

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 saw Jude alone that night; the Skipper, his tall and tuxedoed younger aunt; Aunt Martha, stout and prudish; Gay Palmer, Mike's red-headed sweetheart; Higgins, the chauffeur; William, the chauffeur; Cook; Annie, the maid—even I, Mike's closest friend. We believe an outsider, perhaps a maniac, is loose in the house. The dull dawn of the second day finds us nerve-taut and exhausted from futile searching.

Chapter 23

Horror In Jude's Room
IN THE same room Michael stood at a window, his back stiff. On a bench in front of the fireplace with her back toward him, Gay was persistently bouncing a table tennis ball. The atmosphere was eerie.

"It's daylight," I announced triumphantly.
"How cozy," from the window. No response from the bench.
I fumbled through the mess of keys, selected theirs, and handed them out. "Breakfast in half an hour. We'll have to shake a leg."

"Or a neck," Mike strode into the hall, slamming the door after him.
I walked over and removed the racquet from Gay's hand. "You're a good egg, Gay. I've always liked you. But you're digging yourself into a hole that you won't be able to climb out of. Mike is all right. Go take a shower and forget about it."

"She got to her feet at that," Mike said furiously, "is a lying skunk! I've just told him so, and now I'm telling you." And she was out of the room.
"Gay!" I shouted, rushing after her. But she flew up the stairs without looking back.
"Good morning, Mr. Jimmie."
I spun around to find Higgins beside me, freshly dressed, brushed and combed. How much had he heard?
"How's everything below decks?" I said, a bit weakly.

"Fair to middling, sir. Cook—but she means well, sir."
"I'm sure she does. Can you manage breakfast in half an hour?"
"Yes, sir."

I left him there. I had no desire to talk to anyone, Mike's door was closed, and I didn't open it. Did Gay seriously think—The whole idea was ridiculous. I shaved, tubbed and dressed in a stupor. Just as I was climbing into a shirt, there came a low, insistent knocking on my door. It was the Skipper's voice. "Jimmie, can you come out here a second?"
I moved to the door. "Hello, Skipper. What is it?"
"Don't make so much noise." She was beckoning me down the hall in the direction of her own room. "Come—quickly!"

I went on the run. The Skipper paused before Jude Blinshop's door, pointing, and my eyes followed the direction of her finger. Jude's door had been forced open. The lock was still on it, but the woodwork had been torn by terrific pressure. We must have all of us come down the hall without noticing. I pushed open the door.

"Don't Go In There!"
IN THE dismal half-light of the winter morning, the door had been still burned, lending a ghastly unreality to the whole scene. A sheet lay on the floor just at my feet. The bed was empty! I took one half-hearted look under it. One glance into that closet and I was back in the hall. I must have been jabbering like a monkey.

The Skipper started for the door, and I flung myself in her way.
"Don't go in there!" I was roaring.
"Don't!"
She shoved me aside and disappeared through the door. I should have followed her, but I didn't. I leaned against the wall with my head in my hands. "She was dead." I was saying it to the empty hall. "I saw her. I felt her heart. She was dead!"
"Jimmie, quick!"
I couldn't seem to make my legs move. It seemed a century before I reached the Skipper, who was standing in front of Jude's closet, her face reflecting the terror that held me paralyzed.

She was pointing to something long, lumpy and shapeless that lay upon the shelf of the closet. Something that vaguely resembled a stack of blankets, but was not a stack of blankets. I seized the uppermost blanket and pulled.
A cold, limp hand was at my throat and something soft and heavy was rolling over me. My head struck the floor with a sickening thud. Even then I didn't appreciate the full horror of it. I was on the floor struggling furiously with something that was wrapped around me like a vise. I was twisting, pounding, roaring. The world was tumbling in a thundering, blinding wreck about my head.
And then I was on my feet, the Skip-

