

THE HUMAN SPHINX

By Ellis Parker Cutler

ILLUSTRATIONS BY RE. WATSON

That Dr. Blessington was utterly amazed and genuinely shocked by this brazen question discharged at him by Simon Judd in putting it mildly. He glared at the fat Iowan and when he tried to speak he could only sputter. Brennan himself looked at Simon Judd with smiling curiosity, but as Judd's possible thought suggested itself to him he straightened with a perceptible jerk.

"Murdered!" sputtered the doctor. "I take exception to that word, sir! I demand that you explain—"

"Well, black my cats!" Simon Judd said good naturedly. "You don't have to go flyin' off the handle at me, doc. I ain't said you murdered anybody. It just sort of struck me that maybe this dead lady had been doin' some. I don't know but what—if I was a female person tryin' to let on to be a male man, and if I had all-fixed big reasons for keepin' it dark—I would sort of like to get rid of may nosy hired help that got a notion I wasn't what I let on to be. Seems reasonable to me, some ways. I ain't sayin' you had anything to do with it, doc. Don't think you had, myself. You ain't that sort."

"Why—why—" Dr. Blessington stammered, still too angry to have control of himself.

"Never mind, Blessington," Brennan said soothingly. "Our friend here is a new hand at this business. He only thought he had found something interesting. Don't let it worry you. Stop as you go out, if you want to talk it over; it's probably unimportant."

But when the doctor had entered the house Brennan did not act as if he thought the suggestion unimportant.

"Have you seen anything to make you think there has been murder of that sort done?" he asked Judd, but the Iowan was unable to say that he had.

"Now, don't go to payin' too much attention to what I say from time to time, Dick," he said. "I'm gabby, I am. Always an old fool when it come to shootin' off my mouth; notion hits me in the head and I blab out like a kicked billy goat. Wouldn't surprise me a mite if I was all wrong about these sick and halt hired hands bein' murdered; prob'ly just one of my fool notions. Doc wouldn't go and bury nobody without findin' out what they died of."

"He certainly would not—if he suspected anything," Brennan said. "But if he had no reason to suspect? If he saw in a death only the operation of the disease he had been treating? There may be a lot in this idea of yours."

"Pshaw, no!" Simon Judd said with exaggerated carelessness. "Just the fool talk of a fat old feller that don't know nothin' much. You better forget it, Brennan. Go on and ask some more of the help about things."

"I never forget anything, Judd," Brennan said, but he did continue, as his next step, the questioning of the servants. The local reporters had by this time had word of the murder and began to arrive, and Brennan referred the first to Dr. Blessington and the others upstairs and told Norbert to send any others to Dr. Blessington. To have further privacy for his further questionings he went into the library and had the servants sent to him there.

From the servants, however, he was able to draw nothing new. With Simon Judd's murder suggestion in mind he dug a little more into that phase of the life in the Drane home. Norbert said that he had succeeded a houseman who had died, and the cook Maggie Maney admitted that she had come while her predecessor still lay dead above stairs, but she insisted she had known the former cook and that she had always been sickly and weakly. The others had followed servants who had gone to other positions as their health improved, or had been sent to sanitariums by John Drane when they became too ill to work.

To get Maggie to say this intelligibly was not easy for she had been drinking and as Brennan's questioning proceeded she was alternately angry—shouting her answers at the top of her voice—and maudlinly tearful, her huge body shaken by rather ridiculous sobs. She became so hysterical finally that Brennan told her he would not bother her more than, for it was plain she was an apoplectic and he was afraid she might break a blood vessel if she carried on any worse. But she would not go.

All Brennan had managed to get from her were assertions that John Drane, "poor woman that she was" had been a "heavenly angel, God rest

him," and that a poor woman had a right to a "swaller" of drink when her heart was broke, and that she could tear the hair from the reads of "them that came sneakin' an' snoopin' tryin' to blacken folk's car-ack-ters."

"All right, then, Maggie," Brennan told the excited cook, "we won't sneak and snoop any more. You go back to the kitchen and take it easy, and don't let it worry you. And just send the chauffeur in, will you?"

