

# THE LAND WHALE MURDERS

## Chapter 5: Nothing Like a Writing Desk

AUTHOR

Ah, you're back. I brewed some tea; how about you? Do you like tea? Well let me spill the tea of history into your ears. Anjus Troup, one of the Four Elementals, was kidnapped by Pirate Penny, the merciless leader of the Blow Hole Gang. Hiram Blud was murdered by a swordfish. Eugene Neddly and Maryanne Blud are still alive but Eugene is sleeping off some psychedelic mushrooms and Maryanne is off to write some poetry. Also Commissioner Theodore Roosevelt has assigned almost officer Shandel "Doubles" Blum to the case. It's a lot, sure, but hopefully all will be made clear soon. Now where should we begin? Let's start at police headquarters where Commissioner Roosevelt is going over his reports.

5.1:

ROOSEVELT

Bully! So the most corrupt area of the cities are- here, here, and here according to our corruption study study. Which is a study we did of the original corruption study which we found was very corrupt. The corruption study study was only somewhat corrupt so now we can convene the corruption study study study which will find out who corrupted the corruption study study and in turn corrupted the corruption study and thus let us figure out who is really corrupt. Got that Sergeant Fitz?

FITZ

Aye Sure, sure but Tammany Hall and Boss Crocker are wailing like a banshee saying that to complete that study they'll need ten thousand dollars for various fees.

ROOSEVELT

Fees! For what?

FITZ

Corruption.

ROOSEVELT

How will we ever clean up this city! We need to cut the corruption down to the ruption. An eruption of truth and justice!

FITZ

You'll never get approval for that, sir.

ROOSEVELT

As commissioner I'm hogtied by laws. Bully! But maybe there's another way  
... another way ... another way ...

FITZ  
Sir?

ROOSEVELT  
I was doing an echo for dramatic effect.

Very effective, sir.

SHAINDEL enters.

FITZ

SHAINDEL  
So much pecking.

ROOSEVELT  
Almost Officer Doubles where have you been?

SHAINDEL  
Trying to round up all those birds! They're flapping amok. They've even agitated the  
local birds. It's avian awfulness from pecker to flecker.

ROOSEVELT  
Well non native birds could be an issue. But then again we're a nation of immigrants  
so perhaps these birds too are but a huddled mass of feathers yearning to be free.

SHAINDEL  
Some are very violent.

ROOSEVELT  
A few bad wrens spoil the bunch. Keep an eye on them Fitz.

FITZ  
Nope.

ROOSEVELT  
Oh you. Anyway it's good you're here, Doubles, we have an important job for you!

SHAINDEL

You need me to help sweep out corruption!

ROOSEVELT

Sort of! I need to you to sweep out the cafeteria. And also the lavatory on the third floor is clogged.

SHAINDEL

There is no lavatory on the third floor ...

ROOSEVELT

Then some misguided soul clogged up something and you're just the almost officer to undo it.

SHAINDEL

But I'm working the Hiram Blut murder! I'm supposed to be protecting those farkakhte scientists.

ROOSEVELT

Yes. Have you exposed the vile mer-villain The Fish Monger yet? I know that costumed creep is behind it!

SHAINDEL

Such a thing I don't think there is.

ROOSEVELT

And that's why you're not an officer. Look at Fitz he did all sorts of things to become a Sergeant.

FITZ

Aye. They said "Fitz ma boy you want to be a sergeant since you're Ma O'Grady's cousin?" And I said "ach." And they said "aye," and by the green grass of Kerry I was made a Sergeant.

SHAINDEL

That's just nepotism!

ROOSEVELT

And here's a plunger! De-clog well, Doubles. Now I must go to the roof for ... reasons. I take my leave. Running!

ROOSEVELT runs off.

FITZ

He does love to run.

SHAINDEL

I won't drop this case, I'll solve it and become a real police woman!

FITZ

That's not how it works. I don't think ... ah kip my gowl who can know. Life is as mysterious as me ma's cabbage recipe.

