

THE PHONE BOOTH MURDER

by Phoebe Atwood Taylor

Chapter 23 Hunt For Miss Olive

"YOU mean," Cummings said again, as if he couldn't quite grasp the situation, "that the three of you were there in that room all the time? Every minute?"

"If you want proof," Freddy said, "I can tell you the plot of every soap serial from three o'clock on."

"Sounds like quite an afternoon," Asey commented.

"It was. Someday I hope to find out," Freddy said, "why people who get bored on dull days in a hotel do such utterly bizarre things. Anyway, I finally quelled them by getting them an early tea—now there's another peculiar thing I forgot to tell. Mother about Miss Olive came in about a quarter past four, and she wouldn't stop for a cup of tea! And she always does! But today she said no, and went right up to her room, and then she came down in about fifteen minutes—and that was when she told me she was dining out, by the way—got into her car and drove off."

"Freddy, you disappoint me," Cummings said. "You mean that Rankin was really around all afternoon? Didn't he make any phone calls? Didn't he go near that booth?"

"No, Lady Boop did, and so did I, but—"

"I must confess I'm disappointed," Cummings said. "Rankin was really here, under your eyes, all the time?"

"Well, he did walk up to the main street with Dad," Freddy said. "About the time Miss Olive left, they went to Tony's for their afternoon beer—they often do if Rankin's here. Then they rushed back for the broadcast at quarter to five. That's why this is so muddled—we were all here! I had listened, Mother, Dad, Lady Boop, Rankin, and I. And Mamie Riggs. She'd been in the dining room, washing the waitressing."

"Was she there all afternoon?" Asey interrupted.

"All day, and she'll be there all day tomorrow," Freddy said. "Did you ever wash carved waitressing? It's a hellish job."

"Uh-huh, Jennie an' Syl an' I do mine every year. Freddy, was the dinin' room doors open or closed?"

"Open. I suggested Mamie close 'em, but she said she guessed she'd listen to the radio. I should have been firm and made her shut them. Mother would have. But it's dull work washing paint, and I never thought till later how Lady Boop and Rankin must have sounded to her. Anyway, we all listened. Then Judge Houghton came for Rankin, and Lady Boop bounced off in a huff to the club when Mother insisted she might not have a minute to make a call. People were there in the living room all the time! So this must have happened in those few minutes before six, from the time the lights went out, and Dad and I went to get the lights working, till Asey and Mrs. Mayo came with the clams."

"Did you ever get them lights working?" Asey asked. "I wondered."

"No, the regular current came back before we got anywhere. Frankly," Freddy said, "Dad and I are not good mechanics. Neither of us ever understood that machine. But, you see, the stoves are electric, so Dad was stymied."

No Miss Olive

"HUMPH!" Cummings said. "I wonder if her watch was right?"

"Mine?" Freddy asked. "It usually is."

"Ann Joyce's," Cummings explained. "It was stopped at seven of six. I didn't pay any attention to it, because I'm opposed to the theory that someone died at the exact time their watch stopped. Humph! I guess I'll have to take it all back, Asey. I thought I had this figured out."

"You better turn your mind," Asey said thoughtfully, "to other channels. Huh. I had a solution, myself, but that ain't goin' to work. Not if Mamie was washin' paint in the dinin' room."

"What are you talkin' about?" "Ann Joyce," Freddy said, "phone around all the places you can think of an' see if you can't locate Miss Olive. We ain't got much of a basis to start from till we can talk with her an' get things settled."

He was discussing the wound with Hanson and Cummings when Freddy returned some twenty minutes later.

"Located her?" he inquired.

"No one's seen her!" Freddy said. "She wasn't at the movies, and she hasn't been to Johnson's, she hasn't called on any of the people she ordinarily calls on, and no one has any idea where she might be! And there's nothing going on in town at any of the churches, or the Women's Club, or the War Relief or the Red Cross! Truly, Mother and I are terribly worried! What could have happened to her?"

