

# MURDER Spends the Week-End



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— HOBART

*Uncle Hank  
liked  
jokes, but  
the corpse  
wasn't a  
bit funny!*

**T**HE Stamford Local stopped at the Pelham station and I got off the train along with quite a few other passengers. A little boy who must have had some redeeming quality, such as being kind to his parents, took a casual glance at me and stopped to stare.

"Gee, look at the gorilla in a sport coat," he said.

"Come to papa, sonny boy," I said. "You're pretty, too."

The boy made unseemly noises and hurried away down the platform. My vanity was wounded, but then I bruise so easily. "Mugs" Kelly is the name, and I guess the first part fits my face. If beauty is skin deep then I'm not shaving close enough or something. I'll grant you that a

private detective like I am doesn't have to be handsome, but I hate to go around scaring mirrors. I also don't care much for small fry or big lugs commenting on my looks.

I walked on down the platform. A thin gray haired man was standing beside a dark sedan. "Taxi?" he said.

I discovered he already had two passengers, but that's the way the taxicabs work in the Pelhams. They take all the passengers they can get. The nearest address is the one they head for first, and they have a set price for the trip and no meters.

The taxi driver took his seat at the wheel and I climbed in beside the stout man who was in the back seat. He didn't look jolly. A lean man wearing shell-rimmed glasses and a sour expression sat next to the driver.

"I'd like to go to the Clayvilles' on the Shore Road," I said, as the car started moving.

"The Clayvilles?" said the driver, looking at me in his rear view mirror. "Seems to me that I've seen you some place before."

"Probably," I said. "I've been there."

"How could you forget a face like that?" said the man with the glasses.

"The name is Kelly," I said. "I'm six feet four, weight two hundred and ten, and the last fellow who made cracks about my looks is still recovering."

**H**EARING that, the man with the glasses seemed to become a bit nervous. "Sorry, Mr. Kelly," he said quickly. "No offense meant. I'm Dexter Blake."

"I'm John Porter," said the taxi driver.

"And I'm in a hurry to get home," said the stout man beside me in what could only be considered a nasty tone. "If you should ask me, which of course, you

won't, Kelly, you are a fool to go to the Clayvilles'."

"Why? To give you a short question," I said.

"His name is Fred Steele," said the taxi driver. "The stout gentleman, I mean. And he's right about the Clayvilles."

"What's wrong with the Clayvilles?" I asked. "I have known Martin Clayville for some time. He is in the importing business and has an office on the same floor as mine in New York. We often have lunch together and he invited me out to his house for the weekend."

"Martin is all right," said Steele. "And so is Mrs. Clayville. I live next door to them. It is Uncle Hank that I am thinking about. He's as nutty as a chocolate almond bar. You never know what he will do next."

"True," said Porter. The taxi driver apparently knew everything about everyone. "Uncle Hank is just a boy at heart, and every time he pulls one of those practical jokes of his he nearly kills somebody."

"That's why I said you were a fool to be going to the Clayvilles', Mr. Kelly," Steele said, and the stout man almost smiled. "Uncle Hank delights in making life miserable for weekend guests."

"Strange," said Dexter Blake. "I'm going there, too. I'm an old friend of Mrs. Clayville—knew her before she married Martin Clayville—and she invited me out for the weekend."

"Goody, goody," said Steele dryly. "A jolly time should be had by all—with the help of Uncle Hank." The stout man glanced at me. "What business are you in, Mr. Kelly?"

"I'm a private detective," I said.

Steele looked as if he was sorry he had asked the question. Blake turned his head and looked me over carefully. He had blue eyes that appeared harder than the glass in

his glasses.

“A private detective,” he said finally. “That might make the weekend quite interesting.”

“Doubtlessly, in a dull sort of way,” said Steele.

“I read detective stories all the time,” said Porter. “I’m smart. I always spot the murderer before the detective does. They are awfully dumb sometimes.”

“Remind me to get you to solve the case the next time I get mixed up with a murder, Mr. Porter,” I said.

