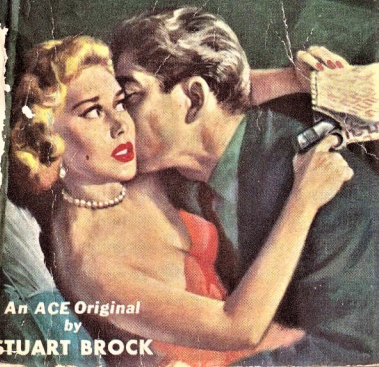


TWO COMPLETE NOVELS 35c

The Door Prize at that Wild Party Was—a Coffin!

BRING BACK HER BODY



An ACE Original
by

STUART BROCK

"I want Paula or her body—

I don't care which."

This was the command of her wealthy, ruthless father. But Abel Cain, who undertook the search, found that he had been presented with only one side of the ugly truth. There were others looking for the hidden heiress too, and among them were the forces of jealousy, greed, and murderous vengeance.

When an island orgy held by Paula's friends backfired and the two-faced revelers uncovered a surprise coffin, Cain found the key to his puzzle, one that pointed to something terribly simple and utterly evil.

This new novel, an ACE Original, presents some saucy humor, stalking females, and a bevy of up-to-no-good sophisticates thrown against a background of fast action and awesome terror. It will keep you guessing and breathless all the way.

***Turn this book over for
a second complete novel.***

CAST OF CHARACTERS

ABEL CAIN—He lived up to his first name, but soon was raising his last.

HONOR RYERSON—A curvacious quiz kid, she asked too many questions.

THEODORE RYERSON—A tycoon who wasn't beyond paying in hot blood for cold cash.

TOBY PATTON—He specialized in wild parties and thought of murder as another sort of amusement.

LISA SIMMS—She knew what made men tick and how to wind them up.

KARL MUNGER—This gambler had chips to burn and fish to fry.

PAULA RYERSON—This elusive lovely held the keys to a dazzling fortune or a fiery fate.

Bring Back Her Body

by Stuart Brock

ACE BOOKS, INC.

23 West 47th Street, New York 36, N. Y.

BRING BACK HER BODY

Copyright, 1953, by Ace Books, Inc.

All Rights Reserved

PASSING STRANGE

Copyright, 1942, by Richard Sale

Printed in U.S.A.

CHAPTER ONE

CAIN wouldn't have got mixed into the Ryerson affair if he hadn't told Honor Ryerson he "would see about it." And that was the equivalent of a promise with Cain.

He paid little attention at first when Honor kept talking of her sister Paula's disappearance. Paula had disappeared before, first with one man and then another, and Cain laid Honor's concern to her imagination. But when she mentioned Karl Munger, Cain became interested.

She said, "I'm really scared, Cain. That private detective Daddy hired quit today because he found a connection between Paula and Karl Munger. And lately I've had the feeling that someone is watching us."

Cain pointed out that a lot of people might find Honor worth watching, especially as her idea of being well dressed was to slide into a pair of sandals and out of practically everything else.

"Pooh," Honor said. "I don't mean that way. I mean sort of — well, skulking like. At night."

"For how long?" Cain wanted to know.

"Just the last few days," Honor admitted. "It was just a feeling until Daddy told me today the detective had been scared away. Now I'm worried."

"Uhm," Cain said. "I'll see about it."

"Tonight, Cain? Daddy asked if you wouldn't come up tonight."

Cain had planned to spend the evening trolling on Puget Sound but Munger interested him more. "Tonight," he agreed, and watched Honor as she got into her little inboard cruiser and charged full speed around the point separating his land from the Ryerson estate.

Cain hadn't tangled with Karl Munger for some time now. In a way he didn't like the prospect. He was afraid of

Munger. But he was restless from a winter of inactivity and the prospect of getting a crack at Munger was too much to resist.

At dark, he got into his little coupe and drove the two miles of road to Ryerson's. He went at his usual conservative pace, braking carefully as he came down the gravelled slope that led to a sharp right-angle turn through the big iron gates.

If he had been going at any speed, the sudden blinding glare from oncoming headlights would have put him in the ditch. As it was, he came to a quick, full stop and blinked his lights. The approaching vehicle came on without dimming, grinding its gears so that Cain knew it was a truck. Then it stopped across the Ryerson driveway.

