

THE LAND WHALE MURDERS

Chapter 8: Never Trust A Scotch Pine

AUTHOR

Fire. Prometheus' gift, man's curse. Also currently ravaging a condemned building where Eugene and Anjus were hiding out. Everything seemed lost, our heroes were about to become crispy critters -- they were out of good ideas and even bad ideas and even almost considered praying; when suddenly a figure leaned over the hole in the roof ...

8.1:

SHAINDEL

Hey! Up here!

EUGENE

Oh great now the roof is talking!

ANJUS

No it's Doubles!

SHAINDEL

Please call me Shaindel. There's a dead peacock up here. Let me use its death-stiffened legs and talons to pull you up!

EUGENE

Mentioned by Shakespeare in Henry IV!

SHAINDEL

Just grab it!

AUTHOR

And using her natural strength and a boost from below she managed to pull up Anjus and then they worked together to pull Eugene up using the bird.

EUGENE

I guess you could say that peacock was more a --

SHAINDEL

Less quips more getting the hell out of here!

AUTHOR

And with that they jumped the gap to the next building just as the condemned building crumbled away.

EUGENE

That was ... wow.

ANJUS

I can't believe we lived! How'd you find us?

SHAINDEL

Well I was at the library and then – it's a long story. But I saw all the angry people and I figured it probably had something to do with you both, so I climbed up this building to get a look and heard you sobbing ...

EUGENE

Manly sobbing.

SHAINDEL

If that's what you need.

ANJUS

We have to get to Maryanne, with Lubbins ... um ... with that whole situation.

SHAINDEL

I should get back to the station. I'd go with you but Miss Blud is ... we're not ... anyway, I do have some leads on the whole murder megillah.

ANJUS

You need to look into the Blow Hole Gang and their leader Pirate Penny, they're planning something huge!

SHAINDEL

I will! I'm sure I'll see you soon, try to stay out of trouble.

EUGENE

Sure of course and don't believe anything about us and any dead business leaders.

SHAINDEL

Wait what?

ANJUS

Bye now!

AUTHOR

And with that Eugene and Anjus hurried down the stairwell and out to the street. Shaindel quickly hurried back to the prescient, but when she got there ...

8.2:

FITZ

Where have you been Doubles!

SHAINDEL

Sergeant Fitz, I was stopping a –

FITZ

Shut up, don't care! Oh begorrah all this madness and the co-mmissioner is co-where to be found!

SHAINDEL

What's going on?

FITZ

That fluke duke Henry B. Lubbins is belly up and according to an eye witness these two are the culprits.

SHAINEL

You got the sketches done fast it's ... Eugene and Anjus?

FITZ

That's what it says on the wanted posters.

SHAINDEL

There has to be some mistake.

FITZ

By Molly McGiver's skirts it's true as the Book of Kells! And anyone who catches these skells is going to be made a Two Bar captain – no questions asked!

SHAINDEL

A real deal police officer?

FITZ

With a corner office, a shiny badge, and a slush fund.

SHAINDEL

A real officer and I won't have to scrub the offices or bake cookies?

FITZ

Aye. It's a dumb system but it's our system. So catch these coddle-mollies and you will be a real and true officer of the law! But don't worry your little Hebraic head about it, there's no way a skirt is going to beat the boys to the perps. Girls can't do a fitz of diddly. Also put on some makeup, you look like the Liffey after Trinity pledge week. I'm exhausted. Time for my nap!

SHAINDEL

Well I'll show –

FITZ is snoring.

SHAINDEL (cont.)

Wow he's asleep on his feet like a horse. Impressive. But I'll show him! I'll show all of them that Shaindel Blum will be a real and true copper! No matter what it takes!

AUTHOR

And while institutional sexism was running rampant at police plaza Eugene and Anjus headed toward the Salmagundi Club to find Maryanne.

8.3:

EUGENE

Oh my legs! Too much walking today.

ANJUS

You should try it in heels.

