

THE PHONE BOOTH MURDER

by Phoebe Atwood Taylor

Chapter 12

Gone Like The Wind

"SHE'S back," Rankin said, but she isn't doing anything! What's she waiting for? Why doesn't she get along with it? Give her time."

"I don't think she's going to do anything more," Rankin said impatiently. "Look, Mayo, I think she's stuck. Her car's in the garage. There's Rankin pointed to a building beyond the turntable. She's got to get that body down from the sun deck, get herself down, get her car, get the body into it."

His patience was practically exhausted by the time Rankin reached them via his circuitous route.

"Hi," Asey said. "Where's your car?"

"Parked down the road a bit. Jennie seemed to think that what I ought to do. Asey, Jennie told me all about this, but I don't understand it! And when I asked her to explain anything, I couldn't understand it as well as I hadn't before! What's happened here?"

"We're endeavoring," Asey said. "To find out. Hanson, peek up on the roof—no, this way. By the sun deck. See the lady?"

"What she doing?"

"Lady has a body," Asey said. She's now in the process of brooding—hey, come back here! Hold on, Hanson. We ain't rushing in on her. We're going to let her brood an' see what she does with it. You got your car an' ease it up across from the drive, an' be ready to follow her in case she gets to the point of drivin' off. We're going to wait here an' watch for developments, an' if they don't develop pretty soon, we'll join up in a bit of confusion."

"But, Asey," Hanson began. "Pop along an' get the car."

"But look here," Hanson said plaintively. "I only want to know one thing. Asey! Is all that stuff Jennie told me true?"

"Most probably," Asey said. "Maybe she's done a little embellishin', but she must've stuck pretty close to facts. If she started wonderin', you wouldn't be here now. Say, where's that car goin'?"

"What car?" Hanson returned. "I don't hear any car."

"See them headlights, over yonder."

Asey pointed to the left beyond the kitchen ell.

"Service drive," Rankin said. "It swings along over there."

"How'n time did I miss that?" Asey asked, and at once answered his own question. "That rain the first time, I guess, an' I cut in the other side of it the next time. I was so busy computing the area of them ell's. I suppose it's no wonder I missed a driveway."

"Well, I didn't," Hanson said. "It was full of puddles up to my knees."

He broke off as Asey grabbed his arm.

"Hey! We got to beat it on the dock quick! Hustle up!"

"What for? She hasn't left that roof, has she? I can see her."

"But she just waved! Now she's goin' down! Hustle, Hanson! Get goin'! Whoever come in that car is going to help her! She waved, I tell you! Come on!"

"Can I come too?" Rankin demanded. "Hustle!"

Mad Chase

WITH Asey leading the three of them cut back through the woods, circled wide around the inn, and reached Hanson's police car a split second after a sedan cut out of the service drive.

"I'll drive," Asey said, and started off with part of Hanson and most of Jonathan Rankin clinging perilously to the running board.

Hanson took it as a matter of course. He had driven with Asey too many times before in Asey's own low-slung Porter roadster and when Asey was really in a hurry to be perturbed about a slight catapulting.

But Rankin was frankly shaken by the experience, and he said so, as soon as he reached sufficient breath.

"Do you," he inquired acerbically, "always start off like that?"

"Only," Asey told him, "when the car I'm chasin' has the choice of two main roads an' fifty million little ones—that's funny, Hanson. They're all down to the Cape. They're takin' the Pochet turn."

"How do you know? I can't even see the car!" Rankin complained. "And what made you guess that Elissa might be having help?"

"Wa-el," Asey said, "like you pointed out, she was kind of stuck. An' I seen her make a kind of surreptitious phone call, usin' the back door of that livin' room phone booth, so I put two an' two together an' wondered if she wasn't just possibly waitin' for some help from the person she called. Hanson, this is fishy."

Hanson and Rankin both instantly demanded to know why.

"Because," Asey said, "they're goin' too blessed fast. We're a lap behind 'em an' look at our speedometer needle."

