

MURDER ON THE BLUFF

SYNOPSIS: A raging February storm breaks on Farrington Bluff as Michael, his sweetheart Gay Palmer and I arrive for a weekend with his aunts. That night, Jude Blinshop, the fourth guest, and the Skipper, Mike's tall and tweedy younger aunt, disappear while we search the island. But William, the chauffeur, and I continue the search, finding Jude's bullet-pierced body on the bluff. I carry it to the kitchen and the Skipper works in saying she's been in the stable attending her stock collie, Mike, Gay and Aunt Martha take the news about Jude rather hard.

Chapter Eight "Never Repeat This!"

FARRINGTON'S room was like her. Stuffy little knock-knock tables and chairs, all over the place, morbid looking men in whiskers and pompadour women in bustles simpered eternally. In an absurd bassinet beside the bed reposed Christopher, looking fat and disagreeable, and in the bed, pitifully white and shaken, lay Martha Farrington.

Something in her face got me as I crossed the room. For all her prudery and fussiness, I was fond of the old lady. I was suddenly keenly aware of all the innumerable little kindnesses she had done me. All the possibilities of that impossible night seemed summed up in that picture of M. Farrington lying there helpless. I sat down beside her and took her hand.

"Aunt Barbara has just gone to say good night to Michael," I said. "You mustn't worry, Aunt M. It will all work out somehow." I realized how inadequate those words were, but couldn't think of anything more impressive to add to them.

Her head moved feebly from side to side. She scarcely seemed aware of my presence. "I thought it would all finish when you and Michael came," she said faintly.

My breath came in so hard that it seemed to crack my ribs. With all my might I was fighting back the horrible suspicion that was closing in on me like a monstrous octopus.

"You thought what would finish?" I prompted, loyalty to the Skipper lying like a ton of lead in my chest. There was no answer. M. Farrington was crying, not in the loud, ear-piercing hysteria that had greeted us earlier in the night, but weakly, pitifully, as if too worn out to do anything else.

"Don't cry, Aunt Martha," I said. "Try to rest. I'll take care of everything." Wild promise!

The hideous clock on the mantel ticked persistently over the sound of her weary sobbing. I strained to make my mind a blank—to forget the Skipper's stricken face, to forget Michael's words, above all to forget that picture of Judith lying in the light of William's torch. Every nerve in my body tingled to the sound of that clock and of that crying. And then slowly the sobbing diminished, paused for an instant, started again and stopped altogether. The clock and I were alone in a nightmare world. M. Farrington's voice recalled me to my senses.

"James, promise me something," I rubbed my eyes dazedly. "Anything, Aunt Martha."

"Never repeat what I am going to tell you to anyone."

"You can trust me."

"I know I can," she hesitated. When she spoke again her voice was stronger, nearly normal. "Something has been troubling Barbara for months. She refuses to see a doctor. She can't seem to bring herself to confide in me. I sent for you and Michael because I was frightened."

I felt cold and clammy. "I know," I said.

"When I told her that I had invited Judith, she seemed terribly upset. I would have undone it if I could, but Judith had already accepted. And now—her grip on my hand tightened. 'James, I left the bathroom door open when I went to bed. About half past nine I heard Barbara come up. She didn't go to bed apparently, for she didn't come in to say good night. I fell asleep and after a while I woke to hear her talking with—' with Judith. After a few moments I heard them go downstairs together. 'James—'

Her voice cracked and there was silence. We sat staring at each other, and the horror in her eyes was caused by the same thing that was creeping up and down my spine. I found my voice finally.

"But—what were they talking about?"

"I couldn't hear. I couldn't hear anything."

Again the clock obtruded itself upon my consciousness. I counted its ticks—one—two—three—four—And the Skipper came quietly in.

And So To Bed

I ROSE clumsily to my feet to face her.

"Just dislocated, Jim. I think I got it," she said.

"That's great," I said dully.

The Skipper... for a moment and I thought she winced. "Get to bed, Jim," she said. "Just leave the bathroom door open and keep an eye on Mike. We'll be all right."

It was risky to leave them alone like that. And yet, looking the Skipper square in the eye, it was impossible to think—I murmured a jumbled good night to M. Farrington and got to the door. There stood the Skipper. I kissed her and ran out of that room as fast as I could go.

For one moment after I had closed Michael's door the ticking of that infernal clock seemed to have followed me. There was Michael and there was Gay, both looking better and both looking a bit surprised.

"Where's the fire?" demanded the former with a faint smile. I hadn't seen one in many hours. "I won't run away—not after the manhandling I've just had. How's the Aunt?"

"Weepy, but still with us. Beat it, Gay, and take some more aspirin. This guy's going to sleep. If you want anything, hang on the wall and I'll come roaring, armed to the teeth. Scram!"

