

MURDER ON THE BLUFF

SYNOPSIS: The mysterious shooting to death of Jude Blinshop, my old flame, opens our stormy weekend at Farrington Hill, home of Michael's aunt. A series of strange attacks is 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. Sleeping partners nearly finish Aunt Martha, and Cook gets "doped to the gills." Searching the bedrooms, Mike, Gay Palmer, his fiancée, and I find proof that William, the chauffeur, is an ex-convict.

Chapter 38 Nightshirt Apparition

"If William is our man, we're on a bad spot," I said. "If he's the murderer, I'm pretty sure he has another revolver. And furthermore, he knows how to use it."

Michael gave a violent start. "He was alone with Aunt Martha for— He didn't finish. He didn't need to. We were all thinking the same thing. We started down that hall in a body. All in a heap, we burst into M. Farrington's room.

Annie had been sitting beside the bed, reading. On the bed M. Farrington, wide awake, was surveying us with a chilly eye.

"Are you running away from something?" her dry voice demanded.

Michael found his tongue first. "Sorry, Aunt Martha. We—got worried about you."

"Quite sudden, wasn't it?"

Despite everything, I couldn't control my laugh. Good old M. Farrington. Queen Victoria perched on a cyclone I roared, and the others along with me. Queen Victoria continued to sit sedately waiting until we gradually subsided. Gay was still giggling when the old lady spoke.

"Now, if you have all had your little joke, perhaps one of you would tell me what this is all about?"

Michael sank down on the bed beside her. "Aunt Martha," he said, "you're marvelous, only in our present weakened condition we aren't up to you."

"Hmhmhm" observed M. Farrington.

For want of something better, I asked her how she felt.

"Amazed." The dry voice was getting drier. "Well?"

Mike took a deep breath and plunged in. "Well, you see none of us had been in to see you because we didn't want to disturb you, and we—the idea struck us all at once that you might not be all right. We—er—we got worried."

I opened my mouth to elaborate upon the subject, when Michael's foot dealt me a savage kick in the shin. He glanced significantly at Annie, and I realized that I had been about to narrate our whole case against William in front of the girl. And it would not be safe to send her out of the room. She would head straight for William, and the door of his room was probably standing wide open, exposing a perfect record of our activities.

"We're getting a little jumpy," I put in lamely. "Do you mind a bit of company for a while?"

We had not bluffed the old lady. I was glad to see, M. Farrington's advice was something to go with right then, if only I could get the coast clear to ask for it.

An Obvious Ruse

"ANNIE," said M. Farrington, "I wish you would find my glasses. I think I left them on the table in the library."

I nearly swallowed my tongue. Annie was going to get a sight of either William's room or the living room only over my dead body.

I said, "I've forgotten my cigarettes. I'll be right back."

It was an obvious ruse—too damned obvious. But Gay didn't understand. "I have some here, Jimmie."

"Wrong brand," I said, glaring at her as she edged myself toward the door. I followed Annie into the hall. I stepped into the living room and watched her until she disappeared in the direction of the library. Our little tableau was just as we had left it. Whether or not it had been discovered by anyone, I couldn't tell. I switched off the radio, shoved the furniture back into position, and yanked the dummy sleepers apart. A good alibi was on the tip of my tongue for anyone who might interrupt me. I was looking for my cigarette case. But no one interrupted me. Galloping up the stairs, I cut down the hall and into the servants' quarters. William's door was closed. The shock of that sent me crashing through it. The light had been extinguished by someone—someone who was no longer in the room. Drawers had been returned to their places. Everything had been tidied. In the faint light from the hall, I could see that even the cushion had been returned to its place at the window. I strode over to the thing.

Its snaps had been refastened. Someone—possibly William himself—had been covering our tracks. Why? I closed the door and crept to the head of the narrow staircase. From below I could hear the faint rumble of voices—William's and Annie's. Not William then. Not unless he had been standing just outside his door as we rushed out of it, worked with remarkable speed, and rushed down to the kitchen when he heard my steps in the hall. I had lost all conception of time. Whether or not such action would have been possible, I couldn't say. He was gone from that room more than five minutes?

If William were eliminated, only Cook and Higgins were left. Cook's room was straight across the hall from the scene of activity and Higgins' was right next door to it. They were both in their rooms. It was possible. But why should they cover our tracks? Why should anyone do that, unless—the thought struck me like a thunderbolt—unless the Skipper was still in the house?

If the Skipper was in the house, her disappearance must have been of her own choosing. Why? In my excitement I bumped smartly against the wall. Higgins' door flew open and Higgins, an apparition of nightshirt and spindly legs, confronted me.

"Nervous, But No Fool"

"WHOS there?" His voice was nervous. "What do you want?"

I had no intention of frightening him. I didn't answer him at once because I expected him to step into the hall where he would have seen me standing against the wall next to his door.

