

THE LAND WHALE MURDERS

Chapter 2: Fish and Murder Stink

AUTHOR

Hiram Blut, leader of the Four Elementals was murdered. Stabbed through the heart via a swordfish. His fellow elementals or fellowmentals a clever name I just came up with: Maryanne, Eugene, and Anjus vowed to solve his murder. Eugene was also preparing for the great Shakespeare Bird Release where he would release every bird mentioned in Shakespeare into Central Park! After the undertaker was called, the murdering swordfish was removed from Hiram's body and taken by our protagonists to the Metropolitan Police Station dispatch area 8, where Eugene tossed the felonious fish onto the night sergeant's desk.

2.1:

The swordfish lands with a plop on the desk.

EUGENE

And this is the fish that did it!

SERGEANT

That don't prove nothing!

ANJUS

You have to help us, her brother died!

SERGEANT

This is New York City, kitty, and I don't got to help. I'm just running out the clock!

EUGENE

What did a clock do to you?

SERGEANT

I am one hour away from retirement! Then I'm free and clear with my pension and my corrupt graft money from shaking down local businesses! Oh I have a quiet wonderful life planned! Off to my family farm in Weehawken. The pearl of New Jersey! No, better -- the clam poopin the pearl! Yeah I'm going to that pearl pooper of a town: Weehawken!

EUGENE

Well you still got an hour so ... help!

SERGEANT

Oh sure I'll have the boys stroll down to the Fulton Fish Market and interrogate some filets of sole!

He laughs.

MARYANNE

How dare you! My brother was a good man and a scientist of the first degree!

SERGEANT

You Darwinists live fast and dangerous lifestyles with your chemicals and your lab glass!

EUGENE

That's a gross prejudice that has –

He's cut off when a test tube falls out of his pocket and breaks.

EUGENE

My test tube, I –

A Florence flask falls out of his other pocket as he moves.

EUGENE

My Florence flask!

SERGEANT

Exactly ...

EUGENE

That's not – they were having a good sale at Dr. Pane's Glassware warehouse! Half off beakers! HALF OFF! OK? What? I'm not the criminal here, I'm not on trial. I'm ...

More glassware falls out of Eugene's coat. Sargeant

SERGEANT

Tell you what I'm feeling generous. Why don't you fill out these forms and I'll pretend to read them before feeding them to my horse on my farm in sweet, sweet Weehawken.

ANJUS

Stuff your forms! It's useless, they don't take scientific homicide seriously!

EUGENE

That burns my Bunsen!

MARYANNE

It burns all our Bunsens, Eugene, obviously!

ANJUS

The whole city is corrupt: the police, the gangs, the politicians, the newsboys, even the corruption squad –

SERGEANT

Especially the corruption squad ... look I retire in two minutes you want me to pretend to care or not?

EUGENE

We all –

MARYANNE

G
E
T
D
O
W
N
!

MARYANNE grabs Eugene and ANJUS as they fall to the ground. There's a crash of the window.

VOICE

Death to those who oppose us!

Suddenly there is the sound of starfish being thrown like shuriken. They hit the walls and the SERGEANT who is mortally wounded.

SERGEANT

Oh ... my stars.

EUGENE

Starfish. Someone sharpened and threw them like some sort of throwing star ... fish.

ANJUS

They really cut up the place!

SERGEANT

And me. Ooooh. I'm dying ... tell my wife to ... get the appropriate amount of milk ... and ... pour it ... on my ... uuuugh.

He dies.

EUGENE

On his what? His what? He's dead!

ANJUS

Probably his grave.

EUGENE

But we'll never know for sure.

A door opens and an OFFICER enters.

OFFICER

It's official!

(Starts to sing.)

Happy retirement to ...

(See's the scene.)

Oh, oh dear. Oh my ... um. I'll come back.

MARYANNE

Is everyone OK? It seems those deadly echinoderms were meant for us.

ANJUS

We were lucky. And I hate luck, there's too much chance in it.

