

# THE HUMAN SPHINX

by Ellis Parker Butler

ILLUSTRATIONS BY R.E. WATSON

WHAT HAPPENED BEFORE

Simon Judd, amateur detective, and William Dart, an undertaker, visit John Drane, an eccentric man of wealth, at the Drane place. Suddenly John Drane is murdered, and Dr. Blessington, after examining the body, makes the astounding revelation to Amy Drane that her "uncle" is a woman and not a man.

All the servants in the household are sick. It is noted, and it is found that Drane never discharged a servant for ill health. Dick Brennan, detective, arrives at the house and makes thorough investigations. Simon Judd tells him the story of the actual John Drane with whom he (Judd) was acquainted in Riverbank. Judd proposes to Brennan that he "go partners" with Brennan in the solution of the crime. Brennan accepts, then Judd declares that Amy is not John Drane's niece or any relative of Drane. Mrs. Vincent, housekeeper, tells Brennan that Drane kept his servants from among the chronic patients at the hospital. Dr. Blessington is asked if he had ever noticed any special change in Drane. Dr. Blessington has but little information to give. The talk veers to Drane's employment of chronic invalids, and suddenly Judd astonishes the doctor by asking when "Drane murdered the first of those hired hands of his?"

More servants are questioned, but are unable to give much information, being intoxicated. Judd then propounds the belief that the undertaker is the husband of Drane. He also tells Brennan: "You've been thinking perhaps Dart murdered Drane. You're wrong."

NOW GO ON WITH THE STORY STORY

EAST INSTALLMENT

"Yes, the first," Abner Dart said so weakly that they could hardly hear him. "The first was housekeeper she had, named Caroline Barstell. She was a sickly old thing and believed in ghosts—she thought she was a medium and had second sight but she was keen. She was keen the way fortune tellers are when they study a person and then tell them what their past has been and what their characters are. She told Ella right out to her face she was a woman. That night Mrs. Barstell had a fit and died."

"Ella had poisoned her?"

"Yes, and that was the first. That

was what started Ella getting the sick ones from the hospital—Dr. Blessington made no trouble over the Barstell woman's death; he said she had been in danger of death at all times."

Abner Dart was silent a moment. "There were nine others," he said hoarsely. "Nine others. When Ella suspected that one of them believed she was a woman that one died."

"And who is Amy, Abner?"

Before Abner Dart could answer Simon Judd's question the silence was broken by cries and loud noises within the house and Brennan leaped for the door and ran inside. For a brief period the noise continued, then it was silenced and Brennan came out again.

"That Maggie cook was cutting loose," he said. "She has been drinking more but I took the stuff from her and she promised to be a good girl. Did you say who Amy was, Dart?"

"She's a Drane," Abner Dart replied. "Along during these last years Ella complained a good deal because she had never had a child. It bothered her mind. She talked to me about it. She worried because we were old and there would be no one to leave the money to, and I told her to adopt a child. She used to go away when she was sick; she went to Hot Springs when she had appendicitis; she couldn't let the doctors here handle her illness, of course, so she went away. She went to California on one of the trips when she thought she was going to be sick, and she heard of a Drane there and tried to find him—his name was Silas, but he had died and his wife had died and they had left this baby. So Ella adopted it. That is Amy. That is all we ever knew about Amy. She was a great comfort to Ella, these years, especially these last months."

"Well, black my cats, I'm glad to know there was some good in the woman, anyway!" Simon Judd exclaimed. "Did she make that will she was talking about, leaving the money to Amy?"

"Yes, and she was going to give Amy a fine sum when she married. We liked Bob Carter. It was like ending with something clean after a lot of vileness to know we would leave these two when we went," Abner Dart said. "It did not pay, Sime. She made a mistake, Ella did. She wasn't happy and I wasn't happy."

John Drane's money did her no good and it did me no good. I'd have enjoyed life more just being a second-rate undertaker out there in Riverbank, burying some old friend now and then, and going along nice and easy."