per in my arms, and both of us were staring down at a huddled mass on the floor—a blotch of eery blue in that ghastly light. The dead, white face of Jude Blinshop was staring up at us.
"I don't know what I did exactly. After a while I tried to quiet the Skipper.
What had been on that bed when I stood alone beside it earlier in the evening? What if I had reached down and moved that sheet! What—I finally managed to move—to lift the body to the bed, cover it with the discarded sheet, and turn out the useless light. When I finished, the Skipper was standing by the door.
"I might have known," she was saying over and over. "I might have known."
I took her arm. "Known what?"
She started, like a person suddenly waking up.
"Quickly, Jim," she said. "We must hurry."
Before I caught up with her, she was halfway down the hall.
"Wait, Skipper," I pleaded. "You can't stand any more of this. I'll call Mike and William."
"No!" in horror. "Good Lord, no!" I followed her with no idea of where she was going. So the killer had evaded us by cramming Jude's body onto that shelf, taking its place on the bed, and forcing his way out of the room at his leisure. We could have had him twice. Twice! The Skipper was going down the front stairs and straight to the front door, where she paused, pointing jerkily. The heavy bolt had been drawn aside and the key was on the floor. Our man had escaped.
The Skipper flung open the door and dashed out to the steps. Wind whooped around us in fiendish welcome, but the rain had stopped. The Skipper was away—running for dear life toward the end of the house in the direction of the tennis courts. In an instant I was after her, shouting, "Skipper! Skipper! Wait!"
She never turned. At the corner of the house, she disappeared. At top speed I followed. Once I thought I would catch her as she paused for half a second at the path leading from the game room to the bathroom, but she was off again before I had gained a dozen paces, running straight for the bluff.

That bluff was a sheer drop of 50 feet onto sand or rocks—My eye caught the boiling, roaring surf beyond, and I remembered Michael's experience by the beachhouse. It seemed as if my legs would drop under me.
She was nearly there. Desperately I mastered an impulse to close my eyes and avoid seeing it happen. And just at that moment she stopped short, on the very edge of the bluff. Another gasping leap, and I was beside her. I had my hands on her, and I meant to keep them there.
Then I, too, was staring into the abyss below us—staring at the body of a man lying face downward on a jut of sand in the middle of the bluff. Just out of reach of the howling fury of the sea.
Again I Bear Bad News
WE climbed down only part of the bluff. He was dead. I realized that before we reached him. From the way his head was bent to one side, I seemed as if his neck must be broken. A deep blot of red stained his heavy white hair and was gradually spreading into the sand. Higgins' hair was gray and very thin. Whoever this poor devil was, he was not the butler.
I shouted above the noise of the wind. "We'll have to get help. Can't reach him without a rope!"
She nodded dully. Without a word she allowed me to draw her back and in the direction of the house. I think she would have fallen had it not been for my arm. The side door was still bolted. We were obliged to make a circuit of the house and enter as we had left it.
From the dining room, a low babble of voices indicated that breakfast was already under way. I steered the Skipper into the living room, administered a dose of brandy, and ordered her to stay where she was. Once again the bearer of bad news. I entered the dining room.
They were all there, being served by Higgins. M. Farrington paused in the midst of an announcement concerning the weather to eye me worriedly.
"Well," growled Michael. "now what?"
"We have found something on the beach," said Higgins. I want you and William and a rope. Hurry! Higgins gave me one horrified look and rushed toward the kitchen.
Gay was on her feet—"What—have you found?"
It seemed to me to be the kindest thing to end the suspense of the last three or four hours.
"We've found the body of a man lying halfway down the bluff," I told them. "Our prowler is—through Higgins gave me one horrified look and rushed toward the kitchen."
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1937 highs are Rio coffee, pig iron, coke, cement, yellow pine, Douglas fir, gasoline and crude oil.
Those at lows are flour, sugar, butter, wool, lead and steel scrap.
President Roosevelt's declaration against high prices centered mainly against steel and copper and those suffered widely. Copper had reached 37 cents a pound domestically, having risen from 12 cents a pound. It broke to 14 cents a pound where it now is but there is a firm undertone to the market and many anticipate higher prices within the next few weeks. Steel scrap at Chicago had reached \$21.75 per ton and broke to \$16.75 a ton where it is now. But trade journals say that recent developments in the market—prior to the outbreak of labor difficulties in independent company plants—have indicated that the decline has about reached its bottom.

Hammock Berths
PARIS (UP)—A novelty in overnight transport has just been introduced by the Paris-Orleans-Midi railroad here, when voyagers were presented with the hire of hammocks for overnight travel. Though not advertised as being more comfortable than the normal sleeper or French "couchelette" the hammocks are reported to have won popularity.