"I heard you," he quavered. "And I know where you're hiding." "It's only me, Higgins," I said, stepping into his range of sight. "Don't be alarmed."

Whatever he had been afraid of, I apparently had not been involved in it. With a gusty sigh of relief, he leaned heavily against the door.

"Oh, it's you, sir. I—I wasn't sure. My nerves aren't so good any more." Was he acting or wasn't he?

I said, "Have you been in William's room at all tonight?"

He stared at me blankly. "No, sir. Why?"

"Have you heard anyone in there since you've been in your room?"

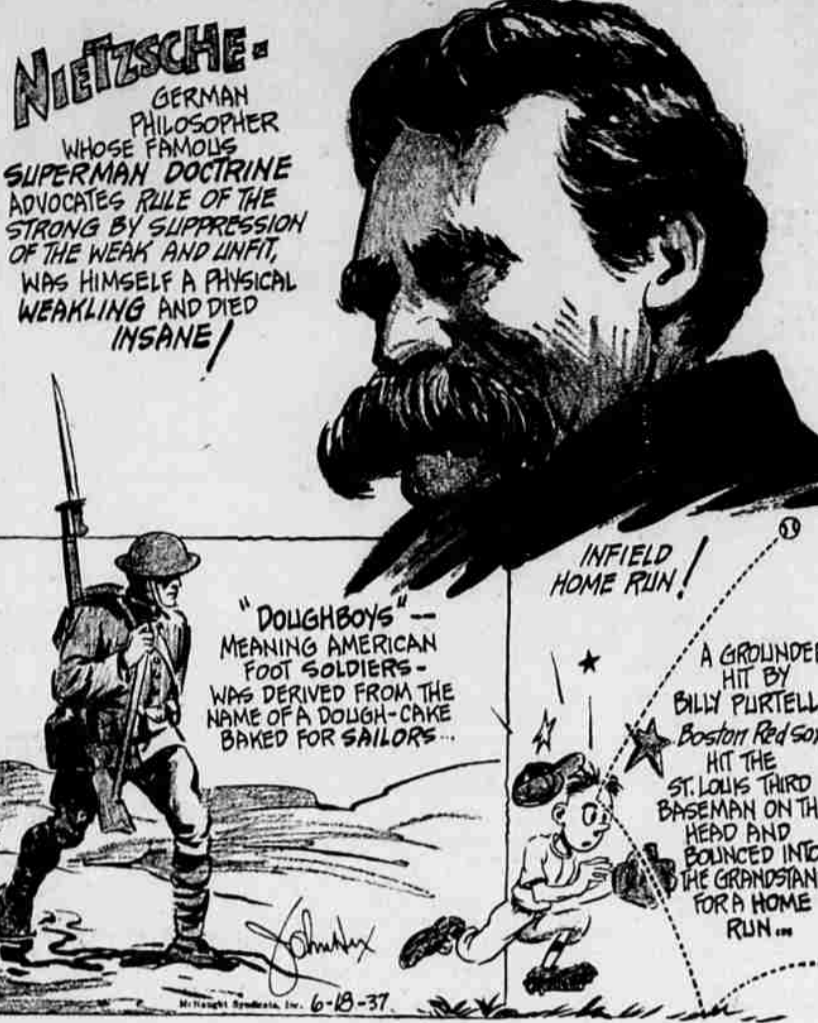
Sleepy or not, his eyes were on the alert. "No, sir."

"That's odd, Mr. Michael. Miss Palmer and myself were searching that room just a few minutes ago."

I was giving him his chance. If the conditions were had almost given me concerned. William, there would be little point in his withholding the information now. He was no fool. He would normally conclude that if we had searched William's room, we must in some degree suspect William.

STRANGE AS IT SEEMS—By JOHN HIX

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strength and pride were offered as the cardinal virtues of his teachings. Nietzsche, himself, fell far short of his ideal, the "superman." A professor of the University of Basel, he was forced to retire by ill health. Wandering from health resort to health resort, the philosopher eventually went insane. He died in 1900.

Home Run Grunder

At bat for the Boston Red Sox against the St. Louis Browns some 25 years ago, Billy Purcell cracked a hot grounder down the third base line. Art Griggs, the Browns' third baseman, reached down to scoop up

the ball. Hitting a bump, the ball bounced up, struck Griggs' forehead and glanced off into the stands. Purcell rounded the bases and came in for his team's winning score on the "grunder home run."

Phone Strike Off

WARREN, O., June 18.—(AP)—Telephone jangled again today as 87 operators called off their strike, went back to their switchboards here with pay raises and began to ask for your number—and more nickels.

Medical Attention

Total cost of bringing a dog or cat into Honolulu, exclusive of steamer fare, therefore is \$30.

