

MURDER ON THE BLUFF

SYNOPSIS: Just wild, stormy weekend at Farrington Bluff, home of Michael's suite, opens with the mysterious shooting to death of attractive Juan Blinshop. A series of strange attacks is apparently explained when we find the body of Michael's mad father below the bluff. Then, under by an unseen hand, and the Skipper, Mike's tall, tweedy aunt, disappears. Sleeping powder nearly finish Aunt Martha, William, the chauffeur, Mike and I leave Gay Palmer, Mike's fiancee, with Aunt Martha while we hunt futilely for the Skipper.

Chapter 35

Doped To The Gills

THE Skipper had run from Jude's room straight to the exact spot of his brother's fall, just as if she had known what she was looking for and where to find it. She had particularly requested that her doubtful story about the old man not be repeated to her sister, the only person aside from Higgins who could in any way substantiate or refute it.

Her alibi with respect to the shooting of M. Farrington rested exclusively on Higgins, who would have died for her with pleasure. Higgins had been in a bad state of nerves since our arrival. I could not forget that he, intentionally or otherwise, had almost succeeded in causing my fingerprints to be planted on a weapon that he certainly believed to be the only one used on M. Farrington.

It all boiled down to the fact that the Skipper was the center of the horror that engulfed us. She could use a gun quickly and well—we had seen her do so in the case of the cat. Her story could be substantiated only by Martha Farrington, and Martha Farrington's life had twice been threatened since we had heard it. The Skipper had been left alone with her sister, who, but for our chance arrival, would have been dead. And the Skipper was missing.

My mind began to consider the unsuspecting rescue party that would probably put in an appearance by morning. I wondered what they would say—that we should say to them. I speculated upon who would be in that boat.

I pictured to myself old Andie Darrel, with salt water running down his wrinkled face and his enormous mouth gaping at us. Andie would be in that boat. And after Andie—I could not seem to decide on anyone else. Well, she should say that two people had been killed, a third both wounded and poisoned, and a fourth disappeared. Andie would gape at us, and then—blankness. I went over the same ground a dozen times before William came in.

"Mr. Michael says to come down to dinner, sir. I'm to stay with Miss Farrington."

William was to stay—well, suppose he had locked that cellar door? He had saved the old lady's life first, and he would hardly have gone through all that if he were planning another stay. After all, it was Michael's aunt and Michael's decision. I went down to dinner.

An Appalling Meal

I HAVE eaten some bad meals in my day, but I have never seen confronted by anything as bad as the one Hash-browned potatoes, cold and reeking of grease, underdone pork chops, limp and slimy burnt peas fresh from a tin can. Mike threw down his fork in disgust.

"Higgins," he exploded, "what the devil is the meaning of this?"

Higgins had been quite well aware of what he was giving us. He had served the appalling meal as quietly and carefully as he might have served a banquet for the Duke of York, and yet I had the impression that he had been enjoying an excellent joke. His face never moved a muscle.

"The meaning of what, sir?"

Michael nearly strangled. "Don't mimic me! What do you mean by serving this disgusting mess? Has Cook lost her mind?"

"No, sir. Cook is a bit upset, sir. I'm very sorry."

"Sorry!" Michael's face turned purple. "Do you mean to—?"

But Gay interposed quickly. "Shut up, Mike. Is there anything in the ice box, Higgins?"

"There might be, miss. I will look."

Gay pushed back her chair. "Never mind," she said. "We'll look ourselves."

Unexpectedly Higgins planted his back against the door. His face was expressionless, but it stopped all three of us.

"If you'll excuse me, miss, I would advise your going into the kitchen just now. His words were civil enough, but his tone was commanding. It took Michael several seconds to be able to speak at all.

"Cook is not quite herself. Nerves and a little too much stimulant, sir." I glanced back at the untouched meal. "Do you mean she's drunk, Higgins?"

"No, not exactly."

Brushing past the butler, Mike strode into the kitchen with Gay at his heels. I took a good look at Higgins. With a slight shrug he stepped to the table and began to clear it. I wanted to knock some answers out of the man, but his back told me plainly that I might just as well save my breath. Reluctantly I followed the others.

An arresting scene presented itself in the kitchen. Cook sat at the head of the table, a huge spoon in her hand with which she from time to time dipped into an enormous bowl in front of her. The woman was not drunk. She was doped. Her eyes and skin betrayed that.

Mike was staring at her, dumbfounded. But sheer terror was written all over the face of Annie, who crouched on a stool at the other end of the table, apparently under orders not to move. Through the open door into the entry, I could see Gay rummaging in the refrigerator.

"What's the matter with you?" said Michael sternly.

Cook waved a roguish, dripping spoon in his direction and began to curse fluently. We couldn't quiet her for a long time.

