# MURDER ON THE BLUFF

BY ESTHER TYLER

*SYNOPSIS: It was a wild, stormy night at Farrington Bluff, home of Michael's aunt, when beautiful Jude Blinshop is shot to death on the bluff. Mike dislocates his shoulder hunting for the missing Skipper, his tall and tweedy younger aunt. She turns up with an alibi. Aunt Martha, stout and prudish, has a few genteel tantrums. Gay Palmer, Mike's red-headed sweetheart, keeps fairly calm. Next morning we search the grounds, but find no intruder. Aunt Martha gets me to lead our group investigation, so I send everyone to his room and try to puzzle things out with pencil and paper.*

Chapter 12

### Slow, Creeping Steps

AT LAST I put down the pencil. Wearily I read over that paper. Who? What? Why? It occurred to me that it is much easier to solve imaginary problems than real ones, and this was all too real. I helped myself to another drink.

On a fresh piece of paper I wrote *MOTIVE* in large capitals and considered. M. Farrington? Obviously not. Jude was M. Farrington's choice of the year for Michael. If the old lady had any conceivable reason for wishing Jude out of the way, why send for us to swell the number of state's witnesses? The Skipper? She had certainly asked me to keep Mike away from Jude for some reason. That she would go to the length of murder to gain her obscure end, I was not prepared to believe. Michael? He had never lost his head over Jude, but that was hardly a suspicious circumstance.

Again that tête-à-tête in the game-room loomed before me. I discounted it altogether. Jude and Mike had been friends all their lives. There were a million things they might have talked about. Gay? She had certainly been in a rage, but that was nothing unusual. The furniture might suffer from Gay's disposition, but the idea of murder was preposterous.

The servants? I ticked them off on my fingers—Higgins (ridiculous), William (pointless), Cook (more pointless), Annie (absurd).

Such was my state of mind that I gravely considered any possible motive of my own before I fully realized what I was doing. I left a blank after the word *MOTIVE* and wrote *WEAPON* also in large letters.

Again I was at a standstill. I wrote, "Revolver in the possession of Higgins. All the regular household aware of it." Sitting back, I reviewed my handiwork. Then I rang for Higgins.

"Have you kept careful watch of the servants?"

"I have, sir. They are all together in the kitchen."

"Good. Rouse the rest of the house and tell them I'd like to see them right away."

It occurred to me as I listened to his slow shuffle up the stairs that I was probably making a mistake in questioning them in one another's hearing. And yet I was beginning to feel that the best way to protect that unhappy party was to keep its members all together. I would have more luck with Michael anyway if the Skipper were present. He would never lie to her. But if he were shielding her? Suddenly I decided to recall Higgins and to approach the whole thing from a different angle. Too late. The door opened and Gay walked in.

### Prowling In The Hall

"GOOD Lord, Jim, don't do that again!"

"Do what?"

"Leave us all caged up like that and go prowling around in the hall. It's amusing to read about, but right now it's not so darned funny."

I stared at her. "You heard someone in the hall?"

"Certainly. Do you think I'm deaf? I heard you come up and I heard you go down. You ought to give a Hallowe'en party some time. The guests would be carried out in dozens."

"They're always carried out when he gets started," said Michael from the door. "What's the big idea? Some fancy third-degreeing, or what?"

I tried not to look as if I had just seen a king cobra.

"Oh," I said, "you heard something, too?"

"Sherlock!" from Michael.

The Skipper and M. Farrington coming in together saved us from another argument. They both looked tired and worried. I didn't wait for comments.

"Were any of you outside of your rooms after you went upstairs?" I demanded.

M. Farrington answered promptly. "Yes, I've been in Barbara's room all along. I was nervous."

"Did you go through the hall?"

"Why, no. Did you want—?"

The Skipper interrupted. "What's the matter, Jim?"

"Nothing." I snapped and once more rang for Higgins. The silence was charged with many things. I am afraid I was a little disappointed when he finally did appear.

"Higgins, were you in the upper hall at any time after I instructed you to watch the servants?"

"Why, yes, sir. Just now when you requested me—"

"I know. But were you there at any other time—or could any of the servants have been there?"

"No, sir, I'm positive."

I digested that slowly. "Aunt Martha—Skipper, did either of you hear anything unusual while you were upstairs?"

Their negatives were prompt. Someone then must have come up those stairs and gone down the hall toward the east end of the house, since Mike had heard it and the aunts had not. Gay's room was opposite the head of the stairs. I whirled on her.

"You heard this person come up and go down?"

She shrugged impatiently. "Really, Jim, you're too obvious. You could be heard from here to the mainland—slow, creeping steps as when the maniac is about to grab the heroine by the hair. You should have shrieked occasionally for local color."

It is one thing to have your fictitious hero suspected by every person present. It is quite another to be suspected yourself by your own roommate and his fiancée.

"Look here," I said, "you can believe me or not, just as you like, but I haven't been up those stairs since lunch time."

She didn't believe me. I could see it in her face and I could see it in Michael's.

"Higgins here will tell you—" I began hotly, but Gay interrupted.

