

OUT OUR WAY—By WILLIAMS

**"The VANITY CASE"***A Tale of Mystery and Love*

By CAROLYN WELLS

MRS. PRENTISS sees lights mysteriously appear and disappear in the Heath home every night, and the next day Major Gardner, the island is aghast with the murder of MYRA HEATH, his wife, and his disappearance. Perry, the house guest of the Heaths, is a Law student, and to Myra's fortune, and BUNNY MOORE, vivacious, golden-haired, and a good companion, because of her refusal to answer questions. Myra Heath was peculiar. She never used to have a mania for collecting glass, and it was a rare old mystery. She collected, and the murderer used to kill her. Candies were burning at her vanity case—the one you have lost."

"How did Emma come to disclose this fact?" Bunny spoke coldly, her eyes almost glittered, and her whole expression was like her usual sunny smile.

"She said Carter told her to do it." Toddy went on, looking at her now, and trying to gather an inkling of her real thoughts.

"Carter!" Bunny gave a sudden start, and a frightened look appeared in her eyes.

In some ways Toddy Buck had a single track mind. Just now, he was determined to find out something about Bunny's doings on the fatal night, and he took deliberate advantage of her present distraction to quiz her.

"You were downstairs, you know," he said, not accusingly, but as one stating a fact. "You saw the candle burning?"

"I saw those in the morning," Bunny began, but Toddy said, inexorably:

"No; they had burned out when you entered that room in the morning. You went in with Dr. Conklin, and the candles had then gone out."

Bunny stared at him. But instead of losing her grip on herself, she seemed to be steadier, and she said, quietly:

"What are you trying to do? Trick me into some incriminating statement?"

"No." Buck looked at her kindly but very seriously. "I am trying to prepare you for others who will try to trick you into such admissions. For it is better you should know that there are such—that there are people who are beginning to think you have some knowledge of Mrs. Heath's death beyond what you have told."

"Oh, there are," and now Bunny's lovely mouth took on a scornful curve, her blue eyes stared haughtily and her golden, curly hair tossed with an air of utter contempt for the people of whom she had just been told.

"Will you be good enough," she said smilily, "to go to them and tell them to mind their own personal affairs?"

"But they consider this matter their own affair," Buck said, watching her. "You see, they are the detectives. That man, Mott, is just waiting a little longer for Perry Heath's return."

"Perry Heath will never return," Bunny said, with a note of solemnity in her voice.

Mrs. Prentiss' intuition lifted its head.

"Was that Perry Heath talking to you on the telephone last night and this morning?" she demanded.

Bunny returned her gaze. "No," she said, simply, and shook her head.

The girl's mind worked like lightning. She wanted to confide in these kind friends, and ask their advice, but Perry Heath had forbidden her to say he had spoken to her, and his word was law.

Yet she must not antagonize these people with whom she was staying. She must make them believe in her truth and innocence. She must wheedle Mrs. Prentiss into a real friendship, and she must charm young Buck, until he was blind to her faults.

Well, these things ought to be easy for her—for Baby Moore, who had always, so far in her short life, charmed anybody she wished to.

But these folks were so—no, not suspicious—but so curious, yes, that was it, they were curious to know about her doings that night.

Well, they must not know, that was a sure thing! Why, her finger-prints and Larry's too, were on that bottle about the death of Myra!

And her vanity case—oh, why did they harp on that so? Did they know—oh, what did they know?

And just here, Mrs. Prentiss broke in on her thoughts again.

"What were you crying about so bitterly when Carter came to your room to tell you the sad news? Please tell us—it will be so much better for you to confide in friends. Now, if you tell us the whole story, we can understand the case better and we can be of real help to you."

"Oh, I can't—I can't—" and Bunny was crying now. Not sobbing, but just silently weeping, and the tears ran unheeded down her pink cheeks.

But they left no stain, for never once, since the sight of Myra and her painted face, had Bunny touched rouge or lipstick.

"Well, let me tell it, and you check me up," Toddy said.

"You went downstairs late at night to get your vanity box that you had left in the studio."

"How do you know that?"

"All right, I know," and he nodded his head in satisfaction. "Well, then, when you went in the room, you saw—Mrs. Heath—dead."

"Oh, no, no," and Bunny covered her eyes with her hands.

"Yes, dead—and the candies burning."

"You're all wrong, Mr. Buck. I saw nothing of the sort. I—I didn't go down."

"Then, when did you see those candies burning at the head and feet of Mrs. Heath?"

