

THE PHONE BOOTH MURDER

by Phoebe Atwood Taylor

Chapter 13

The Pickax Mystery

"W-A-E-L," Asey said, "Elissa's findin' out fast. She seems to have been purchasin' a pickax. See her?"

Rankin craned his neck. "No." "Look into the mirror," Hanson obligingly moved over toward Asey.

Rankin wriggled himself around until he finally caught a glimpse of Mrs. Hingham with her newly purchased pickax.

"Then, after straightening out his collar and tie and pulling his coat back in place, he shook his head and announced that it was all beyond him."

"All I can say is that the sight of Elissa Hingham bearing a pickax startles me a lot more than the sight of her dead body ever would! Mayo, now that she's got her pickax, what do you expect she intends to do with it?"

"Well," Asey said, "most usually when people buy pickaxes they plan to dig. But you can't ever tell. Maybe Mrs. Hingham's aimin' to join the W.P.A."

Rankin sighed. "Mayo, do you always take this sort of thing so lightly? Here you are trailing a body, and you jape! Here's Elissa removing a body, and you don't seem to care a whit!"

"I care deeply," Asey said. "Hold on some more, Mr. Rankin, we're startin' up, again, just soon's they get by."

He and Hanson bumped their heads trying to get a clear view of the car as it went past.

"What did that guy driving have on?" Hanson asked curiously. "He seemed to have something funny around his neck. Was it a scarf, Asey?"

"Couldn't see," Asey said. "Asey swung the police car out of its parking space and started after the sedan."

"I got a pretty good look at him," Hanson said. "I think I've seen that guy somewhere before. Did he look like someone you knew, Asey? Did he look familiar?"

"Didn't notice," Asey said. "His crisp, abrupt answers, in such contrast to his easy, joking manner of a minute before, appeared to trouble Rankin. He looked questioningly at Hanson, who merely shrugged."

"What's wrong?" Rankin formed the words with his lips. "When the car swerved around a corner, Hanson took the occasion to whisper in Rankin's ear as he lurched against him."

"Asey's like that some times," Asey, keeping just in sight the tailfins of the sedan containing Mrs. Hingham and her friend, paid no attention to either of his passengers.

"This whole thing was getting fishier by the minute, he thought. Again the driver of the sedan was hurtling along at a terrific speed, cutting corners, slamming past side roads. And he wasn't heading for any remote beach or secluded woods. He was heading into South Pocat village, which was well lighted and well populated, and in general no place to dispose of a body."

One Mystery Solved That had certainly looked like a body up on the roof, Asey thought. It had every appearance of a body. Mrs. Hingham had certainly purchased a pickax, which certainly would come in very handy for digging a body.

But grave-diggers would hardly set out in costume, and under Mrs. Hingham's trench coat she was wearing something that looked like an evening dress to Asey. And the man driving that car had what seemed to be a ruff around his neck, and his coat looked more like a satin waist.

Those costumes, and that crazy driving! Asey shook his head. "If it should turn out that this extraneous was a wildgoose chase, as he now strongly suspected, he was going to look like considerable of a fool. But that wouldn't matter. What would matter was that in racing off from the Inn, he might well have presented to someone, or a silver waiter, the opportunity of making away with the body in comparative peace and safety."

And there was always that fantastic possibility rearing its ugly head that Mrs. Clutterfield and her man Friday might have had the body all the time anyway!

The car ahead cut off on a side road, and a little smile began to play around Asey's mouth. He thought he was beginning to understand this.

"How'd you know?" Rankin demanded. "I guessed. What was that bandy-legged fellow in tights supposed to be? No wonder he stayed in the car where nobody could see him!"

"He," Rankin said, "was a page. I asked him from what, and he said, just a page, Mayo, did you know this was the South Pocat Barn Theater?"

"It come to me after we hit the side road," Asey said. "I drove Betsy Porter to their formal opening last summer. Why'd Mrs. Hingham choose such a roundabout way to remove a rug? Was it Mrs. Doane's rug?"

"No, her own," Rankin said. "No, about it last week in Hyannis, and Rankin Reid, the director, saw it and wanted it for the set of their first play here. She refused to let him have it, but tonight she decided she was a self-sufficient pig, and she could have the rug. Her migraine at once left her, so she phoned for someone to come and help her get the rug."

"Somehow," Asey said, "that don't all follow."

"That's Elissa's story. After troubling Mrs. D. so much with her migraine, she didn't want to trouble Mrs. D. any more. So she hit on the roof route. Maybe that sounds illogical to you, Mayo?"

"It ain't the most sterling logic I ever heard," Asey admitted. "Let me assure you it's characteristic. The pickax, I might add, is a prop."

"What kind of a play?" Asey started the car, "needs a page boy with a ruff, an' a pickax, an' a Persian rug?"

