

THE LAND WHALE MURDERS

Chapter 3: Accidentally on Porpoise

AUTHOR

Hiram Blud was murdered. He was part of a group of scientifically minded intellectuals called The Four Elementals. One of these Elementals – Eugene Neddly is currently meeting with Police Commissioner Theodore Roosevelt. And Commissioner Roosevelt has a strong hunch about who was behind it ...

3.1:

ROOSEVELT

I realized who murdered your friend ... oh this is big. This is ... yes! We're dealing with some sort of deranged madman wielding fish-based weaponry. The Killer Eel he might call himself. Or ...

EUGENE

What?

ROOSEVELT

The Fish Monger! A blackguard who strikes with ichthyo-terror in the night!

He runs over to a window.

ROOSEVELT (cont.)

Mer-villain you will be stopped! By this I swear! Yes that must be it!

SHAINDEL

I don't think that's it ...

ROOSEVELT

Almost Officer Doubles your reach extends your grasp and not just because you have small arms ...

SHAINDEL

I have small arms?

ROOSEVELT

I wasn't going to say, but ...

EUGENE

That's a great "theory," but I was thinking it might be someone from Big Whale Oil like Blubberton or The Fluke Brothers ...

ROOSEVELT

That's just what the Fish Monger wants you to believe! This evil vile person I just thought of has probably been on a reign of aqua-struction for years! Right Sergeant Fitz?

FITZ

Holy Mary Shamus Connolly it could be ... or gang violence.

ROOSEVELT

True you'd be surprised by the number of violent ne'er do wells: The Bowery Boys, The Plug Uglies, the Dead Rabbits, the Velvet Spankers, the Blow Hole Gang –

EUGENE

Wait what was that last one?

ROOSEVELT

The Blowhole Gang? Oh they're a bunch of former fisherman and sailors who gave up the sea to practice land piracy. You can recognize them by their eye patches which they wear whether they need them ... or not!

SHAINDEL

Horrible.

FITZ

Rúla búla! Think of all them half blind orphans who could be using them patches!

EUGENE

That could be it! Though Blubberton's CEO Henry B. Lubbins and Hiram were often at odds ...

ROOSEVELT

Listen, what makes the most sense? Gang violence? A business vendetta? Or an evil cur using the power of fish to bring scaly havoc upon us? No don't answer, the answer is obvious – THE FISH MONGER!

EUGENE

Um ... all right. So I should tell my friends ... about ...

ROOSEVELT

You're concerned. I know, you should be – look I'll assign Almost Officer Doubles to help you out.

SHAINDEL

And if I solve the case I'll be made a lieutenant!

ROOSEVELT

What?

SHAINDEL

You already agreed!

ROOSEVELT

I did? Oh in that case Bully for you!

FITZ

But Commissioner –

ROOSEVELT

I already said bully! Bully! That settles it, off you all go, I have commissioning to do!

SHAINDEL

Come on Gene, let's go!

EUGENE

To the friends ... of mine. To my friends is where we are going!

EUGENE and SHAINDEL exit.

ROOSEVELT

Yes run along. But know Fish Monger your time has come! From the sewers and sludge of this city a hero will arise – seemingly mild-mannered – but when night comes – BULLY!

FITZ

What was that, sir?

ROOSEVELT

Oh you're still here Sergeant Fitz?

FITZ

Don't worry I wasn't listening a tig. Off I go now.

FITZ exits.

ROOSEVELT

I'm coming for you Fish Monger!

AUTHOR

And with that the Commissioner ran off to places unknown. Meanwhile at Anjus' greenhouse our faces known, Eugene, Maryanne, Anjus and Shaindel 'Doubles' Blum met to catch up after the long eventful night.

3.2:

MARYANNE

I don't think there's a Fish Monger. So he's no help.

EUGENE

No. But he was very eager.

ANJUS

Eager indeed and now we're stuck with this flatfoot.

SHAINDEL

It's why I can't walk in heels. But *zorgt zikh nit*, I'll protect you all.

MARYANNE

I've heard that line before. Then you run off and abandon us in the Sonoran desert with only a cactus to drink and a scorpion for company.

SHAINDEL

Did that happen or was it a metaphor?

MARYANNE

The desert happened. The cactus was a metaphor. The scorpion was an anaphora.

SHAINDEL

Noted.

ANJUS

Anyway I think – why are you staring at me? Is it my missing hand or my horribly scarred eye?

SHAINDEL

Nu, voden? Is that what those are? I was just looking at you because you were talking.