SHAINDEL

She boils it.

FITZ

Boils? What a thing! What a thing!

FITZ leaves.

SHAINDEL

I should check on Eugene, make sure he's fine after all this birdary.

AUTHOR

And with that Shaindel headed out. But before we leave the Police Headquarters let's take a quick trip to the roof to see what Commissioner Roosevelt is doing ...

5.2:

ROOSEVELT

The city, my city, I see you twinkling like a cave of jewels. I will protect you. It's my city not yours ... FISH MONGER! This apple is not big enough for the both of us! Oh you want it? Too bad! Fish do not eat apples, stupid!

POLICE OFFICER enters.

OFFICER

Uh, sorry Commish but this came to you, express, from Brooks Brothers.

ROOSEVELT

Give it here! Oh goody, goody, goody!

ROOSEVELT rips open the wrapping. He lets out an excited whoop.

ROOSEVELT

Oh it's even better than I hoped! Bully!

AUTHOR

Morning breaks in New York and Eugene's head is throbbing from his mushroom mind melt. He was having his morning ice cream but he can't enjoy it because of the toadstool hangover. He looked at the few extra mushrooms he had stuffed in his pockets and tosses them onto his desk.

5.3:

EUGENE

Ugh. My head is pounding.

There's loud knocking on the door.

EUGENE (cont.)

And now it's pounding so loud it sounds like it's coming from the door.

More knocking.

EUGENE (cont.)

All right head, we get it, you can throw your pounding; you're a regular Terrific Terry the ventriloquist!

SHAINDEL enters.

SHAINDEL

The door was open and cops are allowed to enter any home for any reason as long as we plant evidence, so I'm going to put this bloody knife here so it's all nice and legal! Oh Eugene, you're up!

EUGENE

Sorry about all the pounding, that was my head. I hope it didn't bother you.

SHAINDEL

What?

EUGENE

What? Anyway thanks for meeting me so quickly Officer Doubles.

SHAINDEL

It's Almost Officer and I prefer Shaindel. Also how did you know I was coming?

EUGENE

Oh I assumed I asked you to come by.

SHAINDEL

No I was just checking on you.

EUGENE

So you came on your own? No one has ever come by on their own. Oh that is so nice.

SHAINDEL

I have to. I've been assigned to protect you.

EUGENE

Any port in a storm! I'm about to scrapbook all these articles about the Shakespeare Bird Release.

SHAINDEL

Let me see.

(Reads through the clippings.)

Ah, "idiot releases birds," "cuckoo ruins New York," "Birds dying" ... "Shakes-jerk," that's not even clever New York World. None of these seem very positive.

EUGENE

Scrapbook doesn't judge if it's good or bad they just want scraps. Like a hobo.

SHAINDEL

Oh hobos judge, let me tell you.

EUGENE

It's only with Hiram being ... this release -- I was hoping to make the city better. I want to fix things. But I'm not good at fixing via tools or building. I'm not what you call a man's man. I'm more like a monkey's man.

SHAINDEL

I don't know what that means.

EUGENE

Exactly. But Hiram saw something in me. He came from a rich Texas family who made their fortune "finding" the cows of ranchers who went off to fight in the Civil War and selling them back to said veterans at a profit. Hiram studied at Harvard while Maryanne studied at Mrs. Harburgh's School for Mouthy Girls.

SHAINDEL

She is mouthy.

EUGENE

Quite. I went to Princeton which was coincidentally where my parents donated the Neddly Library of Extremely Expensive Books.

SHAINDEL

How serendipitous.

EUGENE

I don't speak Yiddish.

SHAINDEL

That's not ... how did they pay for that?

EUGENE

I come from very rich stock – the Neddly's --

AUTHOR

Though having since faded into obscurity, were once the most powerful family in Delaware.

EUGENE

We own the most famous thing in Delaware – the Delaware Stump which was said to be the remains of the first tree that George Washington ever cut down.