Gay laughed. Whatever I had been going through in that last half hour, it was evident that the Skipper had bolstered up those two very effectively.

"In that case, I won't bang." She kissed Michael, threw me a "see you later" look, and took herself off.

Over the weird arrangement of bandages, blankets and pillows that surrounded him, Michael considered me.

"For once," he observed with a chuckle, "you'll admit that it would have been a good idea to have stayed in New York."

His chuckle reminded me of the Skipper.

I gave him what I considered enough aspirin to numb an elephant. My watch said 5:15 as I put out his light. The last thing in the world I had any intention of doing was sleeping. My program was all for action. I would merely wait until I was sure he had dozed off.

As I flopped down on my bed, head in hands, I could hear Gay's restless footsteps in the next room. I meant to figure some things out before I joined her. I meant personally to inspect the locks on every door and window in the house. I meant to do a lot of things. And five minutes later I was stretched out "sawing wood" for all I was worth.

Bad Temper Prevails

I HAVE seen many a morning after, but never one like that. I woke with a pounding head and an unshakable conviction that if the powers that be were attending to their job, they would dispense with creation in general, and me in particular. But the powers must have been otherwise engaged.

I was still sitting on the edge of my bed, holding my head on both hands and experimentally stretching one stiff leg after another when Michael appeared in the bathroom door. As I considered his sling and the bandage on his head, dimly wondering where he got them, he burst into vehement speech.

"Perhaps you'll be through admiring my physique by lunch time and help me get on a shirt."

Memory did some effective dirty work that left me feeling like a combination traffic mule and jackass.

"How do you feel?" I hazarded.

"If I felt lousier, they'd flog me!"

All in all, I felt more like the jackass. I had slept—slept while an unknown killer—My thoughts weren't very pleasant. I cut myself shaving, burned myself in a scalding shower, and broke two shoes. By the time we were both dressed it was 9:30 and I had exhausted an extensive vocabulary.

Michael, disdaining my suggestion that he might stay upstairs for a little while, marched down ahead of me a bad case of grouch written in the set of his chin and the way his one good hand slapped the banister. Tragedy seemed to have taken a ding out of the window that morning in favor of common, ordinary bad temper. We found the dining room enveloped in forbidding silence.

The Skipper sat at the table, absent-mindedly fiddling with some bacon, while Gay banged angrily among the coffee cups on the sideboard. The idea of the women being up and about while we calmly slept—well anyway, slept—annoyed me into speech.

"It is," I announced with finality, "a rotten morning."

"Think of your discovering that all by yourself," said Gay, and spill her coffee, to my infinite satisfaction. The Skipper laughed. "How's your arm, Mike? Get any sleep?"

Michael's arm, as he had already explained to me with some violence, felt better and he had more sleep than any of us. But he slumped into a chair, took the coffee Gay handed him, and growled "O.K." in a tone that made it quite clear that anyone who wanted to argue about anything would be accommodated immediately.

We search the grounds for a tramp, Monday.

STRANGE AS IT SEEMS—By JOHN HIX

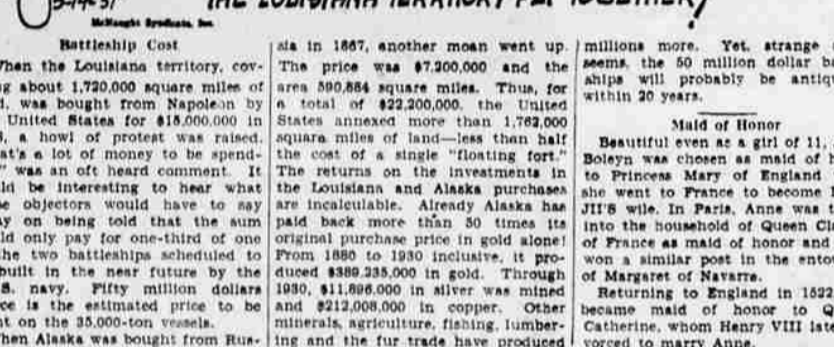
For further proof address the author, inclosing a stamped envelope for reply. Reg. U. S. Pat. Off.



ANNE BOLEYN—2ND WIFE OF HENRY VIII. WAS MAID OF HONOR TO 4 QUEENS BEFORE SHE, HERSELF, BECAME A QUEEN...

A TREE THAT WENT ON A SIT-DOWN STRIKE—A PINE AT YOSEMITE NAT'L. PARK...

TROTGING HORSES WERE USED AS A MEANS OF ARTIFICIAL RESUSCITATION AS LATE AS 1812...



A MODERN BATTLESHIP COSTS OVER TWICE AS MUCH AS THE UNITED STATES PAID FOR ALASKA AND THE LOUISIANA TERRITORY PUT TOGETHER!