Finally, she turned the full benefit of her glassy, muddled eyes on my face. Then, grunting like a ponderous animal, she wobbled to her feet and wove an unsteady course up the stairs, still clutching the repulsive bowl in her arms. Four of us gaped after her.

Is Cook An Addict?

MIKE dug himself into a chair. "Oh, hell!" he muttered wearily. "What next? Damn it all, what next?"

I didn't answer him. My attention for the moment was fixed upon Annie, still shivering at the end of the table.

"Annie," I said, "have you ever seen Cook like this before?"

The girl nodded dumbly.

"Often?"

"No—only once."

"When?"

"Last winter. It was only once, Mr. Wells. She ain't done it in years except then. It was—was an awful storm, sir. And she had a toothache."

I chewed that rapidly. "Did either of the Miss Farringtons know of it?"

Annie was on the verge of tears. "No, sir. We—she said she was sick—me and William. There wasn't no use in letting on to Higgins. He'd have gone straight to the missus, and—"

"Hard to live things down, sir. I used to know Cook when I was little. She'd given it up, sir. And anyway, it wasn't like this. She was just quiet, Mr. Wells, you're not going to—"

"I don't know," I said. "Go help Miss Palmer scare up something to eat out there."

She went, but I had to help her to her feet. As soon as she was out of earshot I whirled on Michael.

"She's doped to the gills now. That means—"

"I was just beginning to realize what it did mean. The second attempt on M. Farrington's life had been made by dope. And either Cook had once been an addict or Annie was a liar. No help was forthcoming from Michael. He sat staring at the floor, not even listening to me."

"What do you think, Mike?"

No answer. Impatiently I shook his shoulder. But the entrance of Gay and Annie stopped me. They had found food all right—plenty of it. But for once a successful raid afforded me no satisfaction. We all ate because we needed food, not because we wanted it. Higgins made quiet entrances and exits to and from the dining room, assured us that he had already eaten, begged permission to retire, and took himself off upstairs with evident relief.

Over and over in my mind, I mulled the possibilities that this new angle lent to the situation. If Cook was now doped—and there seemed very little doubt on that score—there was a possibility that she had been in the same condition on the night when Norman Farrington made his dramatic entrance into the house.

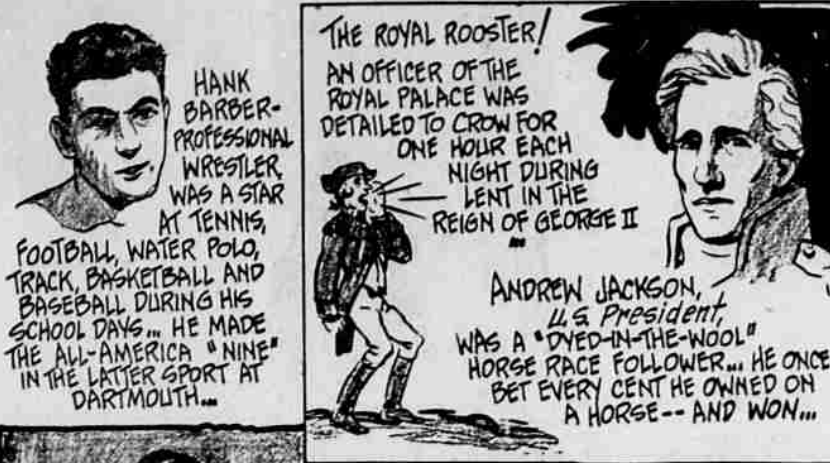
In that case, all our previous calculations on time were worthless. There was no telling how long Annie had lain bound and gagged in the entry. And the unquestionable fact of William's lathered and partially shaven face dwindled in importance. He might have taken all the time in the world to prepare that evidence.

(Copyright 1937 Esther Taylor)

Gay does a little stage setting in the living room, tomorrow.

STRANGE AS IT SEEMS—By JOHN HIX

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The cause of the strange reflecting phenomenon found in the so-called "magic mirrors" of Japan aroused considerable interest in scientific circles some years ago. It was finally explained as follows:

In common with practically all mirrors made in Japan up until recent years, the "magic mirrors" were made of metal and had raised designs molded on their backs. Cast flat, they were curved by being scratched with iron tools and then rubbed off by rubbing in mercury. This treatment caused a greater curvature of the face of the mirror over the plain parts of the back than over the parts carrying a design. Due to this unusual curvature, beams of light reflected from the face of the mirror to a wall or other flat surface shows the outline of the design on the back of the mirror in much the same manner as a piece of paper covering part of the face of an ordinary mirror will outline itself. On the "magic mirror," however, no irregularity is visible to a person looking at its surface.

