

Deaths BRIGHT DIAMONDS

THE STORY: Nick queries Mr. Hudson about Eric. Would he get satisfaction. Brenda Temple and her father are forced to remain overnight at the Lodge when their car refuses to start.

THE FLY IN THE OINTMENT

THERE is no more arresting sound than an unexpected knock on a door at night.

"What's that?" asked Charley. "It's someone knocking at the front door," said Mr. Hudson, "but I wonder who it can be."

The caller had waited for a few moments, then attacked the knocker with renewed vigor.

"He's impatient," murmured Brenda. "I'll go," I said quickly and I went through the dining room.

I opened the door cautiously and peered out into the darkness. "Who is it?"

"Oh, is that you, Mr. Trent? It's Cass Hapes. I saw your lights and thought I'd investigate."

"Come in, Cass," I threw open the door with relief.

Hapes had assumed his peaked police hat as a mark of authority, but the rest of him was unconstructed Northshoreman.

His red rubber boots were glistening with moisture, and the soft mud on their tips told of reconnoitering on the grounds.

Mr. Hudson had followed me and now he came forward through the hall.

"Why, Cass," he said, "what's wrong?"

"I just saw the cars and your lights, Mr. Hudson, and thought I'd look in."

Hapes whacked the moisture off the crown of his hat.

"Well, I'm glad to see that the Sandy Point police are on the job."

"Minot," corrected Hapes mildly.

"Well, Minot or Sandy Point, you'd better have a little something to ward off cold."

"No," Hapes shook his head and there was a serious glint in his eyes. "I'm on duty, Mr. Hudson."

Mr. Hudson put back his head and eyed Hapes shrewdly.

"What's on your mind, Cass?"

The policeman put his finger on a bubble of moisture on his hat and rubbed the finger against his thumb.

"Well, Mr. Hudson, there's been some prowling going on in Sandy Point—especially here at the Lodge, and I thought you ought to be on the watch."

Mr. Hudson smiled.

"There always is, Cass. It's probably just a few curious townies who want to see what the summer colony lives in."

Hapes flushed.

"It's not townies, Mr. Hudson." The policeman held up his hat and I saw a clean hole through the peak.

"Great heavens, man, that's not a bullet hole!"

"It ain't termites," replied Hapes, "and it's damned good shooting."

"What happened, Cass?" I asked.

"It was last night. I was driving down to Cap Hutchin's and it had just fallen dark. As I came past the Lodge, I saw a bug light over by the garage. It went out the minute I spotted it. Somehow I didn't like the look of it, so I pulled up by the gate and climbed the wall. I hadn't got any more than halfway to the garage when I spotted the light again. I yelled and—got this for an answer."

Hapes gestured with his hat. "I dropped like I was hit and waited for another shot so I could fire at the flash. But whoever it was, he was cagey. No shot came and he got away."

"Nicholas," Phineas Hudson took my arm gently. "Don't say anything of this to the girls."

"Several people have reported seeing lights here," went on Hapes. "At first, I thought you might be coming down from Boston, but no one had seen you so I got suspicious."

"Naturally," Mr. Hudson shook his head in perplexity. "But I can't understand what anybody would want here. Nothing's been taken and there's little of value in the house."

Hapes said: "Whoever it was had no business here, Mr. Hudson, and it's my job to find him."

"Of course," said Mr. Hudson. "I appreciate that and I'm very grateful. But I don't think there's much danger of your marauder turning up tonight, now that we're here."

Hapes looked very much as if he wanted to say something. But he closed his lips stubbornly.

"All right, Mr. Hudson," he pulled on his cap. "I just wanted to make sure everything was in order. But remember that the fellow who was here last night is a killer and he's not particular who he shoots at."

WHEN we got back to the library, Bruce Temple turned his head and I remember thinking that he looked unpleasantly arrogant.

"Wasn't that Hapes?" he asked. "Yes," replied Mr. Hudson. "He saw our lights and thought he'd investigate to make sure everything was all right."

Charley came through the door with a pot of coffee which he set down on the table. He sat down beside me. "Who was at the door, Nick?"

"Cass Hapes."

"What did he want?"

"Just checking up to see who was here."

Charley's eyes rested on mine for a full five seconds. Then he said: "Nick, he knew who was here. I saw him in the square this afternoon and told him all about it."

"There is a very large fly in somebody's ointment," I said.

"Coffee, Nick?" Brenda Temple passed me a cup and saucer. Her eyes were bright and knowing.

"You may be glad to hear."

(To Be Continued)

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Our Boarding House

With Major Hoople



Boots and Her Buddies



Out Our Way

J. R. Williams



By Edgar Martin



Merrill Blosser

