't know how sorry I am. If you will get your wrap I'll drop you at the club. There will be people to see you home again."

She was disappointed to an extreme degree but he did not relent. He let her down from his open roadster at the porte cochere of the Broken Hill clubhouse, and bent over her hand in the European fashion, saying that he would telephone her the following day. Then Fred West was at the top of the porch stairs, calling to them.

"Step on it, I'm holding that table for you."

Others whom they knew were moving about, and calling to them. Three or four approached to smile at Cynthia and shake hands with Vaughan Dunbar and urge them to come in. Behind Fred West, they could hear the voice of the professional master of ceremonies as he prepared to introduce the entertainers on the cleared dance floor.

For a moment, Vaughan Dunbar seemed to hesitate.

"Come on," Cynthia said in a whisper.

But he straightened very quick-

ly, as if he had reached a decision. He bowed again, said good night, and stepped immediately into his automobile.

FRED WEST and his cousin Anne, and Mitchell Grace had a table near the dance floor, and there was wine in a silver bucket hard by, and people waved at Cynthia as she stood looking about her for a moment before taking her chair. She nodded, and smiled, and sat down, and, of course, dropped her cigarette case on the floor for Fred West to retrieve.

There was the show. It took an hour for the show to be over. Then lights were up again, and people were dancing. The course of Cynthia Merrivether and Mitchell Grace as they, too, danced, carried them to the farther corner of the huge, barnlike room, and there they came upon Henry Prentiss.

He leaned against a pillar. He was disgracefully dressed in one of his tweedier jackets and a pair of his roomier trousers, though he did wear a cravat within the collar of his white shirt. Cynthia stopped dancing and looked at him a little wearily.

"Slumming again, I see?"

"Sorry." He grinned mightily and held up his bandaged hand. "Couldn't manage the right buttons to be correct."

"Lucky you could make a knot in that thing you have around your neck."

He laughed, and with his good hand yanked the necktie away from his collar. It was one of those made-up affairs held in esteem by motormen on nights out.

"Invalid's delight," he said. "Made in two tones, also right and left-handed, by a world re-

nowned haberdasher and on sale in exclusive shops everywhere."

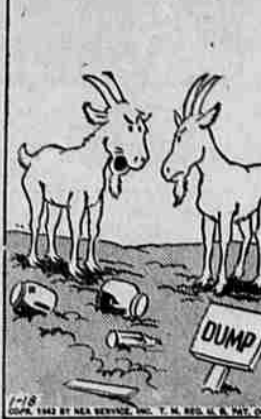
"Sort of a puff for Woolworth, isn't it?"

Mitchell Grace said. "People are dancing. I just thought you might not have noticed."

Cynthia smiled at him, and tucked her arm closer to his.

(To Be Continued)

HOLD EVERYTHING!



"Nothing but glass jars—this food shortage is terrible!"

Under no circumstances should a tire be continued in service until the wear extends through more than one carcass ply.

The nation's traffic toll for 1942 was placed by the National Safety Council at less than 28,000—a drop of about 12,000 from 1941.

It is estimated that America's motor vehicles are riding themselves off the road at the rate of 3 1/2 per cent a month.

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THIS CURIOUS WORLD

By William Ferguson



ONLY BIRDS THAT SWIM LOSE THEIR ABILITY TO FLY DURING THE MOLTING PERIOD! LAND BIRDS LOSE ONLY A FEW WING FEATHERS AT A TIME, SINCE FLIGHT IS SO NECESSARY TO THEIR SAFETY.

"What can they do? What can I do? You know. You must know. Please. Tell me."

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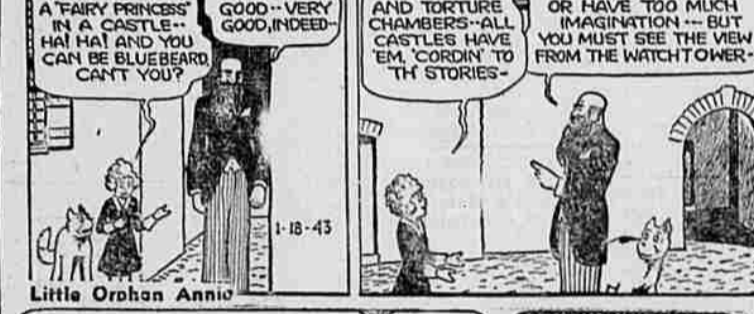
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Out Our Way By J. R. Williams



