

# THE HUMAN SPINNAKER

By Ellis Parker Butler  
The Famous Author of  
"Pigs is Pigs" - "Philo Gubb"  
"In Pawn" - etc.  
You'll Enjoy it!  
Bubbling Over with Thrills,  
Mystery and Adventure!

"You don't mean to say!" Simon Judd exclaimed. "Well, black my cats! And I dare say it was along about when he called you in that, he begun to gather these sickly hired helps around him, huh?"

"Yes, I think that is so," Dr. Blessington said. That is so."

"And when, doc," Simon Judd asked cheerfully, "was the time when he murdered the first of these sickly hired hands of his?"

That Dr. Blessington was utterly amazed and genuinely shocked by this brazen question discharged at him by Simon Judd is putting it mildly. He glared at the fat Iowan and when he tried to speak he could only splutter. Brennan himself looked at Simon Judd with smiling curiosity, but as Judd's possible thought suggested itself to him he straightened with a perceptible jerk.

"Murderer!" spluttered the doctor. "I take exception to that word, sir! I—I demand that you explain—"

"Well, black my cats!" Simon Judd said good naturedly. "You don't have to go flyin' off the handle at me, doc. I ain't said you murdered anybody. It just sort of struck me that maybe this dead lady had been doin' some. I don't know but what—if I was a female person tryin' to let on to be a male man, and if I had all-fixed big reasons for keepin' it dark—I would sort to like to get rid of any nosey hired help that got a notion I wasn't what I let on to be. Seems reasonable to me, some ways. I ain't sayin' you had anything to do with it, doc. Don't think you had, myself. You ain't that sort."

"Why—why—why—" Dr. Blessington stammered, still too angry to have control of himself.

"Never mind, Blessington," Brennan said soothingly. "Our friend here is a new hand at this business. He only thought he had found something interesting. Don't let it worry you. Stop as you go out, if you want to talk it over; it's probably unimportant."

But when the doctor had entered the house Brennan did not act as if he thought the suggestion unimportant.

"Have you seen anything to make you think there has been murder of that sort done?" he asked Judd, but the Iowan was unable to say that he had.

"Now, don't you go payin' too much attention to what I say from time to time, Dick," he said. "I'm gobby, I am. Always was an old fool when it comes to shootin' off my mouth; notion hits me in the head and I blat out like a kicked billy goat. Wouldn't surprise me a mifs if I was all wrong about these sick and halt hired hands bein' murdered; probably just one of my fool notions. Doc wouldn't go and bury nobody without findin' out what they died of."

"He certainly would not—if he suspected anything," Brennan said. "But if he had no reasons to suspect? If he saw in a death only the operation of the disease he had been treating? There may be a lot it this idea of yours."

"Pshaw, no!" Simon Judd said with exaggerated carelessness. "Just the fool talk of a fat old fellow that don't know nothin' much. You better forget it, Brennan. Go on and ask some more of the help about things."

"I never forget anything, Judd," Brennan said, but he did continue, as his next step, the questioning of the servants. The local reporters had by this time had word of the murder and began to arrive, and Brennan referred the first to Dr. Blessington and the officers upstairs and told Norbert to send any others to Dr. Blessington. To have privacy for his further questionings he went into the library and had the servants sent to him there.

From the servants, however, he was able to draw nothing new. With Simon Judd's murder suggestion in mind he dug a little more into that phrase of the life in the Drane home. Norbert said that he had succeeded a houseman who had died, and the cook Maggie Maney admitted that she had come while her predecessor

still lay dead above stairs, but she insisted she had known the former cook and that she had always been sickly and weakly. The others had followed servants who had gone to other positions as their health improved, or had been sent to sanitariums by John Drane when they became ill to work.

To get Maggie to say this intelligibly was not easy for she had been drinking and as Brennan's questioning proceeded she was alternately angry—shouting her answers at the top of her voice—and maudlinly tearful, her hugh body shaken by rather ridiculous sobs. She became so hysterical finally that Brennan told her he would not bother her more then, for it was plain she was an apoplectic and he was afraid she might break a blood vessel if she carried on any worse. But she would not go.

