

THE PHONE BOOTH MURDER

by Phoebe Atwood Taylor

Chapter 32

MRS. HINGHAM's story was simple enough, and it provided the solution to much that he wanted to know, although none of it appeared to concern Ann Joyce.

It seemed that Bram Reid, the director, had read and liked and wanted to produce, later in the season, a play whose leading character was a middle-aged school-teacher. Mrs. Hingham at once picked the part for herself, but neither Horace nor Bram Reid would even entertain the suggestion that she do it.

"They laughed at me! They said a real actress had to play that part! I begged them to let me do the part, and we argued about it all yesterday and all last night till my poor head was whirling! Simply whirling!"

"I see," Asey said. "That settles your migraine today, don't it?" Mrs. Hingham looked as if she'd like to hurl a brick at him.

"An' that's why," Asey continued, "you decided you'd dress up like Miss Olive this afternoon, huh, an' show 'em how good you could be? I see. So you went in an' swiped Miss Olive's clothes—what time was that?"

"Oh, about half-past five! I don't know. Anyway, I slipped in and put on some of Miss Olive's clothes—deadly things! And slipped out the back door. But I never saw Ann Joyce! I haven't seen her since early morning when she went out to rehearsal. I don't know anything about Ann, or what might have happened to her! I didn't!"

"You see anyone lurkin' around when you left?" Asey interrupted. "Only that fat chauffeur, Mrs. Clutterfield."

"Huh!" Asey said. "So it was you an' not Mrs. Doane he seen at the back door. Was the electric lights out then?"

Mrs. Hingham said that the street lights went out just as she reached the road in front of the Inn. Dramatically, and with gestures, she described the terrific rain, and how she'd run every step of the way to the house where Bram Reid was staying.

"I wanted to catch him before he left—I knew he was going out because one of the times I phoned him today I asked him to dine with me, and he said he had a date. I caught him just as he was gettin' into his car. And he said—her voice broke, "he said, 'Elissa, go home and take the clothes off! He said, 'Take them off, Mrs. Fiske, and be your age!'"

"An' you did, I see," Asey said. "An' what with havin' been dealt that heavy blow by Bram Reid, you was too worked up to notice Jennie there in the livin' room, huh?"

Mrs. Hingham nodded. "As I went up the stairs someone screamed, and frightened me—I had such an eerie feeling when I entered the Inn then, anyway! And I was simply a terrified pulp when that woman clumped up-stairs after me! All I wanted then was to get out of those hideous sweats before Miss Olive came back—those plain, intelligent women are so serious about their deadly clothes! I thought if I kept quiet, this other woman would go away. But at last, I decided to—"

"To Mrs. Thorne's?" Asey said. "Uh-huh. An' nobody could find fault with that piece of actin'. Now, what about this rug business?"

Mrs. Hingham presented him with an elaborate and rather poignant explanation. She had refused to lend the rug to Bram Reid for the opening play. Bram had begged her for it, but she had been adamant. Back in her own room, after she had taken several pills to ease the hideous pain of her whirling head, she began to realize how selfish she was. She decided to let Bram have the rug.

"In short," Asey said, "you used the rug for one last try to wheedle Bram Reid into lettin' you have that part, huh? That was your big gesture. I see. Now, about Ann Joyce."

Mrs. Hingham burst into a flood of praise for Ann Joyce. Ann was a sterling young actress, a fine girl, admirable in every respect, and definitely destined for great successes. If Ann had been murdered, the loss to the Theater would be beyond belief.

"Asey let her talk herself out. "Where's Bram Reid now?" Asey asked.

"I don't know! Back where he lives in Quisset, I suppose!" Mrs. Hingham was now practically seeing. "He wasn't here at all tonight. He phoned he had important business to attend to!"

"Where's Horace?" "I don't know!"

"From the harshness of her tone, Asey gathered that she didn't do much care, either."

"I don't know anything about Horace!" Mrs. Hingham went on. "I want to—look I've answered all your questions, haven't I? Do I

have to go to the police barracks?" "That's up to Lieutenant Hanson," Asey told her. "You go back to the Inn an' talk with him an' see what he decides you got any way to get back there? Got a car? Maybe you better come with me."