MARYANNE

Why is someone trying to kill the Four Elementals?

EUGENE

Maybe this is unrelated. There is all sorts of random violence in this city ... There was that woman who was crushed by a piano and that piano that was crushed by that woman.

ANJUS

It *was* related; Madame Mona crushed that piano because it had crushed her sister Cecily. Part of the great cycle of piano violence which led to the Steinway Panic of '95. No. This starfishing was personal. Someone wanted us dead.

EUGENE

So what do we do? Sit down and cry? A lot? That could work. It would be quite cathartic.

ANJUS

No! We take this ... to the top!

AUTHOR

And with that they quickly hurried to ...

2.2:**MARYANNE**

The roof! We made it. But ... now what?

ANJUS

I'm not sure ... I just assumed it'd come together. We're scientists not detectives.

Suddenly the sound of someone moving.

EUGENE

Yipes stripes, what's that!

ANJUS

Probably another assassin out to get us got!

A small man in a porkpie hat steps out. It's SPEEDY RUBENSTEIN

SPEEDY

Hiya, whatya up ta doing!

EUGENE

Ah! Goblin!

SPEEDY

Rude. I may be short and stout but I'm not a goblin! Though I do enjoy gobblin a turkey leg!

MARYANNE

This is the chattiest assassin I ever saw.

SPEEDY

My name is Speedy Rubenstein, the fastest secular Jew in the tri-state area. I might look a bit beefy, but that don't mean I ain't speedy! Peep peep!

EUGENE

Peep peep?

SPEEDY

It's my catch-in-your-ear phrase!

ANJUS

Pass! But what is a squat Hebrew doing on the police station's roof?

SPEEDY

I came up here to train!

MARYANNE

But why this station?

SPEEDY

Oh cause it's got a natural incline that strengthens the calves! Helps put a zip in my zop! But it's hard to work out cause you sci-guys are always coming up here to peep, seeing as how you get a straight shot of the sky.

MARYANNE

Oh. Huh.

SPEEDY

But why this exact moment? Well that's a funny story. You'll laugh. I was speeding down the street, I think it was 5th Avenue, maybe Madison. Doing my little zippy walk, because I am the fastest secular Jew in the tri- state area - even when I'm not trying - I got a natural pep. Like a little ha-cha-trot-a-trota.

MARYANNE

Such odd sounds for an odd story.

SPEEDY

Yep! So just, whizz wham. There I go. I'm thinking maybe about a salami, because I power eat tube meats: salamis, pepperonis, liverwurst ... we ethnics love tube meats, I can say that being of *the tribe*. They give you that power packed salt package that keeps you ja-ba-la-bobbing along!
Jewish salami is all beef. Not as good, I've all tried sorts of 'amis' and 'onis' since being secular I don't follow Talmudic rules of –

ANJUS

Can you ...

SPEEDY

It's a good yarn! You'll laugh, ya noodge! So I was walking, thinking of salami and suddenly bam! I just knew I needed to start doing some calisthenics! Felt it in my pancreas. I'm training for a big race to show that maybe I'm fast even against a goy! So I'm in the middle of the street doing my push-ups, squat downs, and of course my clothes are restrictive so off they doff ...

MARYANNE

You were nude in the middle of the street?

SPEEDY

Naked as Adam on apple day.

ANJUS

Just please --

SPEEDY

Hold your horse-hockles this is going somewhere. So I'm a rat-a-whap-whap with my shvantz out and who do I see? My cuz, she's an officer, sort of officially unofficial. She only got her job cause the Police Commissioner is a stand up egg in an apple box. But she said I'm causing a stir and purr with all my buff exercising and she told me to shove on my garments and shove off! Then I met this – never mind. That. So I button up and come up here and I tell you what needs telling! Told ya it was a laugh riot.
Ta-da! What a story, me, good jibber!

Beat. No one is amused.

MARYANNE

Well ... yes. Thank you for that ... that was ... a huge waste of time.

