

THE PHONE BOOTH MURDER

by Phoebe Atwood Taylor

Chapter 24

More Mystery

"NOT to expect her back when? Tonight?" Assey demanded. "Who took the call? What did he say, exactly?"

"I answered," Freddy told him. "I said, 'Where's Ann, and a man's voice said, 'Is this where Miss Olive Beadle lives?' I said, 'Yes,' and he said, 'Well, don't expect her! Then he hung up before I had a chance to ask who he was, or how he knew about her, or where she was, or anything else! I called Hanson and told him, right away, and he tried to trace the call. But he couldn't find out anything about it except that it was made in town here. The operator said there'd been a flurry of calls right about then, and she didn't notice who called the Inn. All she knew was that it wasn't a long distance or a toll call."

"What do you make of that?" Cummings inquired. "That make any sense to you, Assey?"

Assey shrugged. "Course," he said slowly, "it's perfectly possible she just happened to do something out of the ordinary, right, and he tried to trace the call. But he couldn't find out anything about it except that it was made in town here. The operator said there'd been a flurry of calls right about then, and she didn't notice who called the Inn. All she knew was that it wasn't a long distance or a toll call."

"On the other hand, she doesn't do things out of the ordinary!" Freddy interrupted. "I wish I could make you understand that!"

Freddy broke off as Hanson entered the living room. He looked distracted, too.

"Where the hell have you been, Assey? I wish you wouldn't go dashing off! Peterson wanted to talk with you before he left. Look, he says there's everything to indicate that the bullet in the doo found, and the markings on the bullet show no slippage as it took the rifling, so it's probably from a Colt automatic and not a revolver."

"Huh!" Assey said. "In other words, she probably was killed by a bullet from the twenty-two that was there in the booth with her. Peterson was pretty sure, was he?"

"He said there's always the chance it wasn't, but I think he's sure. He'll phone us back later, and he's going to look up and see if he can't find out who bought the gun—what's the matter with her?"

He pointed to Mrs. Clutterfield, who was still squealing at intervals.

"Ooooh!" Assey said. "What's the matter with you?" Hanson said brusquely.

"Ooooh! I didn't know a goat was so important!"

"What's she talking about?" Hanson appealed to Assey.

"I don't think," Assey said, "it's worth the time to go into it. Tell me, Mrs. Clutterfield, just what was you lookin' in windows for, anyway?"

"Ooooh!" Mrs. Clutterfield said. "I saw all these policemen moving around! Alfred was afraid. He said there might be trouble. I wanted to see what was going on! Really, it's a matter of a fine, I'm sure I can!"

"I'm sure you can, too," Assey said. "Tomorrow mornin', Mrs. Clutterfield, I'll tell you the fine, an' you'll right now, you go up to your room an' stay there!"

"Mrs. Clutterfield scurried up the stairs."

Now For Rankin

"WHAT did you pack her off like that for?" Cummings wanted to know.

"I can't concentrate with her squealin' so," Assey said. "Besides, I'm sure she ain't got a thing to do with this. Her problem is runnin' over a goat."

"What was all that about a fine?" Cummings persisted.

Assey grinned. "That's just a charitable problem, Doc. Where's Rankin?"

"You'll find your friend in the smoking room," Cummings drew on his overcoat and picked up his little black bag. "A blend of tolerant amusement and refined irritation. He was only waiting for a street car—I mean, he was only chasing someone else. I always enjoy that—it wasn't me—it was two other fellows angle. Have fun with him. I'm going to join Carey."

"You're goin' to do more work tonight?" Assey asked in surprise. "Thought you hated workin' up there at night. You always claimed the place didn't have enough light."

tors. I'm forty-eight, as a matter of fact. May be I gather it's Ann who's been killed, and not Miss Olive, and I also gather from Cummings's mutterings that he thinks I killed her. I didn't. I was very fond of Ann. But, as I told Cummings, if it'll make the authorities happier, go upstairs and go through my things. Prod into anything that strikes your fancy. You'll find a forty-five Colt in my bureau drawer, and a license to carry it in my pig-skin wallet. And—tell me, why does Dr. Cummings dislike me so?"

"Wa-el," Assey said, "I think it's mostly the bill you owe him."

"The bill I owe him? But I don't! I left money with Freddy to pay him last year, before I went home. If he forgot, why didn't he send me a bill? My God!"