All Brennan had managed to get from her were assertions that John Drane, "poor woman that she was" had been a "heavenly angel, God rest him," and that a poor woman had a right to a "swaller" of drink when her heart was broke, and that she could tear the hair from the heads of "them that came sneakin' an' snoopin' tryin' to blacken folk's car-ack-ters."

"All right, then, Maggie," Brennan told the excited cook, "we won't sneak and snoop any more. You go back to the kitchen and take it easy, and don't let it worry you. And just send the chauffeur in, will you?"

The cook flared up again.

"I'll not have him bulldozed by the likes of you," she shouted. "All shame to you, stirrin' up strife in th' house. Go on about your business an' leave us be, why don't you?"

"Now be easy," Brennan urged good naturedly. "I'm Irish myself and you don't want to get me angry, you know. It'd be a terrible row. You just tell George I want to see him here, that's all."

The cook went out mumbling and growling, but George did not come and Brennan had to send Norbert for him.

What got into that stout lady cook, do you think?" Simon Judd asked while they waited for the chauffeur.

"Some of the worst sort of whiskey now being bootlegged," Brennan said, smiling. "I imagine John Drane kept the lady pretty severely off the stuff and she's having her first real happy time for many a month."

"Black my cats!" Simon Judd exclaimed. "It beats my time how they get ahold of the stuff, with prohibition and all."

"They get it," Brennan said drily, but Norbert's return cut short further explanation. He said George the chauffeur was sorry but he had gone to bed and didn't think he could bear to get up.

"He says, Mist Brennan, how the growth in his stomach got mighty bad all-of-a-sudden-like while back and he ain't able to stand it. Yes, sir. He says how the pain is mighty terrific. He ain't hardly able to stand it, he says. So he took some of the medicine what he's got and went to bed. Yes, sir."

"Well, what's the rest of it?" Brennan asked. "I can see that's not all; you've got something else on your mind."

"I was only thinkin', Mist Brennan," Norbert said, "that if he got a pain or ain't he got a pain it ain't goin' to be much use troublin' George right now. No, sir. Seems like he been indulgin' in alcoholic liquor to a very considerable extent."

"Drunk, is he?"

"He certainly has been indulgin'," Norbert said seriously. "I ain't seen a man what has indulged more completely fo' quite some time. No, sir!"

"We'll put George off for the present then," Brennan said. "Are there any other servants I have not seen?"

"No, sir," Norbert assured him. "We you have seen is all."

"This George," Brennan asked. "What do you know about him, Norbert?"

The negro told what he knew. Like the others George—who had the

odd name of Firmandick—had been in John Drane's service some little time. He had been an orderly in the hospital before coming to Drane and had had an operation for a growth in the stomach, but the operation had not been entirely successful—the growth had returned. Dr. Blessington said, Norbert told Brennan, that the growth was a serious matter and would kill Firmandick some day if there was not another operation, but the chauffeur was set against another.

The chauffeur, Norbert said, was supposed by the servants in the house to be engaged to marry Maggie, but no one believed the marriage would ever occur because they did not believe George would live to be married. He was too ill when his bad spells came upon him. Norbert said he supposed George got his liquor from some bootlegger; the servants knew George usually had whiskey in his room but the chauffeur seldom drank it—only when the pain was bad. Probably, Norbert said, Maggie had got the whiskey from George, but she should not drink. Dr. Blessington said she had a might high blood-pressure and whiskey was dangerous for her. He had scared her good, Norbert said, when she had a sort of stroke. The doctor told her she was pretty sure to drop dead if she took much whiskey.

When Norbert was gone Brennan lighted a cigarette.

"It's a queer bunch altogether, Judd," he said, "but you'd be amazed how many queer bunches there are in this world if you mixed around as I do. I see them at their worst usually, when they are keyed up by some catastrophe and their eccentricities stick out strong. I think my next job is to talk to this man Dart, our undertaker friend. He may not yield much but we'll get another angle on John Drane. I have a notion Dart must have known Drane was a woman."

"Pshaw, now," Simon Judd exclaimed, chuckling. "You don't mean it, do you, Dick? Why the old rascal! A hairy old boy like him, seventy years old if he's a day, hangin' around this old lady like he was tryin' to be her husband!"