"In a police car?" Mrs. Hingham wet her lips. "Uh—do you have room for my things? I've got quite a lot that must go back to the Inn tonight. Most of it's in Ronnie's car already. Wouldn't it be all right if I just went with Ronnie?"

"Wa-el," Asey said. "Wa-el—go along with him, then. See Hanson right away, an' tell him all what I told me. Tell him I'll be right back, only I got a little errand to attend to first."

Mrs. Hingham looked as if she had just been granted a stay of execution. Asey thought, as she walked back through the lobby. He trotted on out to the roadster where Mrs. Clutterfield was all but buried in road maps.

"Figgered out your route?" he inquired as he got in.

"I've thought and thought," Mrs. Clutterfield told him seriously. "And I think I've made my choice. I think I'll go via Dedham."

Asey looked at her. "You mean, via Dedham, Mass.?" "Dedham's so pretty. I always think," Mrs. Clutterfield mused the irony of Asey's question.

"Have you found out anything useful from Mrs. Hingham? Did she tell you why Ann Joyce was dressed up like Miss Olive?"

"Nope, but I think I know why, now. There's a play Ann wanted a part in, I think. It was a middle-aged part, an' Ann'd never taken one like it, an' I think this dressin' up was to show folks how much she could make herself look the part."

"D'you suppose Miss Olive knew about it?" "I don't know. I hope Horace or Bram Reid can settle that. Mrs. Clutterfield, isn't that place the girl stayed, the Beeches, near here somewhere?"

"Just down by the shore," Mrs. Clutterfield waved a hand toward the fog. "Down there."

"I think we'll drop by," Asey said. "Hanson said he'd send someone there as soon as his fellows come, but nobody's said nothin' about it. Want to drive me over there, please?"

Pushing the road maps out of her way, Mrs. Clutterfield backed the roadster around without even a preliminary quiver, and a few minutes later drew up neatly in front of the Beeches, whose sign said simply, "Guests—Meals—Open."

A distraught-looking woman in a gray bathrobe answered Asey's knock.

"Sorry to disturb you," Asey said, "but has a state trooper—?" "They've all just gone. All of them—aren't you Asey Mayo? Well, I'm Martha Thorne. Isn't there some way to keep people from taking pictures of this place? What are they taking so many pictures for?"

Asey shook his head. "I'd like to," Asey said. "I was goin' to ask you if you'd show me where Ann lived."

He followed her along a succession of halls, and finally she opened a door.

"Here. Look. Those are all the things she has. You could put that poor girl's belongings into a suitcase. Everything—except, of course, for that packing case! Heaven! I suppose I they'd known that was hers, they'd have had everything out of it and taken pictures of that, too!"

"What packin' case?" Asey inquired.

"It's out here in the hall. See! It came from the estate of some relation of hers who'd died, and she's hardly touched the things, she's been so busy. I don't know what in the world she'd ever have done with the things, anyway! It was just old stuff. She took out those bronze book ends, and that awful plaster cat—see, in there on her bureau? They took dozens of pictures of that cat! I can't think why, can you?"

Asey picked up the cat and looked at it.

"Nope. I guess Hanson's got another of them photographers that likes to enter prize contests. He had one once that drove him nuts, gettin' angle shots of evidence—hey!"

He put down the cat and pointed to a picture on the book ends.

It was a duplicate picture of the bewhiskered man, the baby, and the girl that Jennie had noticed in Miss Olive's folder!

"Oh, that," Mrs. Thorne said. "That came from the packing box."

"Who are they?" "She didn't say," Mrs. Thorne said. "It was just in things, with that cat and the book ends. I told her the man looked to me like a minister. Doesn't he look like a minister to you?"

"Philpotts," Asey said. "That's why Jennie thought of Philpotts! He does look sort of ministerial!"