EUGENE

Wait. Don't you see, lil Speedy is helping us. He's saying the Police Commissioner is a stand-up fellow and he'll aid us in solving Hiram's murder! We don't need to go to 'the top' of the building. We need to go to 'the top' of the police chain!

SPEEDY

Huh? No! I just like yammering! Points are for pencils not stories ya lunk!

EUGENE

Speedy is right! To the commissioner!

SPEEDY

Also that geode is cursed get rid of it!

MARYANNE

What geode? Never mind we must go!

ANJUS

Away.

AUTHOR

And with that the three remaining elementals quickly hurried to Police Headquarters. Speedy watched them go and then started doing some calisthenics.

BEANS

Good work, Speedy, you've gotten those no good scientists headed in the right direction.

SPEEDY

Just give me my ill gotten gelt. I don't care for schemes, but this payola can buy me a spot in the marathon-marathon a marathon of marathons that will take me from Vancouver to Canvoucer the secret city in Patagonia founded by rogue Canadians. The first Jew to jog the Americas! That'll be me!

BEANS

Here just stop talking.

SPEEDY

And awaaaaaay I go!

SPEEDY runs off.

BEANS

Yes ... everything is falling into place!

AUTHOR

But Speedy wouldn't make it to Patagonia. But he did marry and settle down in Mexico City. But settling down wasn't in the cards for our elementals. Not yet! Maryanne, Anjus and Eugene raced through the dark streets of New York until they arrived at the mostly dark Mulberry Street, there were a few gas lamps. Anyway Mulberry was the address of Police Headquarters where the top brass sat around. Inside, the check-in desk shined to a point that you could almost see your reflection in it. Well not you, because by the time you hear this that desk is long gone. But at the time it was quite nice. Now its atoms are probably scattered across the world. Such is the fate of all things. Eugene went right up to the desk.

2.3:

EUGENE

Shiny!

AUTHOR

He looked over information on the desk and went back over to Anjus and Maryanne.

EUGENE

They want us to take a number and sketch our favorite crime. The winning drawings will be hung up in Gracie Mansion and you can win a lifetime supply of gravel. But how do you sketch an illegal left hand mule turn? Should I put those action lines on the mule or –

ANJUS

We don't have time for this! Excuse me, Mr. Policeman!

POLICEMAN

How'd you know my name?

ANJUS

What?

POLICEMAN

My last name is Policeman!

EUGENE

That's a coincidence ...

POLICEMAN

How do you mean?

MARYANNE

Your name and your profession ... they're both ... policeman.

POLICEMAN

Huh, guess you're right. Never noticed.

EUGENE

We have no time for this! We need to see the commissioner, pronto!

POLICEMAN

How'd you know my first name was Pronto? Pronto Policeman.

MARYANNE

We have no time for this! Take us to the commissioner, now!

POLICEMAN

I

—

MARYANNE

I don't care that your middle name is 'now!' Co-mmiss-ion-er!

POLICEMAN

He's not here! He's asleep, it's the middle of the night!

EUGENE

I see. I see. The old night excuse. I've heard that one. 'Sorry sir the store is closed, it's after five.' Or 'how'd you get in here?' Or 'sir please put that down its very old and doesn't belong in your mouth.' You are trying to give us 'no's' but we don't take 'no's' we have a strong 'no's take backs.' That's how we do it, you see?

A long pause.

EUGENE (cont.)

Um, hello?

POLICEMAN

I was hoping if I stayed very still and quiet you would forget I was here and go away.

ANJUS

That's not going to work!

POLICEMAN

The Commissioner's not due back til morning so ... we have a cold bench over there you can sit on, but it's very uncomfortable it was voted most uncomfortable bench in Uncomfortable Seating Monthly.

EUGENE

I'm an early bird. I'll stay here and wait for my worm: Mr. Big Britches Commissioner Muckity-Muck.

He sits on the bench.

EUGENE (cont.)