"Huh," Asey said. "Happen to know her license number?"

"Her car's a sedan, but I don't know what the number is! Maybe Mother might."

Characteristically, Mrs. Doane

had the license number on the tip of her tongue.

"Fine," Asey said. "I'll cruise around, an' see if I can't find her. May be that she had a flat, or engine trouble, an' is waitin' for the rain to let up before she sets out to phone for help. That's probably the answer. Oh, Doc! He paused at the front door and beckoned to Cummings.

"Don't keep your eye on Jennie. An' see if you can't do some delvin' into this time problem. So long."

He found his own Porter roadster where Sam had left it on the corner where he had previously parked Syl's truck.

A little wearily, he got in and started off in search of Miss Olive. Two hours later, having covered all the roads he could think of, and having made a canvass of all the garages within a radius of thirty miles, he turned back to Quisset.

At Joe's gas station at the four corners he stopped on impulse, introduced himself to the attendant who was just closing up the place for the night, and asked if Mrs. Doane had been there for gas around six.

"Sure. She was here from just before the lights went till the current came back. All the time, I told that state trooper so."

"Another thing, you seen Miss Olive tonight?" Asey asked.

"She was here this morning for her weekly checkup," the man said. "I told Freddy Doane she called up a little while ago."

Lady Boop

Asey frowned as he drove on to the Inn.

This business, he thought, got more and more like a Chinese puzzle. Was it the real Miss Olive who refused tea and drove off from the Inn that afternoon, or was it the girl Ann Joyce, dressed like her? Was it the real Miss Olive or Ann Joyce whom he and Jennie saw?

And, if no one knew that the girl was dressed up like Miss Olive, was it possible that someone had meant to shoot Miss Olive, and got the girl instead?

And, if that was the case, had someone realized their mistake, and since gone after Miss Olive and carried out their original intention of killing her?

It almost began, Asey thought to look that way.

The Inn driveway seemed filled with cars, so he stopped his roadster a little beyond, got out, and walked through the wet grass toward the Inn.

Just as he stepped on the gravel to cross the driveway between two parked cars, he saw someone duck into the bushes by the portico.

Asey stood stock-still and watched with interest as the broad figure of Mrs. Clutterfield slowly emerged.

Apparently the lack of any further scrunching of gravel relieved her of the error of mistaking Lady Boop for a gnomel.

Asey walked softly over to her and touched her shoulder as she started her second circuit.

"Ooooh!" Asey inquired, "do you think you're doing? What's the idea of all this reconnoiterin'?"

"Why are you—say, can't you do anything but squeal?"

When it became apparent that Lady Boop couldn't answer his questions in any other manner, Asey took her firmly by the arm and led her indoors to the living room.

Cummings stared at him in amazement as he entered.

"For heaven's sake, Asey, what's that you've got on your arm? Who's she?"

"Meet Mrs. Clutterfield, Doc. It don't hardly seem possible, but there's indications that she might maybe have been our Peepin' Tom."

"Well, she is not!" Cummings said. "One of Hanson's troopers picked him up twenty minutes ago. It was your dear friend Rankin."

"Ooooh!" Mrs. Clutterfield said. "Police! Ooooh! Ooooh! Ooooh!"

"What's the matter with her?" Cummings demanded. "She's in pain?"

"I think she's just frightened," Asey said. "What do you mean, a trooper picked up Rankin?"

"She sounds," Cummings said, "like a baby I once saw who'd swallowed a tin whistle. Rankin was peering into windows, Asey. Claims he'd seen someone out there and was trying to catch him."

Freddy came into the living room.

"Did you find Miss Olive?" Oh dear, you didn't! This is simply getting worse and worse. Did you tell him about the call, Doctor?"

"No, I was just getting to that," Cummings said. "What do you know, Asey, a man phoned a few minutes ago and said not to expect her back?"