Cain swore fervently, squeezing his eyelids together to cut down the glare, and crept his coupe forward. He stopped alongside the truck and before he could do anything a flash-light beam hit his eyes, blinding him again.

"It's Cain all right," a voice said. There were footsteps on the gravel, "Going somewhere, Cain?"

"Take that damned light out of my eyes."

The light dipped away. Cain blinked the after-glare away. He saw a slender, dapper man, a sleek little man with the marks of a typical gunsel stamped all over him. Cain recognized one of Munger's hoodlums, a man he knew only as Smoky.

"Your business where I'm going?" Cain demanded.

"My business." Smoky sounded as if he hoped he could get an argument started with Cain.

Cain took one hand from the wheel and pulled a cigarette out of the pack in his pocket. He found a match and lit it, cupping the flame to the end of the cigarette and letting the light flicker on his long, bony face. He flipped the match, still alight, at Smoky's face. Smoky slapped at it where it struck his cheek. His swearing was shrill.

"Get that truck out of the way," Cain ordered.

Cain could see Smoky's hand tug a little at his coat lapels and he knew the man was itching to go for his gun. It was always that way with the kind of hoodlums Munger picked, Cain thought. They couldn't use their heads; they substituted bullets for brains.

"This is just a friendly warning, Cain." Anger shook his voice. "Go back to your fishing."

"Sure," Cain agreed. He opened the car door and unfolded his great length from the seat. Standing he was a head and a half taller than Smoky but not much wider. He looked down, noting indecision on the pale features. The light over the gate was dim but sufficient.

"Now let's move that truck," Cain said.

"The big fisherman wants to play, Anse," Smoky said loudly.

Cain stood waiting, his eyes flicking toward the truck. The door opened and a man got out. Cain knew Anse and now he wasn't at all happy about this situation. Anse was as tall as he and twice as broad. He lumbered down from the truck like a great robot, carrying his six-feet-six inches and three-hundred-odd pounds stiffly. When he came into the light, Cain could see his dead white hair and the pallor of his skin. He was an albino.

Cain knew better than to tangle with Anse: — He had tried it before. He moved swiftly, grabbing Smoky by the coat lapels. He lifted, smelling the sweet odor of marijuana on Smoky's breath. With a grunt of pure pleasure, Cain juggled so that he caught Smoky by one leg and his coat front. Then he heaved as Anse charged forward.

Smoky hit Anse in the chest, breaking the big man's stride. Cain took two quick strides and swung a looping right that flattened Anse's nose. He cried out and Cain drove a fist against his ear. Off balance, Anse went on over sideways, tripping on Smoky. Cain turned and legged it for his car.

Inside, he gunned the motor and roared off down the road. As he took the curve at the bottom of the slope, a gun cracked from behind him. They would be shooting at his tires — Munger wouldn't take a chance on killing him yet, he knew. But he was sweating. He didn't like to think of tangling with Anse. He had tried it before and found it like trying to work over an animated stone wall.

Once around the curve Cain slowed, looped back by another road, and approached the estate along a little used gravel road that limited the south boundary. Parking in a thick grove of spruce trees, he went through a break in the

high iron fence. He was shaking a little as he stood still to get his bearings. His fright was wearing off, leaving him angry. He didn't like being pushed around by anyone, especially by Karl Munger.

But even in his anger he had to admire the man's efficiency. Two hours after Cain had decided tentatively to look into the affair, Munger had a set-up rigged to warn him away. Which could only mean that Munger had already heard of the private detective's quitting and of Honor's latest visit to Cain. Very neat, Cain thought. Too damned neat.

Now, calmed a little, he followed a faint track through the fir and spruce forest that made up this part of the estate. He stopped once, listening to hear if he had been followed, but the only sounds were those of nocturnal animals and the plaintive bellow of a ferry boat on the Sound. It occurred to him that even Munger might hesitate to invade Ryerson's. The old man was still a power in the area despite his age, and despite the rumors that he was financially against the wall. Cain decided to take his chances and turned on his pencil flashlight.