AUTHOR

This of course wasn't true, but at the time people believed it was. We still remember the famed story of George Washington and the cherry tree – a story created by Parson Weems to sell biographies of General George. But what is forgotten is that this book caused a whole slew of books about George Washington cutting down trees. There was Washington's Wood, George Don't Cut That, and Axe Him Another Log to name but a few. There was a mania to own wood from a "genuine Washington cut tree." It was the Neddly's who cashed in on this mania by selling splinters at a highly inflated price from the supposed first tree. It's said if you were to reconstruct a tree from all the splinters sold it would be over 6 miles wide and 10 miles tall.

SHAINDEL

Did any of your families earn their wealth honestly?

EUGENE

Did anyone?

SHAINDEL

Touché.

EUGENE

Again I don't know Yiddish.

SHAINDEL

That's French.

EUGENE

No he was American.

SHAINDEL

Who?

EUGENE

That's an owl. This is a strange game.

SHAINDEL

How does this relate to Hiram?

EUGENE

Well it was at Princeton I followed my birding passion into a birding career with a degree in Ornithology. Which means the ology of Orni. I think Orni invented birds – I was first in my class and when I stood on the Neddly Additional Donation Steps and received my diploma I knew I loved birds. But it would be at a fancy party where I'd meet Hiram, Maryanne, and Anjus ...

SHAINDEL

I'm not surprised.

EUGENE

It was a fundraiser for the element boron. A wealthy dowager had decided that boron was the most ignored of the early periodic elements and thus was worthy of more praise ...

AUTHOR

The press, however, felt that the money lavished on this event was ridiculous and Joseph Pulitzer ran a column called "morons for boron."

SHAINDEL

So you were also at this Boron bash?



EUGENE

What! No! I had come to the party as a protest because boron was not good for birds –

AUTHOR

There is no proof of this.

EUGENE

There's proof of this and thus its promotion was a backhanded attack on the avian world. I protested by dressing up as a flamingo and dancing outside of the wealthy widow's estate. Hiram didn't like this one bit so he came outside. Then we got into a fight! It was a real rumdunger!

AUTHOR

Actually neither of them had fought before and didn't really understand how to fight. They merely stood facing one another, waiting for the other to start so he could copy his moves. Eventually they tired of staring at each other and went to a local tavern.

EUGENE

We drowned our sorrows and tended our wounds. Hiram helped me get a position with the American Acclimatization Society!

SHAINDEL

Oh so you're just a bunch of rich weirdos. Not a group of famous brilliant scientists. That makes so much more sense.

EUGENE

That Boron loving dowager changed our lives. I wonder what happened to her.

AUTHOR

She died of Boron poisoning. On a side note it was actually because of this party that the name The Four Elementals was first proposed. Of course it was in reference to the older understanding of the four basic elements of Empedocles. The group felt it paid homage to past and future since boron is the 5th element. Not love as posited by others.

EUGENE

Anyway we became the four elementals but you could say the fifth element was love.

AUTHOR

It's Boron.

SHAINDEL

That story was quite a story. My story is much less exciting. Born in a slum, one of eight children, and the only really interesting part is –

EUGENE

I need more glue! Hold on with whatever you were saying.

SHAINDEL

(Upbeat.) Right sure.

(Muttering, annoyed.)

Veren zol fun dir a blintshik, un di katz dikh khapn<sup>2</sup>.

EUGENE

Now where is –

Suddenly an object crashes through Eugene's window.

EUGENE (cont.) My window! I was using that for winding!

SHAINDEL

It's a dead bird!

EUGENE

Another one! I'm sorry! I'm sorry birds that you keep dying! Who would have thought something created by Shakespeare would end in tragedy!

SHAINDEL

There's a note attached ...

EUGENE

It wrote a suicide note?

<sup>2</sup> place the emphasis on the second to the last syllable so "Veren" will sound more like "Vern."

SHAINDEL

That's not ... it says 'you're next.'