"Oh, don't perjure Higgins. It would have worked better if you'd only had sense enough to—"

From somewhere in the rear of the house a fullthroated scream rang horribly through the hall.

### A Low, Hysterical Giggle

INTO the startled silence that followed that frightful sound, came a low, hysterical giggle. The hair on my neck was beginning to prickle. I could see Higgins' bulging eyes. It was M. Farrington, collapsed in a chair, her head in her hands, rocking spasmodically back and forth. Michael moved mechanically.

"Stop it! Stop it! With his good arm he seized her shoulder and shook it roughly.

"Quiet!" the Skipper said. The effect was instantaneous. At off hours when I have had one drink too many I can still see that scene. Michael half bent over his aunt's chair, Gay stiffly erect, and myself gripping the edge of the desk, while all eyes were riveted on the Skipper's haggard face. Half turned away from us, she stood staring toward the hall door. Waiting. Waiting for *what*?

I didn't walk across that room. I bolted for the door. If the devil himself had been in that hall, I would rather have encountered him than endure that waiting another minute.

The devil, fortunately or otherwise, was not in the hall. Nor was anyone else. The scream had come from the kitchen and in that direction I galloped as fast as my legs would carry me. The door of the servants' dining room crashed open to my hand.

In the half light from the hall I could see that the room was empty, but I could also see the swinging door leading into the kitchen moving, as if someone had just gone through it. Beyond that door I could hear the sound of heavy footsteps coming, seemingly, from a point halfway between the floor and the ceiling. One moment only I hesitated to see Higgins following me in a labored dogtrot. Then I went through that door.

Directly against the nearest wall ran the staircase to the servants' quarters and halfway up it stood William in his shirt-sleeves, one half of his face covered with lather and a razor in his hand. He was breathing heavily and his staring eyes were fixed on something on the floor, hidden from my sight by the kitchen table. Our eyes met for the fraction of a second.

"Gawd!" said William hoarsely.

Almost I had ceased to feel. Certainly I walked around that table with as few qualms as I might have stepped to it for a cigarette. Lying in a grotesque heap on the floor was the mammoth figure of Cook. Her arms were sprawled horribly and blood was flowing from a huge gash on her forehead. As I knelt beside her, William came heavily down the stairs and Higgins panted through the dining room. I felt for her heart.

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**Annie the maid is found bound and gagged, tomorrow.**

# STRANGE AS IT SEEMS—By JOHN HIX

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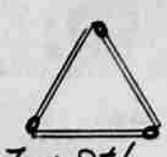
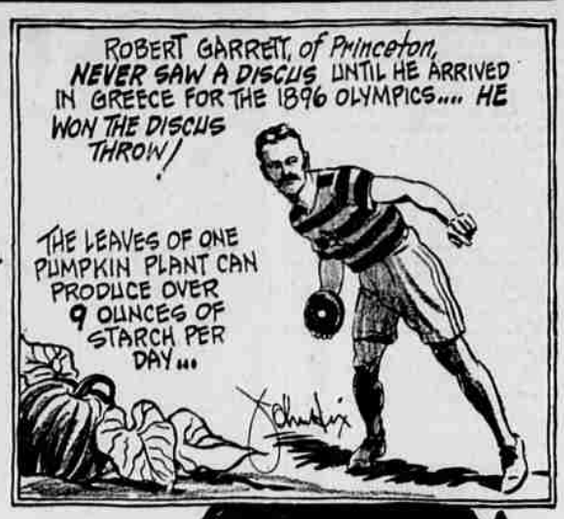
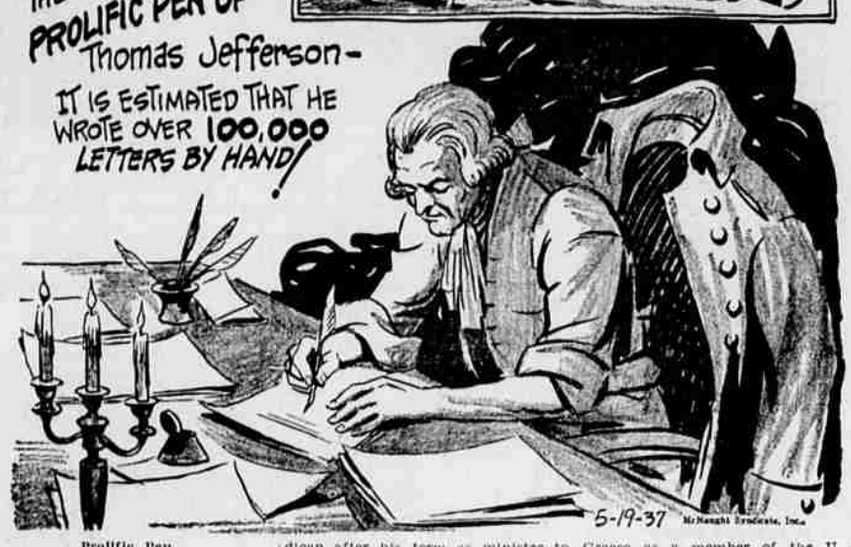


*Try It!* USING 3 MORE MATCHES, FORM 4 TRIANGLES, EACH EQUAL IN SIZE TO THE ORIGINAL TRIANGLE... *(Answer tomorrow)*




**Prolific Pen.**

"The Pen of the Revolution" is the title sometimes applied to Thomas Jefferson third president of the United States. Well does he rate it. In the interests of America's fight for independence and in later life he wrote more letters by hand than is believed to have been written by any other public man in history.