"I—I didn't see them at all. I almost felt as if I had seen them, because I heard them described so often."

"Oh, tut, tut! Let me on the Fairy Tales. Now, little Miss Moore, I'm ready to help you, my good aunt, here, is ready also, but we can't do it unless you are frank and truthful with us."

"You see, my dear," Mrs. Prentiss spoke gravely. "I am certain you knew of Mrs. Heath's death before Carter told you. That is why you were crying when the woman came to your room."

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woman.

It wasn't quite fair of Bunny, but 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 what 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 more suspicious of me, and also 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 heart 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 confidence; but these people showed a little too much cold 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

"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, 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 said it funny to assume it was from Perry. I wish I knew where he is!"

"Yes, so do I." Inman agreed.

"Do you want to scoot 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 loyalty 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 the 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 makeup 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.

"But you were down in the studio

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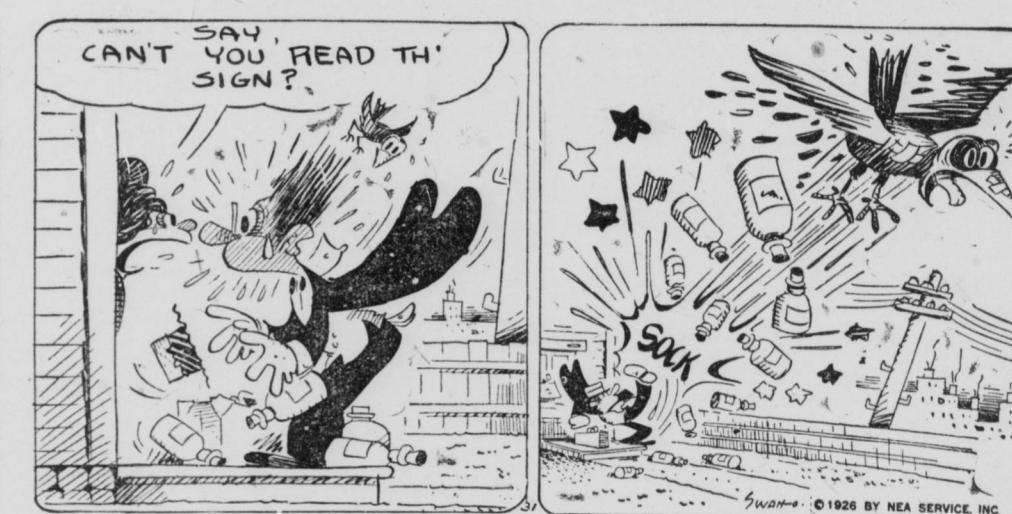
"I HEAR YOU AN' TH' MAJOR ARE GONNA MAKE A SECRET TRIP UP TH' AMAZON RIVER! CAN YOU LET US IN ON TH' PLOT?"

"YES, JUST LIKE SPLIT INFINITIVES!"

"BEE BUZZIN'!"



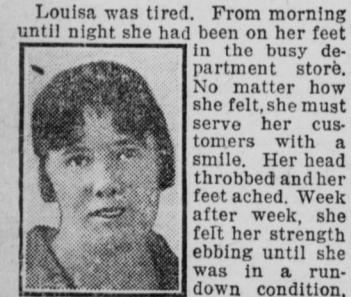
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Sleek, snug and subservient, Herrick appeared.

"Did you ever hear or overhear any quarrels or small tiffs between Mr. and Mrs. Heath?" Mott asked him.

Herrick, after a stumbling interval, managed to get out the information that he had heard such.

"When last?" Mott asked.

"The—the night Mrs. Heath died," Herrick replied.

"Here in this room?" the detective went on.

"Yes, sir. They were in here."

"And where were you?"

"In the lounge, sir."

"What were you doing there?"

"Just waiting to lock up the house. Mr. and Mrs. Heath were about to go upstairs."

"And the quarreled?"

"Not to you quarreled, sir. But they had words, like, and Mrs. Heath told the master that she knew his secret."

"Oh, she did! And what did he reply to that?"

"Oh, he said a lot of things, but I didn't half hear and I didn't get the drift anyway. But they talked about a divorce and the lady said if the master's secret should get known it would be terrible."

"I don't think you know much about that conversation, Herrick."

"No, not much, sir."

"Well, then, don't try to repeat it. Was Miss Moore's name mentioned?"

"It was, sir," Herrick flashed an apologetic look at Bunny.

(To be Continued)