Ow. Ooof. That is uncomfortable like sitting on sack of kittens. You both go get some rest.

MARYANNE

I am drained from all of this. Oh. You'd do that, for me?

EUGENE

For you ... and Hiram. Eugene Neddly is on the case. And don't worry, nothing gets past me. I have eagle vision, that's why they call me hawk- eye.

AUTHOR

There was little to do but wait so Maryanne and Anjus bid Eugene goodnight and headed to their homes. Eugene vowed to stay awake all night so of course he promptly fell asleep. Time does what it does, ticks by and soon morning came to the police station. A beam of light from the stained glass window of a policeman beating a Polish man shines down on Eugene. He's bathed in the soft glow of multi-colored illuminated police brutality.

A chicken clucks nearby and then crows. EUGENE wakes up.

EUGENE

Wha? Huh?

A young female Police officer SHAINDEL BLUM chases it away.

SHAINDEL

Damn street chicken! How'd you get in here? I swear they're worse than the pigeons. Clucking and pecking like they don't have a care in the world.

EUGENE

Where'd this blanket come from?

SHAINDEL

You looked cold so I put it on you. We got it from a bum who died from bleeding scabs.

EUGENE

Gross. Thanks. Gross.

SHAINDEL

Protect and serve! Hope you have a good morning.

EUGENE

Wait, morning! Rats with hats! I fell asleep; I need to see the Commissioner!

SHAINDEL

He passed by here nearly a quarter turn ago. Likes to start early. I'm Almost Officer Shaindel Blum but everyone calls me Doubles.

EUGENE

Cause of your ... um ...

SHAINDEL

Because I'm a lady and Jewish. Commissioner wanted to open up the police force and let women and Jews serve so they hired me. I check two boxes.

EUGENE

Wow what a progressive force!

SHAINDEL

Not really. They won't make me a "real" official officer yet, so mostly all they let me do is clean the station. *Feh!* Also cakes they make me bake, do their taxes, wash laundry ...

EUGENE

But not their delicates!

SHAINDEL

Oh yes and the stink of a patrolman's *untervesh* haunts you!

EUGENE

You know what else is strange you're the second Jew I've met today! Well yesterday but ...

SHAINDEL

Oy meshugeneh, you met two Jews in New York City. Miracle of miracles.

EUGENE

Maybe you know him!

SHAINDEL

Not every Jew know every other -

EUGENE

His name is Speedy.

SHAINDEL

Oh. I do know Speedy. He's my cousin. But still we don't all know --

EUGENE

What about Nachman the Knockdown, the famous boxer?

SHAINDEL

Yes, him I know too.

EUGENE

What about that singer Baruch Mendel?

SHAINDEL

Fine! Yes, him too. I'm very friendly and social but my point still stands! What was I saying?

EUGENE

You're not a real cop.

SHAINDEL

Right, yes, but one day I hope to be a full-fledged policewoman. Maybe even a detective inspector! They get all the big jobs like solving and causing murders!

EUGENE

Tis a complicated age ...

SHAINDEL

Nu, what do you need to see the boss about?

AUTHOR

And with that Eugene recounted the tale of murder. A tale he wanted to tell the commissioner but the commissioner was in the middle of his own problems at the moment.

2.4:

ROOSEVELT is fighting with a bunch of squirrels.

ROOSEVELT

Hah! Take that, hah! Yipes! Nice try with the chompers! These bushy-tailed beasts won't stop me! Try it you tree rats! Ha! No squirrel bests me!
Police Commissioner Theodore Roosevelt!

AUTHOR

And with that Commissioner Roosevelt let loose his Tedie Chop on the cadre of grey squirrels as they bit and clawed him. But before we get to that let's check in on Pirate Penny who has recruited the infamous Blow Hole Gang in their newly acquired hidden lair. At the moment they are "greeting" a newly captured taxidermist.

2.5:

The GOONS punch the TAXIDERMIST as they speak.