Hotel Walkout Ends

KANSAS CITY, Mo., June 18.—(AP)—A strike of 450 Kansas City hotel workers ended early today when operators of seven hotels signed a contract guaranteeing virtually a closed shop to an equal number of unions.

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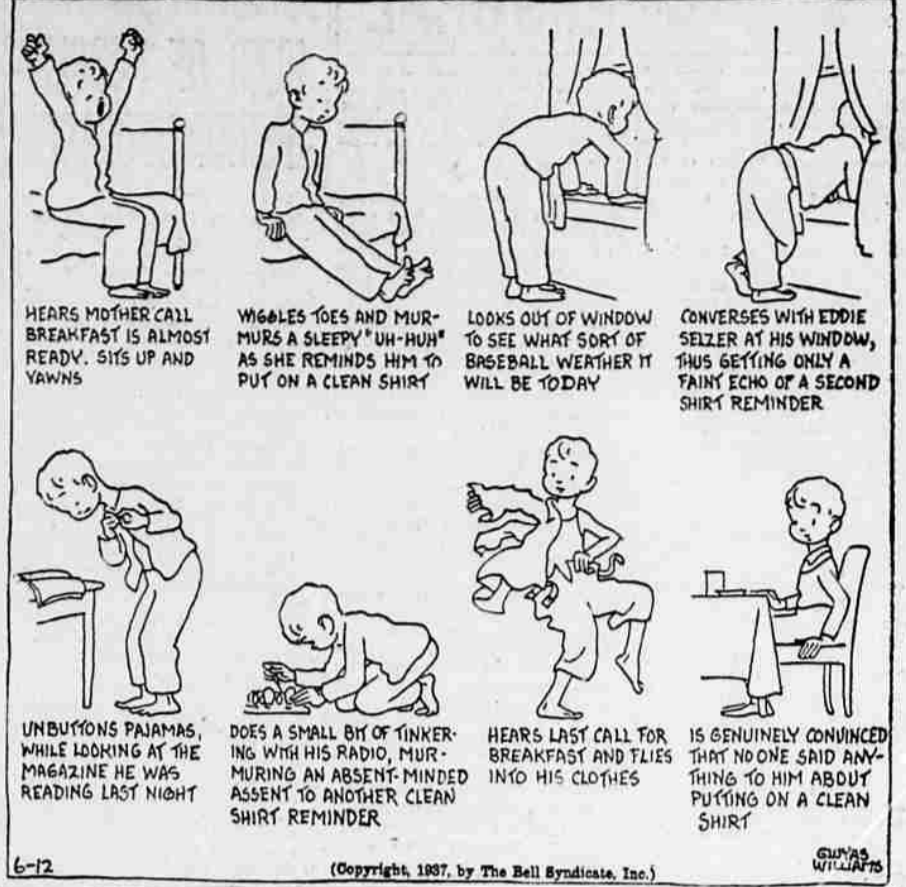
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SENSE OF HEARING

By GLUYAS WILLIAMS



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S'MATTER POF

By C. M. PAYNE



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TAILSPIN TOMMY—Skeeter 'Dates' Tommy's Girl!



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BEN WEBSTER'S CAREER—Good Luck?



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THE NEBBS—Just Dumb



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HAWAII PREVENTS PERIL OF RABIES BY STRICT LAWS

HONOLULU (UP)—Hawaii, which boasts that it has no snakes, is free of another sometimes dangerous scourge, rabies.

A disease, which has been noted in almost every other nation, never has been found in the "paradise of the Pacific."

Furthermore, it never will be, health experts predict. The most stringent animal quarantine laws enforced under U. S. jurisdiction are administered in Hawaii. No dog or cat brought in from outside points may be taken home by its owner until it has been thoroughly examined by territorial veterinarians and kept in quarantine 120 days.

"This is the only place in the United States where such quarantine laws are in effect," explained Dr. B. A. Gallagher, territorial veterinarian in charge of the station. "While the restrictions may appear severe, we believe them to be entirely reasonable."

"By vigilant enforcement of the quarantine laws diseased dogs and cats are refused admittance to the territory. No complaints are made by dog owners after the fairness and purposes of the quarantine are explained."

"Owners are permitted to visit the kennels at any time and their own veterinarians may care for the pets if they wish," Dr. Gallagher said.

"Not all incoming pets and warm-blooded animals pass through the advanced territorial station, so many dogs were brought in by army personnel that over-worked territorial authorities persuaded the army veterinary service to assume quarantine responsibility for such animals. Navy pets still go through the territorial station since their number has proved smaller."

Capt. E. E. Hodgson, in charge of the army station, reported that from June 27, 1936, to January 15, 1937, 68 pets owned by army officers were landed through his office. Other warm-blooded animals are subject to a four-day territorial quarantine, plus

By SOL HESS