

# "The VANITY CASE"

A Tale of Mystery and Love

By CAROLYN WELLS

MRS. PRENTISS sees lights mysteriously appear and disappear in the Heath household next door one night, and the next day her husband, Perry, is seen in the company of a woman who is the daughter of a man who was the murderer of MYRA HEATH. The disappearance of her husband, PERRY, is the subject of the story.

At the Country Club the murder is discussed by SAM ANDERSON, Heath's friend, and the club president, AL CLINGHAM, who is trying to solve the crime, and others. The story continues with the investigation of the murder.

CHAPTER XXIII Mrs. Prentiss did not inquire and Bunny did not vouchsafe any information as to the identity of her telephone caller.

The girl went back to bed, and the older women went to her room, but neither of them slept much. Toddy Buck, too, was wakeful, and when the three met at breakfast, though outwardly cheerful, there was an undercurrent of restraint and all were a little ill at ease.

The meal was nearly over, when Bunny was called to the telephone. "I won't go!" she cried, petulant. "You go for me, won't you, Mr. Buck?"

"No, Miss Moore," the waitress intervened, "the gentleman on the wire says he must speak to you personally."

With a sigh, Bunny rose and went to the small booth in the hall, where the instrument was.

As she had fully expected, the voice she heard was Perry Heath's. "Don't speak," he said, "don't say a word. But, listen. You must be careful what you say or do. Emma Heath has told a lot of stuff about you—probably lies—but she will make trouble for you if she can. I don't think she has it in for you exactly, but she loves to talk, and the detectives are getting a lot out of her."

"You'd better see her yourself, if you can, and manage to shut her mouth some way. Offer her money, if you can do it secretly. But be careful that no one knows it. And remember this, child, Emma did the deed. Inman is the criminal. If they come at you, and they will, you tell them he is the murderer of MYRA. Now, remember all I've said, and don't go to pieces when they question you. I have nothing to fear—if you keep your secrets to yourself. But confide in anybody and you're lost."

"Hush, don't talk. The very walls have ears. No one can hear what I say to you, but they can hear what you say to me. So, don't say a word. Don't tell anyone I have talked to you, don't tell anyone the whole truth. Let them hunt for me as much as they like—they'll never find me. Good-by, Little One, and try to forget me yourself."

The voice ceased abruptly, and the dead silence told Bunny she would hear nothing more.

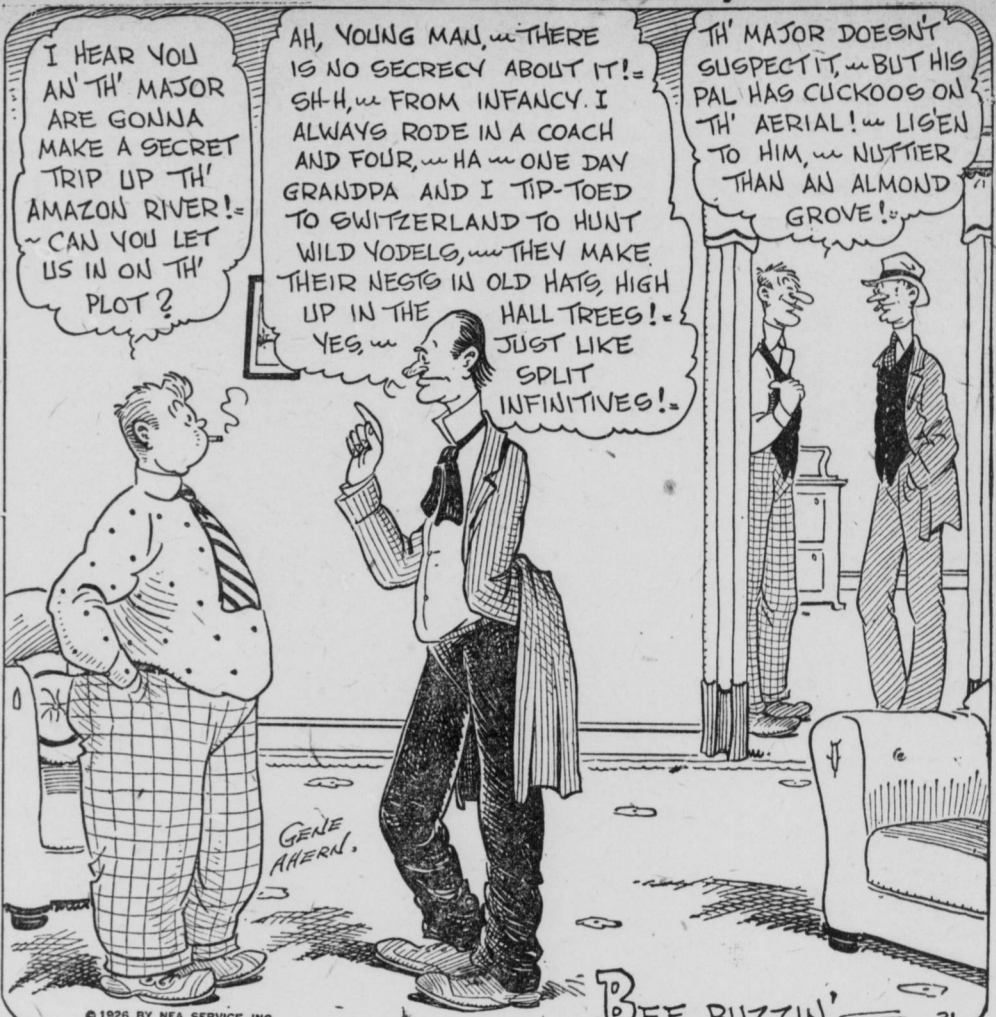
She hung up the receiver, and walked slowly back to the porch, where the others still sat.