Battleship Cost
When the Louisiana territory, covering about 1,720,000 square miles of land, was bought from Napoleon by the United States for \$18,000,000 in 1803, a howl of protest was raised. "That's a lot of money to be spending," was an oft heard comment. It is interesting to hear what those objectors would have to say today on being told that the sum would only pay for one-third of one of the two battleships scheduled to be built in the near future by the U. S. navy. Fifty million dollars apiece is the estimated price to be spent on the 35,000-ton vessels.

When Alaska was bought from Russia in 1867, another moan went up. The price was \$7,200,000 and the area 580,864 square miles. Thus, for a total of \$22,200,000, the United States annexed more than 1,720,000 square miles of land—less than half the cost of a single "floating fort." The returns on the investments in the Louisiana and Alaska purchases are incalculable. Already Alaska has paid back more than 50 times its original purchase price in gold alone. From 1880 to 1930 inclusive, it produced \$389,235,000 in gold. Through 1930, \$11,896,000 in silver was mined and \$212,008,000 in copper. Other minerals, agriculture, fishing, lumbering and the fur trade have produced millions more. Yet, strange as it seems, the 50 million dollar battleships will probably be antiquated within 20 years.

Maid of Honor
Beautiful even as a girl of 11, Anne Boleyn was chosen as maid of honor to Princess Mary of England when she went to France to become Louis XII's wife. In Paris, Anne was taken into the household of Queen Claude of France as maid of honor and later won a similar post in the entourage of Margaret of Navarre.

Returning to England in 1522, she became maid of honor to Queen Catherine, whom Henry VIII later divorced to marry Anne.

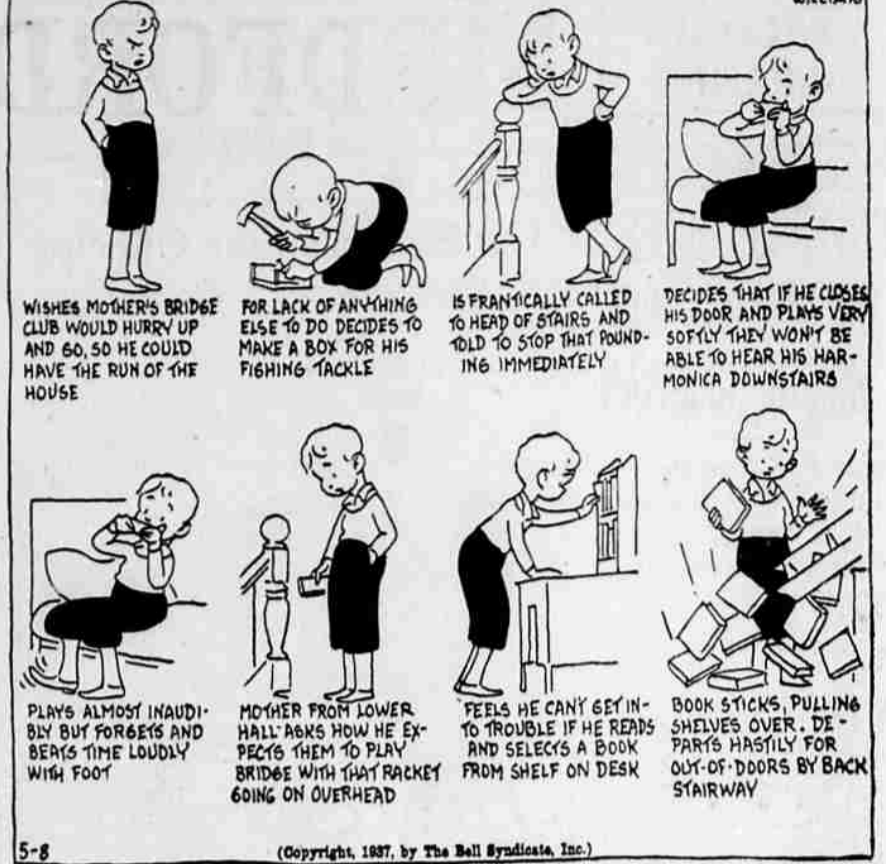
Pay To See Flower
COLOMBO, Ceylon—(UP)—Queues form up every day at Nugegoda, near here, to see a mystery flower which botanists have identified as a rare species of arum lily. Admission is charged to see the flower and smell it. One of its peculiarities is an extraordinarily strong scent.

Policeman Has Luck
PASADENA, Cal.—(UP)—Good luck, like misfortune, seemingly never comes singly. On the day that Lieut. Harry Thomas of the police department received a \$5000 inheritance he caught an escaped Mexican convict with a \$200 award attached to him.

Relics of Fair Found
ST. LOUIS—(UP)—Reminders of the almost forgotten World's fair days of 1904 were churned up here by giant excavators working on grade separation projects. Masses of wooden pilings, buried remains of fair buildings, were found. The largest group of pilings was thought to be part of an old railway station used for transfer of victors to the exposition grounds.