To be continued

On the Radio Chains

STATIONS: Chain affiliation and where they are on the dial: KSL (CBS) 1330, Portland; KEX (NBC-Blue & MBS) 1510, KGA (NBC-Blue & MBS) 1510, Spokane; KGO (NBC-Red) 810, San Francisco; KGW (NBC-Red) 820, Portland; KJR (NBC-Blue) 1000, Seattle; KXN (CBS) 1070, Los Angeles; KOA (NBC-Red) 850, Denver; KOIN (CBS) 970, Portland; KOMO (NBC-Red) 930, Seattle; KPO (NBC-Red) 680, San Francisco; KSL (CBS) 1160, Salt Lake City.

Time shown is PST Wednesday 8:00 p. m.—Vagabonds, KGO, KJR; Big Town, KSL; Ken Stevens, KOIN; Jane Arden, KOMO; Adventures in Toyland, KEK; Stars of Today, KGW; Don Winslow of the Navy, KPO. 8:30 p. m.—News of the World, KGO, KJR, KEK; Doctor Christian, KSL; Cocktail Hour, KGW; Bill Hanson, KOIN; Eyes of the World, KOIN; Parent-Teachers Ass'n, KOMO; Waltz Rhythm, KPO. 9:00 p. m.—Fred Allen, KSL; Fred Watson's Orch., KPO, KGW, KOMO; Joe Bethancourt's Band, KJR; Cinnamon Bear, KEK; Judy Splinters, KGO; Scandinavian Reporter, KJR; Tonight's Best Buys, KXN, KOIN. 9:30 p. m.—Penthouse Party, KGO, KJR, KEK; 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, KEK, KJR; Kay Kyser's Musical Quiz, KPO, KOW, KOMO. 7:30 p. m.—News Here and Abroad, KGO, KJR; Romance of the Ranches, KXN; Modern Music Box, KEK; Leon F. Drews, KOIN; Clark and Sprynozzle, KSL. 8:00 p. m.—Quiz Kids, KGO, KEK, KJR; Amos 'n' Andy, KXN, KOIN; KSL; Point Lundy, KPO, KGW, KOMO. 8:15 p. m.—Lambie Ross, KNX, KSL, KOIN. 8:30 p. m.—Dr. Christian, KNX, KOIN; Plantation Party, KPO, KOW, KOMO; Manhattan at Midnight, KGO, KJR, KEK; News, KSL. 9:00 p. m.—Time To Smile, KPO, KJR, KOIN; Easy Aces, KGO, KEK, KJR; Fred Allen, KOIN, KXN; Hyman Service, KSL. 9:30 p. m.—Basin Street Chamber Music, KGO; Mr. District Attorney, KPO, KOMO, KGW; News, KJR, KSL; Moonlight Sonata, KEK. 10:00 p. m.—Reporter News, KPO, KOW, KOMO; Paul Whiteman's Orch., KGO, KEK, KJR; News, KNX, KOIN; Masterworks of Music, KSL. 10:30 p. m.—Howard Becker's Orch., KGO; Music for Listening, KGW; Broadway Bandwagon, KEK; Bill Clifford's Orch., KGO; Rev. Peterson, KJR; Public Affairs, KNX; The World Today, KOIN; Christmas Fund, KOMO; Concert Hall, KPO. 11:00 p. m.—Dancing with Glancy, KPO, KOW; Wilbur Hatch's Orch., KOIN, KSL; This Moving World, KJR, KEK; News, KNX, KGO; Evening Reveries, KOMO.