They looked at her so expectantly that she felt she must satisfy or at least allay their evident curiosity.

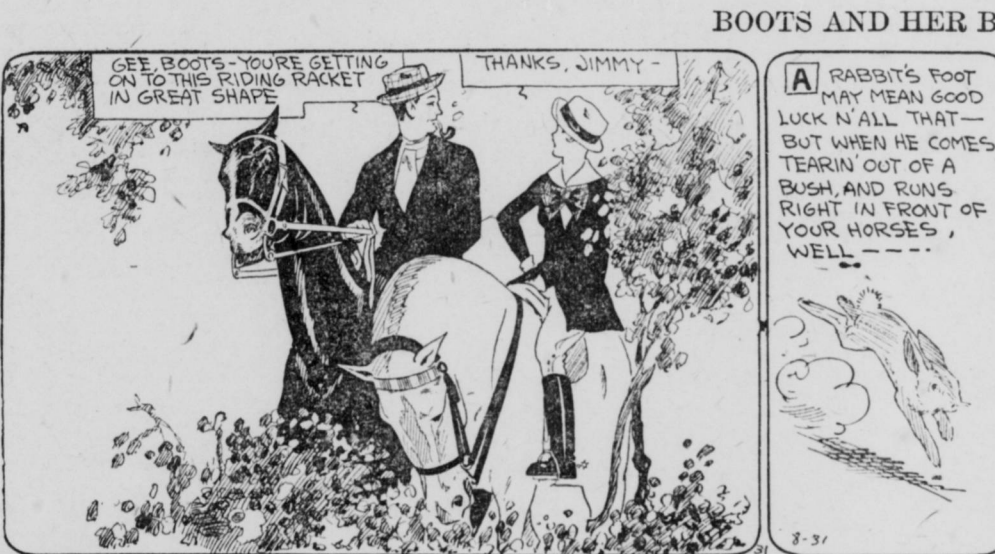


CURLY BRINGS HOME A GOLD BRICK.

SALESMAN \$AM—By SWAN



BEE BUZZIN'



BOOTS AND HER BUDDIES—By MARTIN



FRECKLES AND HIS FRIENDS—By BLOSSER



## EAGER SHOPPERS THROG STORES

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Louisa was tired. From morning until night she had been on her feet in the busy department store.

No matter how she felt, she must serve her customers with a smile. Her head throbbed and her feet ached. Week after week, she felt her strength ebbing until she was in a run-down condition, not fit to work.

"My mother suggested that I try Lydia E. Pinkham's Vegetable Compound," she writes. "I took only three bottles and it brought me about all right. Through the Vegetable Compound, she found better health to do her work and she told the other girls about it."

That was several years ago. Louisa is now Mrs. L. J. Van Dyke of 1246 Spring St., Morrell Park, Baltimore, Md. She is the mother of three healthy, active children. She says that she found the tonic effect of the Vegetable Compound helpful to her during this entire period.