MARYANNE

Talk, talk, talk! It's all we do!

ANJUS

We fought that mummy ...

EUGENE

True, but go on Maryanne you were talking about how all we do is talk, talk more about that.

MARYANNE

I wanted to bury Hiram at sea but with all the piracy going on just off shore – that guy the Boll Weevil is raiding ships – we'll have to settle for a land burial. It's terrible. The ground is ...

ANJUS

It's easy to blame the ground. But it's where plants come from!

MARYANNE

Plants! Yes plants! Maybe you'll like him more now that he's feeding the plants.

ANJUS

What are you suggesting? In mixed company?

MARYANNE

My dear Anjus, what could I mean?

EUGENE

Something about the ground! That's what I'm getting.

MARYANNE

Yes Eugene the very ground may be the final answer to all of this. We have to remember our common enemy.

EUGENE

The Fish Monger?

MARYANNE

There is no FISH MONGER! Sorry, that was improper of me to be so emotional. I apologize to all of you. My brother was my rock, my. But. My outbursts are for the page, not conversations. Where does it end? Just today I was at the Wordsman Club and I just overheard the worst of things

...

Scene changes to a flashback of the Wordsman Club. MARYANNE is dropping of some poems.

3.3:

MARYANNE

Here you go. For the reading next Thursday.

ORGANIZER

Wonderful, wonderful, we look forward to reading them. But ... have you thought about our ... comments?

MARYANNE

Censorship you mean?

ORGANIZER

The Cowabungus Corporation is very powerful and you wrote a whole rondeau attacking them.

MARYANNE

Corporations can only be stopped by poetry. Poetry will bring them down. Unless we are cowed and corporations manage to shove poetry aside and turn the people against the versed arts.

ORGANIZER

But your editor said –

MARYANNE

I fired him. My work is my own now.

ORGANIZER

Well I don't know if we can find room for you at the next reading ...

MARYANNE

Is that so?

ORGANIZER

As they say ... like a sestina at a sonnet party one cannot envoi too long.

MARYANNE

I'll show you all! You are letting poetry fall into the hands of the elite! They'll strangle it! And us! We need to do something! Something big!

Scene moves back to the greenhouse.

3.4:

MARYANNE

And then I said “something big” again. Then I ate a small cracker. They have good crackers there. But really the nerve.

SHAINDEL

I don’t get it? What happened?

MARYANNE

A sestina? Need I go on?

SHAINDEL

Yes.

ANJUS

Look this whole Blow Hole Gang seems to be a good lead.

MARYANNE

As does Blubberton. Henry B. Lubbins and Hiram had some business and it seems to be ... unfinished.

EUGENE

Like that famous painting?

SHAINDEL

Which one?

EUGENE

I don’t know ... I just wanted to contribute.

ANJUS

Well the painting of our doom of the mystery of this case needs to be solved and solved like Prussian blue or Transubstantiation red.

MARYANNE

Let us not bring the European Color War into this.

EUGENE

Listen ... to me, Eugene Neddly. I'll go down to this Blow Hole Gang and give them the skiddy on the shingle. I speak their argot with my slangular jivney! See sister, I'm an upturned rascal.

MARYANNE

Why don't I talk to the Blow Hole Gang, you're just so soft ...

EUGENE

Oh thank goodness. I realized it was a terrible idea just as I said it.

ANJUS

So instead Eugene and I will go to speak to Lubbins at the Blubberton Headquarters and Whale Distillery in the whale district in Little Beluga- town.

SHAINDEL

And I'll go with Maryanne, this is a simcha¹

of an adventure-le.

MARYANNE

I think I should do this alone.

SHAINDEL

Ta-ke! Because I'm Jewish?

MARYANNE

No.

SHAINDEL

Because I'm a woman?

1 Yiddish pronunciation is a little different from than Hebrew. It will sound more like SIM-khe with the emphasis on the first syllable.

MARYANNE

No.

SHAINDEL

Oh. That's surprising. It's usually one of those two.

MARYANNE

It's because you're a copper.

SHAINDEL

Almost.

MARYANNE

Close enough. Those gangs can smell a policeman from a mile off.

SHAINDEL

Well we do put a sprig of juniper in our boot. Also lack of bathing. It's why they call the police the 'stinking service.'

ANJUS

Plus we don't need a nanny. We're the Four Elementals we can take care of ourselves.

EUGENE

Right but also can you help me, I got my arm caught in this jar?

SHAINDEL

Just unclench your hand. See it pops right out.

EUGENE

Huzzah!