“I’ll do that,” Porter said. “Always wanted to try my hand at solving a real crime.”

We all lapsed into silence as the car sped along Pelhamdale Avenue toward the Shore Road. On either side of us houses set back in the center of well kept lawns and the trees were green and cool. When we reached the Shore Road the sedan headed in the direction of New Rochelle. We went a couple of blocks and then stopped at the first of two old houses built up on a hill so they overlooked the Sound.

“Shall I drive up, Mr. Steele?” Porter asked.

“Never mind, John,” Steele said, paying the taxi driver. “I’ll walk up.” He glanced at Blake and then at me as he got out of the car. “I hope you two enjoy your weekend.”

“Thanks,” I said.

**WE DROVE** on up the winding gravel driveway that led to the front of the next house. It was a big rambling place with quite a lot of ground and trees around it. A completely bald-headed man wearing nothing but a pair of shorts and carrying a bow and arrow appeared from around the side of the house and stood watching us.

“My how cupid has aged,” I said.

“That is Uncle Hank Dawson,” said Porter. “He is Mrs. Clayville’s uncle on

her father’s side. Such a nice woman, too.” The taxi driver sighed. “Seems to me there was something about being able to pick your own friends but not your relatives. I forget just how it goes.”

“So do I,” I said. “But I see what you mean.”

Blake and I paid Porter and got out of the sedan. We weren’t paying any attention to Uncle Hank as we walked up the steps of the porch. Suddenly something whistled through the air and an arrow went clear through the top of my hat, knocking it off my head. One look at it and I knew that as hats go that one was finished.

“I’m William Tell!” Uncle Hank shouted delightedly.

“We’d better get in the house fast before he decides he’s the sparrow who killed Cock Robin and aims lower,” I told Blake, hurrying across the porch. “They were right. Uncle Hank is going to be a problem.”

The front door of the house was standing wide open. Blake was right behind me as we stepped into the hall. With Uncle Hank out there, pulling another arrow out of a quiver he had lying on the ground beside him, it didn’t seem time for ceremony and ringing doorbells.

“He’s crazy,” Blake said. “Uncle or not I’m surprised that Nancy lets him run around loose.”

“The Clayvilles probably consider Uncle Hank harmless in a weird sort of way,” I said. “Speaking, of Clayvilles, I wonder where Martin and Mrs. Clayville are now.”

“That’s so,” said Dexter Blake. “I phoned Nancy that I would be out on the two thirty-five train, so they must be expecting us.” He raised his voice. “Anybody home?” he shouted.

There was no answer. I didn’t like the silence at all. It gave me an uneasy feeling. Further along the hall, what I suspected

might be the door to the living room stood half open. I walked toward it with Blake following close behind me.

We reached the doorway and peered into the room beyond. A gray haired man I had never seen before was sprawled back in a chair that faced the door. He was very still and there was an arrow sticking out of his chest.

"Looks as if Uncle Hank has been much too playful," I said grimly. "We appear to have walked in on a murder, Blake."

"It—it looks that way," Blake said nervously. "Is that Martin Clayville?"

"You mean you've never seen Martin Clayville?" I asked as I walked over to the still form in the chair.

"No," said Blake. "As I told you in the taxi, I'm an old friend of Mrs. Clayville. She invited me for the weekend. I've never met her husband."

I examined the man in the chair. The arrow had entered his heart and he had apparently been dead for some time. It looked as if Steele had been right when he said a jolly time would be had by all at this house.

"This isn't Martin Clayville," I said. "I don't know who he is, but he is sure dead."

From the closed door of what appeared to be a closet at one side of the living room I heard a strange thumping sort of sound. I went to the door and found it was locked and the key was missing. It was just an ordinary door lock. I usually carry a few skeleton keys with me. I drew them out and tried them in the lock until I found one that unlocked the door. Blake had joined me and stood silently watching.

I OPENED the door. It was a closet all right. Martin Clayville sat on the floor of the closet, his ankles tied, and his wrists bound in front of him. There was a gag in

his mouth. The sound I had heard had been his thumping his feet on the floor.