GOON 1

The stone work in this lair is top notch.

GOON 2

Yeah you can really get your goon on here.

GOON 1

Also I think I might ask out Mary.

GOON 2

Really Mary with the red hair?

GOON 1

I wouldn't say it's red, more ...

TAXIDERMIST

Please stop hitting me.

GOON 2

Rude. My fellow goon and I are trying to solve a delicate issue. You may not know but my colleague has not had the best luck in the area of romance.

GOON 1

I'm a bit of a wallflower.

GOON 2

I say it's more dealing with the Goon/life balance. You spend too much time henching and not enough time getting out there.

GOON 1

I do take my work home with me. Like your toes that we cut off ... I'll probably take them home. Why? I don't know. I have a problem.

PIRATE PENNY

Enough!

GOON 1

Yes Pirate Penny!

TAXIDERMIST

Why are you doing this? I'm just a humble taxidermist. We live simple lives ...

PIRATE PENNY

You're too humble. You are Stitch Montgomery, famed for your nimble fingers. Now if you'd only do as I ask we wouldn't have to keep ... bothering you.

TAXIDERMIST

What you ask it's ... impossible!

PIRATE PENNY

Fine then. Feed him to the eels!

TAXIDERMIST

Wait, wait, maybe not *impossible*. Just really hard and ...

PIRATE PENNY

Maybe you need more ... persuading. Perhaps some ... rice pudding?

TAXIDERMIST

Oh that does look ... delicious wait you're putting raisins in it! You monsters! Oh that poor pudding! OK, just no more raisins! I'll help you.

PIRATE PENNY

Welcome to Project Land Whale, Stitch.

AUTHOR

Meanwhile back at police headquarters Police Commissioner Theodore Roosevelt was still dealing with some fuzzy fiends of his own.

2.6:

ROOSEVELT is fighting off several squirrels.

ROOSEVELT

Hiya! Ha! And there you go! Last one down!

FITZ, a police sergeant blows a whistle.

FITZ

Seven seconds! A new record!

ROOSEVELT

Bully! Another fine squirrel workout! Have some peanuts my bushy tailed friends!
Huzzah!

FITZ

O' begorrah, and shamrocks, another rousing knuckle thumper, Commissioner.

ROOSEVELT

Indeed, Sergeant Fitz! Walk with me, we have much to do!

FITZ

Ready for orders, sir.

ROOSEVELT

Double check the Bowery Bar and double bar the Bowery Check

House. Make sure the Chinese aren't rooting the Italians on Mott and the Italians aren't motting the Chinese on route. Also check into that company repairing Castle Clinton. After the clown fires ...

A beat as he looks into the distance. Sounds of carnival music and burning and screaming. FITZ crosses himself.

FITZ

Mother Mary and Joseph all that smoldering greasepaint.

ROOSEVELT

People are reporting ghostly wailing and moaning.

FITZ

Sure and begorra!

ROOSEVELT

And you lot there, stop loafing! Into the tubes!

ROOSEVELT grabs some coppers and tosses them into some chutes.

ROOSEVELT (cont.)

These “express chutes” I installed get coppers to the streets thrice as fast! They used to be garbage chutes. Still can be!

Roosevelt tosses some garbage in a chute.

ROOSEVELT (CONT'D)

Refuse incoming!

FITZ

Saint’s alive, you’re busier than Annie Green Skirts on sailor’s leave week.

ROOSEVELT

I try, Fitz, I try ...

SHAINDEL and EUGENE enter.

SHAINDEL

Commissioner this man would like to speak with you about an urgent matter.

ROOSEVELT

Almost officer Doubles! What a surprise! A ‘shalom’ to you!

SHAINDEL

That's actually Hebrew, we speak Yiddish so ...

ROOSEVELT

Shalom!

SHAINDEL

Yeah, ok, shalom.

ROOSEVELT

It means hello and goodbye! Smart, saves time, smart folk you lot.

