THE PHONE BOOTH MURDER

by Phoebe Atwood Taylor

YESTERDAY: Asey Mayo, the Cape Cod detective, was only delivering clams when he ventured into the Whale Inn. He found it deserted, lighted with candles because a storm had put out the lights, and what is more important, he found a corpse sitting on a chair in the phone booth. And now, just after verifying the fact that the corpse is still in the booth, he is accosted by the very self-possessed daughter of the proprietor.

Chapter Six

Through The Keyhole

ASEY chuckled. "I must," he said, "look pretty much of a tramp."

The girl didn't deny it.

"But," Asey continued, "my appearance is deceivin'. I've done some trampin' this evenin', only I ain't one. Miss Doane, how long have you been in this room?"

"Since three this afternoon," the girl said tranquilly. "And now, I'm sure you're in a hurry to get to the Commercial—"

"You mean," Asey said, "you been in this room since three this afternoon? All the time?"

"Yes," the girl said firmly.

Asey's eyes narrowed.

"And if you'll be good enough to come to the door," the girl continued, "I'll point our the direction of the Commercial House."

Asey leaned back his head and opened his mouth wide.

"Jennie! Ahoy, Jen-nie!"

The girl jumped as his quarter-deck bellow roared out.

"Jennie!" Asey took another breath. "Jen-nie!"

"Look here," the girl said sharply, "you've got to stop that din! I can assure you that there is no one named Jennie here!"

"Asey! A-sey!"

"Who's that?" the girl demanded.

"That," Asey said, "is Jennie. Ahoy, Jennie, where are you?"

"Upstairs! Come up here, Asey! I got her, right here!"

The girl ducked down, opened the low-swinging cupboard doors, squeezed herself through them, and ran over to the staircase in front of Asey.

"Absolutely, you can't go up—"

"Aside, youngster," Asey said, and took the stairs three at a time.

He found Jennie on her knees with her eyes focused on the keyhole of a room down the corridor to his right.

"What's goin' on, Jennie? What're you glued to that keyhole for? Who's in there?"

Jennie put her finger to her lips.

"Sshh!" she said. "She's in this bedroom! Right in here! Sshh!"

"What's the use of shushin'?" Asey wanted to know. "Between your yells an' mine, I guess somebody knows we're in this general vicinity! Jennie, who's in there? What you been doin'?"

"Look!" Jennie got to her feet and held out something she'd picked up from the floor beside her. "Look!"

Asey took the white-stitched leather pocketbook from her and glanced at the initials.

"O.E.B. This's the one from the phone booth?"

"Listen," Miss Doane had been desperately trying to get a word in edgeways. "Listen, will the two of you simply stop this and—"

"Oh," Asey said. "I forgot you. Go downstairs, will you, an' phone Hanson of the state police, an' Doc Cummings, the medical examiner, over in Wellfleet. Tel' 'em Asey Mayo wants 'em at the Whale Inn right away. Hurry, will you? Now, Jennie, what'd you take this from the phone booth for?"

"I never did, Asey! I took it from her!" she pointed toward the door at whose keyhole she had been watching.

Miss Doane broke in before Asey had a chance to speak.

The Pocketbook

"YOU don't look like Asey Mayo!" she said. "I've seen innumerable pictures of him. He wears a yachting cap, and a duck coat with lots of little pockets, and he carries a gun. And, besides, he's in Washington right this minute! I saw a picture of him in the paper this morning, shaking hands with people who make engines or something!"

"I'm back," Asey informed her, "an' these are my city clothes. Now, hustle with those calls, will you?"

"Well, all right." But she still looked skeptical as she turned and walked back along the hall to the stairs.

"Now, Jennie," Asey went on, "let me get this straightened out. What's the story on this pocketbook, anyway?"

"I tell you, I took it from the woman that's in the bedroom in there! I didn't take it from the phone booth woman!"

Asey sighed.

"Let's start at the beginnin'," he said patiently. "Somebody knocks over a bucket of clams, an' I rush out into the rain. What did you do then?"

"The minute you left," Jennie said, "I somehow begun to feel awful scared an' trembly. All alone there with those candles flickerin', an' her in that booth! Why, for a minute or two, I just shook! An' then I shut the closet door, an' then I begun to — little better. An' then — in — come!"

"Who?" Asey demanded. "This Doane girl that was just here?"

"No, no, no! The woman at the red lights! The one with the umbrella! The one—"

"Look, Jennie," Asey said soothingly, "I don't blame you for bein' confused. I tell you what I'll do. I'll phone Sam over at the garage an' have him drive my roadster here an' take you home. You need to lie down. You had a hard day even before you got to this place, an' what's happened since hasn't made it any easier. I'm not a bit surprised you seen a ghost! Come on downstairs, an' I'll call Sam."