EUGENE

I would, but society isn't ready for it!

BIG STICK

Somersault! Bully!

BIG STICK somersaults in.

BIG STICK

Ha! You like that!

EUGENE
Big Stick!

BIG STICK
Indeed! Ha ha!

EUGENE
Whoa and you have cape now! Swell!

BIG STICK
You should see it flap in the breeze. It's not ... let me, it's not ... like ... but – if you get a good gust ...

EUGENE
No, no you really get the idea.

ANJUS
Is Maryanne with you?

BIG STICK
Oh dear, gird your loins my friends ... gird them! I was doing my best to reach her ... a lot of tumbling and jumping but when I reached the Salmagundi Club there was an issue ...

FLASHBACK to the Salmagundi Club

8.4:

DOORMAN
Sir, you need a jacket and tie to go inside –

BIG STICK
But I'm Theo ... (Catches himself.)
Theo, theo-boy. O boy you gotta let me in!

DOORMAN
Rules is rules.

BIG STICK
That is unassailable logic! I leave!

Back to the present.

8.5:

ANJUS

So you just gave up?

BIG STICK

Gave? Up? So? Never! I shimmied into a ventilation shaft where I nobly got stuck. But there was a ceiling grate where I could see everything ...

8.6:

Inside the Salmagundi Club. MARYANNE is reading her poetry.

MARYANNE

... and finally rests.

Polite applause.

MARYANNE

Thank you. As you might know my brother recently passed and I want to dedicate this next poem to him. It's called "Apogee of Lethargy" a play on Lord Bermer's "Elegy to Apogee."

Audience murmurs

AUDIENCE MEMBER

I get it! I get the reference.

MARYANNE

Yes. Anyway, let us –

There's a commotion.

BIG STICK (V.O.)

Suddenly there was a commotion. In the back of the room, some of those Blow Holers pushed their way in! They quickly pulled off their jackets and ties – they'd thought of everything it seemed! I struggled like a dachshund in a badger hole but I was stuck fast. They sauntered up towards Maryanne ...

MARYANNE

Excuse me but this is an arts space not a fish space.

GOON 1

Where your friends at?

MARYANNE

Listen you slimy seadog I don't – ugh!

BIG STICK

The Goon hit Maryanne with a giant mackerel knocking her to the ground! The other Blow Holer threatened the audience with a tuna.

GOON 2

Best you folks leave lest you wanna get fished!

Panic people start running.

BIG STICK

Everyone started running as the Goon hit Maryanne again with the fish! In my ensuing panic I started getting the anger sweats which lubricated the walls of the shaft and suddenly I slid down at great speed –

Sound of the Big Stick rocketing through the shaft as he screams.

BIG STICK (cont.)

And then hit the basement garbage pile with a thud. I recovered in a daze and covered in the scraps of the pass-around hors d'vours - the pate was not popular - I then went through the service exit, only it wasn't the service exit it was the snake closet and so I was set upon by snakes ...

ANJUS

Snake closet?

BIG STICK

I really hit my head hard coming down that ventilation shaft, so I might have been hallucinating and it was merely spaghetti, but probably snakes. Then I found the exit. And passed out. I woke up with dried blood, probably my own, on my head. But I felt fine. The police had cordoned off the scene by this point and then I – I mean, then Commissioner Roosevelt showed up ...

8.7:

ROOSEVELT runs over to them. He's still wearing his mask.

OFFICER 4

Sorry buddy you can't cross here, this is a how-d-you-call-it, crimebean –

POLICEMAN

Scene. Crime scene.

OFFICER 4

Are you sure it's not crimebean? Cause a crime has bean committed.

POLICEMAN

Maybe you're right.

ROOSEVELT

But I'm -- oh my mask is still on. Hold on! (Takes it off.)
There!

POLICEMAN

Oh Commissioner! Sorry that tiny mask completely obscured your identity even to us trained cops.

OFFICER 4

Also your pajamas are sticking out.