"Elissa said it was a dear little fantasy," Rankin told him, "and I see no reason to doubt her. Er—now you know a little more about Elissa, don't you, Mayo?"

"She certainly seems like a creature of impulse," Asey said. "What is she, an actress?"

Rankin said that depended entirely on one's point of view. "Personally, I'd sum her up as a thwarted prima donna. Now what?"

"What I'd like," Hanson said, "is some food. I been up at Camp Edwards all day teaching the traffic squad, and I rushed down here without dinner when Jennie called. We got time enough to get some food, haven't we, Asey?"

Mrs. Clutterfield "WHAT we got to do," Asey said, "is to get straight back to the Inn an' comb the place from attic to cellar an' give Mrs. Doane and everybody else a little refined third degree. An' if you want to kick me for gettin' sidetracked on this crazy chase, go on. I deserve it."

"Did you have dinner?" Hanson inquired coldly. "Nope."

"Well, then!" Hanson said. "Let's stop anyway at the corner diner and get some sandwiches. It wasn't a crazy chase, Asey, and if it'd taken a little longer, why we'd been longer, wouldn't we? So we certainly got ten minutes to get some sandwiches. Get 'em and eat 'em in the car, huh?"

"Somebody within me says we shouldn't stop, an' somebody else says we will," Asey drew up at the corner diner. "Get me anything that's ready, an' some coffee in one of those paper things."

Hanson urged him to come in. "Nope. If I do," Asey said, "we'll just find ourselves sittin' down gorgin' ourselves on Artie's fancy fifty-cent dinner. Bring it out, an' hurry up!"

"Well, all right," Hanson said reluctantly. "It was plain that the idea of gorging himself on one of Artie's regular dinners appealed to Hanson a lot more than the thought of a few ready-made sandwiches to be gulped down en route."

"Rankin," Asey said, "would you step in there after him an' stand at his elbow in a menacin' fashion an' keep him from succumbin' to anything that requires time? He knows I'm hungry myself, an' he'll tease me into a full meal if I go in."

Rankin laughed. "After that drive, I should think you'd need a rare meal to restore you, anyway! Sure, I'll restrain him for you."

Asey sat up with a jerk as a car drove past the diner. Lurched was maybe a better word than drove, he thought. It had lurched so close to Artie's neon sign that the fender almost scraped the post.

On the Radio Chains

STATIONS:
Chain affiliation and where they are on the dial:
KALE (NBC) 1230, Portland;
KEX (NBC-Blue) 1190, Portland;
KGA (NBC-Blue & MBS) 1510, Spokane;
KGO (NBC-Blue) 210, San Francisco;
KOW (NBC-Red) 620, Portland;
KJR (NBC-Blue) 1600, Seattle;
KNX (NBC-Blue) 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

Tuesday
5:00 p. m.—Adventure Stories, KGO, KJR, KEX; Are You a Missing Heir, KSL; Jane Arden, KOMO; Stars of Today, KGW; 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, KOMO, KGW; Today's Best Buys, KNX; Scattergood Baines, KOIN.
6:00 p. m.—Burns and Allen, KGW, KPO, KOMO; We, the People, KSL; Secret City, KGO, KJR, KEX; KOIN; Scandinavian Reporter, KJR; Second Husband, KNX.
6:30 p. m.—Symphony Concert, KGO, KEX, KJR; Report to the Nation, KNX, KOIN; Fibber McGee and Molly, KPO, KOMO, KGW; World News, KSL.
7:00 p. m.—Hop Hope Variety Show, KPO, KOMO, KGW; Glenn Miller's Orch., KSL, KNX, KOIN.
7:30 p. m.—Red Skelton, KPO, KOW, 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, KOW, KOMO; Lanny Ross, KNX, KSL, KOIN; Concert Hall, KJR, KGO, KEX, KJR; Are You a Missing Heir, KNX, KOIN; News, KSL.
8:30 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; Mai Hallett's Orch., KGO, News, KJR, KSL; Moonlight Sonata, KEX.
10:00 p. m.—Ban 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 Dent's Orch., KGW; Stanley Kenton's Orch., KGO, KJR; Broadway Bandwagon, KEX; Masterworks of Music, KNX; The World Today, KOIN; Concert Hall, KPO.
11:00 p. m.—Chuck Wagon Days, KPO, KGW; This Moving World, KEX, KJR; Ken Stevens and Edwin Yeo, KSL, KOIN; News, KNX, KGO; Reveries, KOMO.
Wednesday
5:00 p. m.—Adventure Stories, KGO, KEX, KJR; Big Town, KSL; Ken Stevens, KOIN; Jane Arden, KOMO; Stars of Today, KGW; Don Winslow of the Navy, KPO.
5:30 p. m.—Dr. Christian, KSL; News of the World, KGO, KJR, KEX; Cocktail Hour, KOW; Bill Henry, KNX; Scattergood Baines, KOIN; Waltz Rhythm, KPO.
6:00 p. m.—Fred Allen, KSL; Fred Waring's Orch., KPO, KGW, KOMO; Secret City, KGO, KJR, KEX; Scandinavian Reporter, KJR; Tonight's Best Buys, KNX, KOIN.
6:30 p. m.—Penthouse Party, KGO, KJR, KEX; Concert by Kalash, KPO; Big Town, KNX, KOIN; Highlight Hour, KOMO.
7:00 p. m.—Glenn Miller's Orch., KNX, KSL, KOIN; American Melody Hour, KGO, KJR; Kay Kyser's Musical Quiz, KPO, KGW, KOMO.
7:30 p. m.—Ahead of the Headlines, KGO, KJR; Romance of the Ranchos, KNX; Modern Music Box, KEX; Leon F. Drews, KOIN; Clark and Spray-nozzle, KSL.
8:00 p. m.—Quiz Kids, KGO, KEX, KJR; Amos 'n' Andy, KNX, KOIN; KSL; Point Sublime, KPO, KGW, KOMO.

