

# MURDER ON THE BLUFF

**SYNOPSIS:** Just wild, stormy weekend at Farrington Bluff, home of Michael's aunts, opens with the mysterious shooting to death of attractive Jude Blinshop. A series of strange attacks apparently explained when we find the body of Michael's mad father below the bluff. Then Aunt Martha is shot in the shoulder by an unseen hand, and the Skipper, Mike's tall, tuxedoed younger aunt, disappears. Six explosive powder nearly finish Aunt Martha. Leaving Gay Palmer, Mike's fiancée, with her, Mike and I search the cellar, desperately hunting the Skipper.

## Chapter 34

### Locked In

I TRIED the next closet and the next and the next. Splintered wood, broken glass, and a mess of fruits and vegetables. Mike took the ax from me and I stood hanging on to the light while he bashed in two more doors. Then I took another turn and he took another. Before the last closet we paused, looking at each other.

I went at it quietly. Perhaps we were lucky that it was to be in the last one. I shuddered to think of the effect our wild smashing would have had on a person inside any of the others. It took more time this way. The wood gave way slowly with a dull, tearing sound. I seized a loose

with a screech of tearing wood we tumbled pell-mell into the entry and threw open the kitchen door upon an empty room.

The picture in my mind sent me tearing up the back stairs. On the landing, Mike nearly knocked me down, attempting to pass me. I flung open M. Farrington's door, but Mike was into the room ahead of me.

M. Farrington was sleeping. Gay was sitting beside her, and in a far corner of the room William and Annie were whispering together. They all turned sharply toward us. "All right, I think," Gay answered our unspoken question. "Mike, what under the sun—"

I interrupted her. It seemed to me that this was no place for telling the story.

"My fault, kid," I said. "I thought I'd had a revelation or something." "But—"

"Not here. Mike will tell you about it. You two go on down and start Higgins rustling up some food. I'll stay with Aunt Martha." I showed them both into the hall, still protesting. Why had William bolted that cellar door? I was almost positive that he had, and I was equally positive that there would be no use in asking him. He had certainly saved M. Farrington's life, but— At any rate, I sent both him and Annie down to help Cook. Alone, I sat down beside M. Farrington. She looked better, but not enough better for much rejoicing. The Skipper's words, "Her heart is bad,"



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board and ripped it away—then another and another. Mike's face was turned away, his shoulders hunched. Snatching the light from his hand, I flashed it upon—six orderly rows of canned lima beans.

"I suppose," poor Mike's voice was hollow. "we'd better get back to the others. They'll be—wondering."

I couldn't look at him. "I'm sorry, Mike," I said. "I'm damned sorry."

"Forget it!" His laugh was a pretty weak attempt. "Boy! Will Aunt Martha be wild when she sees this!"

It struck me that M. Farrington might never see it.

"Let's get back upstairs."

We left the ax where we had found it, and started down the passage, our light flashing ahead of us. Mike's hand closed on my arm suddenly.

"Jim," he whispered, "wasn't there a light over the stairs?"

I stared into the blackness ahead, and my heart did a flip-flop.

"It was an old bulb," I said. "Probably burned out." But the echo of my voice wasn't reassuring. I breathed a sigh of relief as we gained the top of those rickety steps and my hand found the door knob.

**Crashing In The Door**

"WHAT the devil's the matter?" demanded Michael.

I had to swallow before I could answer.

"The door's locked on the outside—bolted." The reflected light from the kitchen shown clearly through the keyhole when I extinguished our torch.

I handed Mike the flashlight and without a word he went back to the ax. I put my shoulder to the door. It was useless. On that narrow top step there was barely room for steady footing, let alone for bracing yourself for a push. The steepness of the stairs wasn't a running leap out of the question.

I was obliged to stand there waiting for Mike, my ears cocked for sounds from the kitchen beyond—sounds that never came. By the time an advancing ray of light appeared down the passage, my imagination had me on the run. I imagined that the killer had come down into the blackness of the cellar to finish his work. I imagined that I had sent Mike down to his death while I stood at a door, I saw the glint of light on the steel ax, and swallowed hard.

"Here you are, hurry!" Mike's voice was urgent.

It didn't take me 10 seconds to crash in that door.

were drumming in my head. Well, as long as she was sleeping there was nothing more we could do. Sitting there with anxious eyes glued to the old lady's face, I went through a bad half hour.

**A Conviction Gnaws Me**

ONE terrible conviction was gnawing at me persistently—the conviction that the Skipper alone was responsible for our weekend of horrors. Her peculiar actions had been the direct cause of our presence at the Bluff. We had only her unsubstantiated story to explain her invitation, and that story was bizarre, to put it mildly.

It was possible, of course, but it was difficult to believe that Norman Farrington had lived all these years unknown to his own son. Was it plausible that Martha Farrington, who possessed above all things a generous amount of common sense, would have insisted upon harboring a dangerous lunatic in that deserted spot?

Another stumbling block was the presence of Jude Blinshop. Surely a person of the Skipper's determination could have found a dozen pretexts for revoking a commonplace invitation when she realized the very real danger involved. And why the unusual attitude of both sisters toward poor Jude? With Michael flaunting Gay under M. Farrington's nose, the old lady had almost ignored Jude. And the Skipper's "Keep Michael away from Jude!" still rang in my ears—unexplained.