SHAINDEL

Fair enough, I could use a shvitz, let us regroup tomorrow at Eugene's bird thing.

EUGENE

You're coming!

SHAINDEL

I was ordered to.

EUGENE

Goody! Mandatory attendance is why most people are coming! They are letting several prisoners come as a punishment! And before you say anything, yes the court upheld it was 'cruel and unusual' but they're doing it anyway!

SHAINDEL

Mazel tov?

ANJUS

Don't encourage him.

SHAINDEL

Oh. But since you all like Shakespeare so much with the whole ... birds thing. Tonight I have extra tickets to the Jewish Decency League's production of Merchant of Venice. It starts at eight.

MARYANNE

I have dinner plans half past.

SHAINDEL

Oh that's fine. The whole production is about ten minutes. The Decency League censored most of it. Now it's just the first couple lines then Shylock wins a cruise to Jamaica and then everyone does a little dance. The head of the decency league also owns a new ship that does trips to Jamaica. It's mostly an advert for the SS Shlomo. Take a shlo-boat to Jamaica! That's their shlo-gan.

ANJUS

We'll pass. Come on Eugene let's get to Blubberton.

AUTHOR

And with that Anjus and Eugene headed off. Maryanne made her way down to the Five Points to find the Blow Hole Gang. I found one review of the Decency League's Merchant of Venice in a Yiddish paper. The entirety of the review reads: "Oy!"

Anyway let's move our focus to the gilded office building at Baleen Plaza. This plaza no longer exists as it was destroyed by Robert Moses because that's what he did. But at this time in history its red brick façade was adorned with a bas relief of whales in various stages of being gutted and quartered. The interior where Eugene and Anjus waited was gilded and there were several small fountains of whales shooting water from harpoon holes. A large iron door in the shape of a ship loomed before them.

3.5:

ANJUS

What is taking so long?

EUGENE

I gave them my card. If we don't follow the rules of decency what would we be?

ANJUS

True, but ...

EUGENE

Indeed we'd be a true butt.

AUTHOR

The large door opens and a lanky fussy man steps into the entryway. It's Ellis E. Ellison, Mr. Lubbins' personal secretary.

ELLIS

Did someone slide a five of clubs under the door?

EUGENE

My card! Yes!

ELLIS

Why?

EUGENE

Y. My thirty second favorite letter. But we're not here about letters, fella, we're here about murder!

ELLIS

Whale murder? We do that down at the refinery. Scoop the good bobs and sell the rest.

EUGENE

Sell this! I'm talking people!

ELLIS

Sell people? Not since the 13th amendment. Damn government regulations and overreach. Now it's just whales.

ANJUS

We're here to see Lubbins!

ELLIS

Do you have an appointment?

ANJUS

Do I need an appointment to accuse him of murder!

ELLIS

Yes.

ANJUS

Oh.

ELLIS

I can pencil you in ... how's your April looking?

EUGENE

Our friend is dead and our accusations can't wait!

ELLIS

Hmmm. I have a brief window tomorrow morning ...

EUGENE

Oh, that's the bird release ... do you have something after five?

ELLIS

No.

EUGENE

Oh. Well maybe I could ... skip ...

ANJUS

No, Eugene, it's your big day. (To Ellis.)

The next day?

ELLIS

Ugh, Fine. But it has to be early. Mr. Lubbins like to go to his midweek mansion early. Mrs. Lubbins is hosting a Dutch shoot.

AUTHOR

A Dutch shoot was a popular party game of the time where the nouveau riche would go to Europe, buy paintings by Dutch masters and then have them thrown into the air so that the revelers could shoot at them with the latest Winchester rifles.

ANJUS

A terrible hobby. We've lost so many Van Eycks.

ELLIS

If you kill a painting you gain its powers. So the legend goes. Plus they're all so dreary, men in ruffled collars and terrible facial hair. I've penciled you in for nine thirty. And the reason again for your meeting?

EUGENE

Accusing him of murder!

ELLIS

Right, right. All set. See you Wednesday. Now I'll stand here quietly while you talk amongst yourselves.

EUGENE

We did it! Sort of! We made an appointment! I'm proud of us.

ANJUS

But we can't sit on our laurels. I'm going to research various swords and fishes to see where they intersect. I'll fill in Maryanne and then meet up with you at the Shakespearian Bird Release tomorrow!

EUGENE

Excellent, excellent I should check in on the birds at the Acclimatization Society Headquarters in the Armory.

ANJUS

Let us away!

EUGENE

Away!

