

THE KILLER SPEAKS

RICHARD HOUGHTON

CHAPTER THIRTY-EIGHT

"You won't have to take any more risks," I told my friendly jailer, the little cook. "I'll be able to get off this barge at the next landing without your help."

"And without the police?"

"Right. I'm going to ask one of the men to go ashore with me."

"Which one?" asked the cook suspiciously.

"Well, that big fellow didn't seem to be busy with the potatoes. He doesn't look like a regular member of the crew. How about him? You wouldn't be afraid to let me go in his custody, would you?"

The little man's eyes were wide. "Don't trust Bill. Don't go ashore with him!"

"So his name is Bill, eh? I thought so. He wouldn't be William Calla, would he?"

The cook was frightened. "Sh!"

He went to the galley door and looked out to make sure no one was listening. "How did you guess that?" he asked, coming back.

"We thought you couldn't recognize him."

"His size gave him away. And since he's William Calla I know he'll be glad to see me. He'll think it will be a good chance to finish the job he started."

"You've sure got plenty of nerve."

"I'll have the advantage. I'll know my danger, and he won't know that I know."

The rumble of the hand trucks below us had ceased. There was a scraping and a thumping as the gangplank was pulled aboard. Pete shouted to someone to cast off the mooring rope. The gasoline engine of the barge came to life. We were on our way to Big Bend. No one came up to the galley. Perhaps they felt uneasy in my presence. I wouldn't blame them.

"How did this outfit get mixed up with Calla?" I asked. "You've already told me you don't go for murder."

"He's a friend of Pete's," the little cook told me. "I think Pete owes him some money or something. Bill asked for a ride to Frisco tonight. We didn't know about him tying that old rowboat to our stern. He used a long rope and we didn't see it in the fog. Jack heard you holler and pulled you in. We were sure surprised."

"So was Mr. Calla, I imagine," I said.

"He thought he could get away with it. When you told us the name of the man who tied you in that boat—"

"You think he hoped you would never know?"

"I think after that rowboat sank he was going to cut the rope."

"And that's the kind of man you're trying to protect!"

"I'm not protecting him. I just don't like the idea of turning him over to you—and your friends. How do I know what he had against you? It musta been something bad, or he wouldn't try to kill you."

"You probably think he's just a bootlegger."

"Sa-ay, how much do you know?"

"Whatever I know about Mr. Call's liquor business, and the part this barge plays in it, I'm willing to forget," I said. "He's in a much worse game, and I believe he's in it alone."

I left the little man speechless and walked to the galley door again. I looked down the ladder. Four cigarettes glowed in the shadows below. I climbed down.

"I want to see if I can find a way to get back to the city from Big Bend," I announced. "Would any of you fellows have time to show me how to reach a ranch house when we get there?"

"Sure, I'll show you," volunteered Bill.

His voice was disguised, but I recognized it.

The crew stirred uneasily. There were several whispered comments not quite loud enough for me to overhear.

"How long will you be stopping?" I asked. "How long will I have to

get back, if there's no one at the farm house?"

"About fifteen minutes," said a voice I knew to be Pete's. "We'll wait a couple more minutes—for Bill."

"I'll go back to the galley and get into my own clothes," I said. "They ought to be dry by now. Much obliged to you—Bill."

He grunted, apparently annoyed that Pete hadn't been quick witted enough to give him another name.

Up in the galley the cook was awaiting me nervously. "Well, what's it going to be?"

"Your friend Bill fell for it. In fact, he suggested he'd like to go with me."

"He's no friend of mine!"

"All right, all right."

"Why don't you go alone?"

"Bill wouldn't like that. Have you a revolver I can borrow?"

The little man's eyes widened. "So that's it? You think you can handle him if you've got a gun? Okay. Just to prove he's no friend of mine, I'll loan you my gun."

He opened one of the cupboard doors and from inside a can labeled "sugar" he lifted out a revolver that seemed to have been well cared for despite its evident age.

"Be sure you give this back," he remarked as he passed it over to me, first examining the chambers to make sure that they were loaded.

"How will I get it to you?"

"We tie up at the wharf across the river from the Rio Vista club every other night 'bout sundown."

I did some quick calculating. "Were you there Tuesday night—about 11 o'clock?"

He nodded. "Big party at the club that night. Lights in the garden went out."

"What did you see in the garden?"

He hesitated. "Didn't see nothing. Too many willow trees."

I wondered if his hesitancy was caused by the fact that he knew William Calla had an appointment in that garden—with a man who was murdered.

"Didn't you see anybody in the garden?" I persisted.

He shook his head. "I saw some

Cooper Urges People To Back Legion Team

Mayor Thomas E. Cooper yesterday urged the people of Wilmington to give the Legion Junior baseball team all the support possible, as the team opened its season at Legion field in a game with the Dunn aggregation.

"The Legion is doing a fine piece of work when it makes it possible for these young men to play the game which has become the national pastime. Not only are these boys given an opportunity to learn how to play the game as it should be played, but throughout the season good sportsmanship is instilled in them as well as the need for clean living."