EUGENE

"You're next?" I'm next? What next? Next!

SHAINDEL

Stop saying next!

I can't. Next. Next. Next.

MARYANNE rushes in.

EUGENE

SHAINDEL

Maryanne?

MARYANNE

Eugene! Are you alright? I saw the window was broken!

SHAINDEL

Don't worry I'm here to protect him.

MARYANNE

Where were you last night! Anjus was kidnapped! Her greenhouse was ransacked and she's gone!

EUGENE

Next. Next. Next.

SHAINDEL

You don't mean ...

MARYANNE

I do mean! Whomever murdered Hiram must have –

EUGENE

I'M NEXT! I'M NEXT!

MARYANNE

What?

SHAINDEL

Bird. Read.

MARYANNE

Azoy! I see. This intimidation tactic has Blubberton's oily fingers all over it. What do we do?

EUGENE

Do? Do! We find Henry B. Lubbins the third and tell him we don't care how many whales he's flensed, he can't threaten and kill us! Well I mean he already killed one of us –

SHAINDEL

What about the Blow Hole Gang?

MARYANNE

That's obviously a false lead.

EUGENE

Lubbins is the real criminal! We go down and find him and tell him to knock it off!

MARYANNE

Really?

EUGENE

Yes! But let's hurry, this rush of adrenaline will not long and he's very scary – hurry to the Financial District!

AUTHOR

The Million Dollar Club was the gilded hall where the rich and super rich came to eat pre-lunch the fourth meal of the ten meals of the day. Steak was always on the menu and it was covered in lamb gravy and even the potatoes were made of meat. The arched vaulted dining room was glittering with gold-leaf and various statues imported from far off lands. The napkins were 12th century tapestries that were cut and sliced – it's opulence to the nth degree – even more, like the qth or rth degree. Is that how it works? I'm a historian not a math person. But I assume you get the idea. Very fancy. It's into this austere eatery that Eugene, Maryanne, and Shaindel entered ready to confront Lubbins. But they were quickly stopped by the Maître d'.

5.4:

(Put on fake French accent.)

Excusez-moi where are you going?

MAÎTRE D'

EUGENE

To confront Henry B. Lubbins.

MAÎTRE D'

Fine, fine. Oh wait, vou?

SHAINDEL

Me?

MAÎTRE D'

Oui.

SHAINDAL

What?

MAÎTRE D'

Are you a ... Jewess?

SHAINDAL

Yes.

MAÎTRE D'

You cannot go in. We have a policy.

SHAINDAL

I'm also a member of the police!

MAÎTRE D'

It does not matter. Rules, they are, how you say, "the rules."

MARYANNE

But we're fine?

MAÎTRE D'

Your heritage?

MARYANNE

Anglo-Saxon.

EUGENE

Same with a touch of Dutch.

MAÎTRE D'

That's fine. But you will have to wait out back. We have a holding room for lesser Europeans. It's quite nice we have complimentary custard and a hose for drinking.

EUGENE

Oh a hose, see it's not all bad.

This isn't right!

(Drops the accent.)

SHAINDEL

MAÎTRE D'

Hey buddy, it's a private club we can do as we like. So kick off to the green room, the blue room is for the Colored folk, then there's an orange room for Assorted Celestials, also a corridor for Red Indians but since the whole "push, push, bye bye" policies, it's pretty empty. The real problem is Laplanders where do they fit? According to some it's

—

MARYANNE

We don't have time for this terrible policy!

SHAINDEL

I'm not going!

MAÎTRE D'

Then you all cannot come in.

MARYANNE

Doubles please this is a terrible policy but we're not going to solve it today. Lubbins is more important.

SHAINDEL

This is dehumanizing!

EUGENE

Right but ... we do this now and then I'll write a strongly worded letter to the comptroller or a clerk. Clerks really respond to letters.

SHAINDEL sighs.

SHAINDEL

Fine. Just this once.

