

THE HUMAN SPHINX

By Ellis Parker Butler

ILLUSTRATIONS BY F.E. WATSON

WHAT HAPPENED BEFORE
Simon Judd, amateur detective, and
Dick Brennan, investigator, are visiting John
Drane, a man of wealth, at the
house. Suddenly the household is
shaken. The dead man is first seen by
Brennan. The murder is then by Amy Drane and
Simon Judd. The latter faints.
Police officers call and investigations be-
gin. Dr. Blossington is called, and after see-
ing the murdered John Drane, makes the
astonishing revelation to Amy Drane that her
husband is not a man but a woman!
NOW GO ON WITH THE STORY!

"It is queer," said the doctor. "It is apt to be queerer than we imagine."
Dick Brennan, the detective arrived by that universal vehicle, the taxicab, while Amy Drane and Simon Judd were at breakfast. As he turned from the cab, after having slammed the door, he cast his eye over the Drane house, registering certain salient features: "Three story mansard-roofed house—painted white—veranda full width of house in front—fluted pillars approximately six feet in diameter supporting the third floor mansard projection—"
His brain registered physical objects in this way, a result of his innumerable appearances on the witness stand against criminals he had tracked down. A silver watch was never a silver watch to Brennan—it was "one white metal watch, hunting case No. 1,249,563, fourteen jewel movement No. 985,003." For Brennan no one ever lived at seven hundred and sixty-five South Street and at seven six five South Street." For Brennan no one ever stood on the corner of Elm Street and Grand Avenue; he stood "on South-west corner of intersection of Elm Street and Grand Avenue." For Brennan gold was "yellow metal" and brass was "yellow metal;" it was not for Brennan to decide which was which, but on the witness stand.
In no respect, except that he resembled thousands of detectives, did Dick Brennan resemble a detective. He resembled no one in particular except himself; you were apt to say "I know that man!" and then, immediately, "No, I'm wrong—I know someone who looks quite a little like that man." You saw this of people resembling the clerk, who waits on you in a grocery, or of people resembling the clerk who waits on you in the grocery. Dick Brennan's face was so like thousands of other faces that it was hard to remember. Not infrequently this was of value to him in his work. A man who so nearly resembled many other men could easily make himself look unlike himself.
Dick Brennan was forty-two, but he looked not over thirty. For twenty years he had been picking up criminals. He had never "studied" time, but the ways and habits of criminals had soaked into him; an

understanding of their probable actions and reactions had become instinctive in him; this was one reason why he was so valuable; another reason was that he had a brain that was able to recognize the times when a criminal was not acting according to rule. He could think when he had to.
Brennan was not particularly annoyed because he had been put on this case on a Sunday morning. He had planned to see a football game that afternoon but his intention had been to pick up a couple of pickpockets there, if they were still working the football crowds, and a murder was apt to be more interesting. He followed the circular drive to the veranda, glancing past the house toward the back where the drive curved farthest and when he had mounted to the veranda he rang the bell. Norbert, the colored houseman, came to the door.
"I'm the detective assigned to this case," he said without flourish. "The body upstairs or downstairs?"
"Upstairs, sir; yer sir," Norbert assured him. "Two cops up there; you can go right on up. Should I take your hat sir? No; you goin' take it with you. Right up these stairs. Yes sir!"
At the head of the stairs on of the officers greeted him with a "Hello, Dick!" and Brennan replied "Hello Joe!"
"Mean piece of business this is, Dick," the officer said.
"Stabbing, is it? What was that about it being an old lady?"
"Yes, Dr. Blossington made the examination; victim dead several hours, cause of death stab wound to heart. Suicide theory untenable, Dick, because the old lady couldn't have used so much strength. And there ain't no knife around, either, Dick. She's been murdered, all right. Well, the queer part is she's this old John Drane that's been living here, see? He was a she all the time; wouldn't it jar you?"
Yes, Hang around. I'll just take a look or two."
He went to the bed and looked down at the victim of the murder and, turning, surveyed the room. He walked across the floor and opened the door of the closet. Here hung many suits of men's garments, on proper hangers each on its own hook while a dozen pairs of shoes stood in a neat row on the floor. He stood on a chair and examined the shelf, taking down several hats, looking into each and noting the makers' marks in them. He moved the hanging clothes and tapped on the inner wall of the next closet.
His next act was to open the door leading into John Drane's private