Voice Shatters Glass
LONDON—(UP)—John Lovering, Welsh baritone, stands alone among most singers. He has broken a wine-glass with his voice. It was at a banquet that Lovering first realized his strange power. He sang a G note loudly—and a wine-glass at a distant table was shattered by the vibrations.

BRIDGE BELOW



By GLUYAS WILLIAMS

Wishes mother's bridge club would hurry up and go, so he could have the run of the house.

For lack of anything else to do decides to make a box for his fighting tackle.

Is frankly called to head of stairs and told to stop that pounding immediately.

Decides that if he closes his door and plays very softly they won't be able to hear his harmonica downstairs.

Plays almost inaudibly but forgets and beats time loudly with foot.

Mother from lower hall asks how he expects them to play bridge with that racket going on overhead.

Feels he can't get in to trouble if he reads and selects a book from shelf on desk.

Book sticks, pulling shelves over, disappears hastily for out-of-doors by back stairway.

(Copyright, 1937, by The Bell Syndicate, Inc.)

S'MATTER POF



By C. M. PAYNE

Hold still! See if I kin hit ya in tha mouth with this pie.

Okay, willyum, lettut flicker!

It slipped!

Heh, heh! I'm a pretty good pie pitcher!

(Copyright, 1937, by The Bell Syndicate, Inc.)

ART MOVED FROM SALOON TO SALON

SAN FRANCISCO, (UP)—Arthur Putnam, famous American sculptor whose works may be found in the Metropolitan Art Gallery at New York, has seen some of his early art works transferred from a saloon to a salon—that of a New York art dealer.

In his early days at San Francisco, Putnam produced a bas relief for the Hippodrome, one of the notorious dance halls of the Barbary Coast. It was a bas relief of satyr chasing nymphs. Some of the details of the bas relief were so frank that even jaded Barbary Coast blinkers. So Putnam was obliged to apply a little red plaster where it would do the most good.

Barbary Coast went out under the campaign of 1917 and the Hippodrome turned from a dance hall to the business offices of the Alaska Canneries Workers' Union. The Putnam bas relief, however, was allowed to remain intact.

Putnam, however, in the meantime

INCENDIARY BOMB EFFECTS STUDIED

CHERBOURG, (AP)—Experiments designed to show that fires caused by incendiary bombs cannot be extinguished by any known method have been carried out at the naval arsenal here.

Protection against fire was accorded by coverings of cement, sand, plaster, milk of lime, the experiments revealed.

All efforts of firemen to put out the conflagration of a washed bit by incendiary bombs were in vain. But incendiary bombs generating a heat of 1800 degrees centigrade had no effect when dropped on a plank covered with sand. Nor did four thermite bombs dropped on a shed with a covering of plaster and milk of lime on its roof.

At the outbreak of the World war France and Germany each had an air force of about 600 planes.

having become a world famous sculptor, a New York art dealer discovered the early bas relief and obtained it.

LET'S FOLLOW THE COURSE OF TOMMY'S MYSTERY PLANE



By HAL FORRESTER

Let's follow the course of Tommy's mystery plane, after it was stolen from the hangar following Tom's departure from the airdrome. The erratic flight of the ship indicates that it is being guided by... inexperienced hands...

Suddenly the plane stalls... then whips over...

Into a deadly tight spin... and plunges earthward...

Zowie! I'll bet that pilot's mink-meat now!

How he ever escaped... is a miracle!

Say! There goes... the pilot!

(Copyright, 1937, by The Bell Syndicate, Inc.)

BEN WEBSTER'S CAREER—Not Yet!



By EDWIN ALGER

Wheh! Five hundred dollars due tomorrow! You know something's wrong, don't you, Briarsie? Gogh, are we up against it?

Wonder how much of banker Crunchem's talk Mrs. Higgins heard before she fainted? Guess I'd better stall for time—

Ruined, ain't we, gon? But may God forever bless you, Ben, for the help you've given an old woman!

Ruined? Gay, where do you get that stuff about being ruined, Mrs. Higgins? We're not ruined—we've just started to battle!

(Copyright, 1937, by The Bell Syndicate, Inc.)

THE NEBBS—Telephone, Telegraph and Tell Yilly



By BOL HESS

Hello Miss Gruntley, pardon my inquisitiveness but when will you take your matrimonial plunge?

My fiance wants to go to Cuba or some other European place but he's got to get a man from his other bank at Pottsville to relieve him before we can sail.

Were gon' to put our fortunes together... I'm gon' to resign my position and Ambly is gon' to take things easier... were gon' to be a couple of gypsies... will see very little of us in this hogstoto hatchery... now I peddle that to the natives.