"I'm trying not to," Rankin said. "And what's so fishy, as you term it, about their haste? After

all, they have a body to dispose of, and they want to dispose of it with all possible speed and celerity, don't they?"

"If you had a body to dispose of, an' if you possessed just a quarter of a teaspoonful of common sense, would you drive like a fool an' lay yourself open to accidents, an' village cops' speed traps, not to mention the fellows Hanson plans around these roads just to haul in speeders? Asey returned, "I'm sure I wouldn't. I'd drive thirty-five miles an hour on the right-hand side of the road, blow my horn pretty at all intersections, an' try to seem like somebody on their way home from Prayer Meeting."

"That's fishier an' fishier, Hanson. They've taken the turn into Pochet village."

Rankin took off his shell-rimmed glasses, wiped them as well as he could in his cramped position next the door, put the glasses back on, and shook his head.

"I'm still damned if I can see any car at all!" he said.

"Why, it's right there!" Hanson said. "Right on—let's see. That'd be the Old Mill road, wouldn't it, Asey?"

"Well, yes," Asey said. "Only kind of a little mile more to the left, on the cut-through that runs past the ball park."

"A little mile more to the left, indeed!" Rankin said sarcastically. "You mean a good half mile to the left! Hanson, you can't see that car any more than I can, and you know it! And if you really know, Mayo, and if you really are following it, why don't you catch up with it and grab them for speeding, and put an end to this—er—well, I suppose you could call it just a ride, but it seems like such an awfully scant and inadequate little word! If this is merely a ride, then I've been traveling on goats all these years!"

Asey chuckled.

Lights In Pochet

"BEAR up," he said. "I'm goin' to see this thing through to the bitter end. Maybe you better hold on tight, Mr. Rankin. I'm goin' to creep up on 'em a mile. I want to know what they're up to in the village."

"Creep?" Rankin said. "Creep! I'm the one who's creepin'! I'm a creeping piece of goon flesh! That speedometer needle won't go any farther!"

When it did, Rankin took off his glasses, folded them, and tucked them away in the pocket of his brown tweed coat.

"Hey, I can see the car now! Look!" Hanson pointed.

"My eyes," Rankin told him. "are closed. Tell me when we've landed."

Hanson laughed.

"To me," Rankin said, "it all seems perilously like Dick Tracy."

"It is a Dick Tracy finish, all right. Mr.—say, I don't know your name."

"Meet Mr. Rankin," Asey said. "Mr. Rankin's a genealogist, Hanson."

"Oh," Hanson said, and added, after a pause, "Do things with rocks, eh?"

"No, I do things with families," Rankin said with a trace of laughter in his voice. "People with nothing better to do pay me to track down their family trees. And if I come to a violent end on this little ride, as I fully expect to, there are at least three fat dowagers who'll cry themselves to sleep because I never finished their ancestral charts—look, we must be there, aren't we?"

"Uh-huh. You can open your eyes now," Asey said. "I'm parkin'."

Rankin looked around Pochet's main street.

"Where's Elissa?"

"Parked by the station. I drove past 'em. Kind of gay here to-night, ain't it?"

"Gay? It's almost abandoned! What's the reason for all this reckless illumination?" Rankin indicated the brightly lighted stores in front of them. "Stores open, crowds milling around—what's the event? Is there a carnival in town, or is it bank night?"

"Tomorrow's a half holiday in these parts," Asey told him. "Seventeenth of June. May even be a bonfire later, if the boys get ambitious, an' things ain't too wet to burn. They—"

"See here," Rankin interrupted, "now that you've caught up with them, aren't you going to see what they're doing?"

"I'm watchin' right now," Asey indicated the rear-view mirror. "Mrs. Hingham's just gone into Fishback's Hardware Store."