"He said that he did, but—"

"He never did! I never got any! How utterly ridiculous, to suspect me of killing Ann because I didn't pay a bill he never sent me! Was that the reason he had me seized by that trooper? I was brought in here and told to wait for you. Nobody explained why."

"Didn't they bring up the matter of somebody lurkin' around peerin' in windows?" Assey asked.

"I brought up that matter, myself!" Rankin said. "Look, you remember my cigarette lighter? You threw it at Hanson, and in all that rush after Elissa, I forgot to retrieve it. I'm fond of that lighter, so I went out to see if I could find it. And when I turned the corner of the house, I saw someone dart away from the bushes and waited to see if the fellow might come back. In my own way, I was trying to be helpful. I thought that, under the circumstances, someone darting around bushes in a surreptitious fashion was someone to grab and investigate. And while I was lurking there in the bushes, waiting, this trooper grabbed me. I'm sure, Rankin concluded, "that he meant well. So did I."

Bright Girl

"I SEE," Assey said. "Now, tell me about this girl Ann Joyce, will you?"

"She was an awfully bright and talented girl," Rankin said promptly. "And I was very fond of her. She worked for me as my secretary the winter before last. It was admittedly a stopgap job. She wanted to go on the stage. She was good-looking, and had one of the loveliest voices I ever heard, and I thought she had ability. So I told people about her, and helped her get a job here in the South Picher Barn Theatre last summer. And I don't mind telling you that whatever success the Theatre enjoyed was due wholly to Ann. Last winter she got some understudy jobs, and this summer, she came back to the Barn Theatre to get more experience."

"Then," Assey said thoughtfully, "you couldn't hardly, in all honesty, refer to her as a star, could you?"

"No. That's why," Rankin said in a troubled voice, "I can't begin to understand this business of her being shot! Ann wasn't important, in the sense of her being any colossal, glamorous success in the theatre. She wasn't. She was just a talented, ambitious youngster starting to work her way up."

"An' bein' at the foot of the ladder," Assey said, "she wasn't far enough advanced on her career to have what you'd call awful complicated problems, was she?"

"She had problems," Rankin returned. "Who doesn't have problems? The problem of getting three meals a day is no less acute in the theatre than it is anywhere else."

"Uh-huh. But there wasn't Hollywood agents fightin' over her," Assey said, "or admirers challengin' each other to duels, or people she'd stepped on veftin' to pick out her eye teeth. Nobody stood to lose millions because she did this thing instead of that thing. The point I'm makin' is that while her problems mattered to her, they weren't important an' far reachin' enough to make someone want to kill her."

"I don't see why anyone would want to kill her anyway!" Rankin said.

"You can't think of anyone you might call an enemy of hers?" Assey asked. "Anyone that might have had a grudge against her?"

Rankin hesitated.

"D'you remember," he said at last, "I told you earlier in the evening that it wasn't fair for you to ask me my opinion of the people at the Inn until I knew who was killed? Well, now I know it was Ann, I'm not going to pretend to pull any punches. The Barn's success last summer was due to Ann, Elissa Hingham's one of the Barn's backers. Elissa's husband, Horace, is—"

"By the way," Assey interrupted, "just for the record, what's Horace's last name?"

"His last name?" Rankin said. "Why, it's—er, Sproul. I think. No, it isn't. It's Henderson, or Sanderson, or Martinson, or something. I don't really remember. Anyway, Horace has wit enough to know that Ann is good."

To be continued

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Phoenix, Dec. 15.—(Spl.)—Phoenix Townsend club will

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KJW (NBC-Blue) 1000, Seattle;
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Time Shown is PST