ELLIS

I did a good job of being quiet. Good work, Ellis. Good work.

BEANS

Excuse me, I'd like to make an appointment!

ELLIS

Sorry, I'm on break no more appointments.

AUTHOR

Oh sorry we stayed with that scene too long. Life, it keeps going I guess. Anyway, now let us travel uptown to the home of the American Acclimatization Society. A group whose mission was to bring interesting flora and fauna to the Americas for economic and cultural reasons.

Currently the loud chirps of Shakespearian birds were driving another member – Cullen Brooks close to madness.

3.6:

Sounds of various birds chirping.

Shut up! Shut up! Shut up!

EUGENE enters.

CULLEN

EUGENE
Aren't they wonderful, Cullen?

CULLEN
No! They're terrible!

EUGENE
But imagine them –

CULLEN
In flight, yes, yes.

EUGENE
I was going to say: in crates chirping.

CULLEN
That's what they're doing now!

EUGENE
A dream come true!

CULLEN
I hate you so much.

EUGENE
What? Sorry it's hard to hear over the chirping. Have you collected the bugs to feed them like I asked?

CULLEN
What all this tweeting is –

EUGENE

Let me close this door.

He closes the door. The chirping stops.

CULLEN

What? Why did that work?

EUGENE

Open doors scare birds, if you close a door they quiet down. That's science. I was asking if you caught bugs for them.

CULLEN

I'm not some bug catcher! I ordered a bunch of lettuce. It's over there.

EUGENE

They need bugs!

CULLEN

You need bugs! Forget it and forget you! I'm done with this Society. It's too limited. I've aligned myself with a greater force!

EUGENE

God?

CULLEN

What? No. Him!

Sound of a deep breathing. And clomping of steps. A Large FRENCHMAN in a diving-like suit clomps in.

AUTHOR

Just then from the corner of the room a large Frenchman in a diving suit walks toward them. It is odd Eugene didn't notice him before. He holds a bellows that he keeps pumping so the air flows through the suit.

FRENCHMAN

[Speaking incomprehensible French through the suit.]

EUGENE

What? Who?

CULLEN

What who, indeed! This is Comte Le J'accuse Huguenot the French naturalist!

EUGENE

Why is he in the full body suit? Was he horribly disfigured in a fromage accident?

FRENCHMAN

[Speaking incomprehensible French through the suit.]

CULLEN

He's a student of the works of Duke Buffon who believed that the air and climate of America made its animals and people weak and inferior compared to the strong robust European stock.

EUGENE

Didn't Thomas Jefferson disprove that by sending him a Moose?

FRENCHMAN

[Angry speaking incomprehensible French through the suit.]

CULLEN

He believes the moose is a hoax. And he brought enough French air to last a lifetime. He is afraid his virility and very natural masculinity would shrink up if he sniffed our feminine atmosphere.

FRENCHMAN

[Speaking incomprehensible French through the suit.]

EUGENE

Um ... OK.

CULLEN

He's also very rich. He bought a small town on the Hudson that he will dome over and create a New France with air imported from Mont Blanc, and filled with French marmots He loves marmots. To eat, to pet, to wear as shoes, to pull wagons, all the normal marmots uses. And I'm going with him. He's to make me supervisor! Supervisor!

FRENCHMAN

[Speaking incomprehensible French through the suit.]

CULLEN

Yes, fine. Average-viser. But it's still better than this putrid city! So I'm off! I'm done with this dumb society that gives into your whims because your family funds all this

bird brained nonsense! Also I'm taking these anchovies that came delivered to you earlier! They're my anchovies now! So stuff it Neddy!

EUGENE

Anchovies? Delivered? Me? Wait – no one gifts anchovies! It's a trap! A boobied trap! Don't take those chovies!

CULLEN

No! My chovies! Let me just violently shake the anchovy box to show you how much they are mine!

CULLEN shakes the box.

EUGENE

Nooooooo!

The box explodes blasting Cullen back and blasting a hole in the FRENCHMAN's suit.

CULLEN

What? An explosion?

EUGENE

Exploding anchovies! Explod-chovies! Anch-plodies! Another attack against the Four Elementals.

CULLEN

Compte! Your suit is ripped! Are you all right?

FRENCHMAN

Mon costume! C'est déchiré! L'air! L'air! Je suis condamné! FRENCHMAN runs off.

CULLEN

No! Come back Count! It's just a small rip! I can patch it! Patch it! (Turns to Eugene.) You've ruined me! I'll never catch him! Damn you, Eugene! One day I shall have my revenge on you!