Step by step I once more reconstructed the events of the case. We had come there because of the Skipper. Her attitude had been strange, particularly in regard to Jude. She had been out of doors for an indefinite space of time on the night of the girls' death, and her actions were none too satisfactorily accounted for. She would have known more about the whereabouts of dreamers at the Bluff than anyone else in the house. And Jude would have followed the Skipper into the storm without a moment's hesitation.

She had been in my own sight during the episodes of Cook, Annie and Christopher, and she had been in the sight of all the others when William and I met our assailant. But again, we had Norman Farrington to reckon with.

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We find Cook "doped to the gills," tomorrow.

# STRANGE AS IT SEEMS—By JOHN HIX

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



**CHARLES PEALE—Famous American artist, NAMED ALL OF HIS 11 CHILDREN AFTER THE OLD MASTERS. 3 OF THEM, REMBRANDT, RAPHAELLE AND TITIAN, BECAME ARTISTS.**



**FLOATING ISLANDS OF GRASS ARE USED AS HOME SITES BY INDIANS ON LAKE TITICACA, SOUTH AMERICA, HIGHEST NAVIGABLE LAKE IN THE WORLD... THE REEDS OF WHICH THE ISLANDS ARE COMPOSED ARE ALSO USED FOR HOUSE AND BOAT-BUILDING**

**NEW YORK, A. L., AND PHILADELPHIA SCORED 5 HOME RUNS EACH IN THE SAME GAME... — May 22, 1930**



Betrayed By His Parrot

Head of a notorious gang of French criminals, M. Chambon, who went under the name of Victor Chevalier, successfully eluded capture by the Paris police again and again. About 1888, however, the gendarmes were not on his trail. The lively stable which he kept as a front for his real activities was located and the police raided it. Chevalier had flown the coop with his pet parrot. Only his wife, Marie, remained. The authorities could get no information from her.

Time passed. Chevalier became more and more a thorn in the side of the police force. They followed up lead after lead, but their quarry was always one jump in front of them. Finally the chase led to the Mont-



Betrayed By His Parrot

Victor Chevalier, notorious 19th-century French criminal, was captured by the clues uncovered by the talking of his parrot.

Living On Reeds  
Sole living material of the Uros Indians living on Lake Titicaca is the reed which flourishes in the lake. Growing in tangled floating masses, these reeds even make up the islands on which the natives build their reed homes.

Charles Peale  
Chiefly noted for his many paintings of George Washington, Charles William Peale (1741-1827) was the father of 11 sons, each of whom he hoped might follow in his footsteps. He gave them such names as Van Dyck, Titian, Rembrandt, Raphaelle and Rubens after all old masters. Three of his sons did become artists.—Raphaelle, Titian and Rembrandt.

Wool Mart Brighter  
BOSTON, June 14.—(U. S. Dept. Agr.)—Most wool houses in Boston expressed a fair degree of confidence the last week. Trading showed a moderate expansion confined to relatively few lines.

Salem Mill Gets Contract  
SALEM, Ore. June 14.—(AP)—The Salem Linen mills received today a contract from the navy department at Washington to furnish the Boston navy yards with 61,000 pounds of flax twine on a bid of approximately \$35,000.

WASHINGTON, June 14.—(AP)—Fiscal officials said today that, after six years of heavy borrowing, the government may operate in the next fiscal year without going to the money market for new cash.

# SPANISH IRKED BY MOVIE TABOO

VACAVILLE, Cal., June 14.—(UP)—Excitement was running high in the Spanish quarter of Vacaville to-night after the city council, for the second time within a week, refused permission to show an anti-fascist motion picture of the Spanish civil war. A previous refusal to allow another film to be shown resulted in rioting and the seizure of the film by police, who claimed no motion pictures could be shown without the sponsors having a proper city license. It was reported a refusal to allow showing of "Spain in Flames," scheduled for tonight, incensed the Spanish sympathizers. Handbills were distributed stating the film would be shown regardless of police.

# NAME ATTENDANTS FOR F. D. R. WEDDING

WILMINGTON, Del., June 14.—(AP)—Miss Almee DuPont will be maid of honor, and Mrs. John Böttiger, of Seattle, Wash., matron of honor, at the wedding of Miss Ethel DuPont to Franklin D. Roosevelt Jr., son of President and Mrs. Roosevelt, June 30.

Miss Almee DuPont is a sister of the bride, and Mrs. Böttiger, a sister of the bridegroom.

# THE NEBBS—Oh, Well, That's Different



# IMPERSONATING TOMY LACEY, SLAIN PILOT FOR AN INTERNATIONAL ESPIONAGE ORGANIZATION...



# BEN WEBSTER'S CAREER—It's Spreading!



# TAILSPIN TOMMY—An Unexpected Demand!



# Wool Mart Brighter



# Crashing In The Door



# SUBURBAN HEIGHTS by GLUYAS WILLIAMS



FRED PERLEY WAS DEFINITELY IN AN EMBARRASSING POSITION WHEN HIS WIFE, IN ONE OF HER NOT UNUSUAL MOODS WHEN SHE MIXES UP REVERSE AND LOW SPEED AHEAD, DROVE THE CAR INTO THE BACK YARD OF THE NEIGHBOR WITH WHOM FRED IS NOT ON SPEAKING TERMS

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# S'MATTER POP By C. M. PAYNE



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# By HAL FORREST



AND TOMMY HASN'T GOT ANY RECEIPT FOR THE SIMPLE REASON THAT THE REAL SPY DESTROYED IT!

# By EDWIN ALGER



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# By SOL HEPP



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