SUBURBAN HEIGHTS

By GLUYAS WILLIAMS



GLUYAS WILLIAMS

(Released by The Bell Syndicate, Inc.)

YOU CAN'T HEAR YOURSELF THINK WITHIN A MILE OF THE STATION WHEN THE 5:15 COMES IN BECAUSE OF THE CLAMOR RAISED BY WIVES, CHILDREN, AND HORNS OF CARS THAT COULDN'T PARK NEAR-BY, TRYING TO ATTRACT THE HOMECOMERS' ATTENTION BEFORE THEY ACCEPT LIFTS IN OTHER PEOPLE'S CARS



GLUYAS WILLIAMS

(Released by The Bell Syndicate, Inc.)

TRAVEL BY THUMB

The release signed by hitch-hiking members of the National College-University Travel Club absolves the driver from any responsibility in connection with giving the student a lift. The reverse side of the card reads: "Thanks for the ride. If I have not merited your kindness to me, notify the National College-University Travel Club, San Antonio, Texas."



GLUYAS WILLIAMS

(Released by The Bell Syndicate, Inc.)

TOBACCO—THE LIFE SAVER!

NICOTINIC ACID, PRODUCED FROM NICOTINE, IS USED IN PREVENTING AND TREATING THE DREAD DISEASE PELLAGRA!



GLUYAS WILLIAMS

(Released by The Bell Syndicate, Inc.)

STRANGE AS IT SEEMS

by JOHN HIX



GLUYAS WILLIAMS

(Released by The Bell Syndicate, Inc.)

AN OUNCE OF PREVENTION...

IRVING JAFFE. ICE SPEED KING, TEACHES PEOPLE TO SKATE BY FIRST TEACHING THEM HOW TO FALL!



GLUYAS WILLIAMS

(Released by The Bell Syndicate, Inc.)

INDUSTRY'S IDEAS OF STRIKE CONTROL GIVEN

New York, Dec. 2.—(AP)—Industry's wishes in regard to

SPECIAL!
warm, wool
Overcoats
\$23 and \$27
Barkers
Store for Men

anti-strike legislation for defense lines were outlined today at the opening session of the national industrial council of the National Association of Manufacturers.

R. S. Smethurst, counsel for the N.A.M., told the council, attended by approximately 1,000 representatives of trade associations, that bills introduced by Representative Howard Smith (D-Va.) and Senator Clyde Herring (D-Iowa) came closest to meeting view of manufacturers.

U. S. SOLONS ABROAD
Plymouth, Eng., Dec. 2.—(AP)—Five members of the United States house of representatives visited bombed areas of this port today under the guidance of Lady Astor.

THE NEBBS—Poor Rich Emma

By SOL HESS



WELL, ENMA, HOW ARE YOU FEELING TODAY? YOU LOOK GOOD

OUTSIDE OF FEELING WEAK AND THAT PAIN IN MY BACK, I FEEL NEARLY GOOD ENOUGH TO GO HOME



I WAS JUST WONDERING WHAT YOU EXPECT TO DO WITH ALL THIS MONEY YOU'RE HOARDING. YOU DENY YOURSELF ALL THE LUXURIES OF LIFE...CRAWL UNDER THE SIDEWALK FOR A FEW PENNIES WHO'S GOING TO GET

I DON'T KNOW...BUT SOMETIMES I FEEL ILL. BUY SOMETHING THAT'S NECESSARY, AND WHEN I DO, I FEEL SO BLUE I CAN'T ENJOY IT...SO THEN I START SAYING THAT MONEY BACK AND I FEEL BETTER



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