To be continued

On the Radio Chains

STATIONS:

Chain affiliation and where they are on the dial:
KALE (NBC) 1330, Portland;
KEX (NBC-Blue) 1190, Portland;
KGA (NBC-Blue & NBC) 1310, Spokane;
KGO (NBC-Blue) 810, San Francisco;
KGW (NBC-Red) 650, Portland;
KJR (NBC-Blue) 1690, Seattle;
KNX (CBS) 1070, Los Angeles;
KOA (NBC-Red) 850, Denver;
KOIN (CBS) 970, Portland;
KOMO (NBC-Red) 830, Seattle;
KPO (NBC-Red) 680, San Francisco;
KSL (CBS) 1190, Salt Lake City.

Time shown is PST

Sunday
5:00 p. m.—Edger Bergen, KPO, KGW, KOMO; Blue Echoes, KGO, KEX; Columbia Workshop, KNX, KOIN; Gospel Clinic, KJR; Ministerial Assn., KSL.

5:30 p. m.—Floyd Wright, KJR; One Man's Family, KPO, KGW, KOMO; Sporting Posters, KNX; Cinnamon Bear, KEX; Musical Highlights, KGO; Castles in the Air, KOIN.

6:00 p. m.—Sunday Evening Hour, KNX, KSL, KOIN; Grandpappy and His Pal, KGO, KEX, KJR; Manhattan Merry-Go-Round, KPO, KOMO, KGW.

6:30 p. m.—Bookman's Notebook, KGO; American Album of Familiar Music, KPO, KOMO, KGW, News, KEX; Conf. of Jews and Christians, KJR.

7:00 p. m.—Hour of Charm, KPO, KOMO, KGW; Goodwill Hour, KGO, KEX, KJR; Take It or Leave It, KNX, KSL, KOIN.

7:30 p. m.—Helen Hayes Theatre, KNX, KSL, KOIN; Adventures of Sherlock Holmes, KPO, KGW, KOMO, KGO; Vera Vague, KPO, KGW, KOMO; Inner Sanctum, KGO, KEX, KJR.

8:30 p. m.—Jack Benny, KGO, KEX, KJR; I Was There, KNX, KOIN; Beau Soir Musicals, KGW; Highway Night Express, KGO; Echoings in Brass, KPO.

9:00 p. m.—Walter Winchell, KPO, KOMO, KGW, Irene Rich, KGO, KJR, KEX; Hollywood Playhouse, KNX; Leon F. Drews, KOIN; String Ensemble, KSL.

9:30 p. m.—Story Behind the Headlines, KGO; What's It All About, KNX; Quiz of Two Cities, KGW, KOMO; Highway Night Express, KEX; Baker Theatre, KOIN; Regal Amblings, KPO; On Temple Square, KSL.

10:00 p. m.—Reporter News, KPO, KGW, KOMO; Screen Guild Theatre, KNX; Stanley Kenton's Orch., KGO, KEX; News, KOIN; Masterworks of Music, KSL; National Vespers, KJR.

10:30 p. m.—Henry Busse's Orch., KGO; Henry Owen's Orch., KOIN; Amen Corner, KEX; Hollywood Temple Hour, KJR; Report to the Nation, KNX; Sabbath Reveries, KSL.

11:00 p. m.—Bill Clifford's Orch., KEX; Gene Grounds, KOIN; Strings that Sing, KPO, KGW, News, KNX, Midnight Reflections.

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

8:30 p. m.—News of the World, KGO, KEX, KJR; Cocktail Hour, KGW; Bill Henry, KNX; Leon F. Drews, KOIN; Christmas Bells, KGO; Waite Rhythm, KPO; Voices of Yesterday, KSL.

6:00 p. m.—Radio Theater, KNX, KOIN, KSL; Dr. I. Q. Jim McClain, KPO, KGW, KOMO; Cinnamon Bear, KEX; Rose Resnick, KGO; Scandinavian Reporter, KJR.