Now with enough light to keep the underbrush from tripping him, he made good time. He was still alert, his woods-sense sharpened as though he were a thousand miles from civilization instead of a few miles north of Seattle. But for the light it would have been difficult to track him. For a big man, he was surprisingly quiet.

When he broke onto the edge of a lawn that flowed uphill toward the house, large on a hill crest, he snapped off his light. He turned and walked to his left toward a summer house. It was little more than a vine-covered roof supported by pillars set in slabs of concrete and when he neared he could see the glowing tip of a cigar near one of the pillars. He knew that Theodore Ryerson was there waiting for him.

Cain had counted on this. He knew from things Honor had said that the old man always spent the warm evenings here in the quiet, soft darkness. Cain reached out with a toe and put his weight on a dry twig. The crack was a tiny pistol shot in the darkness. The glow of the cigar wavered briefly.

"Damn you!" It was a dry, rustling voice.

Cain said, "You should be more careful. Munger's men are around."

Ryerson's voice was dry. "Munger wouldn't dare come onto this place. When Paula first started gambling, he threatened me. He hasn't tried it since."

Cain could imagine the type of reprisal a man like Ryerson would concoct. He was still mentioned with awe in many business circles. Fabulous as the last of the lumber barons, an anachronism in modern business, he still managed to outwit many a younger, supposedly cleverer man by his ruthless disregard for ethics. Munger would not be fool enough to buck him openly.

Cain took a cigarette from the pack in his pocket and snapped a match aflame, holding it so he and Ryerson could see each other. They had not met before, although Cain had known Honor for five years.

The light revealed a drawn, heavily lined face, thin and dry like the voice, a pair of deep-set eyes, piercing, and a beak of a nose above a tight mouth. Cain could find little resemblance either to Honor or her half-sister Paula.

"Sit down."

Cain sat. Ryerson spoke like a man accustomed to giving orders and to having them obeyed. There was no particular rudeness in his manner. "So you're Abel Cain?"

Here it came. "Yes," Cain said, and to forestall further remarks, added, "The name was my father's idea of a joke." Cain's father had been a renegade minister and he had left his son a small income property and a somewhat agnostic idealism that Cain found to be incompatible with modern civilization. As a result, he had chosen to combat life by ignoring it for the most part.

Cain said, "Honor told me that Paula has disappeared again. She either didn't know any more details or wouldn't tell me."

"I asked her not to say more. Honor is a good girl."

That sounded odd coming from Ryerson. Honor was brilliant in the academic sense of the word. A genius. But she was erratic. That was the kindest word Cain could think of. Contrary to popular conception, being erratic and being a genius seldom went together. But in Honor Ryerson they did. But "a good girl"? Cain wasn't so sure.

He said, "Why ask my help when a licensed detective failed?"

"You know Paula. From what I hear, you're the only man who ever managed to handle her for any length of time. I want you to find her and bring her back."

Cain said, "Your daughter chartered my boat to take her fishing in Alaska two years ago. I made her fish, that's all."

"Not from what I heard." Ryerson chuckled, a rasping, dry sound. "I heard you threw her case of whiskey overboard and kept her away from getting more."

"I just stayed away from shore," Cain said. "But listening to a woman coming out of the D.T.'s isn't getting to know her. I spent a lot of time fishing her out of the water, too, before I got rid of her liquor. I couldn't convince her you don't paddle around in glacier-fed water. I know her anatomy. I don't know her."

Ryerson said, "Did you know that when she's sober Paula blushes at wearing a bathing suit in public?"

"She didn't even wear a bathing suit for me," Cain said dryly. "And I was glad to get rid of her. I only did it because Honor thought a trip might 'cure' Paula."

"You seem to think a lot of Honor."

Cain chose to ignore the undercurrent in the voice. "I'm trying to teach her something about literature. She's spent all her life wrapped around a telescope and a logarithm table. I think she needs broadening. Do you object?"

"Hardly. You've been very good for her. And you can sleep with her for all I care. That might be good for her too."

"I don't chase nineteen-year-old children," Cain said, "over-developed or not."

Ryerson said, "We were talking about Paula. I gather you don't think she's worth finding."

"I know her reputation," Cain said. "I don't see what you're worrying about."