It was not until he took hold of Jennie's arm that Asey realized his error. The sudden gleam in Jennie's eyes was not gratitude for his consideration, but sheer, unadulterated anger.

"You think I'm a fool, Asey Mayo? You think I don't know what I seen? You think I don't know what I'm talkin' about? I tell you, it was that woman, an' it wasn't no ghost!"

"You mean, she recognized you, an' spoke to you?" Asey asked.

Jennie shook her head.

"She walked straight past me, Asey! Never said a word. I don't think she knew I was there! Straight past me, an' across that livin' room, an' up the stairs!"

"What did you do?" Asey demanded. "Did you speak to her, or put out your hand an' touch her? What did you say?"

"I was so flabbergasted," Jennie said, "I didn't do a thing but gape, an' I think my eyes nearly popped out of my head, Asey. They ain't felt right since. Why there one minute I'd closed the door of that booth, an' the next minute there she was, comin' in the front door an' walkin' past me! I thought it was a ghost, first. But that woman was just as real as could be."

"Honest, Jennie, d'you—"

"I kept thinkin' of things to say," Jennie went on. "Only they all stuck in my throat. She was halfway up the stairs before I could unloosen my tongue an' find my voice. Then I let out a scream. A good loud scream. It even scared me! Scared her, too. She went up the rest of the stairs like a streak of greased lightning. Then I come to an' rushed up the stairs after her. An' right on the stairs was this pocketbook here. I guess that proves she was real, don't it? Ghosts don't cary pocketbooks!"

"An' She Dripped!"

ASEY restrained himself from remarking that ghosts had been known to carry far stranger objects than ladies' handbags.

"Huh," he said. "Then you didn't actually take this bag from her, did you, Jennie? You just found it on the stairs."

"Same thing!" Jennie retorted. "She dropped it when I let out that scream! Don't you look so doubtful, Asey. She had on that felt hat an' that tweed coat. I tell you, it was her."

Asey frowned, and played with the clasp on the pocketbook.

"An' you saw her go into this room?" he asked, as he casually opened the pocketbook and peered inside. "Where is she now?"

"Oh, I didn't see her go in, because she reached the top of the stairs before I even got started," Jennie said. "But I know she's in this room. This is the way she ran. An' I been in every room on this floor that's unlocked, an' I listened outside every room that's locked, an' this is where she is. I heard a rustlin' sound. Twice."

"There's nothin' in this pocketbook," Asey said. "It's empty. Tell me, just where did you find it?"

"On the curve of the stairs, to one side, just where she dropped it when I yelled," Jennie told him. "An' I wish you'd stop askin' a lot of fool questions an' either tell her to come out, or break that door in. I knocked an' banged, but she didn't pay a speck of attention!"

Asey reached out and rapped his knuckles against the door.

"A self-respectin' flea," Jennie said with scorn, "wouldn't hear that knockin'. An' if it did, it wouldn't pay any attention to it! Tell her to come out here!"

"Will the occupant of Room Five," Asey said, "be good enough to open the door?"

Nothing happened.

Asey repeated his request, and then he drew a long breath.

"Honest, Jennie, don't you think that maybe perhaps it was just possibly an imaginary woman, sort of a picture in your mind?"

"I do not! She dropped that pocketbook!"

"Maybe. But someone might've been goin' out in a hurry, an' shifted things from one pocketbook to another—I've known you to do that, Jennie—an' left the empty bag on the stairs."

"I tell you, she dropped it! An' she dripped!"

"She was?"

"She dripped rain. She was wet."

"Let me tell you what I think," Asey said, "an' don't interrupt me till I get through. I think it was perfectly natural, after your closin' the door of that phone closet, to look up an' think you seen that woman's image. Most likely you did."

Jennie's lips pursed themselves into a thin, stubborn line.

To be continued

On the Radio Chains

STATIONS:

Chain affiliation and where they are on the dial:

KALE (MBS) 1330, Portland; KEX (NBC-Blue) 1190, Portland; KGA (NBC-Blue & MBS) 1510 Spokane; KGO (NBC-Blue) 810 San Francisco; KGW (NBC-Red) 620, Portland; KJR (NBC-Blue) 1000, Seattle; KNX (CBS) 1070 Los Angeles; KOA (NBC-Red) 850 Denver; KOIN (CBS) 970, Portland; KOMO (NBC-Red) 950, Seattle; KPO (NBC-Red) 680 San Francisco; KSL (CBS) 1160 Salt Lake City.

