

THE HUMAN SPHINX

By **Ellis Parker Butler**

ILLUSTRATIONS BY F. E. WATSON

**THIRD INSTALLMENT
WHAT HAPPENED BEFORE**

Simon Judd, amateur detective, and William Dart, an undertaker, are visiting John Drane, eccentric man of wealth, at the Drane place. Suddenly the household is shocked to find John Drane has been murdered. The dead man is first seen by Josie, the maid, then by Amy Drane and Simon Judd. The latter faints.

NOW GO ON WITH THE STORY

When Simon Judd returned to consciousness it was largely because of the pain in the ear and when he tried to move his head he could not do so. For a moment or two he was unable to remember where he was or how he came there for, close to his eyes, was what seemed to be an enormous black pillar. It seemed to be, as his senses returned a most unaccountable thing—a low black shoe out of which arose a phenomenally large ankle, and when he put his hand to his ear he was no longer in doubt, a foot was standing on his ear. Someone was standing with one heel against his nose and the toe of the other foot on his ear, and he tried to push the latter foot away.

"Leave be! Stop it, you!" a hoarse voice whispered, but the foot removed itself from his ear and Simon Judd sat up. He found himself encompassed by skirts and he backed out from among them and got to his feet. He was in a group at the door of John Drane's room; evidently he had been unconscious but a moment or two, for Amy Drane was still standing in horror on the threshold. The maid Josie still lay where she had fallen, but there were now others peering into the room. Norbert, the colored houseman, was there, and the big foot that had been pressed against Simon Judd's nose was that of the cook, a woman almost as enormous as Simon Judd himself. Behind the cook was a second maid, Zella, with her hands pressed against her cheeks, and Drane's chauffeur was running up the stairs. To him Simon Judd turned.

"John Drane's been murdered," Simon Judd said to the chauffeur. "I can't look at him; I faint off at the sight of blood. Always did and dare say I always will. This here girl's fainted, too. Help me get her into a bed somewhere and out of the way or she's like to be trampled. Here you!"

He touched Zella on the shoulder. "You come and get this girl out of her faint," he said. "Where we goin' to put her?"

"Here—this way," Zella said, crossing the hall and opening a door. "Miss Amy's room. Let me help you, George. You and me take her shoulders and he can take her feet. Go easy, George—she's got heart trouble."

They carried Josie to the bed in Amy's room and Simon Judd followed the chauffeur into the hall.

"If you know who the family doctor is you better send for him," Judd said. "You better send for the police, too; this ain't my balliwick."

"Yes, I'll do that," the chauffeur said. He, at least, was efficiently businesslike. "You better not let them touch anything in there, unless he's alive yet."

"I know all that, young man," Judd said. "I'll take hold here; you get a move on."

"I'll telephone," the chauffeur said, and he started for the stairs, but the cook took his arm.

"George! Ain't it awful? Ain't it just awful?" she cried.

She wiped her eyes and hurried across the hall, and Simon Judd looked after her.

"There's a real kid," he said to himself. "If that's a flapper she ain't flapped none of the common sense out of her yet, anyhow!"

He looked at those remaining at John Drane's door.

"Say, look here!" he said suddenly. "Where's that other feller; the man with the whiskers. What did John say his name was? Dart?"

The housekeeper turned.

"Mr. Dart? Yes, sir. Why, I don't know where Mr. Dart is. I don't know the blue guest room for him. Mr. Drane said he was going to stay the night."

"I left him down there in the parlor, or whatever you call it, when I come up to bed," Simon Judd said. "They had something to talk over, seemed like. I guess may be they talked late; maybe he ain't up yet."

"See, Norbert, if he's in his room," Mrs. Vinvent ordered and the negro went. He came back at once.

"No, ma'am," he said. "He ain't in his room; his bed ain't been slept in. I guess he got so mad—"

He stopped.

"You guess what?" Simon Judd demanded.

"I said mad," said Norbert. "I mean mad. What I mean is I've got this cough on my chest and I been takin' medicine for it. The doc give me a medicine for to alleviate the cough, and he says take a smaller whenever the cough comes upon me, and last night I leaves the bottle down there. So when I starts to cough I go down to get my bottle. Yes sir!"

