

MURDER ON THE BLUFF

SYNOPSIS: A mysterious shot kills Judge Blinshop, my old flame, at the start of our stormy weekend at Farrington Bluff, home of Michael's aunt. After a series of strange attacks, we find the body of Michael's mother below the bluff. Then stout, Victorian Aunt Martha is shot in the shoulder and nearly finished with sleeping powder. Evidence piles up against Higgins, the old butler, and I reluctantly lock him in his room. The Skipper, Mike's all, too young aunts, disappears; we find her six hours later, bound in a chest in the dusty old loft.

Chapter 47

A Shot In Higgins' Room

"Get William," I wheezed. "Yell for him."
Michael yelled, his voice ringing widely through that empty loft. An answering roar came immediately from below, and the next instant William's head appeared through the trap.
"Get down a few rungs!" I panted. "I'll hand her down."
William was quick and efficient. Slowly we lowered our limp bundle into his waiting arms. I followed him with Michael clattering behind me. I could hear M. Farrington's excited voice in William's room, interrupted by Gay's soothing one. I saw Annie, white and trembling, in Cook's doorway. But William was halfway down the corridor, I caught up with him as he strode into my room and laid his burden on my bed. His large hand went immediately to the Skipper's heart and stayed there for at least 10 seconds.

"Get a mirror," he said at length in a hushed voice.
I leapt to obey him. Without a word he held the thing over the Skipper's nose and mouth. I was obliged to hold on to Michael to prevent interference. And then William turned the mirror up. It was covered with a fine mist.
His voice barked at us, "Open the window! Quick!"

I did—and a great many other things in the next half hour, until I became violently ill myself—and had to be taken out.

William was just lowering the Skipper's head to the pillow as I reentered the room shakily a long time later. The glass he had handed Gay was empty, but the patient's face was still ghastly, her eyes closed, and her breathing now painfully audible from across the room. I caught sight of Michael. Beads of perspiration were standing out on his forehead. His hands were clenched, his eyes shut.

I went out into the hall, groping for a cigarette and trying to deafen my ears to the sounds from the other room. I had had enough. Even the thought of the approaching hour of reckoning failed to move me. The Skipper would tell her story. The police would come. And for my part at that moment, I didn't care what she might tell them or what they might do about it. I was through. Or so I thought.

It must have been a good 10 minutes before I realized that Michael had joined me.
"Got a cigarette?" he said.
The gloomy light had just begun. After a long time I became conscious of the scene outside the window. The trees along the drive were standing out in sharp relief. I could even see the outline of the drive itself in the misty gray light. My watch said five minutes of six. We were within a few hours of the end.
"It's getting light, Mike," I said pointlessly.

A Hollow Feeling

MICHAEL, staring fixedly out of the window, didn't stir. I put an impulsive hand on his shoulder, half expecting it to be shaken off. It wasn't. And so we stood there. A hollow feeling in my middle and a lightness in my head spelled breakfast, but I had a feeling that once confronted with food I would not be able to eat it. Suddenly I wanted to get back into that sick-room to find out—whatever there was to find out. But I didn't like to propose that to Michael and I didn't like to leave him alone.

A hand falling on my arm made me jump. Gay was standing there. "She's going to be all right. She's asleep finally."

Michael spun around. "Are you sure? It may be hours before we can get a doctor."
"Of course I'm sure. Her breathing is all right now and her pulse is good. I took it myself. Mickie—" Her voice was doing things that could mean only a sentimental interlude. I interrupted peevishly.

"Did she say anything?"
Gay glanced at me briefly. "She said she was sorry to be such a damned nuisance. If anyone should happen to ask me, I'd say we got out of this pretty darned lucky."

BATHING IN NUDE ALLOWED BY LAW; REPEAL IS SOUGHT

SANDUSKY, O. (UP) The steel-rigid laws of 1846 will be revised and repealed under a city commissioner's drive against obsolete regulations.

The laws at that time were so numerous and quirky, that even law-abiding citizens "looked before they acted," lest they break some misty unknown regulation.

One regulation, passed in 1853 and unrescinded to date, provides for nude bathing in Sandusky bay between sunset and sunrise. The regulation states that "it shall be unlawful for any person, in an unclothed and naked condition, to go into or bathe in the open waters of Sandusky bay, within the corporate limits of the city, at any time after the rising of the sun and before dark."

I tiptoed into the Skipper's room. She did look better. There was a slight tinge of color in her face. But God! How haggard she was! Her cheek bones stood out sharply; her eyes were great black hollows; and her hair, in the dim light of the bed lamp, showed almost entirely iron-gray. And only a few months before—it was unthinkable!