Time Shown Is PST

Monday

5:00 p. m.—Adventure Stories KGO, KEX, KJR; Vox Pop, KSL, KOIN; Stars of Today, KGW; Jane Arden, KOMO; Don Winslow of the Navy, KPO.

5:30 p. m.—News of The World, KGO, KEX, KJR; Cocktail Hour, KGW; Bill Henry, KNX; Scattergood Baines, KOIN; November Overcoasters, KOMO; Waltz Rhythm, KPO; Voices of Yesterday, KSL.

6:00 p. m.—Radio Theater, KNX, KOIN, KSL; Dr. I. Q., Jim McClean, KPO, KGW, KOMO; Secret City, KGO, KEX; Scandinavian Reporter, KJR.

6:30 p. m.—For America We Sing, KGO, KEX; That Brewster Boy, KPO, KGW, KOMO; Tropical Moods, KJR.

7:00 p. m.—Mercury Theater, KNX, KOIN, KSL; Monday Merry-Go-Round, KEX, KJR; Contented Hour, KPO, KGW, KOMO.

7:30 p. m.—Cavalcade of America, KPO, KOMO, KGW; Blondie, KNX, KSL, KOIN; Greater Washington Hour, KJR.

8:00 p. m.—Amos 'n' Andy, KNX, KOIN, KSL; Fred Waring, KPO, KOMO, KGW; Herbert Marshall, KGO, KJR, KEX.

8:15 p. m.—Lanny Ross, KNX, KSL, KOIN; Lum and Abner, KPO, KOMO, KGW.

8:30 p. m.—I Love a Mystery, KGO, KEX, KJR; Voice of Firestone, KPO, KGW, KOMO; Gay Nineties Revue, KNX, KSL, KOIN.

9:00 p. m.—Telephone Hour, KPO, KGW, KOMO; True or False, GO, KJR, KEX; Vox Pop, KNX; News, KOIN; Sports, KSL.

9:30 p. m.—Hawthorne House, KPO, KOMO, KGW; Hollywood Showcase, KNX, KOIN; Nat'l Radio Forum, KGO; News, KSL, KJR; Moonlight Sonata, KEX.

10:00 p. m.—Paul Whiteman's Orch., KGO, KEX, KJR; Reporter News, KPO, KGW, KOMO; Masterworks of Music, KSL; News, KNX; Five Star Final, KOIN.

10:30 p. m.—Ed Stoker's Music, KGW, KGO, KOMO; Alvino Rey's Orch., KJR, John Sullivan's Orch., KSL; Broadway Bandwagon, KEX; Ed KSL; Broadway Bandwagon, KEX; Masterworks of Music, KNX; The World Today, KOIN; Concert Hall, KPO.

11:00 p. m.—Bob Bradley, KSL, KOIN; String Serenade, KPO, KGW; This Moving World, KEX, KJR; News, KNX; Reveries, KOMO.

Tuesday.

5:00 p. m.—Adventure Stories, KGO; KJR, KEX; Are You a Missing Heir, KSL; Jane Arden, KOMO; News, KOIN; Don Winslow of the Navy, KPO.

5:30 p. m.—News of the World, KGO, KJR, KEX; The Arkansas Traveler, KSL; Scattergood Baines, KOIN.

6:00 p. m.—Burns and Allen, KPO, KGW, KOMO; Secret City, KGO, KEX; We, the People, KSL; Scandinavian Reporter, KJR; Second Husband, KNX; Leon F. Drews, KOIN.

6:30 p. m.—Symphony Concert, KGO, KEX, KJR; Report to The Nation, KOIN; Fibber McGee and Molly, KPO, KOMO, KGW; Who, What, Where and Why, KNX; World News, KSL.

7:00 p. m.—Bob Hope, KPO, KOMO, KGW; Glenn Miller's Orch., KSL, KNX, KOIN.

7:30 p. m.—Red Skelton, KPO, KGW, KOMO; Treasury Hour, KGO, KEX, KJR; Leon F. Drews, KOIN; Second Husband, KSL.

8:00 p. m.—Amos 'n' Andy, KNX, KSL, KOIN; Fred Waring, KPO, KGW, KOMO.

8:15 p. m.—Lum and Abner, KPO, KGW, KOMO; Lanny Ross, KNX, KSL, KOIN; Concert Hall, KJR.

8:30 p. m.—Johnny Presents, KPO, KOMO, KGW; Information Please, KGO, KEX, KJR; Are You a Missing Heir, KNX, KOIN; News, KSL.

9:00 p. m.—We, The People, KNX, KOIN; Easy Aces, KGO, KJR, KEX; Adventures of the Thin Man, KPO, KOMO, KGW; Sports, KSL.