Presidential Race Fan
Ready-fisted and wild, Andrew Jackson must have been a big disappointment to his mother, who died when he was in his fourteenth year. It was her fond hope that he would take up the ministry as his life work, but "book larnin'" bored young Andy to death.

Raised in the Carolina frontier country, he came into an inheritance of \$1800 at sixteen. This was a good-sized fortune in those days, but the young hero didn't keep it long. A lover of horseflesh from boyhood, he tossed the entire sum away on bets at a Charleston race track.

Later, when he became a rising young lawyer, Andrew's flair for horse racing had him in continual financial hot water. Heavily in debt, on one occasion, he backed his horse, Truxton, with every cent he owned—\$450. The horse won.

All-Round Athlete
There are few important sports which Hank Barber, now a professional wrestler, has not tried. Three years a football tackle at Dartmouth, he was also a member of the school's track, basketball, water polo and baseball teams. He made the 1932 All-American nine in the latter sport. While at Cambridge Latin, Barber won the All-Intercollegiate tennis championship.

Tomorrow: Lobster Promenade.

County Restricts Credits.
COQUILLE — (UP) — Sales of all county-owned property for less than \$100 will be for cash only, the county court decreed here. Sales of more than \$100 worth of property will include the provision for terms, 20 per cent down and the remainder in installments.

OSC Students Tour.
CORVALLIS, June 15. — (AP) — Twenty-three students of the Oregon State college summer session field course in home economics, representing 11 states, will sail from Vancouver, B. C., June 26 for a two-months tour of Japan, China and Korea.

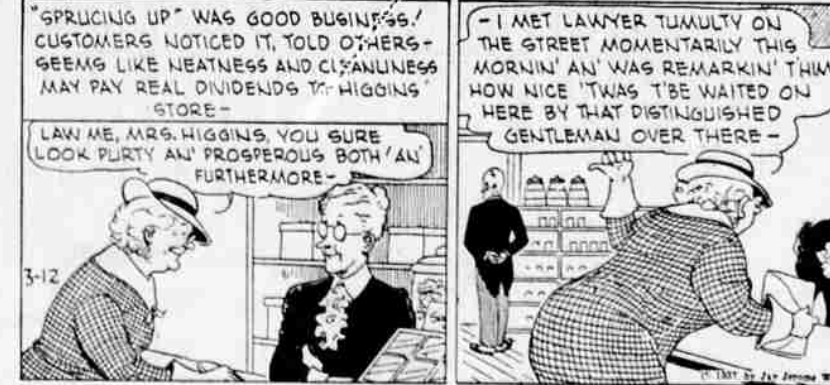
Waiting at Prison Gate.
HELENA, Mont., June 15. — (AP) — Governor Roy E. Ayers approved the extradition to Vale, Ore., on a swindling charge, of Harry Sullivan, alias Steve Sullivan, due to be released from the Montana state prison where he is serving a sentence for forgery.

TAILSPIN TOMMY—The Woman in the Case!



Gay does a little stage setting in the living room, tomorrow.

BEN WEBSTER'S CAREER—Class Tells!



THE NEBBS—It's Different Now



LOST AND FOUND



S'MATTER POP



By C. M. PAYNE

AIR JOY RIDERS GIVEN WARNINGS

LOS ANGELES, June 15.—(AP)—Two plane crashes and the death of five aerial "joy riders" in the Los Angeles area Sunday spurred drastic enforcement of flying rules today.

J. S. Marriott, supervising inspector of the federal bureau of aeronautics, asked Washington headquarters for more men to handle increasing air traffic here and warned airports against violations by pilots.

Three occupants of an old model biplane were killed when it lost a wing during a loop above San Marino and plunged 800 feet to a vacant field.

A small training plane carrying two young men fell in a tailspin six blocks from its hangar at Grand Central air terminal, Glendale.

AMERICAN SYSTEM LAUDED BY SMITH

PARIS, June 15.—(AP) Former Governor Alfred E. Smith of New York said today his impressions of Europe led him to believe the American system of government was better than any kind of "ism."

Addressing the American club, the former governor declared he was a Jeffersonian Democrat, "which means that I am for the kind of government that can't be changed unless the people want it changed."

Smith will be received by President Robert Lebrun Wednesday, and Premier Leon Blum Friday. He plans then to visit England and Ireland.

More Union Voting

PORTLAND, June 15.—(AP)—E. B. Weber, secretary of the Northwest Woodworkers Federation, said today that a balloting committee is in Longview preparing to conduct a vote on the question of whether locals of the Lumber and Sawmill Workers Union in that area will affiliate with the C.I.O.

Jap Consul Moved

PORTLAND, June 15.—(AP)—Ken Tsurumi Japanese consul here since 1935, was notified today of his appointment as consul general for the Harbin Manchoukuo district. His successor here has not been named.

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