Thursday 8:00 p. m.—Adventure Stories, KGO, KJR; Death Valley Days, KSL; Jane Arden, KOMO; Adventure in Toyland, KEK; Stars of Today, KGW; Ken Stevens and Ervin Yeo, KNX; Eyes of the World, KOIN; Don Winslow of the Navy, KPO. 8:30 p. m.—News of the World, KGO, KEK, KJR; Duffy's Tavern, KXN; Ricardo's Rhapsodies, KPO, KOMO; Tonight's Best Buys, KXN; Leon F. Drews, KOIN. 9:00 p. m.—Major Bowes' Original Amateur Hour, KNX, KSL, KOIN; Bing Crosby, KPO, KOMO, KOW; Cinnamon Bear, KEK; Judy Splinters, KGO; Scandinavian Reporter, KJR. 9:30 p. m.—Joe Gallicchio's Orch., KGO; KJR, KEK; Christmas Bells, KJR. 10:00 p. m.—Glenn Miller's Orch., KNX, KOIN, KSL; Cugat Rumba Revue, KPO, KOMO, KGW; Rudy Vallee, KGO, KEK, KJR. 10:30 p. m.—News Here and Abroad, KGO, KEK, KJR; Who Dunnit, KNX, KOIN, KSL; Frank Fay, KPO, KOW, KOMO. 8:00 p. m.—Amos 'n' Andy, KNX.

KSL, KOIN; Fred Waring, KPO, KOMO, KOW; March of Time, KJR, KGO, KEK. 8:15 p. m.—Lum and Abner, KPO, KOW, KOMO; Lanny Ross, KNX, KOIN, KSL. 8:30 p. m.—Maudie's Diary, KNX, KOIN; Saunders of Circle X, KGO, KJR; Coffee Time, KPO, KOMO, KOW; News, KSL; Flowers for the Living, KEK; Captain Quiz, KJR. 9:00 p. m.—Easy Aces, KGO, KEK, KJR; Duffy's Tavern, KNX, KOIN; Aldrich Family, KPO, KOMO, KOW. 10:00 p. m.—Music in the Moonlight, KGW; Death Valley Days, KNX, KOIN; News, KSL, KJR; Moonlight

Sonata, KEK; Let's Go Skiing, KGO; Dance Orch., KPO. 10:30 p. m.—Ed Stoker's Music, KOW; Reid Tanner's Orch., KSL; Masterworks of Music, KNX; The World Today, KOIN; Industry and Defense, KOMO; Concert Hall, KPO. 11:00 p. m.—Etchings in Brass, KPO; This Moving World, KEK; Harvey Owens' Orch., KSL, KOIN; News, KNX, KGO; Fred Waring's Pleasure Time, KJR.

lunches, the Parent-Teachers association has arranged with the city council to have all vacant lots, held for the non-payment of taxes, cultivated as vegetable gardens by WPA workers. PREACHER Joplin, Mo.—J.P. Guy Howard, 50 has earned the title of "Walking Preacher of the Ozarks," for in the past nine years he has walked more than 30,000 miles to conduct religious services in rural districts.

CHRISTMAS EVE

By GLUYAS WILLIAMS



STRANGE AS IT SEEMS

by JOHN HIX



TWO FEET IN HEAVEN!

Back in 1861 the business founders of the Brooklyn, N. Y., shoe firm of Palter and Fitzgerald set out to take care of all sizes and shapes of human pedal extremities. Today the store carries the entire range of shoe sizes for men and women, and the establishment is heaven indeed for anyone whose feet are longer, shorter, wider or narrower than the average. Palter and Fitzgerald's is the only store in America where a man with a size 21 EEEEE foot can walk out with a pair of shoes on his feet! Friday: Mistletoe Medicine!

CLOSE HEARING ON YAKIMA WALKOUT

Yakima, Wash., Dec. 24.—(AP)—A federal mediation panel, headed by E. P. Marsh of Seattle, today closed its preliminary hearing on the fruit workers' strike which has been under way here since the first week of October. Members of the citizens' committee once thought the strike had been solved and pending a final decision pickets from fruit row were called off. When the employers declared they were unable to take back all the strikers, the pickets went back on their beats and the mediation panel was called in. Its sessions have been closed.

Sydney, Australia (UP)—Ivan Mendley, light opera star, in a recent performance took time off from Gilbert and Sullivan to give a first-night audience a lecture on moral rearmament. Next day he denied that he was speaking on behalf of the Oxford group.

We Wish You A Very Merry Christmas Barkers Store for Men



TAILSPIN TOMMY—Dr. Vermin Acts Swiftly!



THE NEBBS—Well, That's That



By AL CAPP

By HAL FORREST

By SOL HESS