I quickly unfastened the gag. It was held in place by a slipknot at the back of Clayville's head.

"What happened, Martin?" I asked, as I drew out a penknife and started cutting the rope at his wrists.

"I'm glad you got here, Kelly," Clayville said. "That crazy fool Uncle Hank caught me when I wasn't looking, tied me up and gagged me and locked me in here. Claimed he was playing he was a sheriff and I was his prisoner. That man is completely insane."

Clayville got to his feet as I released his wrists and cut the rope at his ankles. For a man in his late fifties he was strong and evidently in fine physical shape.

He stepped out of the closet and then halted and stood staring at the dead man in the chair.

"Good Lord!" Clayville said. "Uncle Hank has killed that friend of Nancy's. He's murdered Dexter Blake!"

"He's done what?" Blake asked dazedly.

"Murdered Dexter Blake." Clayville glared at the thin man with the glasses. "Who are you?"

"He's Dexter Blake," I said before Blake could answer.

"No, that can't be," Clayville said. "Nancy said that Blake was one of the handsomest men she ever knew."

"That was nearly thirty years ago," Blake said. "And I haven't been well lately."

I looked again at the face of the corpse. In life he had apparently been quite a good looking man. Then I turned to Clayville.

"Who is he?" I asked.

"I don't know," Clayville said. "I knew that Nancy was expecting Dexter Blake. I thought—well, that he had arrived

while I was locked in the closet and while Nancy drove to the grocery store on the Boston Post Road to get some supplies we needed for the weekend.”

“And that Uncle Hank had killed Blake in one of Hank’s more playful moods,” I said.

For the first time I noticed there was something under the chair in which the dead man sat. I walked over and drew it out. It was a dark tan leather briefcase with a zipper top. I opened it and examined the papers inside.

“The dead man appears to be Thomas Marshall,” I said. “And he evidently was an insurance salesman.” I looked at Clayville. “Do you know him?”

“No,” Clayville said. “Never heard of him before in my life.”

There was the sound of a car outside and then footsteps on the porch and in the hall. A few moments later a slender dark haired woman stepped into the living room. She was casually but smartly dressed, and very pretty in a sultry sort of way. When it came to sex appeal, she sure was sex-appealing.

She gasped as she saw the dead man, but she didn’t scream. She just looked dazedly at her husband.

“What happened?” she asked.

“Uncle Hank,” Clayville said. “He did it.”

“No,” said a quiet voice from the doorway. “I’m not that crazy—though you would like everyone to think so, Martin.”

Hank Dawson stood there. He was fully dressed now in slacks, sport coat, shirt and necktie and shoes and socks.

“Why did you do it, Hank?” Clayville demanded.

Nancy Clayville had discovered Dexter Blake. She walked over to him and said something in a low tone that I didn’t catch.

“I didn’t do it,” Uncle Hank said. “I was sure one of my arrows was missing when I went out to practise shooting at the target behind the house about half an hour ago. Too bad I went out the back way. I might have seen what was happening here.”

I decided that if Uncle Hank was as crazy as people were supposed to believe, he wasn’t working at it much at the present time.

“So this is your great love that you have been raving about for years, Nancy,” Clayville said, glaring at Blake. “He’s not as good looking as I expected, but then he hasn’t been well lately.”

The way he said it was just plain nasty. I found that a man you knew casually during the course of a business day, and that same man in his own house could be two entirely different characters. I liked the New York version of Clayville better than the Pelham version.

“Seems to me it is about time we were sending for the police,” I said. “After all, this is a murder.”

“Of course,” said Clayville. “We’d better phone for the police right away.” He frowned. “Though I hate to think that my dear faithful wife’s uncle is guilty of the crime.”

“I’ll bet you do,” said Uncle Hank. “You know that if anything should happen to me Nancy will inherit all my money. How you would enjoy hearing of my execution, Martin!”

“I hear you have been playing sheriff, Mr. Dawson,” I said. “Mr. Clayville said you pretended he was your prisoner and you tied and gagged him and locked him in the closet.”