"I'm not worrying about Paula," Ryerson told him, and Cain could feel the thread of cold hatred in his voice. "But I can't afford to have her disappear right now. She may be just trying to annoy me, but I doubt it."

"Because of Munger's interest?"

"Yes. For all I know she may be dead. If so, I'll want

proof as quickly as possible. I need her or her proxy for a business deal. If she is dead, the court will award me her proxy, I'm sure.

"As soon as possible, I want Paula or her body. I don't care which."

CHAPTER TWO

BY having more patience than Ryerson, Cain got some information out of the old man. He learned that Ryerson's marriage to Paula's mother had been a business deal, a merger of stock more than of people. Through her mother, Paula had inherited enough voting power to give Ryerson trouble. His important business deal was a week from Saturday. This was Thursday, and Ryerson needed Paula or her proxy. He didn't care how he got them.

From Honor, Cain had learned that Paula's mother had left when Paula was still a baby. The old man had transferred his hatred of his first wife to Paula and had lavished his love on Honor when she had been born. Her mother had died in childbirth.

Cain said, "I still don't see where Munger enters into this."

"All I know is that Paula was last seen at a party given by a man named Toby Patton. Does that help?"

"No. I've met Patton, though," Cain said distastefully.

"And," Ryerson went on, "Paula was heard to say that she was leaving the party to see Munger, that he had cheated her. I've been wondering if she owed him gambling money again. If so, he might be holding her for payment."

"Munger doesn't operate that way," Cain said. "He might kill her for welching. He wouldn't just hold her."

"I've already mentioned the possibility of her death."

Cain nodded. He knew Munger well enough to agree that it was a possibility. He had worked for Munger briefly after the war. Restless, he had enjoyed running liquor up

from Mexico on Munger's boats. He had enjoyed it until the time he discovered they were carrying dope as well as liquor. He had tossed the whole lot into the ocean and decimated the small crew. Munger had never forgotten that.

"I'll pay anything within reason, Cain," Ryerson said suddenly.

"I have money," Cain said. He had his boat; he had ten acres around the point for moorage. He had his income from the dinky apartment house his father had left him. He kept a unit for himself and the remaining rents bought his food and paid his taxes. When he wanted to fish, he fished. When he wanted to lie in the sun and read or drink, he did that. If he needed money for boat repairs or to buy more books, he went to Alaska and fished commercially for a while.

"What do you want then?"

Cain lit his pipe, puffing leisurely. "I don't want anything," he said finally.

"Damn it, man! Why did you come then?"

"Because Honor asked me to." Cain sounded irritated. "I didn't say I wouldn't take the job. I just don't want pay, that's all. I'll take expense money because if I go to Munger's, I'll gamble. Or if I tag that cheesy crowd Paula went with, I'll have to buy drinks. But I want to be able to quit when I feel like it."

"Oh, you're afraid of Munger?"

"Sure," Cain admitted. "I'm very much afraid of him. He hates my guts. He'd kill me if he dared. And someday he may dare. I don't want to push him too far." He didn't want to but he knew he would. There was always an unholy pleasure in taunting Munger.

"But he doesn't dare?" the old man echoed.

"He doesn't know how much documentation I have on his so-called enterprises." Cain grinned evilly into the darkness.

"Swap what you have for information on Paula. I'll pay."

"Once what I have is gone, I won't need money. I'll need a requiem."

Ryerson didn't offer to furnish that. He said, "What are you bargaining for?"

Cain suddenly realized Ryerson could not conceive of anyone working except for money. He said, "I told you,

nothing. I'm doing it to help Honor. I want only expense money."

"To tag Paula's crowd. How well do you know them?"

"Too well," Cain said. "I met a few once. They invaded my boat the night before Paula and I left for Alaska. I threw them off. They're scum."

"They're rich."

"Money isn't cleansing powder for the soul," Cain said.

Ryerson's laugh was appreciative. "All right, Cain."

"Give me more to go on," Cain said. "What about her hide-out on Whidby Island?"

"Honor's checked a number of times. In fact, you'd better ask her for more information. She knows a lot more about Paula's habits than I." Ryerson stopped and then said, "She told me to tell you she'd be at the boathouse, if you accepted."

