

MURDER ON THE BLUFF

SYNOPSIS: A mysterious shot kills attractive Jude Blinshop on a wild, stormy night at Farrington Bluff, home of Michael's aunts. Everyone marooned on this island is suspect: Mike, who talked with Jude alone that night; the Skipper, his tall and fussy younger aunt; Aunt Martha, stout and prudish; Gay Palmer, Mike's red-headed sweetheart; Higgins, the elderly butler; William, the chauffeur; Cook; Annie, the maid—even I, Mike's closest friend. Then we find traces of an outsider, perhaps a maniac, who must be loose in the house. Our search is futile.

Chapter 22

The Horrible Farce

GAY, Michael and M. Farrington came slowly in. Their general aspect was gloomy.

"Perhaps," said Gay, after a long interval of staring at her own feet, "we had better hold a séance. It's done in all the best thrillers."

Mike's face was worried. "Rot!" he said sharply. "Don't get silly, for God's sake!"

Her laugh was shaky. "Why not? People are killed and strangled and tied up by empty air. There must be a ghost! We owe it to ourselves not to miss anything."

"Stop it!" Michael crossed to her swiftly. "Stop it! Get a grip on yourself! Don't—" Too late. She collapsed against him in a tearful fit.

That evening had pretty well exhausted my stock of sympathy. I stepped into the conservatory. But its heavy scent of roses reminded me of nothing so much as a funeral. I thought of Jude Blinshop's funeral. I selected a casket for Jude—not a heavy one—blue, deep blue. No roses. Just—The realization of what I was doing struck me as a revolting shock. My foot sent a pot of American Beauties crashing to the floor.

I swore frantically.

"Exactly," said M. Farrington's voice at my elbow.

"Must have brushed against it, Aunt Martha," I mumbled, stooping for the roses.

"With your foot," said the dry voice. "James, you are not to lose your head. Sit down, please."

I sat dully under an appalling rubber plant. I wished that I were dead, recollected that I might very shortly get my wish, shivered, and brought my wavering attention back to M. Farrington. She was speaking in her dry, precise little voice.

"The greatest danger of all, my dear boy, is that we may allow our imaginations to run away with us. Our predicament is unpleasant in the extreme and entirely unexpected. The thought of the supernatural in connection with these strange occurrences is inevitable, but thoroughly absurd. If we think—"

From behind the rubber plant, I gaped at her. The supernatural! M. Farrington arguing about the supernatural! Were we all going crazy?

Action For Everyone

"DON'T worry, Aunt Martha," I said. "Cook of course would think bananas were after her if a match blew out. But I'm sure the rest of us are too—"

The picture of Gay in hysterics in the next room stopped me. I gaped impatiently for a cigarette.

"Grace is not herself, James." Confound the woman! Did she think me deaf as well as dumb? "In our present overwrought condition, we tend to reduce perfectly normal happenings to the basis of supernatural phenomena. We must retain self-control. I advise you to provide immediate physical action for everyone. This waiting is—"

unpleasant."

I exploded. "But damn it!" I roared. "We can't keep pussyfooting around the house playing hide-and-seek. We've done enough searching for 10 hours! What the devil can we do?"

"How do you usually amuse yourself?" She was laughing at me. Her lips never moved, but she was laughing. I got to my feet and lunged into the living room.

Higgins' back was just retreating through the hall door. In a far corner of the room Michael was bending over Gay with a glass of something in his hand. The Skipper glanced around from the window, but returned immediately to her survey of the darkness outside.

"How about bed?" I meant to say it cheerfully.

Mike straightened up. "Don't be fantastic."

"All right." My voice started out faintly and ended in a hoarse croak. "Then let's do something to amuse ourselves. Bridge? Billiards?"

"Dominoes?" Michael jeered.

"Anything." Gay's voice was shrill and shaky. "We can't just sit here. Let's do something!"

And so we tried it. I dragged out a table, located some chairs, drew up chairs. M. Farrington, Gay, Mike and myself played. The Skipper refused to leave her window.

The horrible farce went on for hours—or seemed to. We overdid wildly and underdid foolishly. It was difficult to remember trumps. Scoring was erratic. In spite of all pretense, every ear in the room was straining to catch sounds from the silent house. Nerves twitched to the soothing of

trees and rattling of blinds. Finally Michael threw down his cards.

"This is the worst idea you've had yet!" he snorted, moving toward the brandy bottle.

"Let's try billiards." My own voice was barely recognizable. "You must play billiards."