Monday
8:00 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, KGO; Bill Henry, KNX; Leon P. Drews, KOIN; Christmas Bells, KGO; Walte Rhythm, KPO; Voices of Yesterday, KSL.
9:00 p. m.—Radio Theater, KNX, KOIN, KSL; Dr. I. Q. Jim McClain, KPO, KGW, KOMO; Cinnamon Bear, KEX; Rose Benick, KGO; Scandinavian Reporter, KJR.
9:30 p. m.—For America We Sing, KGO, KEX, KJR; That Brewster Boy, KPO, KGW, KOMO.
10:00 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, KJR, 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.
8:30 p. m.—I Love a Mystery, KGO, KEX, KJR; Alfred Wallenstein's Orch., KPO, KGW, KOMO; Gay Nineties Revue, KNX, KSL, KOIN.
9:00 p. m.—Telephone Hour, KPO, KGW, KOMO; True or False, KGO, KJR, KEX; 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.—Man Wilder's Orch., KEX, KGO, KJR; Reporter News, KPO, KGW, KOMO; Masterworks of Music, KSL; News, KNX; Five Star Final, KOIN.
10:30 p. m.—Ed Stoker's Orch., KGW; Stanley Kenton's Orch., KJR; Alvino Hey's Orch., KSL; Broadway Bandwagon, KEX; Ran Wilder's Orch., KGO; Masterworks of Music, KNX; The World Today, KOIN; Christmas Fund, KOMO; Concert Hall, KPO.
11:00 p. m.—Bob Bradley and Erwin Yeo, KSL, KOIN; String Serenade, KPO, KGW; This Moving World, KEX; News, KNX, KGO; Revue, KOMO.

Tuesday
8:00 p. m.—Adventure Stories, KGO, KJR; Are You a Missing Heir, KSL; Jane Arden, KOMO; News, KOIN; Adventure in Toyland, KEX; Stars of Today, KGW; Don Winslow of the Navy, KPO.
8:30 p. m.—News of the World, KGO, KEX, KJR; The Arkansas Traveler, KSL; Horace Hildt's Treasure Chest, KPO, KOMO, KGW; Today's Best Buys, KNX; Eyes of the World, KOIN.
9:00 p. m.—Burns and Allen, KPO, KGW, KOMO; We, the People, KSL; Ken Stevens and Erwin Yeo, KOIN; Cinnamon Bear, KEX; Scandinavian Reporter, KJR; Second Husband, KNX.
9:30 p. m.—Symphony Concert, KGO, KEX, KJR; Who, What, Where and Why, KNX, KOIN; Fibber McGee, KPO, KOMO, KGW.
10:00 p. m.—Bob Hope Variety Show, KPO, KOMO, KGW; Glenn Miller's Orch., KNX, KSL, KOIN.
10:30 p. m.—Red Skelton, KPO, KGW, KOMO; Treasury Hour, KGO, KEX, KJR; Leon P. Drews, KOIN; Second Husband, KSL.
11:00 p. m.—Amos 'n' Andy, KNX, KSL, KOIN; Fred Waring, KPO, KGW, KOMO.
11:15 p. m.—Lum and Abner, KPO.

NO CO-OPERATION

By GLUYAS WILLIAMS

EASES FRONT DOOR OPEN AND PEERS STEALTHILY IN TO SEE IF IT'S SAFE TO BRING THE CHILDREN'S CHRISTMAS SLED IN

HEARS WIFE REMARK SHE THOUGHT SHE HEARD SOMEONE AT THE FRONT DOOR, RETREATS HASTILY

WANTS OUTSIDE UNTIL THE DANGER IS PAST, AND THEN RECONNOITERS AGAIN

FINDS THE COAST CLEAR, AND STARTS IN, WIFE CALLING TO CHILDREN SHE FEELS A DRAFT, SO SEE IF FRONT DOOR IS OPEN

BACKS OUT HURRIEDLY

WANTS VERY COLD, UNTIL CHILDREN HAVE GONE UPSTAIRS AGAIN, AND CAUTIOUSLY EASES HIMSELF IN ONCE MORE

WIFE CALLS BRIGHTLY, "IS THAT YOU, DADDY?" AND CHILDREN COME RUNNING, GETS OUT JUST IN TIME

SPENDS HALF AN HOUR HIDING SLED IN GARAGE, COMES IN AND'S CROSS TO HIS WIFE ALL EVENING

12-15

By GLUYAS WILLIAMS

(Reprinted by The Bell Syndicate, Inc.)

L'L ABNER—Safety First!

WHAT INSPIRING MESSAGE HAVE YOU FOR THE PUBLIC, MR. YOKUM?

12-15

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

AMAZING!!—BUT WHY DID HE SAY "CHERRY BLOSSOM"?—WHAT DOES IT MEAN—AND WHY DOES HE SOB WHEN HE SAYS IT?

I DON'T KNOW!—AND WHAT IS WORSE—HE DOESN'T KNOW!!