Cain got up. "She knew I would," he said. Ryerson rose too and handed something into the darkness. Cain took it — a good deal of money from the feel of the roll. He stuffed it casually into his pocket.

Ryerson said, "Report to me when you have something. Get Paula or her proxy for me — or her body. I don't care which. But if she's dead, I'll need time enough to go into court."

"You said all that before," Cain told him and walked away.

Cain walked over the hill and paused on the crest before going down more sloping lawn to the boathouse. Even in the darkness, he could envisage the view from here. The Olympics were to the west and the Cascades to the east. The irregular tip of Whidby Island would be visible to the northwest and the northern end of Kitsap Peninsula was not far to the southwest. It would be a magnificent view. Too good, Cain thought, for most of the Ryersons.

He went on down to the boathouse and sat on the dock until Honor appeared. He could hear her splashing around in the water a short distance away. He spent his time wondering how much money Ryerson had tied up in pleasure boats. Honor herself had three that he knew of: a little inboard with a cabin; an open, expensive speedboat; and a very fancy cruiser.

Cain regarded them all as impractical alongside his own special job rigged for one man to operate by sail or power. He was proud of the design that gave him a tiny, but complete, cabin and bath separate from the galley, and a wide sweep of deck where he could lounge and soak up the sun if he chose.

The splashing came closer and in a moment he saw a white bathing cap above the blurred outlines of a face topping the dock floor. Soon the rest of Honor Ryerson appeared. Cain turned his eyes hastily toward the water.

"Man here," he said quietly.

"So you did agree," Honor said. She shook herself like a puppy, spraying water over Cain, and pulled off her cap to free her hair.

"Yes," Cain said. "I came down for information."

"Let's go into the boathouse," she said. "I don't think Munger would dare send his men on the place but . . ." Her voice was young, undeveloped.

Cain could not help contrasting her voice to her figure. It was anything but young or undeveloped. When she snapped on the light in the boathouse, he looked hastily away again. It always bothered him to see Honor this way, although he had watched her pop in and out of the water with no more concern than a seal since they had met five years before.

"One of Munger's hopheads could come alongside in a boat," Cain warned. "We'll keep our voices down."

"Give me a cigarette, Cain."

"Damn it, go get some clothes on." Cain stared fixidly at the boats floating under the big shed. Besides the three he knew of, there was a little outboard.

Honor giggled at him. "Don't you know yet that I'm after *mens sana in corpore sano*? A healthy mind in a healthy body."

"I know my Latin," Cain said peevishly. "And your mind isn't healthy. I've watched that body develop inch by inch and the gleam in your eye has gone right along with it. Go get dressed."

"Yes, Cain." She walked off. "I'll get you yet," she said as

she disappeared into a cubicle at the far end of the boat-house.

He knew that she teased him deliberately and had since she learned that he was susceptible to her. She returned shortly in jeans and a sweat shirt and sat on a bench beside Cain. In the light, her features were no longer blurred. They were like her voice, not yet caught up with her body. She had a very round face, round dark eyes, a cap of short, curly blond hair, a snub nose, and a full mouth that was somehow sensuous despite the irregularity in her front teeth that strengthened the appearance of babyishness. The overall effect was that of an immature imp.

They smoked a moment in silence, using Cain's cigarettes. Then she said, "What are your plans, Cain?"

"I'll start at the beginning and try to trace the whole affair forward," he said. "I could go straight to Munger but I want him to think I took his warning — for a while, at least."

"Warning?"

Cain recounted his experience at the gate. Telling it made him enjoy it all over again. He only regretted there had not been an excuse to break Smoky's neck.

"Exciting!" she said and tried to snuggle up against him.

Cain said, "So I want to start from the beginning and . . ."

"That's what I decided too, Cain," she broke in. "And we'll start right tonight. It's perfect for it."

"Whoa!" Cain said. He moved a little away from her. "We won't do anything, child."

"Pooh," she said. "I don't have any classes tomorrow. "She jumped up. "Let's go get me ready."

"Wait a minute. All I want from you is information on Paula's favorite hangouts and . . ."

"I'll show you but I won't tell you." She stood looking down at him. "So there!"