EUGENE

Right, but are you still coming to the bird release?

CULLEN

You can stuff those birds right where ... oh lots of blood loss from the anchovy-shrapnel. I should really get to the Knickerbocker Hospital ... can you call me a carriage?

EUGENE

You're a carriage! Ha! Oh you are really getting blood on – I'll get a carriage.

AUTHOR

Eugene took Cullen to the hospital where he later died from his injuries. It was sad but he hung on for several weeks so it really isn't germane to our story.

The Frenchman, after bumping into many people due to running in a blind panic, would eventually settle down and even found a small city called Donksylvannia. He died later as well due to heart disease from eating too many marmots. I mean everyone dies in the end ... it's the sad nature of our existence.

Speaking of existence let's exist in another scene! Away from all ... that. Later in the secret lair of the Blow Hole Gang ...

3.7:

PIRATE PENNY is with her GOONS.

GOON 1

So I was robbing this –

GOON 2

Person?

GOON 1

Statue.

GOON 2

Gesundheit.

GOON 1

Thank you but no. It was a statue of a centaur. In this rich malooks house. He liked to dress it up in all these –

PIRATE PENNY

Enough of your prattle!

GOON 1

Sorry, Pirate Penny.

PIRATE PENNY

As much as I enjoy hearing about your felonious deeds we must focus on the larger task at hand.

GOON 1

Yeah that giant hand!

GOON 2

Or is it a foot?

There's an odd sad moaning sound.

PIRATE PENNY

He's struggling. Go tend to him!

GOON 1

Right away!

GOON 1 exits.

PIRATE PENNY

Yes everything is coming together. Soon the whole city will understand – everything!

GOON 3

Like what?

PIRATE PENNY

Huh? Oh, you know ... the whole plan. Have you not been paying attention?

GOON 3

I kinda drift in and out. I'm new to gang life.

PIRATE PENNY

It's simple in its complexity. Here goes. First we –

GOON 4 rushes in.

GOON 4

Pirate Penny! Pirate Penny!

PIRATE PENNY

Who interrupts me while I am pontificating!

GOON 4

Just a humble goon, your Pirate-ness. But I have news! The Boston Beaneaters hit a homerun in the 4th! Also the box of exploding anchovies failed to hit the target!

PIRATE PENNY

Quickly tell me ... who hit the homer?

GOON 4

Biff Daniels. The Beaneaters ended up beating the Brooklyn Bridegrooms after Billy Pickler got hit with a pitch and caused a riot.

PIRATE PENNY

So a Brooklyn no win in a Beaneater bean ball brawl that solved all?

GOON 3

More or less.

GOON 2

Didn't the season already end?

GOON 4

This was a special game they set up for the Crown Prince of Bohemia. He was badly injured.

PIRATE PENNY

Injured European royalty is of no concern. Get the sawbones, their bone saws and get to work on the legs. We have a schedule to keep. And keep it we shall!

AUTHOR

What dark deeds do the Blow Hole Gang and Pirate Penny have in store? Will they attempt an attack during the Shakespeare Bird Release?

We'll get to that later but let us end this chapter with the Yiddish League of Decency's production of The Merchant of Venice. Taken from the Wednesday English version called the shiksa's matinee:

3.8:

Venice. A street. Enter ANTONIO and SALARINO.

ANTONIO

In sooth, I know not why I am so sad: It wearies me; you say it wearies you;
But how I caught it, found it, or came by it, What stuff 'tis made of, whereof it is born,

SALARINO

Oh wait look with yon eyes there! It's the Jew Shylock with the air He enters with Bassanio

And then something something rhyming with Bassanio ...

SHYLOCK enters.

SHYLOCK

Three thousand ducats; well.

BASSANIO

Ay, sir, for a goyim's cruise!

SHYLOCK

What do I look like some sort of Rockefeller? How about you help a fella!

SHLOMO SILVERSTIEN enters.

SHLOMO

Hello, I am Shlomo Silverstein of Shlomo cruises. And I want to give you, Shylock a free cruise because you have lived a hard life and it won't cost you 'a pound of flesh!' Cruises to Jamaica leaving from Miami. Great train rates available! Tell old man winter to kick rocks!

SHYLOCK

I've got to shy-lock down this deal! Everything ended well!

ANTONIO

Remember what they say! Pogroms are no fun, but cruises can't loses!

SHLOMO

L'chaim! Let's dance!

Everyone dances. Some nice klezmer music plays.

ALL

Shakespeare!

END OF CHAPTER 3