I found myself reverting to one all-important question: Judge's family. Who was to tell them? It would be sheer cruelty to leave the job to any one of the three Farringtons. Gay had never met the Blinshops. And that left me.

Right then and there I began to lay plans. We would say absolutely nothing to the natives who arrived from the village. I would go back with them and straight to George Foster, her corner. I knew Foster, a fat old boy who loved above all things to troll for bass. I would tell him the whole story and leave it up to him. He had spent a lifetime in such messes, and he had a lifetime friend of the Farringtons. If anyone knew what to do, he would. Then I would either hire a car in the village or borrow Foster's, and head straight for Blinshop.

Screaming through that silent house came the unmistakable sound of a pistol shot, fired at no great distance from where I sat.

"He's done it!" My eyes darted to the Skipper's face. She hadn't stirred. Reaching over, I found her pulse to be strong and steady. Without hesitating I dashed into the hall in the direction from which the sound had come—the other side of the house, near my room. It must be in the servants' quarters. As I crashed through the swinging door I saw the door of Higgins' room standing open, and two more steps brought me within range of all I wanted to see.

Higgins lay sprawled grotesquely over the bed. In one hand was the much discussed revolver. A small, blue hole showed in one of his temples. There was a great deal of blood on the coverlet. The house was ringing with pounding feet.

"He's done it!" shouted William. "He's done himself in!"

I tried to answer, but I couldn't get out a single word. So it was Higgins after all. Higgins, the dignified, pompous old codger, to die like this! There were screams in the hall, screams and babbling voices. M. Farrington was resisting, Michael's attempts to turn her away from the ghastly sight, and Gay on the other side of the old lady was doing her best to help. Beyond them in the hall, Annie was standing in her nightdress, wide-eyed and shaking. I took Gay's arm roughly.

"Go back," the Skipper, I said. "Don't leave her for any reason." Gay seemed to be the only person there with even a mild trace of sanity. She went without a word.

"Please, Aunt Martha!" Michael was saying. "Come away. Please—"

M. Farrington's voice went zooming up the scale wildly. "I will look! I must! I don't believe it! He was here before I was born! He—"

I tried my hand. "Aunt Martha," I said. "Mike can't stand any more of this. He's all in. Take him out of here."

"For an instant it was touch and go, whether the ruse would work or whether she would go off in hysterics. I could see them rising in her spasmodically working throat. And then, 'Of course. Of course!'"

The look of relief on Michael's face was enough for me. I turned back into the room, hearing William's voice in the distance ordering Annie to go back and watch Cook. Once more William and I faced each other over the body.

"I suppose," I said through stiff lips, "we could do something to stop this bleeding. It's—messy."

William's voice wasn't steady. "I wouldn't touch anything, sir. The police will want to see it just like it is. It seems best to leave it—alone like this."

"Well, wait a minute, sir." Before I could stop him, William was out of the room. It was all I could do to keep from shouting after him. I turned away from the sickening sight and leaned heavily upon the dresser. Something bulky under the scarf attracted my attention and I lifted the thing automatically. Lying face upward on the dark oak surface were the two letters that had so mysteriously disappeared from William's room. I was still glaring at the things when William reappeared with a dark blanket which he drew carefully over the bed.

"Look here, William." There was more curiosity than surprise on his face as he took the things. "So that's it. He wasn't a bad sort until something got under his skin—whatever it was."

STRANGE AS IT SEEMS—By JOHN HIX

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RAW MATERIAL SHARE DEMANDED OF WORLD BY NAZI ECONOMISTS

BERLIN, June 29.—(AP)—Adolf Hitler applauded today while Nazi German economists, through their highest apostles of economics, made known to the international chamber of commerce their demand for a share in the world's raw materials and its trade.

Col. General Hermann Wilhelm Goering, virtual dictator of Germany's 4-year plan for self sufficiency, and Dr. Hjalmar Schacht, her economic minister, spoke out to the 1,500 delegates from 40 countries to seek a German place in the economic sun—and the return of war-lost colonies.

Der fuhrer led the applause from the president's box.

Only last night, at Wurzburg, Hitler had his own say on the reich's shortage of raw materials. Then he declared Germany would welcome an inaugural victory in Spain because, "as it is generally known, we try to buy ores everywhere. Spain is rich in the minerals that Germany needs."

TEAMSTERS ENJOINED FROM HALTING BEER

PORTLAND, June 29.—(AP)—Federal Judge James A. Fee signed a temporary injunction Monday restraining the teamster's union from interfering with the delivery of "Red Label" beer from the brewers' union.

The teamsters must appear on July 6 to show cause why the order should not become permanent.