They glared at one another, both with set, stubborn looks on their faces. Honor said almost tearfully, "I've always wanted to see some of the places and things Paula talks about. Now I have a chance — and I'm going!"

"Not with me," Cain said.

Honor sat down. "Then we don't go. You can't unless I tell you my big lead."

Cain scratched his freshly shaved jawbone. He could go without her, of course, but it would be a long job finding the right places. And in a way he knew that she was right. She had spent years listening to Paula's escapades. She would know names and places that could help him. He wanted first to contact Toby Patton, and Honor might be a very good front for the job.

He said, "What did you mean a minute ago by tonight being perfect for it?"

"I won't tell unless you take me along."

This was a game to her, Cain saw. But he knew how she was when she became stubborn. He said resignedly, "All right, we'll go."

Honor squealed and threw her arms around him, kissing him on the mouth before he could move away. She held the kiss a little too long for it to be wholly spontaneous. Cain finally pried her loose. He swallowed a grin. He had learned something — Honor didn't know much about kissing.

"Race you to the house," she challenged. "We can talk while I get ready. I'll even give you coffee." She darted through the door and ran off.

Cain snapped out the light and plodded after her. After thirty years of living, he lacked the desire to run up a hill. In a moment she turned and came back. "What do you think of Toby Patton?" she asked suddenly.

"He's a bit — ladylike," Cain said delicately. "But he's also a much-muscled man. I can't figure him out. But when I hear of those parties he gives . . ." He stopped short. The idea that had come into his head was an ugly one with little foundation. He would have to be more careful talking to Honor. As far as he knew, she was the one person who loved Paula Ryerson.

But Honor finished for him. "You mean, did something happen at one of Toby's crazy parties and everyone covered up?"

"Yes," Cain admitted. He wished her mind wasn't so quick.

"I thought of that," Honor said. "And if I could really be sure I hadn't seen her recently. I wouldn't be so worried."

"It's a screwy idea," Cain said. "Forget it."

"From the way Paula described those parties," Honor said, "anything could happen. Everyone so drunk and wearing silly costumes, and being the kind of people they are and . . ."

The way she said it made Cain realize that she was too young to see the sybaritic humor behind Toby's parties. It was just as well. He said, "Did anything else make you think something might have happened in connection with Toby Patton?"

"Yes," she said slowly. "You see I called Toby the day after she disappeared. Daddy wanted her for something that had to do with his business. Toby wasn't at home. I called for over a week before I could get in touch with him. And then he was so — odd. I've met him and he's always been nice to me. Too nice, sort of. But this time he was sharp, as if he were worried or something."

"Probably out hiding the body," Cain said, and was immediately sorry.

"That's what I've been wondering," Honor said. "He's capable of it, you know."

CHAPTER THREE

THEY met the butler on the landing and Honor said, "Thomas, would you bring Cain some coffee, please? He'll be in my room."

"Yes, Miss Honor." His was the resigned voice.

Cain glanced back and saw Thomas looking up at him. They had been acquaintances for years. In Thomas' eyes, Cain saw a definitely pitying expression. Cain shrugged and turned to follow Honor.

He had never been in her room before but he was not surprised at the contents. He wandered about, looking at her astronomical globes, her books, her desk littered with papers, a slide rule, a mathematical text, and assorted odds and ends.

At one side of the room a stairway went up to a flat roof. Cain climbed to it. Here was Honor's telescope, a serviceable six-inch reflector, fitted with a small motor for making time exposures. He swung it around and squinted toward the lower end of Whidby Island where he knew Paula Ryerson's hideout was located. What little he could see was upside down. There was no sign of life or of a light where he knew Paula's place was located.

When Cain went back down, there was coffee waiting for him. Honor was at a dressing table working assiduously with lipstick and eyebrow pencil. She said without looking around, "I've decided to go East for my graduate work, Cain."

"That will be a relief," he muttered. Aloud, he said, "Fine."

"Are you coming to my graduation? In two weeks."

"You're too young to graduate."

"I'll be twenty. Please come, Cain. I have a ticket for you. And I'm Summa Cum Laude. Isn't that nice?"

"Fine," Cain said again. "Only you don't know a damned thing but astronomy."