Every working girl knows that to do her work properly and easily she must have good health. She can not afford to lose time from her work.

Girls who suffer from a run-down condition should try Lydia E. Pinkham's Vegetable Compound.

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## CHAPTER XXIV

"Nothing of the sort!" said Bunny, who had suddenly, and it seemed miraculously, recovered not only her sang froid, but her usual attitude of airy impertinence. "I was crying because of a bad dream I had. I thought—oh, it was a terrible dream—I don't want to remember it! Now, Mrs. Prentiss and Mr. Buck, you are kind and good-hearted, but I can't—I just simply can't be more frank and confidential with you, because—well, because I just can't! But I do feel grateful for your well-meant offers of help, and I can see how you think I ought to tell you more—but, you see, you are already prejudiced against me, and what I would tell you, would doubtless make you more suspicious of me, and surer that I am more or less implicated in the death of my friend."

If Bunny had made this speech with an humble or appealing air, it might have had a good effect, but, on the contrary, she was smiling of face and gay of demeanor.

Her hearers couldn't know that the poor child was frightened almost to death, that she longed for help and advice, and that she hated to seem heartless and ungrateful, but Bunny had a perverse nature in some ways. Kindness always won her heart; sympathy always impelled her confidences; but, when people showed a little too much curiosity, a little too much suspicious interest, to please Miss Bunny. And discerning these things, she turned from a sweet, confiding child to a wise, canny and even tricky young woman.

It wasn't quite fair of Bunny, then, she felt that they hadn't been quite fair to her. Asking questions of the servants behind her back! In response to the shocked protestation at her last speech, she said, in a conciliatory way:

"Well, never mind. I do want some advice, but I'm not quite ready to tell you all about myself. I think I'll run over to the other house a few moments, and see for myself what Emma had to say, and also have a few words with Carter."

"May I go with you?" asked Toddy, and though about to say no, his smile was so truly friendly and sincere, Bunny changed her mind and said graciously, "I'd be glad to have you, Mr. Buck."

Over to the Heath house they went, and found Larry Inman in the studio, surrounded by a deskful of letters and papers belonging to Perry Heath.

"You have!" Inman said, "I always can tell when you're lying, Bunny. What did he say? Did he write you?"

"No! I haven't heard from him at all. Mr. Buck is mistaken—or he is joking. A very ill-timed jest."

"I think he telephoned to her," Toddy spoke to nobody in particular, merely looking into space, as he leaned his chin on the knob of his stick.

"Did he, Bunny?" demanded Inman.

"No," she said.

"Then where does the joke come in?"

"Oh, I had a telephone message from someone else, and Mr. Buck thinks it funny to assume it was from Perry. I wish I knew where he is!"

"Yes, so do I," Inman agreed. "I say, Bun, here comes that pest, Mott! Do you want to scout out the back way?"

Bunny looked frightened at first then seeing in Toddy's eyes that new light of friendly kindness, she concluded to stay with him.

Though not of deep intuitions, Mott sensed that the mental atmosphere was not in sympathy with him.

"You are the one I want to question first, Miss Moore," he said.

"Yes?" she said.

"I am told, Miss Moore, that you went upstairs of half past one, or thereabouts the night of Mrs. Heath's death. Is that true?"

"Why, no I don't think so," Bunny looked like a puzzled child. "I should say I went up to bed some time earlier than that. Didn't I, Larry?"

Inman gave her an imploring glance, which she rightly understood to mean advice to be more ingratiating in her manner.

But he loyally played up to her lead, and said:

"As I remember it, Miss Moore said good night and went to her room at something like half past eleven."

Mott said, gravely: "I gather, from facts told me that Miss Moore did go upstairs at the time you mention, but that she went down again later, and then reascended the stairs at about half past one o'clock. She carried up with her, her gold vanity case. It has been proved that the contents of this case were used on the countenance of Mrs. Heath, after that lady had ceased to live."

"Excuse me, Mr. Mott," Toddy broke in, "may I ask how you proved that?"

"By the evidence that the vanity case in question is the only one known to have been in the house that night which would give the results, the colors or tints, found on the face of the dead woman. This has been most carefully tested by expert chemists and we believe our deductions to be true ones. Did you put the make-up on Mrs. Heath's face, Miss Moore?"

"Most certainly not," said Bunny, but so tremulous were her lips, and so nearly inaudible her voice, that Mott smiled grimly, as if in disbelief.

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