"I urge every person in Wilmington to do everything possible to aid the Legion in this undertaking. Tickets for the home games are being placed on sale throughout the city and it is my hope the people will purchase them regardless of their ability to attend the games."

THERE'S ALWAYS A FIRST TIME

ST. LOUIS (AP)—Pepper Martin's ejection from a recent St. Louis-Brooklyn game constituted a baseball rarity.

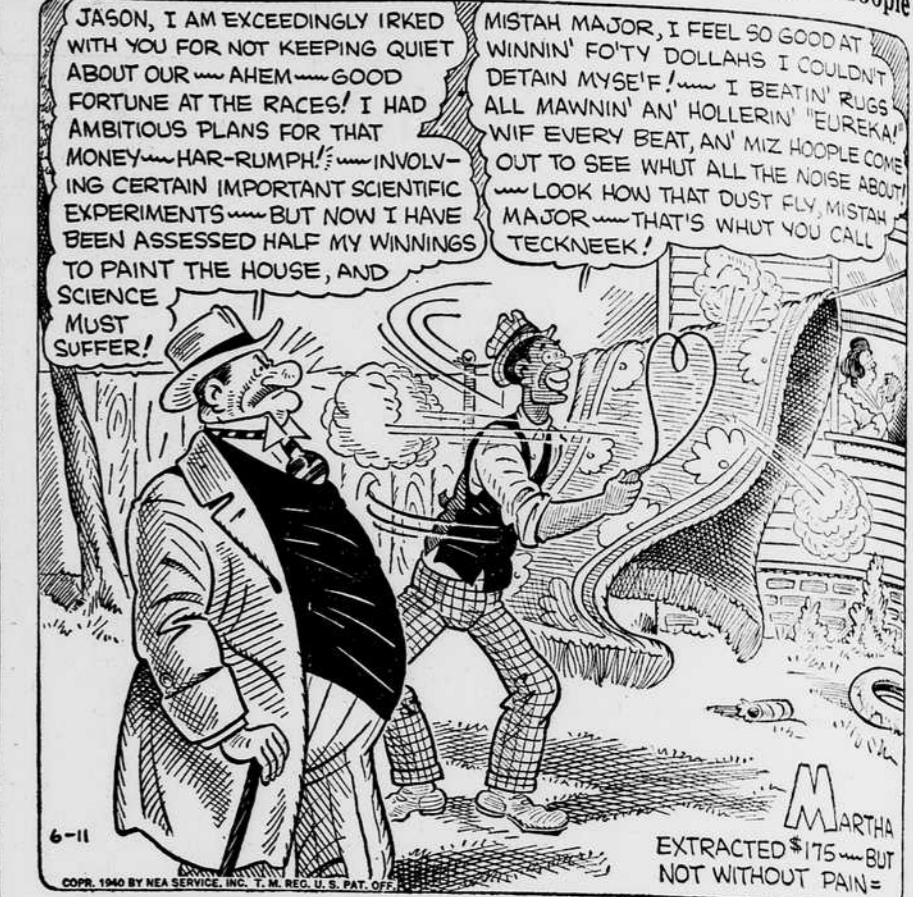
It was the first time the peppery third-sacker had ever been tossed out of a National league game. He argued with Umpire George Barr over a called third strike.