"I do too!" she said defensively. "I've just finished some important work in astrophysics and I'm doing a very exciting paper on some possible problems in space navigation."

"Okay," Cain conceded. "You're a bright little girl who has had to work twice as hard in the science department as a homely one would. You've earned it, Honor, but you're still too young. You don't know anything about — about life." He disliked the phrase but it was the only one he could think of.

"That's your job," she said quickly. "You've lectured me on literature; now you can teach me about life."

Cain could feel the subject heading in the wrong direction. He said hastily, "There's more to this Toby business than you've told me, isn't there? You aren't frightened for Paula just because he sounded brusque over the telephone."

"No-o." Honor did something with mascara. "I found out that Toby works for Karl Munger. He's a — a shill, Lisa Simms said once when some of the crowd was here."

Cain couldn't place Lisa Simms among those who had invaded his boat, but the train of Honor's thought was clear to him: Karl Munger decided to get rid of Paula; Toby

worked for Munger; Toby gave screwy parties where odd things happened. Ergo, no Paula.

He said, "On the way up to the house you mentioned something about seeing Paula a few days ago."

"I think I saw someone on Whidby through my telescope. I'd checked before and there was no sign of anyone. I went right over that time but I couldn't find her."

"Maybe she had someone hidden there? — A man?"

"Not Paula. No one but me ever stayed over night there with her. She doesn't like people there and she has the whole place surrounded with an electrically charged fence."

Cain let it go for the time being as Honor stood up, ready. He helped her into her fur wrap and they walked sedately out to her Buick convertible sedan. She drove Cain to where his car was hidden and then followed him to his little apartment in Seattle where he changed into his tuxedo.

They got into her car and Honor drove swiftly and skillfully along Broadway almost to Jackson before angling right, going down a hill, and onto a steep paved street. Here, there was a sign over a dingy-looking building: *Pepe's*. Honor parked in a line of fancy automobiles and cut the motor.

Cain said, "You wouldn't have known this in advance, would you? This is one of Munger's in-town places."

She smiled brightly. "Toby is supposed to be throwing one of his preliminaries to a party here tonight."

"Uhm," Cain said. So that was why this night was "perfect for it." He was not upset: he had been euchred by Honor before. He said, "One thing before we go in. Why doesn't Paula give your father her proxy and forget about business? Then he wouldn't have to drag her home every time he needs her vote."

She was very serious, her dark eyes round and large. "She doesn't dare, Cain. He hates her so. She's afraid he'll try to kill her or get rid of her somehow. Really try."

Cain remembered Ryerson's tone, the thread of hatred tonight when he had spoken of Paula.

He said, "Let's go in, Honor." He felt very sorry for her.

The evening was rougher than Cain had anticipated. It

wasn't Honor that bothered him at first. She had done surprisingly well in hiding her age with make-up and her evening gown. And it didn't really matter, Cain knew, after one look at Pepe's. She could have been ten years old and no one would have cared as long as she had money to spend.

Inside, Pepe's was bright and brittle with a thick layer of pseudo-Hollywood sophistication designed to draw the more adolescent members of the drinking public. The hat-check girl managed to be clothed enough to pass the censor and yet give the impression that if she breathed just right her slit blouse would dissolve away from her ample chest. She took Cain's disreputable black hat and Honor's fur jacket, passed out a ticket, and turned away. She looked bored with the whole affair.

Inside the one main room there was smoke and noise, a babble of voices fighting against a falling and rising shrill of brass from the small bandstand. There were a dozen booths and one center table with chairs for eight people grouped around it. Cain angled away from it toward a booth as far removed from the bandstand as possible. As they walked, he felt Honor's hand, resting on his arm, tighten perceptibly. For the first time she seemed genuinely nervous.

Cain seated her and then watched as she picked up the liquor list. Her tongue worked into view between her teeth and a frown of concentration wrinkled her forehead. The list was obviously incomprehensible to her.

"Let me order for you," Cain suggested. When the waiter came, he said, "Rye and ditch. Pink lady."

Honor looked mortified. When the waiter returned with the drinks she regarded her foamy concoction with open suspicion, tasted it, reached for Cain's drink, tasted that, and then firmly pushed the pink lady at him. "You ordered it, you drink it."