ROOSEVELT

The mask is because I was at a costume party ... for justice! And also there was a pajama jammy jam for ... truth! And this big stick is for the stick-a- thon to raise money for the American Way?

OFFICER 4

Didn't even notice the stick.

ROOSEVELT

Now stand back officers we need to get into this building! Hi-ya!

ROOSEVELT slams himself against the door.

ROOSEVELT

Damn door. Come on Tedie! I have the power!

Slams against it again.

ROOSEVELT

That's some thick wood.

POLICEMAN

Let me try.

He opens it.

POLICEMAN (cont.)

It was open.

ROOSEVELT

Officer shut that door! But not all the way just mostly.

POLICEMAN

Like this?

ROOSEVELT

Perfect. Now stand back! Hi-ya!

ROOSEVELT kicks it open.

ROOSEVELT (cont.)

Bully! There you go!

BIG STICK (V.O.)

And they rushed into the reading room where Maryanne was attacked, but all we found – they found. They found was ...

8.8:

ROOSEVELT

Just a small black smear -- it's ... caviar!

8.9:

Scene moves back to the present.

ANJUS

Smackereled by a mackerel. And nothing left but caviar.

EUGENE

No ... Maryanne ...

ANJUS

Wait how did you know all those details about the Police investigation and what Commissioner Roosevelt was up to?

BIG STICK

What? Oh, um, I have plenty of copper friends. Never met the commissioner, heard he's handsome, real, a real uh, ladies' man? Sure. Many admirers.

Got to beat them off with a – (Beat.)

Stick? No. Not stick. Beat them off, manually. Yes he's always beating everyone off. Just ... no sticks, no shoes, no problem. I'M NOT HIM! (Pulling self together.)

Rather The Big Stick cannot reveal his sources ... I'm not him.

ANJUS

Right.

AUTHOR

Then at that moment a sad squawk filled the air as a bird fell out of the sky and landed dead at their feet. Eugene scooped it up angrily.

EUGENE

Why must everything I love die! I love birds! I did it for her! Because I loved her! And I know she didn't love me! But I figured maybe I could do this, a grand gesture! Cause she was fire, she burned like a volcano and I was this little stump. And I wanted her to see me. Volcano and stump like the famous vaudeville duo and I'd slip on the banana peel of love and she'd hit me with the frying pan of feelings and we'd be together and it'd never work, but I wanted it to work and it's ALL GONE!

BIG STICK

Whoa.

ANJUS

You can't elevate someone like that. It's not fair to her. Or you. It's –

EUGENE

Right, I know, but counterpoint - I WOULD EAT HOT LEAD FOR HER! Maryanne ... Hiram. Everyone.

BIG STICK

It's important to grieve; you lot have been through a lot and not just this vacant lot where we're currently standing. It's alright to show our emotions. But only four, we are men after all.

EUGENE

Thanks.

Blows his nose in Big Stick's cape.

BIG STICK

But it's not OK to blow your nose in my cape! It's bespoke!

EUGENE

Sorry. I'm the worst!

Eugene starts sobbing.

BIG STICK

No, no. There, there citizen. I know! Go back to Eugene's home and –

EUGENE

We're wanted for murder ...

BIG STICK

Yes they did mention that ... but I know you've been set up! This is a bigger frame job than the one around Rembrandt's Night Watch!

ANJUS

Does Night Watch even have a frame?

BIG STICK

Perhaps the whole Rijksmuseum is its frame ...

They ponder this for a moment.

BIG STICK

Bully! So go back to Eugene's and I'll make sure the police won't search it, at least until tomorrow.

ANJUS

Thank you.

BIG STICK

I will clear your names by bringing in the real culprit ... THE FISH MONGER!

ANJUS

That's not the –

BIG STICK – BIG EXIT!

Big Stick runs off.

BIG STICK

ANJUS

Let's get back to your flat.

AUTHOR

And so they walked up the grimy streets toward Eugene's home. Eugene still carried that dead bird.

8.10:

EUGENE

It's quiet tonight.