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

7:00 p. m.—Bill of Rights, KSL, KNX, KOIN, KEX, KJR, KPO, KGW, KOMO.

7:30 p. m.—Bill of Rights Day, KPO, KOMO, KNX, KSL, KOIN; Modern Music Box, KEX; Greater Washington Hour, KJR.

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

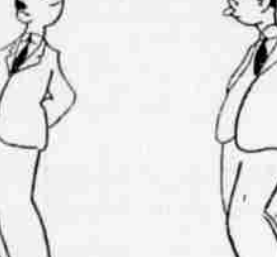
8:15 p. m.—Lanny Ross, KNX, KSL, KOIN; Lum and Abner, KPO, KOMO, KGW; Shall Bert Wheeler, KJR.

BEHIND THE BACK

By GLUYAS WILLIAMS



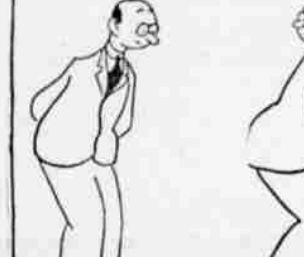
IS SHOWING WIFE THE SKATES HE GOT FOR JUNIOR'S CHRISTMAS PRESENT, WHEN JUNIOR WALKS INTO ROOM



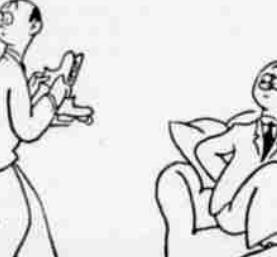
DOESN'T WANT TO ROUSE HIS SUSPICIONS AND WHISKS THEM BEHIND HIS BACK, TRYING NOT TO LOOK SELF-CONSCIOUS



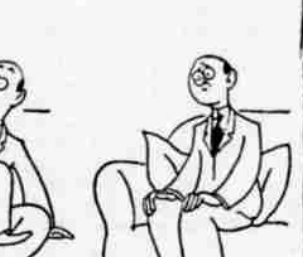
HAS TO KEEP TURNING TO KEEP HIS BACK AWAY FROM JUNIOR AS THE BOY WANDERS ABOUT THE ROOM



GETS DESPERATE ON ACCOUNT OF HIS NOSE STARTING TO ITCH AND SENDS HIM UPSTAIRS TO GET HIS PIPE



STARTS TO HIDE SKATES WHEN HE HEARS JUNIOR RETURNING WITH PIPE HAVING PERFORMED ERRAND IN 3 SECONDS FLAT



HAS JUST TIME TO DUMP SKATES ON COUCH AND SIT ON THEM



SITS VERY UNCOMFORTABLE ON SKATES, JUNIOR FORTUNATELY DECIDING TO GO OUTDOORS PRETTY SOON

L.I.L. ABNER—Time Lurches On!

By AL CAPP



GENTLEMEN OF THE PRESS—IT WAS DUE TO THE ASTONISHING RESOURCEFULNESS AND COURAGE OF THIS LAD THAT I WAS ABLE TO REACH THE SENATOR'S BEDSIDE IN TIME!!



YOU'D BE A NATURAL FOR THE "LUNCH OF TIME" PROGRAM TONIGHT!



THAT NIGHT—AT AUNT BESSIE'S. AS A PSYCHOANALYST I AM INTENSELY INTERESTED IN THE MENTAL MAKE-UP OF THIS FEARLESS LAD!



AND SO WE PRESENT THIS BOY WITH THE NERVES OF STEEL!—WITH THE HEART OF A LION!!—WHAT INSPIRING MESSAGE HAVE YOU FOR THE PUBLIC, MR. YOKUM?



CHERRY BLOSSOM!! OH, SOB!! SOB!!



HE'S BAWLING LIKE A BABY!! TAKE HIM OFF THE AIR!!

TAILSPIN TOMMY—A Diabolical Plot!