Brennan snapped his fingers.

"There's an idea!" he said. "There's a lead worth following! If this man Dart discovered that Drane was a woman he might very well try to blackmail her into marrying him. John Drane was a very rich person, Judd. We may have the reason for the murder there—Dart trying to force Drane to marrying him to avert exposure."

"Nope!" said Simon Judd. "Nothin' like that, Richard."

"But why not, I'd like to know?" Brennan demanded, rather amused at the fat man's decided tone.

"Why black my cats, Dick!" said Simon Judd. "He couldn't be married to her already, could he?"

"How do you make that out?" Brennan wanted to know.

Simon Judd chuckled his reaving chuckle again.

"I just sort of suspicion it, Richard," he said. "Seems so to me, as you may say. A feller don't always have to have reasons, does he?"

"In my profession he does," said Brennan coldly.

"Well, then," said Simon Judd, "how about him comin' to play cards and stayin' over night quite frequent, Richard. If I was tryin' to figger this out I'd sort of say 'John Drane was a woman and she didn't want it known. If she didn't want it known she wouldn't be havin' a feller stay over night much, especial if he didn't need to, seein' as the feller lived right here in town. And if she did let a feller stay over night it'd sort of show they was married. If he was tryin' to bulldoze her into marryin' him she wouldn't want him around, would she?"

"You may be right," said Brennan thoughtfully. "And does your mind tell how long they had been married?"

"Oh, pshaw, now, Richard," Simon Judd laughed. "You don't want I should have a head on me that could tell you the day and date, do you?"

But Brennan was rubbing his chin, considering this new idea. He did not tell Simon Judd what he was thinking but it was that if William Dart was indeed John Drane's wife the last will and testament made by John Drane might be of great importance in solving the mystery, such as it was, of the murder. If Drane had made a will leaving everything to Amy, as Amy said Drane had told her he would, William Dart would have been foolish indeed to kill Drane, but if the latest will left a large sum to Dart and Dart feared the making of a new will this might

be a reason for the murder of Drane by Dart. Coupled with the flight of the undertaker from the house on the night of the murder this might all mean something.

"You're thinkin' maybe this undertaker feller murdered John Drane, so-called,"

"How do you know what I was thinking?"

(Continued Next Week)

### TRAIN SCHEDULES

#### Seaboard

No. 109, South, Arr. 10:30 a. m.  
No. 21, South, Arr. 12:18 p. m.  
No. 22, North, Arr. 4:21 p. m.

#### Southern

No. 113, South, Arr. 6:20 a. m.  
No. 36, North, Arr. 10:09 a. m.  
No. 35, South, Arr. 5:35 p. m.  
No. 114, North, Arr. 8:56 p. m.

#### Clinchfield

No. 37, North, Arr. 10:45 a. m.  
No. 38, South, Arr. 4:48 p. m.  
No. 110, North, Arr. 11:20 a. m.

## NEW RUTH SCHOOL TO OPEN OCT. 18

New \$30,000 Building Will Be Presented to School Board Thursday Evening

Ruth, Oct. 15.—The new \$30,000 modern school building for Ruth elementary school, which is located in the north end of town, will be formally opened Thursday night, October 18th at 7:45 p. m. The County Board of Education will present the building to the local board. Attorney M. L. Edwards, chairman of the school board of this district will accept it on behalf of the district. There will be several other short and interesting addresses and the public is invited to attend. County Superintendent, Clyde A. Erwin will speak.

This is one of the most unique school buildings in this section of the state and has received favorable

comment by various state school officials. It is a building that the people of this district have just reason to be proud of.

### FIRE DESTROYS HOUSE AND GARAGE HERE SATURDAY

A six room dwelling house and garage, located on Clay street and belonging to Mr. Ed Smart, was destroyed by fire Saturday morning about two o'clock.

The fire was noticed by Mr. George Green, night policeman of Spindale, who was riding along the highway near Midway Filling Station. He speeded up his car, drove into Forest City and turned in the alarm. The fire department responded, but arrived too late to save either of the buildings.

The property was valued at about \$2,500, and was partially covered by insurance. The house was unoccupied, Mr. Smart having moved out about two weeks ago.

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