bath. Here the walls were tiled to the height of a man and the porcelain tube was built in, as was the shower. The whole was immaculately white, as was the wall above the tile and the ceiling. On a glass shelf stood the few toilet articles any man might use—a safety razor in its gold-plated case, talcum, bay rum, and so on. There was no opening out of the room except the door into the bedroom and a narrow window the lower part of which was in leaded glass.
"The door wasn't locked, huh?" Brennan asked.
"No. This maid Josie came up to call the old lady and when nobody answered she opened the door and fainted. Door couldn't have been locked. It don't look like the old

"Then Josie was the first to open the door, and Miss Amy was the first to follow her, and then this Mr. Judd came. Who else after that?"
"Norbert—he's the colored houseman. Mrs. Vincent—she's the housekeeper. Maggie Maney, the cook. George, the chauffeur. And I came. We just stood at the door; nobody went in."
"And about when was this?"
"Around nine o'clock; maybe five or ten minutes after. Mrs. Vincent sent Josie up because breakfast was ready and Mr. Drane hadn't come down yet."
"Everyone else had?"
"No; not Mr. Judd and not Mr. Dart—" Josie said.
"Dart? What Dart?"
"The undertaker man," Zella explained. "He's an old friend of Mr.



lady was expected to be killed, Dick, does it?"
"Nothing stolen out of here that you've heard of?"
"Not that I know of," the officer said. "We didn't ask. We waited for you."
"All right," Brennan said, going to the door. "I'm through here, I guess. You better telephone the coroner, Henry, and Joe—you look around for a knife or something. You might keep your hands off anything smooth, in case of fingerprints. Reach in under the mattress and around and anywhere you think a knife might be. Sometimes these killers shove things in under when they get a panic. I'm going down. What did you say the girl's name was that saw her first?"
"Josie. But she ain't downstairs. She's in that room across the hall. She's got a weak heart and they took her in there to bring her to. There's an old dame with her—the housekeeper."
"I'll see them," Brennan said. His interview with Josie in Amy's room yielded him, however, nothing we do not already know.
"And you?" Brennan demanded of the maid Zella.
"I don't know anything," Zella said. "I was down in the kitchen, along with George—he's the chauffeur—and Maggie Maney, the cook, and we heard Josie screaming and heard her fall. So we came up as quick as we could. She was fainted on the floor, and Mr. Judd, too—"
"Mr. Judd? Fainted?" Brennan asked. "Who's Judd?"
"He's a visitor, a friend of Mr. Drane's, I guess. He come last night and stayed over. He saw the blood and fainted."
"He reached the room before you did?"
"Yes, but after Josie, didn't he, Josie? Josie was first, then Miss Amy came—"
"And who is Miss Amy?"
"The grand-niece like of Mr. Drane—of her we thought was Mr. Drane," Zella explained. "Him and her was the family—the rest of us was just the help."

Drane's and sometimes he comes to play cards and stays the night. He always has the blue guest room. But last night he didn't stay."
"Not that I knew it," Josie interrupted, raising herself on her elbow. "I knocked on his door when I came up the first time. That was about half past eight. I thought—" she hesitated. "I thought he answered that time."
"I see!" Brennan said. "You knocked to wake him up and you thought he answered. What did he say?"
"I thought he said 'All right! Yes!' or something like that. So then I went to Mr. Judd's room and knocked and he said 'All right; I'm up.'"
"But, that first trip, Mr. Drane did not answer?"
"No, sir, but I didn't think anything of it. Mr. Drane don't often have to be called; he always woke up of himself. I thought he was in the bathroom, likely, and would be down. I just knocked on his door and went on, sort of reminding him. The others I waited for an answer because they were guests, and guests ain't sure."
"And the second time you came up you got no farther than Mr. Drane's door? You fainted there?"
"Yes, sir; that's it."
"Show me these two guest rooms," Brennan said to Zella, and she went with him, first to the yellow room Judd had occupied and then to the blue room with its untouched bed. Brennan looked around the rooms without much care, but on his way to the stairs he called the officer named Joe and told him to look into the two rooms carefully. Zella went back to Josie and Brennan went down to the lower floor.
As Brennan reached the lower hall the screen of the front door was pulled open and a young man, his face betraying his excitement, came in.
"Oh!" he exclaimed. "I know who you are; you're the detective. I saw you—it was when our house was robbed and I was before the grand jury to tell what was stolen."
"Yes. You're Robert Carter," Brennan said simply. "Seven three