ANJUS

Why are you still carrying that thing?

EUGENE

To remind me.

ANJUS

Of what?

EUGENE

Birds. Ideas. That the Four Elementals are not to be trifled with!

ANJUS

Is that so? We're merely a group of friends who talk about nature and do nothing but drink tea and eat cookies.

EUGENE

And cakes, small cakes. I think they're called petit fours.

ANJUS

Chat and chew, a real legacy ...

EUGENE

We fought that mummy!

ANJUS

Yes the mummy, but ...

EUGENE

It was quite the adventure. I'm remembering it now ...

FLASHBACK to the Niblo Garden Theater.

8.11:

MARYANNE

There Hiram! I was able to burst down the door using my feminine anger.

HIRAM

Excellent! Quickly now, the Pharaonic Theosophical Society rented out the Niblo Garden Theater and filled it with their occult practices!

ANJUS

But can we stop them?

HIRAM

We must.

EUGENE

This way fellow Elementals, onward!

MARYANNE

Eugene is so brave!

ANJUS

There! The sarcophagus is opening.

The MUMMY enters

MUMMY

Curse! Hunger! HUUUUUUNGER!

HIRAM

I'm helpless with fear!

ANJUS

Zounds!

EUGENE

This looks like a scene for Eugene! Time to punch this wrapped rascalion!

Eugene punches the mummy.

MUMMY

Ugh!

EUGENE

Now that's what I call a bruise down the Nile!

MARYANNE

My hero!

EUGENE

(singing.)

I ain't no dummy

I knocked out a mummy

I'm Eugene the birding man! Toot! Toot!

Back to the present.

8.12:

EUGENE

Yeah ...

ANJUS

What's that toot toot?

EUGENE

I'm part whistle, on my mother's side.

ANJUS

Um, I was there. Are you sure that's how it happened?

EUGENE

Well maybe ...

8.13:

FLASHBACK to the Niblo Garden Theater.

ANJUS

There! The sarcophagus is opening.

The MUMMY enters

MUMMY

Curse! Hunger! HUUUUUUNGER!

HIRAM

I'll use this scroll of Tutmose to seal him away! Hold the torch close Maryanne so I can read it.

MARYANNE

I can read it –

HIRAM

We discussed this! I'm reading it.

MUMMY

Bored! Boooooored! Kill!

ANJUS

He's slowly coming slowly right for us slowly!

EUGENE

Oooh someone dropped a coin –

EUGENE goes to grab the coin knocks into Maryanne.

MARYANNE

Oof, watch it Eugene!

HIRAM

No the scroll you've set it alight!

EUGENE

Worse still, it's just a dumb bottle cap!

HIRAM

How do we stop the mummy now?

MUMMY

Can't stop! Wooooon't stop!

HIRAM

There might be one thing if we –

EUGENE

Oooh someone dropped a bottle cap!

Eugene bumps into Maryanne again.

MARYANNE

Ooof. Again? And now I've got the curtains on fire!

EUGENE

And this isn't a bottle cap, it's a coin!

MUMMY

Uh-oh!

ANJUS

Uh-oh is right!

HIRAM

Elementals run!

8.14:

Back to the street.

ANJUS

And the whole theater burned to the ground.

EUGENE

We start a lot of fires ...

ANJUS

Hopefully the asbestos industry will save us all. I think I've only survived this long because I've been eating it daily. Between that and the arsenic to keep me pale I'll live forever.

(Coughs.)

Sorry. Stupid unrelated mesothelioma.

EUGENE

But you see we did something. It's like my father's dying words to me: "you've disappointed me, son."

ANJUS

That's not good! None of it is! In the end we destroyed a theater and paid off the theater owners so they wouldn't file a report. All we are is just rich weirdoes.

EUGENE

Exactly! We're rich. And it's our richness that lets us have our proclivities. Do you think a poor person could buy all the birds mentioned in Shakespeare and bribe the parks department into releasing them? If you had to work in a sweatshop would you have time to plant so many acorns?