Existing today are more than 16,000 letters which he personally wrote. These constitute only a small fraction of his correspondence. He is credited with having written from 10,000 to 15,000 letters each year for a long period of time.

Jefferson wrote under a severe handicap after his term as minister to France for he broke his right wrist while holding this position and the injury bothered him the rest of his life. When the pain in his wrist grew too strong to continue writing with it, he switched to his left hand and continued his work. Eventually his left hand became as proficient in writing as his right. No scribbler was Jefferson in spite of the quantity of witing he did. All of his correspondence was done in a neat, legible hand.

**Discus Champ.**

As captain of the Princeton University track and field team, Robert S. Garrett made up his mind to attend the 1896 Olympic games in Greece as a member of the U. S. team. Hearing that the ancient sport of discus throwing was to be one of the events on the program, he tried to find out what a discus was like. Discus throwing was practically unknown in America at the time. Garrett managed to get a rough description of a discus, however, and had a home-made contraption fixed up. He practiced with this for a while before going to Athens for the games. There he saw a real discus and found it much lighter than the weight he had been using for practice. In spite of the difference, he entered the Olympic event and took first place.

**Tomorrow: Everlasting Life!**

## MAE WEST WINS FIRST SKIRMISH IN LAW SUIT

LOS ANGELES, May 19. — (AP) — Mae West emerged victor today in a preliminary legal skirmish with Frank Wallace, New York actor who seeks to have himself declared her husband.

Miss West's demurrer to Wallace's suit which tests the validity of their alleged marriage in Milwaukie, April 11, 1911, was sustained yesterday by Superior Judge Robert W. Kenny. The court specified 20 days in which Wallace might file an amended complaint.

An X-ray tube in St. Bartholomew's hospital, London, is 30 feet long and weighs ten tons. The patient under treatment converses through a microphone with the doctors who observe him through a mirror system.

## KISS AND LOSE TEETH IS DOCTOR'S WARNING

ATLANTA, May 19.—(AP)—Kiss often and lose your teeth was the warning today of Dr. Marvin M. Harris of the Georgia state health department.

And if you want case history he can give it to you.

Four of six girls engaged in kissing games at a recent party developed a mouth infection, he said.

## SEATING ARRANGEMENTS

By GLUYAS WILLIAMS

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## S'MATTER POP

By C. M. PAYNE

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## TAILSPIN TOMMY—Doubtful . . . But Staunch Friends!

By HAL FORREST

## BEN WEBSTER'S CAREER—It's a Bargain

By EDWIN ALGER

## THE NEBBS—Everything Will Be All Right

By SOL HESS

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# SPEED OPENING OF ROAD TO DIAMOND

ROSEBURG, Ore., May 19.—(AP)—Through arrangements made today with the state highway commission, equipment has been secured for use in an effort to open the road from Union Creek to Diamond lake, according to V. V. Harpham, supervisor of the Umpqua national forest.

It is hoped, Harpham said, to have the road open to travel by Sunday, when the fishing season opens at the lake.

Lacking equipment suitable for removing snow from the road, the forest service, Harpham reports, has secured use of the highway department's rotary snow plow located at Union Creek. Snow depths up to 40 inches are reported on the road which, however, is clear to Muir creek, five miles from the junction.

Ground immediately around Diamond lake is free from snow, Harpham said he was advised, but nearby snow depths measure up to three feet.

A large number of fishermen are expected to make the trip to the lake for the opening day of the season.

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# BANDIT AND MOLL FACE QUICK TRIAL

POUGHKEEPSIE, N. Y., May 19.—(AP)—Asking "How long will it be before I get the electric chair?" Lester Brockelhurst, 23, wanted on murder charges in three states, boarded a train today with Bernice Pelton, 18, bound for a swift trial in Arkansas.

They were shackled together and in the custody of Prosecutor Joseph P. Melton of Lonoke county, Arkansas.

Prosecutor Melton, who quoted Brockelhurst as asking how soon he would face legal death for the murder of Victor Gates, wealthy Little Rock plantation owner, said he replied:

"Six days at the least after trial starts, and 30 days at the most."

"I am willing to reutrn," said the former Sunday school teacher. His sweetheart, charged with being an accessory, likewise told County Judge J. Gordon Flannery, "I am willing to go back."

**May Picket Mill.**

EUGENE, May 19. — (AP) — Picketing of the Cascade Lumber company, small sawmill just outside the city limits west of here, will be ordered Wednesday morning unless company officials agree to demands of the Lumber and Sawmill Workers' union, it was disclosed today.