The cook flared up again. "I'll not have him bulldozed by the likes of you," she shouted. "All shame to you, stirrin' up strife in 't house. Go on about your business an' leave us be, why don't you?"

"Now, be easy," Brennan urged good naturedly. "I'm Irish myself and you don't want to get me angry, you know. It'd be a terrible row. You just tell George I want to see him here, that's all."

The cook went out mumbling and growling, but George did not come and Brennan had to send Norbert for him.

"What got into that stout lady cook, do you think?" Simon Judd asked while they waited for the chauffeur.

"Some of the worst sort of whiskey now being bootlegged," Brennan said, smiling. "I imagine John Drane kept the lady pretty severely off the stuff and she's having her first real happy time for many a month."

"Black my cats!" Simon Judd exclaimed. "It beats my time how they get hold of the stuff, with prohibition and all."

"They got it," Brennan said drily, but Norbert's return cut short further explanation. He said George the chauffeur was sorry but he had gone to bed and didn't think he could bear to get up.

"He says, Mist Brennan, how the growth in his stomach got mighty bad all-of-a-sudden-like while back and he ain't able to stand it. Yes, sir. He says how the pain is mighty terrific. He ain't hardly able to stand it, he says. So he took some of the medicine what he's got and went to bed. Yes, sir."

"Well, what's the rest of it?" Brennan asked. "I can see that's not all; you've got something else on your mind."

"I was only thinkin'," Mist Brennan, Norbert said, "that if he got a pain or ain't he got a pain it ain't goin' to be much use troublin' George right now. No, sir. Seems like he been indulgin' in alcoholic liquor to a very considerable extent."

"Drunk, is he?"

"He certainly has been indulgin'," Norbert said seriously. "I ain't seen a man what has indulged more completely fo' quite some time. No, sir!"

"We'll put George off for the present then," Brennan said. "Are there any other servants I have not seen?"

"No, sir," Norbert assured him. "We you has seen is all."

"This George," Brennan asked. "What do you know about him, Norbert?"

The negro told what he knew. Like the others George—who had the odd name of Firmandick—had been in John Drane's service some little time. He had been an orderly in the hospital before coming to Drane and had had an operation for a growth in the stomach, but the operation had not been entirely successful—the growth had returned. Dr. Blessington said, Norbert told Brennan, that the growth was a serious matter and would kill Firmandick some day if there was not another operation, but the chauffeur was set against another.

The chauffeur, Norbert said, was supposed by the servants in the house to be engaged to marry Maggie, but no one believed the marriage would ever occur because they did not believe George would live to be married. He was too ill when his bad spells came upon him. Norbert said he supposed George got his liquor from some bootlegger; the servants knew George usually had whiskey in his room but the chauffeur seldom drank it—only when the pain was bad. Probably, Norbert said, Maggie had got the whiskey from George, but she should not drink. Dr. Blessington said she had a mighty high blood pressure and whiskey was dangerous for her. He had scared her good, Norbert said, when she had a sort of stroke. The doctor told her she was pretty sure to drop dead if she took much whiskey.

When Norbert was gone Brennan lighted a cigarette.

"It's a queer bunch altogether, Judd," he said, "but you'd be amazed how many queer bunches there are in this world if you mixed around as I do. I see them at their worst usually, when they are keyed up by some calamity and their eccentricities stick

out strong. I think my next job is to talk to this man Dart, our undertaker friend. He may not yield much but we'll get another angle on John Drane. I have a notion Dart must have known Drane was a woman."

"Pshaw, now," Simon Judd explained, chuckling. "You don't mean it, do you, Dick? Why the old rascal! A hairy old boy like him, seventy years old if he's a day, hangin' around this old lady like he was tryin' to be her husband!"

Brennan snapped his fingers. "There's an idea!" he said. "There's a lead worth following! If this man Dart discovered that Drane was a woman he might very well try to black mail her into marrying him. John Drane was a very rich person, Judd. We may have the reason for the murder there—Dart trying to force Drane to marry him to avert exposure."

"Nope!" said Simon Judd. "Nothin' like that, Richard."

"But why not, I'd like to know?" Brennan demanded, rather amused at the fat man's decided tone.