"What time was it?" Simon Judd asked.

"Well, I don't rightly know. Maybe one o'clock, maybe two o'clock. I ain't look at no time piece, I just starts down. And when I get on the steps, here I hear Mist' Drane and Mist' Dart talkin' together, and Mist' Dart he surely is might mad about it. Yes sir! swearin' and cussin'; yes, sir! Mighty mad So I don't go down. I comes up."

"What were they talking about?" Simon Judd asked.

"Now, that I don't know," said Norbert. "I ain't listen; it ain't none of my business what gentlemen talk about. I just comes up."

The chauffeur George came up stairs.

"I got Doctor Blessington," he told Simon Judd. "He'll be right out. And I got the police station; they're sending men."

In fact the police officers arrived almost immediately, the local headquarters having telephoned to the station nearby. They came, two them, on popping motorcycles that they parked alongside the veranda, and entered the house together. From the top of the stairs Simon "but don't get excited about it. You keep calm; you don't want to fetch on another of those spells of yours. You better go down and take a—take a drink of water or something," she said. "Yes, I'll be doing just that," she said. "It's terrible, George a murder right in the house. Who done it, do ye think?"

"We can't tell that yet," he said. "Come on, if you want me to help you down. I got to phone the doc and the police."

Simon Judd turned toward the murdered man's room. He put his hand over his eyes to hid the dead man from his sight.

"Now, you see here, Miss Amy," he said. "You better go downstairs awhile until the doctor comes; that man of yours is sending for him—and for the police. There ain't no-

said. "They hand him most of these murders these days. He's a good one; he'll clear up this in no time if there's any clear up to it. He's the best man we've got on Long Island. Who's that?"

It was Dr. Blessington entering the house. He came up the stairs, a small black case in his hand.

"In here?" he said and entered John Drane's room. Below, the second officer was telephoning headquarters. "Ah, good morning officer," he said to the man in John Drane's room. "Murder, is it? Too bad! This sort of thing is getting altogether too common. You might ask these folks to go downstairs. We'll just close this door."

"And all of you hang around down there, see?" said the officer. "There'll be questions to be asked."

"Come! We'll go down," said Simon Judd and, as Amy Drane came from the room where the maid Josie lay. She stood back to make way for her. "She doin all right?" he asked. "That's good. The cop wants us to go down and wait; the doctor's in there."

They went down. The servants went into the dining room off the hall and waited there, and Simon Judd and Amy went into the veranda. The girl sat twisting her hands, saying nothing, now and again wiping her eyes, and when the doctor came down the stairs did not arise. She held her handkerchief over her quivering mouth.

Dr. Blessington came out into the veranda and set down his black case. His face was drawn into serious lines and he was frowning.

"You are Mr. Drane's niece—his grand niece, I believe?" he said. "And this gentleman?"

"Why I'm just a feller that knew John when he was a boy," explained Judd. "Him and me used to play together back in Riverbank, Iowa, long before he ever came East—60 years ago, anyway. I'm east on a sort of business and I telephoned old John yesterday, just for old times' sake, and he says to come out and see him a day or so."

"How long is it since you saw him last, before yesterday?" Dr. Blessington asked.

"Thirty-five years," said Simon Judd.

"That is a long time; he is greatly changed since then, isn't he?"

"Well, yes," Simon Judd admitted. "Yes, John had changed quite a bit. Just as bony as ever and so on, but a lot older."

"Would you have known him if you had not known he was John Drane? Would you have recognized him, for example, if you had met him on the street by chance?"

Simon Judd rubbed the back of his head thoughtfully.

"Now, that's a hard one, doc!" he said at length. "I might have, and I might not have. Maybe not. It's been so long since I saw John last. Why, what are you getting at anyway?"

Dr. Blessington turned to Amy. "I wanted to tell you this myself, Miss Drane," he said, "for I know it will be a shock to you. The 'man' up there in the bed, the murdered 'man, the 'man' we have known as John Drane, is not a man at all. 'He' is a woman."