By HAL FORREST



TONIGHT YOU SHALL RETURN TO YOUR AERO SQUADRON, LT. MILLIGAN... AND... TOMORROW DURING FLIGHT MANEUVERS.



YOU SHALL BREAK AWAY FROM THE SQUADRON... FLY TO THIS CLEARING AND LAND HERE... FOR FURTHER INSTRUCTIONS



DOKTOR VERMIN... ARE YOU CERTAIN THAT HE??



HE SHALL APPEAR QUITE NORMAL TO HIS COMRADES IN THE SQUADRON... BUT THE HYPNOTIC DRUG SHALL COMPEL HIM TO OBEY MY COMMANDS!



EXCELLENT... AND WHEN HE HAS ACCOMPLISHED OUR PURPOSE HE SHALL BE EXECUTED BY HIS OWN COUNTRYMEN... FOR TREASON AND MASS MURDER! HAH-H! MY REVENGE IS COMPLETE.

THE NEBBES—Liberal?

By SOL HESS



IT'S NICE OF YOU TO INVITE ME OUT TO DINNER



THAT'S NOTHING, MISS MCCOY... YOU DID PLENTY FOR ME AND THAT HOSPITAL FOOD AIN'T SO GOOD



HOW WOULD YOU LIKE A NICE PORTER-HOUSE STEAK... SOME COTTAGE-FRIED POTATOES AND FRENCH-FRIED POTATOES?



THAT SOUNDS PERFECT—STEAK JUST MEDIUM



YOU KNOW MAX IS KINDHEARTED... HE'D BE RICH IF HE WASN'T SO LIBERAL... HE'D GIVE YOU THE SHIRT OFF HIS BACK IF IT WAS WORE OUT



CAN'T YOU TALK ABOUT SOMETHING THAT MAKES SENSE? DON'T YOU EVER READ A BOOK OR ANYTHING? YOU ARE GOING TO YOUR GRAVE WITH THE LAST HALF OF YOUR A-B-C'S A MYSTERY

NAVY INCREASE SOUGHT IN BILL

Washington, Dec. 13.—(AP)—Chairman Walsh (D., Mass.) of the senate naval committee late today introduced legislation to authorize a 30 percent increase in the vessel strength of the navy.

Interrupting senate debate on a war appropriation measure Walsh said he had been asked

by the president and the navy to offer the bill authorizing a blanket increase of 900,000 tons.

The senator said exact categories of battleships, airplane carriers, cruisers, destroyers and submarines planned had not been designated but that under normal conditions the increase would cost about \$3,000,000,000 and under present conditions "probably much more."

BLACKOUT LAW
Pendleton, Dec. 13.—(AP)—Violators of a blackout ordinance adopted yesterday by the city council will be subject to fines up to \$500 or six months in the city jail, or both.

The Grange

Central Point Grange

Central Point Grange H. E. C. will meet Wednesday afternoon, December 17, at the home of Mrs. Stella Anderson. The meeting will begin with a dessert luncheon at 12:30. This is our Christmas party and each lady is to bring a gift for her pal.

Use Mail Tribune want ads

STRANGE AS IT SEEMS

by JOHN HIX



THE GOVERNOR OF COLORADO BET PIKE'S PEAK ON A FOOTBALL GAME AND LOST!
(To the governor of Texas who planted a Lone Star flag atop the peak)
1938...

Curious Coronation

To superstitious Egyptians it might have augured ill that the state sword, once carried by Mohammed Ali, founder of the present Egyptian dynasty, could not be located for use in Faruk's coronation ceremonies. However just as the young ruler left the Abidin palace after his investiture as king, a white dove settled on the roof of his coach and remained there throughout the procession to parliament! This circumstance was joyfully noted by all concerned, and taken to be a happy omen for the future of both king and country!

MONDAY: Bar Dog!

By AL CAPP

By HAL FORREST

By SOL HESS