

FRECKLES AND HIS FRIENDS

—By Blosser

**MURDER BACKSTAIRS**  
By ANNE AUSTIN  
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CHAPTER TWENTY-EIGHT (Continued)

You went to the roof immediately, by the stairs, just as you said, because even then you were planning an alibi in case it became necessary to kill your wife. You met your wife, she charged you with having married her for her money, with having been unfaithful to her; or with some more serious crime, the exposure of which would have ruined you socially.

"A crime, possibly, of which only Phyllis Crosby knew and for which she could have had you arrested!"

"THAT'S a foul lie, too!" Crosby growled.

"Yeah? ... Well, you became violently angry in her, and in your rage you lifted her and hurled her over the railing. And you were caught in the act by Doris Matthews!"

"You deserve to be killed, Captain Strawn!" Crosby told him, in a dead, toneless voice.

"Yeah?" Strawn grinned, and lit his pipe again, striking the match upon the sole of his big shoe. "The unexpected appearance of the maid with your wife's wrap—your didn't know, of course, that Mrs. Lambert had sent her, after speaking with you—threw you into a blue funk.

"Perhaps you did try to leap after your wife, and the girl restrained you. God knows what you said to her. I don't say you offered her hush money then. I rather think you appealed to her love for her mistress, urging her to believe that Phyllis Crosby would rather be listed as a suicide than that her husband should hang for her murder."

"At any rate, it is my firm conviction that you and Doris Matthews concocted your alibi between you, then and there. She had rung twice for the elevator.

"You made her agree to say that she had rung only once, so that your own story of having just come to the roof could be partially substantiated.

"Well, Crosby, it all worked out as you planned. The girl stood by you at the inquest and you were exonerated. Phyllis Crosby was listed as a suicide while temporarily deranged.

"But Doris Matthews had a conscience, and she loved her dead mistress very dearly. She confided to her sister, as this letter very clearly indicates, and Kathryn Matthews advised Doris, for her own sake, not to try to reopen the case, lest Doris be convicted of perjury.

"As Doris writes Kathryn: 'The case is closed forever, and maybe I did wish what she would have wished me to do.'

"But she hated you, Crosby! Doris wanted to make you suffer as Phyllis Crosby had suffered. And as she says here, 'there are other ways.' One way was to expose you to the Berkeleys as a fortune hunter, and, in strict confidence, as a wife-killer."

"No, I tell you! No!" Crosby denied passionately.

"You came here yesterday, not knowing that Doris Matthews was now Mrs. Berkeley's maid."

"That's not true!" Crosby interrupted. "Mrs. Lambert had written me that she had hired Doris for the job."

It was Dundee who spoke now, with curious reluctance: "Pardon me, Captain Strawn. . . Mr. Crosby, it is my duty to remind you that when Mrs. Berkeley mentioned Doris last night, you appeared surprised, even startled.

"You said, 'Surely you don't mean little Doris Matthews?' and Mrs. Lambert then told you she was quite sure she had written Doris for the job."

"But Mrs. Lambert just thought she had written you," Strawn interrupted. "The truth is, you were in a panic. You knew you would have to see Doris Matthews immediately, and insure her continued silence by bribery or by murdering her!"

CHAPTER TWENTY NINE

"I'm sorry, Dundee," Seymour Crosby turned to the younger detective, ignoring Captain Strawn's charge for the moment. "I told you an untruth, the first I have uttered since this questioning began.

"I did not receive a letter from Mrs. Lambert, mentioning the fact that Doris had come here to be



WASHINGTON TUBES II

—By Crane



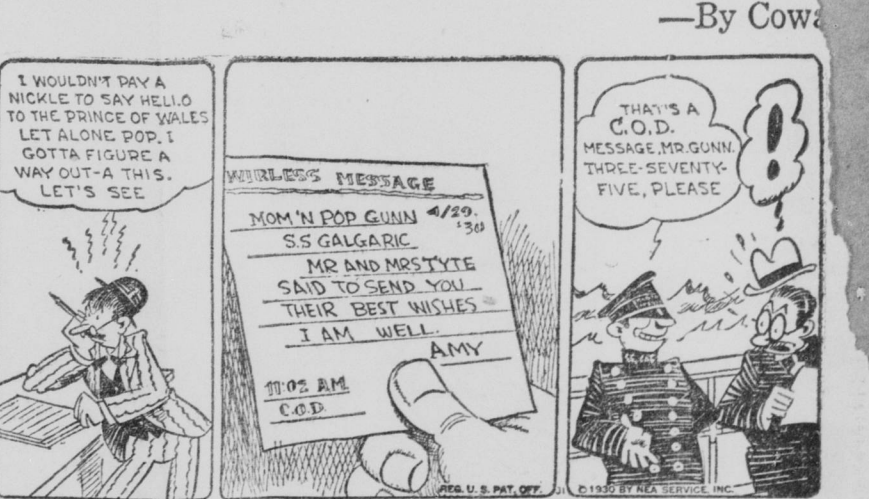
SALESMAN SAM

—By Small



MOM'N POP

—By Cow



(To Be Continued)

THE SON OF TARZAN

By Edgar Rice Burroughs