No! For you see ... man I really wish I had some patriotic music to accompany my speechifying ...

MUSICIAN

I could play you some, I am but a humble one-man-band, but I love to play patriotic music! I played it to drown out the screams of my brother who I bricked up in the wall of my apartment!

ANJUS

Oh that's –

EUGENE

Fortuitous, play sir!

Patriotic music plays.

EUGENE

It's rich people who change the world! Julius Caesar – rich! Alexander the Great – son of a king! America runs on the rich! Rich people bilked this city from the Natives and rich people exploited the workers who built the buildings! Rich people imported slaves and imported and now exclude the Chinese. For you see ... man it would really be great if an American flag was flapping behind me ...

WIDOW

Hey up here, in the window. I gotta flag I can hold behind you – I need to air it out anyhow, I've been farting on it all day! Here you go!

EUGENE

It's as glorious as it does stink! Flag waving, and music –

Music picks back up.

EUGENE (cont.)

We might be rich, we might be strange, but we love science and we love a mystery and we might not be the most handsome, the most talented, but we have the money! Because it's the rich people that the rich have to look out for! Who do the Hapsburgs fear? The Hannovers! And the Romanovs! Other richies who they are also related to! Also paper cuts, because of the hemophilia! Sure there are those poor anarchists but they won't ever assassinate an Archduke near a bridge in Sarajevo! That's crazy – why did I even say that! Bring it back around Eugene, bring it back – the moneyed class! Us, we have the money and raw privilege to bring down Pirate Penny and Project Land Whale!

ANJUS

We do not even know what Project Land Whale is!

EUGENE

But we will. I swear that I will make the enemies of The Four Elementals pay! From the flapping floppers of the penguin to the soaring wings of the Andean condor, as long as I am holding this dead bird –

(Looks at the dead bird.)

Eww, it is swarming with maggots!

Tosses it away.

EUGENE (cont.)

To rephrase, as long as I am metaphorically holding this dead bird the world shall know that Eugene Neddly shall have his revenge and it shall be INFINITESIMAL!

The music stops.

ANJUS

Infinitesimal?

EUGENE

Yeah!

ANJUS

That means very small.

EUGENE

But it has the word infinite in it.

ANJUS

Yes, it's saying it's infinitely small.

EUGENE

See that's confusing.

ANJUS

You can say your vengeance will be infinite.

EUGENE

That doesn't have the same ring to it.

ANJUS

Right, but yours is wrong.

EUGENE

But it has a grandeur.

ANJUS

No, it literally does not.

EUGENE

Well we'll agree to disagree.

AUTHOR

And with that they entered Eugene's brownstone. Once inside Anjus removed her artificial hand and let it soak. Eugene sat at his desk. They were both dispirited. In such a short time they'd lost two of their closest friends and were currently being framed for murder. It was a busy couple of days.

8.15:

EUGENE

It's crackers all of this. I thought the bird release would be the biggest event of my life ... it's not even the top event of the week.

ANJUS

I've survived worse.

EUGENE

I hope we make it through this one.

ANJUS

Well it all comes down to two options: either we do, or we don't. The rest is details.

Eugene eats something on his desk.

EUGENE

That's almost comforting.

ANJUS

What are you eating?

EUGENE

Oh I had some left over mushroom from before.

ANJUS

Oh that's not --

EUGENE

But don't worry I think I've built up a tolerance to --

Eugene farts.

EUGENE

Oh it's guuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuh. (Returns to normal.)

Just a passing blurg dis. I'm not mooch any hallucinatings. OK night- night.

Eugene collapses.

ANJUS

I never saw it work so quickly, his brain is even weaker than I thought.

SHAINDEL

That will make it easier to bring you in.

ANJUS

Almost Officer Doubles! Thank goodness.

SHAINDEL

No-thanks badness! And Shaindel, I prefer! Put your hands up, you're under arrest!

END OF CHAPTER 8