The Skipper and M. Farrington remained in the living room, the latter patiently trying to read a book, the former still motionless at the window. We left the connecting door open, and Gay, Michael and I went into the room where the whole ghastly mess seemed to have started. Not 48 hours ago Jude Blinshop had stood right where I was standing, holding that very same cue, waiting for me to leave her alone with Mike. I dropped the cue as if it burned.

"Oh, hell!" I groaned desperately. Gay seated herself on the table, her foot swinging rapidly.

"Mike," she said, "it isn't just curiosity. I—must know. You ought to trust me enough to tell me why you went outdoors last night."

"Gristly Diversion!"

WE WERE right back at the beginning. What possible difference could it make now? What possible use in dragging it up again? Diversion. Damned gristly diversion!

My foot sent a pot of American Beauties crashing to the floor.



My foot sent a pot crashing to the floor.

started for the door, but Mike blocked me off.

"Stay right here, Jim!" Then, very patiently, "I've told you a dozen times, Gay, that it had nothing to do with all this. I went out to look at the bridge."

"You're lying!" At the fury in her voice the sickening whirl in my head began to tighten. There was no stopping her. "What did you go outdoors for? You were out there at 10 o'clock. You said so—"

I had had enough of it. Pushing Michael out of my way, I barged into the living room, banging the door behind me. The Skipper turned from the window.

"It's nearly daylight," she said. "Thank God. What time is it?"

I blinked at my watch. Two minutes of seven. On the davenport M. Farrington was fast asleep. With all my heart I envied her.

"What's going on in there?" I tried to smile. "Oh—curiosity—nerves. No telling."

"Listen, Jimmie, I'm going to take Martha upstairs with me. It's me for a cold shower. Tell Higgins to star some breakfast—and break up the Donnybrook Fair in there. It's daylight and we're civilized—supposedly. Have you our keys?"

(Copyright, 1937, Elinor Tolan)

The Skipper and I find a body down the bluff, tomorrow.

STRANGE AS IT SEEMS—By JOHN HIX

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



CHAIR OF REMEMBRANCE—
Braemar, Scotland.
TO COUNT THE WAR DEAD, EACH SOLDIER OF THE FARQUHARSON CLAN LEFT A STONE ON A HEAP WHEN DEPARTING FOR WAR— AND REMOVED ONE IF HE RETURNED



A KITCHEN CABINET CONSTRUCTED ENTIRELY FROM CIGAR BOXES is owned by Eugene Henle, of Kane, Pa.



THE MOLE THAT FOLLOWS ITS STAR IN THE CONDYLURA MOLE, OF EASTERN U.S., HAS AN ELEVEN-POINTED STAR AROUND EACH OF ITS NOSTRILS.



HELL ON WHEELS!
216 CARS STARTED IN THE PARIS-MADRID RACE OF 1903 BUT OVER HALF WERE WRECKED ENROUTE! SCORES WERE KILLED OR INJURED AS DRIVERS CRASHED THROUGH CROWDS OF SPECTATORS, FILED INTO EACH OTHER OR TURNED OVER

Little is lacking in the way of thrills for the spectators at the annual Memorial day race at Indianapolis—but he may well thank his lucky stars for the fact that it does not hold quite as much thrill as did the Paris-Madrid race of 1903.

Of 216 cars and 59 motorcycles that started out from Versailles, 11 miles from Paris, less than half arrived at the finish line in Madrid, Spain. Crowds lined the entire route to see the as yet little known horseless carriages tear by. The reckless contestants zoomed along the narrow dirt roads at speeds never before recorded. One of them was actually timed at 90 miles an hour!

The ignorance of the spectators accounted for many of the accidents. As a driver passed them, they rushed out into the road to watch him disappear in a swirl of dust. Blinded by the dust, following drivers plunged into the crowds or swerved off the road and cracked up. No accurate computation of the injuries or deaths which resulted from the race was made, but the number ran into the scores.

Winner of the race was M. Gabriel who averaged 65.3 miles per hour for the 342-mile race. He drove a 70-horsepower Mors.

To this disastrous change-over from road racing to circular track racing such as is held today.

Though the 800 miles of today's Indianapolis race is considered grueling even from modern standards, strange as it seems it is SHORTER than the world's first official auto race. This was run from Versailles, France, to Bordeaux and back, in 1895. The distance covered was 732 miles. It was won by Emile Levassor

Cocoa Project Approved.
WASHINGTON, May 31.—(AP)—The war department advised Representative James Mott, Salem, Ore., today it has approved the report of district engineers recommending a detailed flood control survey of Coos river in southwestern Oregon.