"Hardware?" Rankin sounded incredulous. "Hardware? Mayo, you've made a mistake, that's all. You picked up some other car and followed that! Elissa Hingham's been a number of places, but she never entered a hardware store in all her life! If you asked me to name three places Elissa would never go, I should unhesitatingly say three hardware stores! What in the name of all that's holy would Elissa be doing in a hardware store?"

"Time will tell," Asey said. "Fishback's is where she went."

Rankin said that he didn't believe it, and that Elissa Hingham didn't know what hardware was

To be continued

On the Radio Chains

STATIONS:
Chain affiliation and where they are on the dial:
KSL (NBC-Blue) 1330, Portland;
KX (NBC-Blue & NBC) 1310, Spokane;
KGO (NBC-Blue) 810, San Francisco;
KGO (NBC-Blue) 810, Portland;
KJR (NBC-Blue) 850, Seattle;
KPO (NBC-Red) 850, Los Angeles;
KOA (NBC-Red) 850, Denver;
KOIN (CBS) 870, Portland;
KOMO (NBC-Red) 850, Seattle;
KPO (NBC-Red) 850, 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, KGO; Jane Arden, KPO; Don Winslow of the Navy, KPO.

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

6:00 p. m.—Radio Theater, KX, KOIN, KSL; Dr. I. Q. Jim McLean, KPO, KGO, KMO; Secret City, KGO, KEX; Scandinavian Reporter, KJR.

6:30 p. m.—For America We Sing, KGO, KJR; That Brewster Boy, KPO, KMO; Best of the Week, KJR.

7:00 p. m.—Mercury Theater, KX, KOIN, KSL; Monday Merry-Go-Round, KEX, KJR; Contented Hour, KPO, KGO, KMO.

7:30 p. m.—Cavalade of America, KPO, KMO, KGO; Blondie, KX, KSL, KOIN; Modern Music Box, KEX; Greater Washington Hour, KJR.

8:00 p. m.—Amos 'n' Andy, KX, KOIN, KOIN; Fred Waring, KPO, KMO, KGO; Herbert Marshall, KGO, KEX, KJR.

8:15 p. m.—Lanny Ross, KX, KSL, KOIN; Lum and Abner, KPO, KGO, KMO; True or False, KGO, KJR; Vox Pop, KX, KEX, KOIN; Sports, KSL.

8:30 p. m.—Hawthorne House, KPO, KMO, KGO; Hollywood Showcases, KX, KOIN, KEX, KJR; Moonlight Sonata, KEX.

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

10:30 p. m.—Ed Stoker's Music, KX, KOIN, KEX, KJR; Stanley Kenton's Orch., KJR; John Sullivan's Orch., KSL; Broadway Bandwagon, KEX; Ban Wilde's Orch., KGO; Masterworks of Music, KX, KOIN; The World Today, KOIN; Concert Hall, KPO.

11:00 p. m.—Bob Bradley and Er-

win Yeo, KSL, KOIN; String Serenade, KPO, KGO; This Morning World, KEX, KJR; News, KX, KGO; Reverses, KMO.

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

5:30 p. m.—News of the World, KGO, KJR, KEX; The Arkansas Traveler, KSL; Horace Heidt's Treasure Chest, KPO, KMO, KGO; Today's Best Buys, KX, Scattergood Baines, KOIN.

6:00 p. m.—Burns and Allen, KGO, KPO, KMO; We, the People, KSL; Secret City, KGO, KEX; Anita Carol, KOIN; Scandinavian Reporter, KJR; Second Husband, KSL.

6:30 p. m.—Symphony Concert, KGO, KEX, KJR; Report to the Nation, KX, KOIN; Fibber McGee and Molly, KPO, KMO, KGO; World News, KSL.

7:00 p. m.—Hop Hope Variety Show, KPO, KMO, KGO; Glenn Miller's Orch., KX, KX, KOIN.

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

8:00 p. m.—Amos 'n' Andy, KX, KSL, KOIN; Fred Waring, KPO, KGO, KMO; Lanny Ross, KX, KSL, KOIN; Concert Hall, KJR.

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