Amy was weeping now, crying gently, and Bob Carter, sitting on the arm of her chair was trying to comfort her. Norbert, coughing, came to the door. He seemed to think Brennan was in charge of the house, for he spoke to him.

"If you please, Mist. Brennan," he said. "George Firmendick has just gone an' died all of a sudden an' Maggie is startin' to carry on mightily bad."

"Where is she?" Brennan asked. "She's up in his room ovah the garage," Norbert said, "an' she won't let nobody come up. She's got hold of a knife and I reckon she's gone plum crazy."

"I'll be out there in a minute," Brennan said. "Have the two officers go out with you, will you? Hurry now! I just want to ask Mr. Dart a couple of questions."

Norbert hurried away, coughing as he went, and Abner Dart made a gesture of despair with his hand and his face became sadder than ever.

"Last night," Brennan said, "when Carter here went through the library, Dary, you said to Ell—to John Drane, if you please—something like 'Don't do it! I warn you not to!' or 'I'm against it; remember what I say!' Something of that sort. What did you mean by that? Were you warning your wife not to let Amy marry Carter?"

"No," Abner Dart said hollowly. "Oh, not that; never that! We both wanted that."

"Then it wasn't over that you and Ella Drane quarreled last night after Simon Judd went to bed?"

"You know we quarreled, then?" Abner Dart asked dully.

"We know it," Brennan said. "Why did you not stay the night as had been arranged?"

For a full minute Abner Dart did not answer and when he did it was in the voice of one talking in his sleep.

"I'm old! I'm old! And I'm tired! A man can stand so much and then he can stand no more. I had thought she was through with her killing and that we might have a few years of peace and gentleness before we died."

But she told me there—in there, last night—that another had to die; another had come to believe she was a woman. George the chauffeur, had. George Firmendick had. She told me last night that George must die before morning, and that was what I was begging her not to do. That was why we quarreled. That was why I went away last night. I told her I was through with her—through for ever."

"Dart," Brennan demanded sharply, "do you know who killed Ella Dart last night?"

"No! I do not know!" the little man said, shaking his head. "If I knew I would tell you, I—"

One of the police officers interrupted this time, coming around the veranda walking firmly on his broad soles.

"Brennan!" he said, motioning to the detective with a finger.

"What is it, Joe?" Brennan asked. "The cook lady, Maggie Maney her name is, had a spell and passed out up yonder in the chauffeur's room just now," the officer said "I don't know was she right in her mind or not but she was shoutin' that the dead woman was murderin' all that guessed she was a female, sir, and that last night she saw the dead woman—who was not yet dead, you understand, Brennan—givin' George some drops, at which time the cook was in the chauffeur's closet, I'm sorry to say, sir."

"And—" said Brennan questioningly as he closed his note book and dropped it in his pocket. "And the last words the cook shouted before she passed out," the officer said, "was to the effect that she had murdered this late John Drane, now known to be a female, usin' a knife as the implement, the object of the said crime being revenge, and the crime bein' acuated by love and affection for the said George Firmendick, now deceased."

"Write all that down before you forget any of it, Joe," Brennan said. "You'll have to give that to the Grand Jury, possibly."

He turned to Simon Judd.

"I think that's our case," he said. "It's not much for us but it will be a big story for the newspapers. By the time it reaches Riverbank you ought to be quite a hero detective, Judd."

"If I ain't," Simon Judd said placidly. "it won't be my fault."

THE END

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A regular feature prepared each week by members of the Boy Scout Press Club.

During the past few weeks, six new scouts have been added to the rolls of Troops 52 and 61. In Troop 52 Robert Ginter, John Beckman, Edward Wood, Donald Clark and Walter Toll have received their Tenderfoot badge and are now officially Boy Scouts. Karl Kinley is the new scout of Troop 61. Both troops are continuing to grow and will soon have their troops filled.

News G

Always growing—on Wednesday, October 31, Commissioner W. W. Reichardt presented a charter to Troop 30, a new troop sponsored by the Elm Place school, representatives of Troops 31 and 32 of Deerfield-Shield high school were present. We have room for some more boys to join.—Irvin Gosswiller.