MAÎTRE D'

Excellent! The lesser Europeans' room is this way. I'll have the Ethnic- check girl take you. Moira!

MOIRA enters.

MOIRA

Hey sweets, come with me. Here you go, this is a claim check, bring it to the cloak room and I'll retrieve your Colored, Celestial, and or Lesser European. Also note we are not liable for any damage or radicalization that happens to your ethnic. Thank you.

Oh claim check number 16. Lucky.

Why is it lucky?

EUGENE MARYANNE

EUGENE

I'm just trying to find something positive in this awkward exchange.

SHAINDEL

Make sure to come get me.

MAÎTRE D'

(Bringing back the accent.)

Right this way madame et monsieur

AUTHOR

As this unfortunate racism was occurring Lubbins was getting ready to cut into a giant prime rib. But righth before he could the steak was pulled away by Eugene.

LUBBINS

What! My steak! You! I should have seen you walking over here but I was so steak focused I let my guard down!

EUGENE

Too bad for you.

LUBBINS

“Too bad for you?” Too bad for you! You are a gull-puking éclair! You do not have a spine! You do not talk to me like that!

LUBBINS stabs his knife into the table.

EUGENE

Where you’re going they won’t have steak.

LUBBINS

Where’s that?

EUGENE

Um. Huh. I didn’t really have a follow up.

MARYANNE

You listen Lubbins --

LUBBINS

And who’s this? Another Gibson girl? What you packing that you got all these skirts after you?

MARYANNE

I’m Hiram Blud’s sister, you sockdolager!

LUBBINS

Bah. So more loud lundies who are ultimately harmless.

EUGENE

Harmless? Don’t be so sure, I got my sights on you, buster. My sights and my sounds. Like this: woowooo wooo and that harumphah! Harumphah! So who’s harmless now?

LUBBINS

You.

EUGENE

Oh.

MARYANNE

You’re acting pretty icy for a man being accused.

LUBBINS



I'm a plutocrat, we're used to threats; look around –

AUTHOR

And indeed at various tables all around the Million Dollar Club titans of industry and capitalism were being accused –

BUM

You ruined me, Gould!

POOR MAN

You're going down for this Frick!

BROKEN WOMAN

Please, please don't take all my children to the mines!

AUTHOR

Another deranged man was even charging at Vanderbilt with a gun, but Vanderbilt very casually beat him with his diamond studded cane. The man was then swept into a vagrant gutter. After which Vanderbilt closed his menu and told the waiter –

VANDERBILT

Steak Diane, extra bloody.

LUBBINS

See? We're elite, we know how to deal with riffraff.

EUGENE

Riff perhaps, raff, perhaps not! All you've proved is you'd have no problem giving Hiram the heave ho.

LUBBINS

Let me explain this so even you can understand and in turn leave my life ... for good. I had a court case coming up. I gotta pay the customs house 30 cents per barrel of fish oil because our government is –

(Makes a noise.)

But then I learn that a whale ain't a fish. It's a mammal, right? So I say 'I don't got to pay that fish tax.' No tax and I'd save a mint! But the law says whales are fish. So, Hiram was going to testify about whales not being fish. But then he up and dies on me before he can testify.

MARYANNE

You and Hiram hated each other, he was trying to –

LUBBINS

Who better to defend my side? If my sworn enemy agrees with me any jury will know there's no pay off.

EUGENE

Why would he do that?

LUBBINS

I'm sure he planned to give some boo-hoo whales is people too speech on the stand, make 'em cry. But who cares! I'll dry my tears with a couple million dollar bills. So, in closing, why would I want to kill a guy who's going to save me so much dough? Riddle me that, Auguste Dupin.

EUGENE

Huh. Well ...

LUBBINS

Now that I've choked down my mid-morning steak it's time to get back to ruining some lives. I'm planning a hostile buyout of Edgar Frump's Humpback back hump sack lumps – they sell sacks that you put the backs of humpback whales in, you get it.