“Not me,” said Hank Dawson. “I hate Westerns.”

“I’ll go phone the police,” Clayville said abruptly.

HIS forehead was moist and apparently he found the room warm. He reached into his pocket for his handkerchief, but found it was missing and then hurried out of the room.

"I made a terrible mistake in inviting you here for the weekend, Dexter," Nancy said. "I had no idea that Martin would be so insanely jealous of an old friend of mine as he is of you."

Blake looked smug. Apparently he liked the idea of being able to make another man jealous. Uncle Hank looked at me.

"Sorry about your hat, Mr.—" he hesitated.

"Kelly," I said. "Mugs Kelly."

"Mr. Kelly," Uncle Hank said. "I owe you a new hat. I didn't mean to ruin it. Just one of those silly jokes of mine that are always getting me in trouble."

I could see that none of us was enjoying remaining there in the room with the corpse, and was just about to suggest that maybe we had better go somewhere else when Clayville came back.

"The Pelham Manor police will be here right away," he said. "It looks bad for you, Hank."

He reached into a pocket of his coat and drew out a package of cigarettes. As he did, a plain, ordinary door key dropped to the floor. I was standing beside Clayville and I picked up the key before he could reach for it. Instead of handing it back to him, I walked over and tried it in the door of the closet. It unlocked the door all right.

"You made quite few mistakes, Clayville," I said, turning to the others. "The first was when you mistook the insurance salesman for Dexter Blake and killed him with the bow and arrow."

"Why should I do a thing like that?" Clayville demanded.

"Two reasons," I said. "First, as Mrs. Clayville just said a little while ago when you were out of the room, you were insanely jealous of Blake—though you had never seen him."

"Every time I went to town on a shopping trip Martin would accuse me of secretly meeting Dexter," said Nancy. "That's why I invited Dexter here for the weekend so that Martin could see there was nothing between us."

"But he didn't believe you," I said. "So he killed the man he thought was Blake—and did it with an arrow because he hoped that Mr. Dawson would be convicted of the crime."

"And executed, so that Nancy would inherit my money," said Uncle Hank.

"Nonsense," said Martin Clayville. "I didn't kill anyone. You found me bound and gagged in the closet where Hank put me."

"No he didn't," I said. "You tied yourself up—after gagging yourself with your own handkerchief that is now missing. You see no one ties a man up with his wrists in front of him, as yours were tied. If you had made any real effort you could have got the gag out of your mouth and untied your wrists with your teeth. Besides, Dawson couldn't have locked you in the closet when you had the key in your pocket where you must have put it after you locked the door from the inside."

The police arrived and after I told him my version of what had happened, they started questioning Clayville. He finally broke down and admitted the whole thing. Dawson had left his bow and quiver of arrows out in the hall. Clayville had discovered the insurance salesman in the living room. Evidently, Thomas Marshall had just walked in and made himself at home. He picked the wrong house for it.

Thinking that Marshall was Blake, the man he hated, Clayville killed him with the bow and arrow. Then he put the bow back with the quiver at the rear end of the hall. As an alibi, and to make Uncle Hank seem even more crazy, Clayville tied himself up, and he did it in the closet after he had locked himself in.

The police found out later that he was nearly broke. Uncle Hank's money must have looked pretty good to him.

"But what I don't see is why he invited you out for the weekend, Kelly," said Blake as we were taking a train back to town. Spending the weekend at the Clayvilles' was out under the circumstances. "If he had planned to

murder me, then why did he want a private detective around?"

"He didn't plan the murder ahead of time," I said. "He must have acted on the spur of the moment—and forgot all about inviting me out to visit him. You know, that fat man was right in saying that we were fools to visit the Clayvilles."

"He said we were," said Blake. "But I'm sure glad you were there—and so is Uncle Hank." He smiled. "You know Nancy isn't half as pretty as my wife. She is away for the weekend."

"Unhuh," I said. "I'll be glad to get back to town. The country is much too wild for me. I'm just a city boy at heart."