Ked Ryder



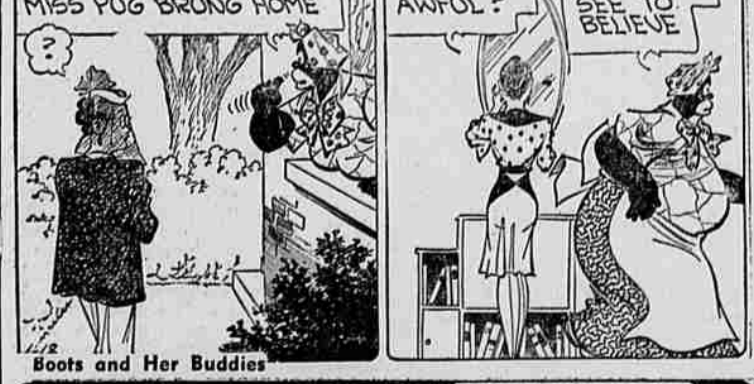
Little Orphan Annie



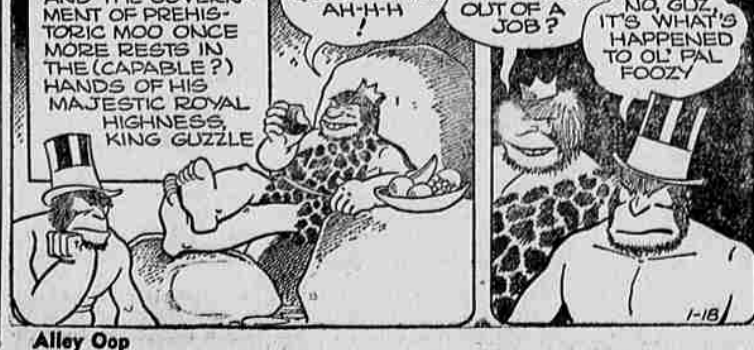
Freckles and His Friends



Wash Tubbs



Boots and Her Buddies



Alley Oop



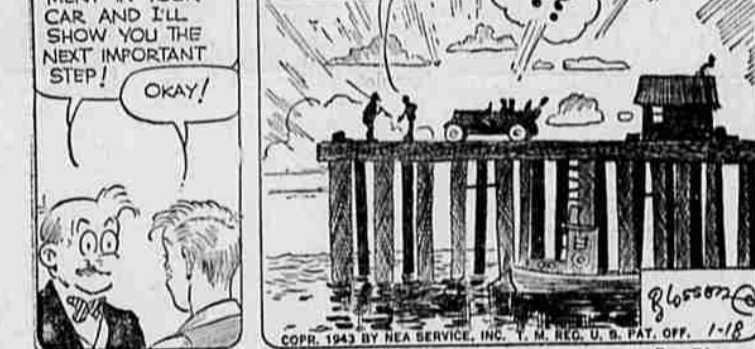
Our Boarding House With Major Hoople



By Fred Harmon



By Harold Gray



By Blosser



By Crane



By Martin



By V. T. Hamlin

HELPED AFRICAN INVASION

HORIZONTAL

1,5 Pictured U. S. general. 23 Ocean.

10 Step. 27 Kind of bee.

14 Plant. 29 Beg. •

15 Weirid. 31 Total up.

16 Streamlet. 33 Insect.

17 Flying devices. 36 He engineered advance preparations for U. S. invasion of—

19 Seine. 38 Heavy rod.

20 Peeled. 39 Compositions in verse.

21 Half an em. 41 Sour plant.

22 Misplaced. 43 Come in.

24 Facile. 44 Twice.

25 Measure. 46 Hard outer covering.

26 Color. 48 Sa, he it!

28 Born. 49 Group of three.

29 By. 50 Negative.

30 Sun god. 51 He is a lieutenant-general in the U. S.

32 Any. 54 Age.

33 Morindin dye. 56 Likely.

34 Manner. 58 Inevitable.

35 Novel. 60 Tellurium (symbol).

37 North Dakota (abbr.). 61 Doctor of Philosophy (abbr.).

38 British (abbr.). 54 Age.

40 Symbol for tantalum. 56 Likely.

42 Tip. 11 Atmosphere.

44 Exclamation. 12 Call.

45 Distinguished. 13 Seniors.

Service Order (abbr.). 18 Male offspring.

67 Registered. 1 Producers. 20 Postscript (abbr.).

Answer to Previous Puzzle

TORPEDO SQUADRON
OR ADMIRAL LOSE
NILES ORTIVE
GOUTTIER TID
AN FUSELAGES AY
TALPARAPID
ALTEINIER
CORN MICKY
PS FADELESS
APE ERGOT
CARTER SO
TRIAL PEAL
SENTIMENTAL

VERTICAL

2 Put in line.

3 Decay.

4 Ship part.

5 Cerium.

6 Pertaining to Lent.

7 Exist.

8 Ceremony.

9 Knight of the Elephant (abbr.).

10 Entreat.

11 Atmosphere.

12 Call.

13 Seniors.

18 Male offspring.

20 Postscript (abbr.).

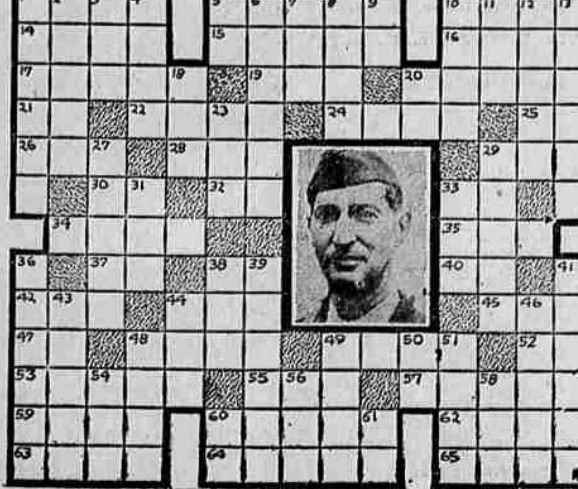


Table for you.