"Why, black my cats, Dick!" said Simon Judd. "He couldn't be wantin' to marry her when he was married to her already, could he?"

"How do you make that out?" Brennan wanted to know.

Simon Judd chuckled his heavy chuckle again.

"I just sort of suspicion it, Richard," he said. "Seems so to me, as you may say. A feller don't always have to have reasons, does he?"

"In my profession he does," said Brennan coldly.

"Well, then," said Simon Judd, "how about him comin' to play cards and stayin' over night quite frequent, Richard. If I was tryin' to finger this out I'd sort of say 'John Drane was a woman and she didn't want it known. If she didn't want it known she wouldn't be havin' a feller stay over night much, especially if he didn't need to, seein' as the feller lived right here in town. And if she did let a feller stay over night it'd show they was married. If he was tryin' to bulldoze her into marryin' him she wouldn't want him around, would she?"

"You may be right," said Brennan thoughtfully. "And does your mind tell how long they had been married?"

"Oh, pshaw, now, Richard," Simon Judd laughed. "You don't want I should have a head on me that could tell you the day and date, do you?"

But Brennan was rubbing his chin, considering this new idea. He did not tell Simon Judd what he was thinking but it was that if William Dart was indeed John Drane's wife the last will and testament made by John Drane might be of great importance in solving the mystery, such as it was, of the murder. If Drane had made a will leaving everything to Amy, as Amy said Drane had told her he would, William Dart would have been foolish indeed to kill Drane, but if the latest will left a large sum to Dart and Dart feared the making of a new will this might be a reason for the murder of Drane by Dart. Coupled with the flight of the undertaker from

the house on the night of the murder this might all mean something.

"You're wrong, Richard," Simon Judd said, interrupting the detective's thoughts.

"You're thinking maybe this undertaker feller murdered John Drane, so-called."

"How do you know what I was thinking?"

TO BE CONTINUED

SPRINGFIELD ELEVEN TO PLAY HARD GAME HERE ARMISTICE DAY

Springfield high school's biggest football game of the year will be played Armistice day vacation, Monday November 12.

It's to be the biggest because the players are in better condition than at any other time in the season and because their opponents, the Junction City eleven, are expected to furnish the hardest battle for the local warriors.

Coach Leonard Mayfield expects to put his best lineup into the fray with the expectations of making the contest interesting.

The Springfield team has lost only one game in the season and that was when the players were outweighed. So far the Junction City team has made a good record. The game on Monday will be the first in which the two teams have opposed each other this year. Former battles between these two schools have provided thrills enough for the most exacting fan.

The game will begin at 2 o'clock on Brattain field. The time was moved up from 3 to 2 o'clock in order that people wishing to see the air circus in Eugene might first see the game.

Springfield players have won three games and lost but one this season. They also defeated the alumni team in a practice tilt. Although the players average little more than 140 pounds they have shown up well in each department of the game, according to the coach.

At ends are Bettis and Leathers who are light but fast. They are both sure pass receivers. Clair Thurman is a new man at end but is showing promise. At tackle Morrison and Deeds are showing up their opponents in every game, both on the defensive and offensive. Summer, while lighter, is an able substitute forether.

The team is probably fortified at guard better than any of the other positions. Kendall, Morse, G. Thurman and Roof alternate in those positions. Roof is also an able substitute for Hemenway at center. The latter has been a stonewall on defense playing and the coach terms him 100 per cent improved over last year.

The backfield has been the biggest source of worry this season. Cowart and McPherson, two lettermen, failed to show up at the beginning of the season and later Lawson, a first string half, underwent an operation for appendicitis. Now Mayfield has a smooth working machine in Palmer and McMurray at Halves, Freeman at fullback and Everett

Squires at quarter.	Springfield 21	Brownsville 0
Walker and Potter, while new at the game, are showing improvement with each scrimmage and fit in well at the backfield positions. Crandall, a new man, shows indications of becoming a real fullback.	Springfield 26	Lebanon 0
	Springfield 27	Harrisburg 6
	Springfield 19	Alumni 0
	TOTAL.....93	24

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