9:30 p. m.—Battle of the Sexes, KPO, KOMO, KGW; Arkansas Traveler, KNX, KOIN; Mal Hallett's Orch., KGO; News, KJR, KSL; Moonlight Sonata, KEX.

10:00 p. m.—Ran Wilde's Orch., KGO, KEX, KJR; Reporter News, KPO, KOMO, KGW; Masterworks of Music, KSL; News, KNX; Five Star Final, KOIN.

10:30 p. m.—Reid Tanner's Orch., KSL; Charles Dant's Orch., KGW; Alvino Rey's Orch., KGO, KJR; Broadway Bandwagon, KEX; Masterworks of Music, KNX; The World Today, KOIN; Concert Hall, KPO.

11:00 p. m.—Happy Gordon Rangers, KPO, KGW; This Moving World, KEX, KJR; Ken Stevens, KSL, KOIN; News, KNX, KGO; Reveries, KOMO.

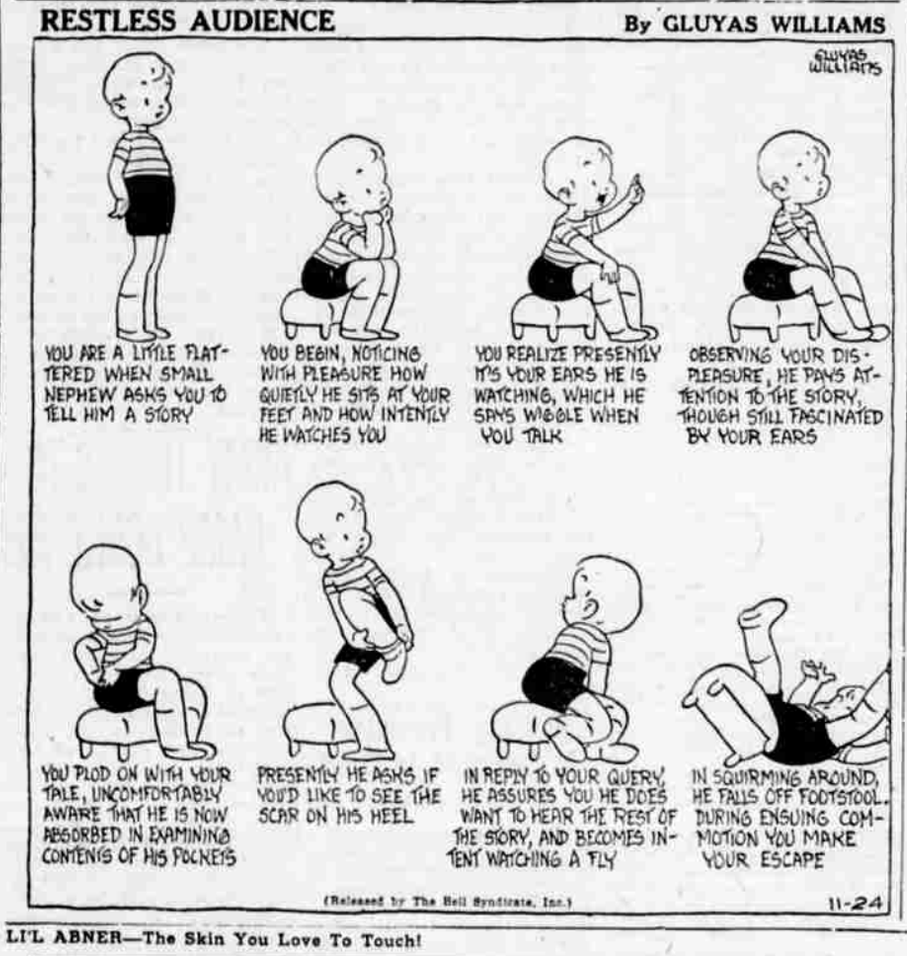
BRINGS LUCK

Perth, Australia, — (AP) — Annoyed because he continued to stub his toe on a jagged piece of rock on the way to his camp, Thomas Starr, a prospector in Kalgoorlie, applied his pick and shovel. On breaking the rock out of its earthy bed he noticed yellow gleams on the underside. He had the stone assayed and found that it contained gold worth $875.

Cy Young, one of baseball's immortals, was traded to the old Cleveland team for a suit of clothes.