STRANGE AS IT SEEMS—By JOHN HIX

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



Detachable Shirt Collars
"Blue Monday" was really blue for Mrs. Hannah Montague, of Troy, New York. Her husband, Orlando, was a blacksmith—and liked his linen clean. The combination heaped up an appalling lot of laundry each week, consisting chiefly of shirts. Week in, week out, she bent over the washboard in a ceaseless fight against the intrusions of Orlando's grimy occupation.
Half fearfully, half expectantly, she awaited her husband's home-coming that night. After dinner she showed him her day's work. In shocked surprise he gasped, then the idea in back of his wife's shirt surgery came to him. He was enthusiastic. Proudly he wore his two-piece shirt to the smithy the next day. His acquaintances joined him in his enthusiasm. The detachable shirt collar was born.
With a partner named Austin Granger, Blacksmith Montague be-

recurred again and again. She straightened up to ease her aching back and looked down at the pile of shirts still awaiting her. Inspiration popped into her mind. Grabbing up the shirts, she moved them into her sewing room, sat down with scissors in hand, and cut off all the collars.
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"A-B-C" Babies Thrive
PITTSBURGH (UP)—The "A-B-C" babies are seven months old now and gaining weight steadily. The triplets were born to Mrs. Amadio Mattei last September 27, 1936. "There is three times better than one," said the father. Then he named them Amadio, Beatrice and Caroline.

Films Plant Growth
LONDON (UP)—With a home-made machine built from old clocks, bicycle parts and gramophone needles, Percy Smith, 57-year-old inventor, can photograph the actual growing process of a plant. A whole day's growth of a plant can be recorded on the screen in one second.

Pay Low in 1892
HARRISBURG, Ill. (UP)—General rate of pay for digging coal in 1892, as revealed in a recently uncovered yellowed payroll book of the old Black Hawk mine, was 27 cents a bushel. Average pay was slightly over \$1 a day and owner-operators took in about \$10 a week.

TAILSPIN TOMMY—A Disappointment!



BEN WEBSTER'S CAREER—Lotsa Headaches!

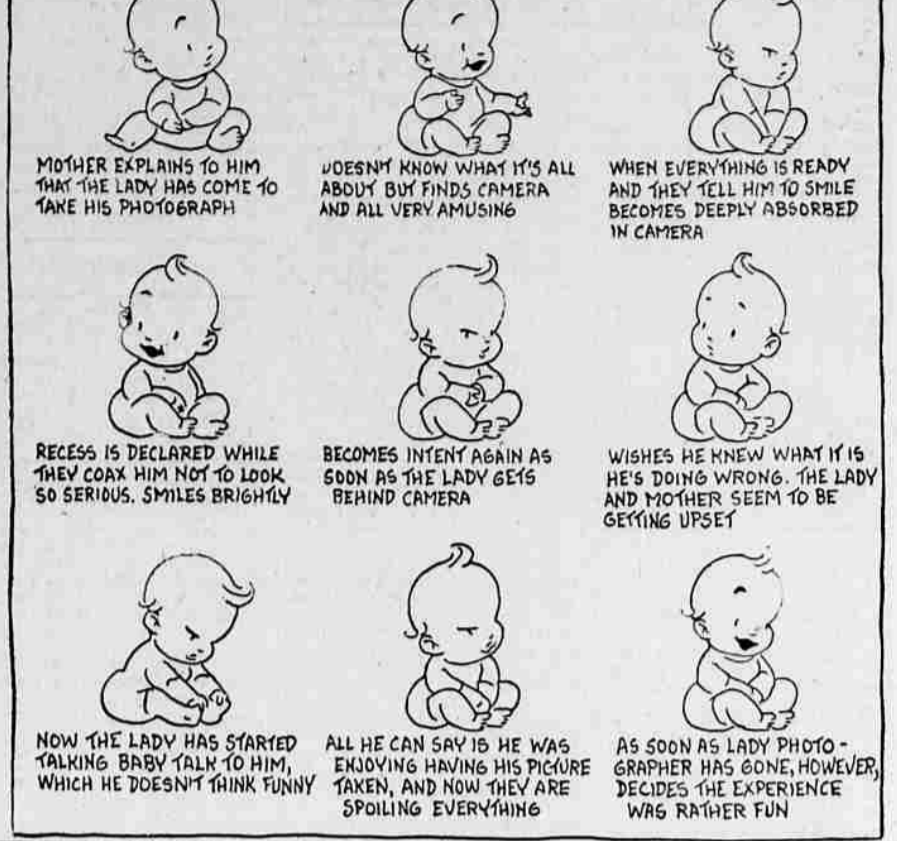


THE NEBBS—Cruel World



SMILE, PLEASE

By GLUYAS WILLIAMS



S'MATTER POP By C. M. PAYNE



By HAL FORREST



By EDWIN ALGER



By SOL HOFF



COMMODITY PRICE CREEPS UP AGAIN TO NEW '37 HIGHS

NEW YORK, June 1.—(UP)—Commodity prices again have started a slow ascendancy after the sharp break occasioned by President Roosevelt's remarks on high prices and speculation.