four Beech Avenue. You made a good witness. Your man went to the pen. You a friend here?"
"Yes, Amy," young Carter said, reddening more. "We're—we would have been engaged. I just heard of this awful business and I came as soon as I could. Is she—"
"Eating breakfast. I shouldn't wonder," Brennan said. "Go right in, if it's the usual thing and you want to. I've been put on this case and I'm looking it over a bit."
"If there's anything I can do—" Carter suggested.
"No; never mind that now," Brennan said. "I'll take it up with you if I need to. I want to talk to Miss Drane next and you can help me most by steadying her down if she's excited at all. Tell her I'm out here on the porch and will see her whenever she's ready. No hurry. Let her take her own time. Tell her it's nothing to be afraid of."
"That's fine of you," Carter said, putting out his hand impulsively.
"Brennan is the name," the detective said, shaking Carter's hand. "Trot along now."
Bob Carter found Amy and Simon Judd finishing their breakfast and about to rise. Mrs. Vincent at her end of the table had eaten nothing, merely sipping tea, and her face showed she was still in great pain. Impulsively Amy arose as Carter entered and he was holding her in his arms before he was aware he had intended to do any such thing.
"Oh, Bob, Bob! Isn't it dreadful!" Amy cried as he tried to comfort her. "If I didn't have you I wouldn't know what to do."
"Yes—well, you've got me all right, honey," he said. "Don't you take it so hard. It's bad enough but you want to buck up. No good in letting it get you too hard. We'll stick it out together."
"It's so good to have you here," she said, wiping her eyes again. "I don't mean to break down. I'm trying to—to not."
"That's the idea!" Carter agreed. "And now, look here, honey—there's a detective fellow out there wants to talk to you. Just don't let it worry you, that's all. He won't be rough; he's a nice sort. And we needn't go out until you're ready; he says he's in no hurry."
"I'm ready now, Bob," she said. "You'll come, Mr. Judd."
"Sure!" tried Simon Judd widely. "Surest thing you know. Detectives are the thing I want to see; I'm going to be one myself."
"You'll see a good one when you see this Brennan," Carter said. "None better."
"That's the kind I want to see," said Simon Judd, and they went out to the veranda. Brennan arose as they appeared.
"Miss Drane," he said. "And this would be Mr. Judd? My name's Brennan as Carter has probably told you. I've been put on this case. I've got to ask some questions of you, Miss Drane, but if there are any you don't care to answer in a crowd we'll leave them until later. No, you men need not go; I'd rather have you here—the young lady is less apt to be nervous. Let's sit down; we may as well be comfortable."
"I've had the officers make a search of three rooms up there," Brennan said. "Mr. Drane's room—we'll call him that, or call her that—and the room Mr. Dart was to occupy, and your room, Mr. Judd."
"Suits me all right," Simon Judd said heartily. "Anything you do suits me; I'm going to be a detective myself, and the way you do it is what I want to see."
"We'll talk that over later, then," said Brennan after a glance at the huge Westerner. "I don't suppose Miss Drane, we'll find anything in those rooms that will mean anything although a man can never tell. I've talked to Josie and got all she could tell me, and Zella has told me her story. You, they say, were the second person to reach Mr. Drane's door. Just tell me why you went there and what you saw."
Amy, folding and refolding her handkerchief, told what we already know.
"Yes, nothing in all that," said Brennan. "Now, have you personally any reason to think any particular person killed—" He pointed toward the house with his thumb.
(Continued Next Week)

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