Wheat Harvest Delayed.
THE DALLES, May 31.—(AP)—Prolonged rains of late winter and early spring, retarding seeding, and the continued low temperatures will make the wheat harvest of north central Oregon unusually late this year, growers predicted.

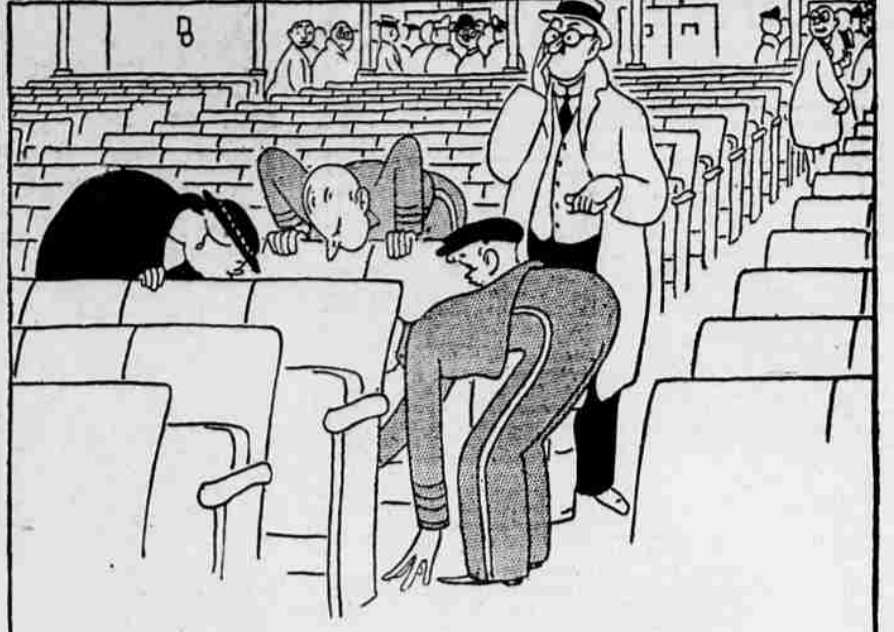
Twins Joined
PORTLAND, Ore., May 31.—(AP)—Twins joined together from the shoulder to hip were born to a couple in the general hospital today but the babies died within a few minutes. The mother's condition was described as satisfactory.

Star-Nosed Mole
Largely confined to northeastern North America, the star-nosed mole has a star-like fringe of cartilage around its nose which earns its name. The reason for the peculiar nasal appendages is not definitely known, but they are believed to be a delicate organ of touch, constituting an aid to the animal in its wanderings through underground passages.

Tomorrow: The Mystery President!

THE WORLD AT ITS WORST

By GLUYAS WILLIAMS



AFTER THROWING YOUR FAMILY AND THE USHERS INTO A TURMOIL BY IMAGINING THAT YOU DROPPED THE KEY OF THE CAR, YOU REMEMBER THAT YOU LEFT THE CAR UNLOCKED WITH THE KEY IN THE IGNITION

5-25

GLUYAS WILLIAMS

S'MATTER POP

By C. M. PAYNE



TAILSPIN TOMMY—Concerning Tommy!



BEN WEBSTER'S CAREER—"Tornado Toots"



THE NEBBS—Just a Wise Guy



5-28

By SOL HESS

EUROPE REMINDED WAR DEBT UNPAID

WASHINGTON, May 31.—(UP)—The American government tonight went through the routine of formally notifying the rearmament-occupied governments of Europe that they haven't paid for their last war.

The state department, at the request of the treasury, sent "due bills" to 12 defaulting debtor governments reminding them that another semi-annual installment on their debts falls due on June 15, together with the total of that installment and of payments past due, unpaid and now in default.

FILM FUNNY GIRL WEDS IN NEVADA

LAS VEGAS, Nev., May 30.—(UP)—Martha Raye, singing comedienne, and Hamilton Westmore, movie makeup man, were married here Sunday in a surprise elopement from Hollywood.

Miss Raye gave her age as 20 and her legal name as Margie Yvonne Reed. Westmore, youngest brother of Wally, Perc and Ern Westmore, prominent studio makeup men, said he was 21. They left for an unannounced destination for a one-day honeymoon before returning to Hollywood.

Polar Sea Deep.
MOSCOW, May 31.—(AP)—Soviet Russia's north polar weather outpost measured the polar sea today and found it far deeper than scientists had estimated.

Alameda Base Okayed.
WASHINGTON, May 31.—(AP)—President Roosevelt signed a bill authorizing establishment of a naval air station at Alameda, Calif.