SHAINDEL

You're a real *gantzeh k'nocker kolboynik*.

ROOSEVELT

And they speak like that all the time! No wonder you people are chosen. So funny!

EUGENE

You know what's not funny? Murder! Except in that one dime novel "The Stinking Stinker" they have that scene where the guy slips on the knife and flies up and knocks down the gun that shoots the wall which then falls on the guy and he's like 'ow my ribs' and then he's hit with the ... well you've read it, right?

ROOSEVELT

I must have missed that one.

EUGENE

Maybe it was not a dovel but a repressed memory of my uncle's terrible ... anyway let's get down to the brass tacks you tall drink of mustache! This force is dirtier than a tinker's pinkie and all scum slimes from the top! So how about that four eyes!

ROOSEVELT

Hello. Let's start with 'hello' shall we? Before we rattle off the innuendo and insults. Hello! Theodore Roosevelt – newly appointed Commissioner of Police!

EUGENE

A pleasure. Now our friend Hiram was murdered. He was a good man and a lover of whales. Well not in the Biblical sense. I mean – how? Cavernous. You'd need maps. A torch and ...

SHAINDEL

Oy. Mr. Commissioner I feel this *putz* here has been given the runaround. And I think there's a serious crime afoot.

ROOSEVELT

Bully! And you've got a nose for it. Not that – I don't mean nose because you're ... well. Um. Anyway now that we're on an even keel I can give one of my new T.R. Funpacks!

Gets out a goody bag.

ROOSEVELT (cont.)

My idea to get law abiding citizens to visit!

EUGENE

Neat! I love free stuff!

ROOSEVELT

Free indeed and more than mere *stuff*. Inside you'll find: a junior deputy badge, a novelty rape whistle, an autographed cabinet card of yours truly, a beetle – dead, and some bitter candied root. Gives the hair a brilliant sheen. See? See?

EUGENE

Such luster in your locks.

ROOSEVELT

Bully!

EUGENE

But will you help us with our friend's murder?

ROOSEVELT

I won't help you murder anyone!

EUGENE

He's already dead.

ROOSEVELT

Then you shall be arrested.

SHAINDEL

He didn't do it, he's trying to find the culprit.

EUGENE

He was stabbed through the heart ... with a swordfish!

ROOSEVELT

Good gravy with a lump! That's more abominable than a snowman! A creature I hope to go mano-a-mano with in the frozen hinterlands one day! I can see it now!

2.7:

Inside Roosevelt's mind. The snowy Himalayas – the YETI and ROOSEVELT face off.

ROOSEVELT

I've hunted you from Kathmandu but you're about to be a cat-man-don't!

YETI

I'm not a cat-man! I'm more an ape-man!

ROOSEVELT

I guess I could have said 'I've hunted you from Kathmandu but you're about to be an ape-man-don't.' But that gets to be a little too abstracted ...

YETI

True ... that's the danger of world play. But how about knife play.

YETI takes out a knife.

ROOSEVELT

A knife! That's dirty bocce!

YETI

Saps on you! It's stab time!

*YETI stabs at ROOSEVELT,
ROOSEVELT dodges.*

ROOSEVELT

Try this kangaroo kick I learned from an Aboriginal in Walla Walla!

YETI

Ha! Your human kicks can't harm me! I don't need a knife.

Yeti throws down his knife.

ROOSEVELT

And I don't need my kicks.

ROOSEVELT throws down something it makes a noise. A beat. Then they charge at each other.

2.8:

Scene changes back to Roosevelt imagining the scene.

ROOSEVELT

And then I give him a good punch, but he – yeah! Huh! Ya! Hey! Oooh!

EUGENE

Wait what did you throw down when you gave up your kicks?

ROOSEVELT

What? Oh was I imagining out loud again?

SHAINDEL

Yes it was quite horrible.

ROOSEVELT

Not as horrifying as what I just realized! I know exactly who killed your friend! I know who's behind it all!

END OF CHAPTER 2