AUTHOR

And with that Lubbins pushed his chair away from the table and headed toward the golden exit door. Eugene and Maryanne were not finished so they gave chase.

5.5:

MARYANNE

You think you're so smart. You're still killing all those whales! What happens when they're gone?

LUBBINS

Ocean is full of 'em. God created all creatures for our use. Says so in the Bible. If God wanted me to stop he'd smite me right here, right now. Well?

Waits a beat.

LUBBINS (cont.)

Still here.

MARYANNE

You're scum, Lubbins.

LUBBINS

If scum and drum were candy and nuns we'd all live in a convent. Help me put on my jacket.

EUGENE

Sure.

MARYANNE

Eugene!

EUGENE

I'm not a savage, coat help crosses all boundaries. There was even the coat truce during the Thirty Years War.

LUBBINS

Thanks, stupid. Anyway listen, girlie, where we supposed to get our fuel from then, huh?

MARYANNE

From the ground. Oil! Coal! We can use the earth right below our feet to –

LUBBINS

You sound like that sop Rockefeller. America runs on whale juice now and forever!

EUGENE

Plants get energy from the sun.

LUBBINS

Do I look like a goddamn radish to you?

EUGENE

You are a bit red. Roundish ...

AUTHOR

By this point Lubbins' carriage pulled up to the rather dirty curb.

LUBBINS

As fun as this isn't I'm glad it's over. Now excuse me; I have a meeting with the secretary of Labor. We're splitting a cigarette girl for dessert, don't think about it too hard.

EUGENE

But –

LUBBINS

If I need you I'll send a letter. I won't, so don't look for one. Now unless you've found my missing whale? No? Then goodbye forever!

The carriage takes off.

EUGENE

One last thing did you murder ... that's a fast carriage. (Turns to Maryanne.)  
I don't think he did it.

MARYANNE

Someone killed Hiram, and Lubbins is guilty of something.

EUGENE

Those are both two some's. Well we can check his office. I took his keys when I helped him with his jacket.

EUGENE rattles some keys.

MARYANNE

Good work, Eugene!

EUGENE

It was kind of an accident, my fingers were sticky with ice cream. (Guilty, sad.)  
I had ice cream for breakfast ...

MARYANNE

For once your sweet tooth may be of use.

EUGENE

It just fell out.

He spits out a tooth.

EUGENE (cont.) Oh well. To the Blubberton offices!

MARYANNE

We should wait until night, when it's empty.

EUGENE

Of course - night, nature's time out. Good plan. What do you want to do until then ...

MARYANNE

We can just meet up later.

EUGENE

I don't have plans.

MARYANNE

Oh. That's ... huh. Oh! Right, what about Almost Officer Doubles? She'll never abet our sneaking. You should go distract her.

EUGENE

True it's ... oh it looks like she has her hands full – look at the Million Dollar Club!

Sounds of panic and fight.

MARYANNE

Oh it looks like fighting and looting! Good thing we got out when we did.

EUGENE

And there's Doubles trying to ... I'm not sure what she's doing, looks like eating a frankfurter. Oh someone started a fire. So it looks like I'm free to hang.

MARYANNE

Hang? Hang what?

EUGENE

I thought you said you had to hang some pictures.

MARYANNE

No.

EUGENE

Then we can do whatever.

MARYANNE

It's kind of. I have lady business.

EUGENE

Oh you mean. (Whistles.)

With the. Huh, huh?

MARYANNE

Let's just meet at Blubberton at seven. Outside.

EUGENE  
Question.

MARYANNE  
What?

EUGENE  
Disguises?

MARYANNE  
The riot is really spilling into the streets. I need to go.

EUGENE  
So yes?

AUTHOR  
The plan was set and the riot was getting worse. But how did the riot start? Will they find Anjus? Who's behind Hiram's murder - The Blow Hole Gang or Lubbins? Are they working together? Oh that's a guess. But the fire raged and looting continued.

END OF CHAPTER 5