—IT'S JUST SOMETHING THAT COMES OVER HIM!!

THIS IS A FANTASTIC CASE!!—A CASE FOR PSYCHOANALYSIS!!
SOMEWHERE, DEEP IN HIS MIND—IS THE ANSWER AND THE EXPLANATION!

WE MUST SOLVE THIS STRANGE OBSESSION—OR IT WILL CONTINUE TO PREY ON HIS MIND AND ULTIMATELY DESTROY IT!!—MRS. BOPSHIRE!!—YOU MUST PLACE THAT BOY IN MY HANDS!!

OF COURSE I WILL, DR. JEKYLL!

12-15

By AL CAPP

TAILSPIN TOMMY—Skeeter Acts Strangely!

12-15

SKEETER, UNDER THE HYPNOTIC INFLUENCE OF THE DRUG ADMINISTERED HIM BY DR. VERMIN, A MEMBER OF BARON VON HOPSIEG'S ESPIONAGE GANG, RETURNS TO HIS AERO SQUADRON, OBVIOUSLY NORMAL, BUT STRANGELY RETICENT!

ABOUT TIME YOU GOT IN, SKEETS! ANOTHER SECOND YOU'D HAVE BEEN TAGGED. A.W.O.L. AFTER LIGHTS OUT!

HEY, YOU LUG! I'M SPEAKING TO YOU. WHERE'S YOUR TONGUE?..YOU LOOK AS DUMB AS A FROG...

K-K-KROAK!

OKAY, DOPE!..KEEP ON CLOWNING/ ME!..I'M GOING TO GET SOME SHUT EYE...FOR DIVE BOMBING PRACTICE TOMORROW

BUT SKEETS ISN'T CLOWNING, TOMMY!! HE NEEDS MEDICAL HELP RIGHT NOW!

12-15

By SOL HESS

THE NEBBS—Innocence

12-15

YOU NEVER KNOW HOW POPULAR YOU ARE UNTIL YOU GET SICK ON YOUR BACK...I HAD CALLERS I NEVER DREAMED CARED FOR ME...I GOT CANDY AND FLOWERS TOO!

OUTSIDE OF A COUPLE OF YOU TIP HUNTERS THEY WERE ALL OF THE MASCULINE... ONE BOY I ONLY HAD BOWING ACQUAINTANCE WITH

CAN YOU IMAGINE THAT CLUCK? IF IT WASN'T FOR THAT SWELL-LOOKING NURSE THEY'D HAVE FLOCKED IN THERE LIKE SHE HAD LEPROSY

12-15

By SOL HESS

STRANGE AS IT SEEMS

12-15

NO TWO SPECIMENS OF THE TIGER MOTH ARE ALIKE IN COLOR AND MARKINGS

ON A STAMP ISSUE OF A BRITISH WEST INDIES COLONY, COLUMBUS IS SHOWN USING A TELESCOPE—NOT INVENTED UNTIL OVER 100 YEARS LATER!

THE THISTLE BECAME THE NATIONAL EMBLEM OF SCOTLAND BECAUSE AN INVADING DANE ONCE STEPPED ON ONE—THIS WARNING OF DANGER!

CANINE BARTENDER!
AT THE BOWSER HOTEL BAR, VANCIVER ISLAND, MIKE, A MONGREL, WAS THE ONLY "WAITER!"
ASSISTING CHARLES WINFIELD, PROPRIETOR, MIKE WOULD BRING BEER AND BOTTLE OPENERS, TAKE MONEY AND RETURN CHANGE!
HE COULD SERVE A DOZEN PATRONS WITHOUT CONFUSING CHANGE OR SERVICE!

CANINE BARTENDER
Patrons entering the Bowser House bar no longer find Mike, the uncannily intelligent canine, dispensing beer. Mike was struck by a hit and run driver on Jan. 2, 1941. For eight of his nine years Mike brought bottles of beer to customers, took their money, and returned change. Though he often handled a dozen patrons at the same time, he never made an error. So attached to Mike was owner Charles Winfield that he allowed the dog to sleep with him and eat at the same table! Mike's daughter, Mitti, is being groomed to take her famed sire's place at the bar.
TOMORROW: Pin Head Plant!

By AL CAPP

By HAL FORREST

12-15

By SOL HESS