CONTINUED NEXT WEEK

NEW HILL NEWS

(Written for last week)

Mr. and Mrs. J. H. Webster and little daughter Evelyn of Greensboro, and Miss Mary Webster spent a delightful week-end at Wrightsville Beach. They returned Thursday by White Lake and spent a few hours.

Mr. Zeb Hearn and daughter, Sarah, and Mrs. Bettie Raynor and little daughter, of Raeford spent the last few days in this section.

Mrs. R. L. Trotter and son R. L. Jr., have gone to Richmond to visit her sisters Mrs. P. F. Lita, and Mrs. Tom Kirk.

Mr. W. T. Mann is confined in a hospital in Raleigh. He is in a serious condition we understand. His relatives and friends are visiting him often.

There was an ice cream supper given by the New Elam Christian L. C. W. society last Saturday evening. Quite a neat sum was realized which will be used for the benefit of the school.

Mr. T. M. Lassiter of Durham, has been visiting his parents Mr. and Mrs. J. C. Lassiter.

Miss Josie Woods has been visiting relatives in Durham for a few days.

Mr. J. R. Sturdivant of Siler City spent the week-end at home with his parents, Mr. and Mrs. R. L. Sturdivant.

Misses Rose Sturdivant and Renne Webster are spending the week in Greensboro with Mr. and Mrs. Henry Webster.

Tuesday a little daughter was born to Mr. and Mrs. Henry Ellis of Sanford. Mrs. Ellis was before her marriage Miss Janice Carr and the little lady has been named Janice Marion.

KIMBALTON NEWS

(Written for last week)

Andrew Burgess and family of Burlington spent last week with their uncle John Bowers.

Mrs. Sam Hancock and children of Sweepersville spent last week with her mother, Mrs. Brooks McMath.

Oakley Baseball team will play Hickory Mt. at Hickory Mt. next Saturday.

The revival meeting at Hickory Mt. Baptist church closed Friday night after a successful meeting. There were fifteen baptised and six new members by letter.

On The Rural Route

Why not let Uncle Sam work for you? His services are cheap, prompt and business-like.

Suppose you are on the farm and receive notice of an account that is due in town. If your funds are at the bank, just mail the party a check by R. F. D., and go right ahead with your work. It's all done for a two-cent stamp. Of course, if you really want to come to town—that's different.

THE BANK OF MONCURE

MONCURE, N. C.

A MIGHTY MEAN MAN

We heard tell of a man the other day who was so mean that he called his wife "Radio" because she broadcasted all the news.

Some cranky old fellow, no doubt, who never lets his wife get in a word edgewise. We often wish this Bank had a real radio broadcasting station so we could tell all the people the good features of our reliable bank. The nearest we can come to it is by advertising. If you are not already a patron, please take this as an invitation.

THE BANK of GOLDSTON

HUGH WOMBLE, Pres. T. W. GOLDSTON Cashier
GOLDSTON, N. C.



Simon Judd beckoned the two officers into the house

"Mighty bad, Maggie," he said. "No, nothing to be done," she said and turned and then, suddenly, she broke into sobs and threw herself against Simon Judd, weeping tempestuously on his shoulder.

"He was all I had!" she sobbed. "He was so good to me; he was so kind to me!"

"There, there!" Simon Judd comforted her. "I know just how you feel, girl. You cry all you want to, it won't do you no mite of harm. All of you keep out of that room!" he ordered, and then to the weeping woman he said, "I'll stay here comfortable about that hired girl we put in your room; the other one said how she has heart trouble. I don't know but what you might help in there some, if you feel up to it."

"Josie?" Amy asked. "In my room? Yes, I'll go to her."

thing to be done until they come." Judd bade them to come up.

"No one been in the room," one of the officers asked as he saw the group at the door.

"No one," Simon Judd told them. "Not that I know of, anyway," and he told of having heard the scream of the girl Josie and of coming at once from his room. The officers entered the room.

"Looks like murder, Joe," one said.

"Sure is murder," the other replied. "Looks to me like a case for Brenny."

"Yes, he ought to get on it right away, too. You better go down and phone headquarters; I'll stay here. This man's dead, all right. Anybody sent for a doctor?"

"One's coming," Simon Judd said. "We're going to have Brennen on this case, most likely," the officer

Are You Ready



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