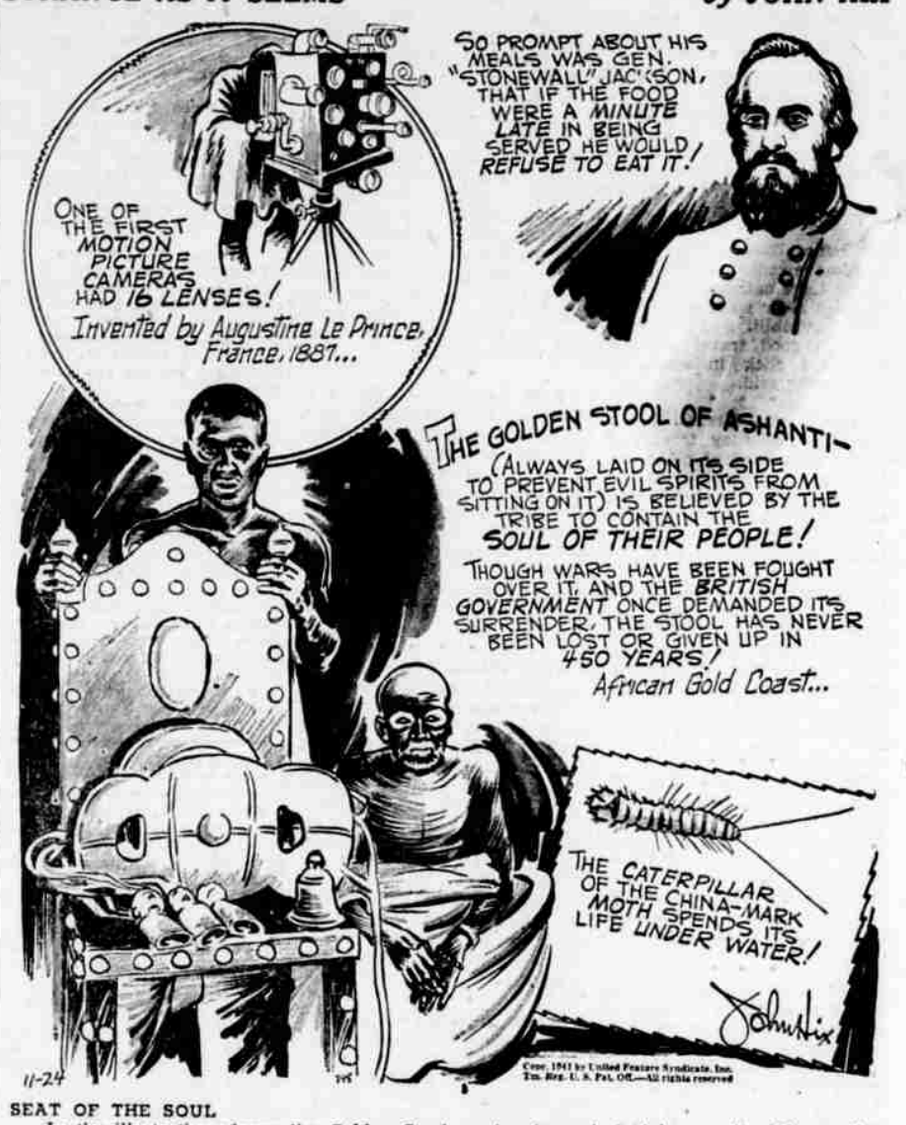
RESTLESS AUDIENCE

By GLUYAS WILLIAMS



STRANGE AS IT SEEMS

by JOHN HIX



SEAT OF THE SOUL

In the illustration above, the Golden Stool, made of wood, is lying on its side on the seat of a chair. Symbolizing Ashanti national unity and spiritual existence, it has never been sat upon by anyone in more than four centuries of its recorded history. In 1900 the British governor of the Gold Coast demanded its surrender and the Ashanti declared war. Later, when they had been subjugated, the stool had disappeared. More than 25 years later the elders of the tribe retrieved it from its hiding place and rebuilt it. With rare understanding the British colonial government decided never to demand its surrender again.

TOMORROW: Billiard Music!

LI'L ABNER—The Skin You Love To Touch!

By AL CAPP

TAILSPIN TOMMY—Ominous Command!

By HAL FORREST

THE NEBBS—It Looks Bad

By SOL HESS

FREIGHTER LAUNCHED

Portland, Nov. 24—(AP)—The John Barry, fifth liberty freighter launched in Portland in the emergency shipbuilding program, entered the Willamette river from Oregon Shipbuilding corporation ways yesterday. A sixth is scheduled for launching next Sunday.

SMELTER HOPE DASHED

St. Helens, Ore., Nov. 24—(AP)—The OPM advised the Columbia county central labor council today to forget its hopes for an iron smelter here. Edwin M. Martin, assistant to the chairman of the OPM plant site board, wrote that the necessity for speed in increasing iron production forced expansion of existing facilities instead of new construction.

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