OUT OUR WAY

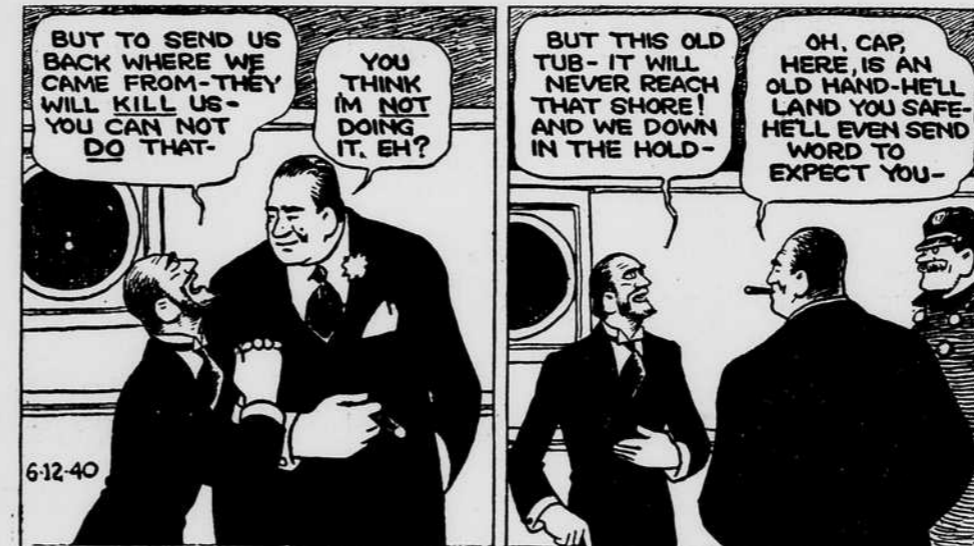
By J. R. Williams



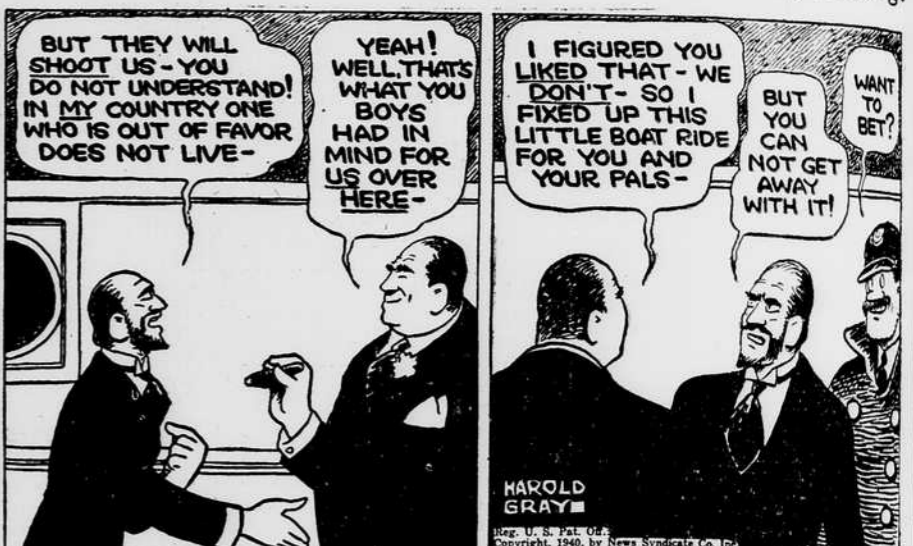
OUR BOARDING HOUSE . . . with . . . Major Hoople



LITTLE ORPHAN ANNIE

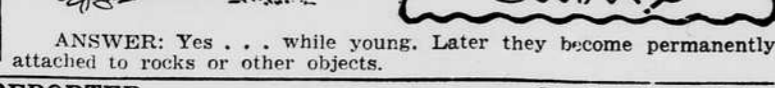
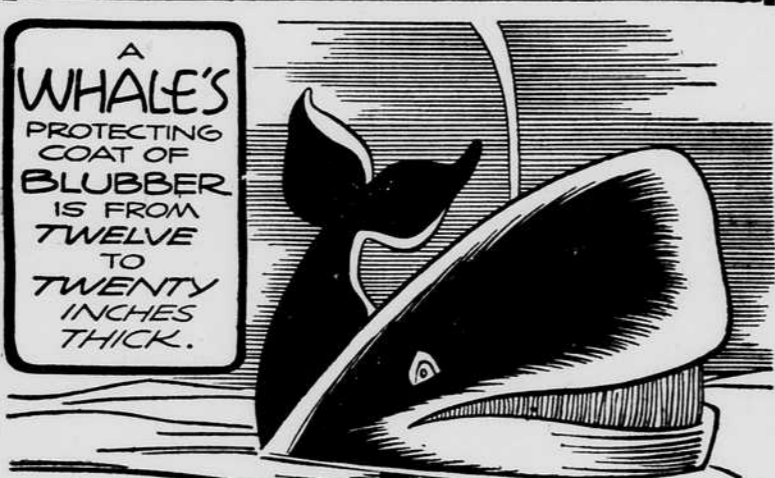


One-Way Passage



THIS CURIOUS WORLD

By William Ferguson



WASH TUBBS



Not On The Program



GASOLINE ALLEY



Safety First



THE GUMPS

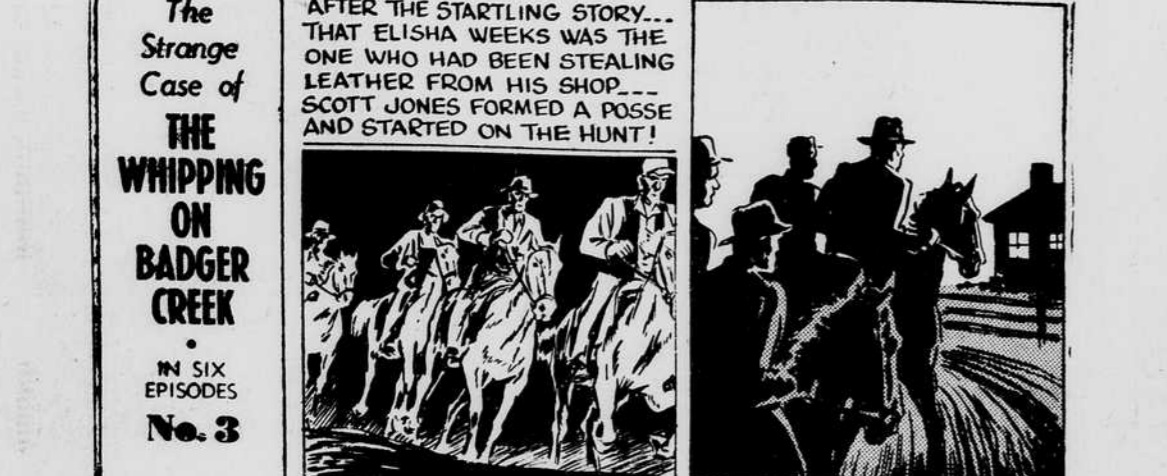


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