Troop 35 has new leader—We had a fine meeting last week under the leadership of our new Scoutmaster, Mr. Jerrems, and our Junior Assistant Scoutmaster, Oscar Goepner. Both Mr. Canmann and Mr. Ewell of our troop committee were present.—Peter White and John Kraft are patrol leaders and David Canmann is scribe. We opened our program with the scout oath, gave some patrol stunts and had a very interesting O'Grady drill.—Scribe, David Canmann.

Troop 31 has enthusiasm and visitors—At our meeting last week we had a good attendance of over 20 scouts and a fine program handled by Senior Patrol Leader, Grant Herman. Our scribe is Neal Rumbaugh, our patrol leaders are Warner Turriff, Edward Narcross and Randolph Herman. Mr. Robert Anspach, our scoutmaster, Mr. Richard de Bernard, our assistant scoutmaster, and Brainerd Chapman is our junior assistant scoutmaster. We had a hike last week and three patrol meetings. New fellows who have joined our troop are George Ralph and Hiram Kennicott—Neal Rumbaugh, scribe.

Libertyville troop reports. Troop 71 of Libertyville held a meeting last Friday in charge of Assistant Scout-

master Randolph. Mr. A. R. Andrews the outdoor member of our troop committee was also present.

Troop 35's beavers very much alive. The beaver patrol just became organized along with other patrols of Troop 35. The members are as follows: Peter White, patrol leader, Bob Cook, assistant patrol leader, Richard Gault, Murdoch Lorimer and Ledo Marcucie. The rest of the members have not been chosen.

Troop 35 is getting under way and is glad to have their new scoutmaster, Mr. Jerrems. It meets every Wednesday night at 7:30 and continues until 8:30 or 9 o'clock. During this time business is transacted, dues collected, announcements made and other affairs of the troop conducted.—Peter White.

Highwood 37 gets under way. Troop 37 of Highwood has been strongly re-organized for the year ahead with a new scoutmaster and a strong committee behind them. Meetings are held on Thursdays at Oak Terrace school. Any boys wishing to become scouts are welcome to visit the troop and become acquainted. A dandy program has been outlined for the coming season.—Assistant Scoutmaster Lloyd Moon.

Troop 36 to get under way soon. The troop will start meetings after the bazaar at St. James church. There are a lot of new scouts in the troop this year. The meetings will be on Friday evenings.—Arthur Driscoll.

Troop 32 getting stronger. Troop 32 of Highland Park is one of the finest troops on the northshore. It meets at the high school in the girls gym every Wednesday night at 7:30, sharp. The scoutmaster is Mr. Rubens, Assistant Scoutmaster Mr. Shaulffer, Junior Assistant Scoutmaster, Ernest West, and Senior Patrol Leader, Herbert Stevens. This troop will go on many hikes and will go in swimming in the high school tank once in a while. All parents are invited to come to see the boys.—Herbert Stevens.

Highland Park Troop 32 hike to cabin. Troop 32 went on a hike, Wednesday, October 17 to the Cabin in the Woods. We had supper out there. Mr. Rubens our scoutmaster did the cooking.—John Stern.

Troop 45 Lake Forest scouts receive awards. Two scouts of Troop 45 went up to Highland Park, Monday evening, to receive merit badges. Brent Wrenn, first aid and Ian McPherson, leatherscraft. The Boy Scouts of Troop 45 are starting to gather up the boys of the town and to make a good scout troop which will make Lake Forest community proud.—Ian McPherson, Troop 45, Lake Forest.

New scouts from this region: George Ralph, Troop 31, Highland Park; Edwin Wood, Troop 52, Deerfield.

News of the Rattlesnake Patrol of Troop 33 of Highland Park. The Rattlesnake Patrol was organized about a month ago. Fred Reichardt was chosen as patrol leader with Roderic Smith as the assistant. We are planning to have patrol meetings. Later on we are going to choose a patrol scribe and treasurer. Saturday, Octo-

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