The teamsters placed a boycott on the "Red Label" suds last Thursday and refused to permit its distribution. Coming chiefly from California and Eastern states, the beer handled by the brewers' union represents about one-third of Portland's supply.

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TAILSPIN TOMMY—Broken-Hearted!

TOMMY, AFTER SECURING A PLANE FROM THE SECRET SERVICE AGENT, WHO HAD POSED AS A MECHANIC, AT UNION AIRPORT, FLEW AWAY FROM METROPOLIS CITY, BENT UPON A DANGEROUS MISSION. MEANWHILE, SKEETER AND BETTY—LOU HAVE ARRIVED AT HER APARTMENTS...

2849

BEN WEBSTER'S CAREER—The Summons

COL. TUTTINGTON, I'LL COME RIGHT TO THE POINT—I'D LIKE TO KNOW SOMETHING ABOUT THIS RECIPE YOU AND MRS. TUTTINGTON HAVE FOR LONG LIFE BREAD—

BE SEATED, SUH—BE SEATED—

THE RECIPE, MAH FRIEND, IS THE PROPERTY OF MAH BRIDE—LET ME EXPLAIN, SUH—AH CALLS HER MAH BRIDE JUST AS AH HAVE FO SEVENTY TWO YEARS AH HOPE TO CONTINUE FO MANY MORE—

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THE NERBS—Welcome, Stranger

HELLO MR GRUNTLEY—WHY, I EXPECTED TO MEET AN OLD MAN! TIME HAS CERTAINLY DEALT GENTLY WITH YOU—

PLEASED TO MEET UP WITH YOU—

PSST! GO PUT ON A SHIRT!

I'VE BEEN ALL OVER THE WORLD TASTED FOOD IN ALMOST EVERY COUNTRY BUT I CALL THIS FOOD!!

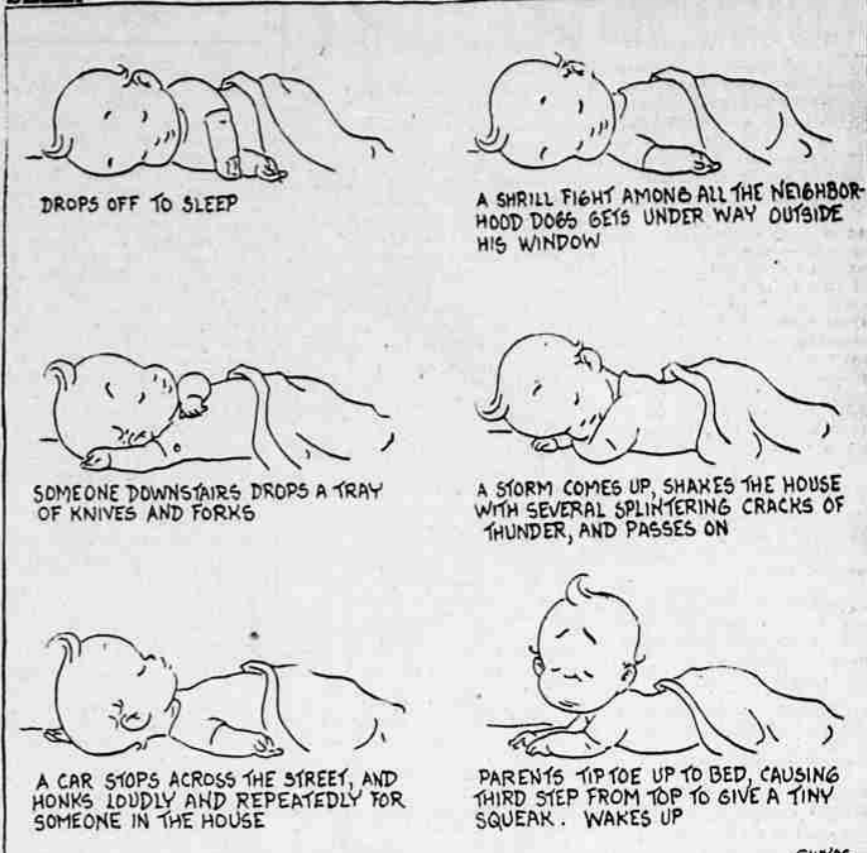
THANKS EXTREMELY FOR THE COMPLIMENT

I DONT WANT YOU TO THINK BECAUSE IM DOWN HERE IM A PIKER... IN '29 I WAS RICH—I HAD A YACHT SO BIG IT TOOK A BIG OCEAN TO TURN AROUND IN BUT THE PANIC TOOK ME, BUT I'LL BE BACK

6-23

SLEEP

By GLUYAS WILLIAMS



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S'MATTER POP

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