"You learn fast," Cain said. Since he wasn't drinking anyway, he let the pink lady stay in front of him. Honor sipped the rye and water with obvious pleasure and chatted casually to Cain. He pushed down his impatience. She seemed to know what she was doing; he let her handle it. Her conversation consisted of remarks on the potential problems of celestial navigation. The blaring band kept Cain

from hearing more than a word now and then. He was grateful to it.

Suddenly Honor stopped talking. A tiny smile lifted the corners of her mouth and froze there. This was it, Cain thought. He stopped toying with the pink-lady glass and turned his head. Someone was standing at his shoulder.

It was Toby Patton. He was quite short, appearing to be a wisp of a man until a second look showed the breadth of his shoulders, the heavy neck supporting his small, delicate-featured head. His arms were long and the fingers on his big hands were long and spatulate, ugly looking for all their careful grooming. His eyes were a light, oddly pale blue that had an emptiness to them. Cain knew the emptiness was as misleading as the wispy effect.

"Well," he said, "the little astronomer and the big fisherman." There was mockery in his voice, and something off beat about the tone of it.

"Hullo, Toby," Honor said and tried to sound surprised. "This is Cain."

"I've met Cain," Toby Patton said. They nodded, neither man offering to shake hands.

"Sit down," Honor said. She did not look particularly happy. Cain realized that she was frightened of Toby Patton. Yet she had been anxious to come here, and had, in a way, arranged it for Cain. He had to admire her.

"I have a party going," Toby said. "Why don't you two join us?"

Cain looked doubtful. Honor drove her sharply pointed toe into his shin. Toby said, "You'll love them all, I'm sure." And now his voice was mincing.

"Uhm," Cain said. Why not? His reluctance was obvious but not overdone. He did not expect to like any of them, let alone love them. But even if he had come here for an entry into this crowd, he did not want to appear over-eager.

Toby went away, signaling a waiter to do something about extra chairs for the big table which had suddenly sprouted a group of people. Cain noticed that Honor was sitting where she could see anyone coming in. His back was to the door and the center table.

"Don't be rude, Cain," Honor said as he helped her from the booth.

His eyes were on Toby Patton who tripped along rather than walked. Cain said, "This is too damned pat for my taste. Toby couldn't have been expecting us, could he?"

"I didn't exactly say we would be here . . ." she murmured vaguely. Toby turned, beckoning to them, and Honor put her hand on Cain's arm. "Come on, dear," she said sweetly.

Cain allowed himself to be led to the center table. He didn't like any of this. He could understand Honor's rather obvious trickery — she wanted his help in finding Paula. But he couldn't comprehend why Toby Patton should be so eager for his company. Unless . . .

"Toby works for Karl Munger," Honor had said.

Cain felt better. He even grinned in a friendly fashion at the tall brunette he was seated next to. Honor was on his left with Toby beyond her. Toby indicated the new arrivals with a flourish as he sat down.

"This is Cain, the fisherman fellow. And you all know Paula's Honor." There was a laugh. Cain did not share it. Nor, he noticed, did the brunette on his right. He remembered vaguely having seen her somewhere and he was about to ask her name when Toby began introductions. Cain knew some of the crowd slightly. The tall, sallow, dishfaced man on Toby's left was named Curtin. Next to him was a wispy blond who giggled constantly and answered to the name of Norene. After her was the lawyer Smathers whom Cain recognized from newspaper photographs, his quite drunk and pretty but undistinguished-looking wife, and then a doctor whose name Cain never did catch. Between the doctor and the brunette was a carroty-haired girl with a pouting mouth and an eye that ranged constantly from man to man.

She smiled across the brunette at Cain. "I'm Anne." Cain scowled at her and she turned and bit the doctor on the ear. When he smiled, he looked very much like an amiable ape.

Toby had finished and Cain still didn't know the name of the brunette. He asked Honor. She said, "I thought you knew Lisa Simms."

Now he remembered her, the name and the face in combination recalling to his mind the one time they had met.

It was the night of the invasion of his boat. She had been very drunk and very hard to handle. Cain remembered that she had chased him all over the boat with a pint of whiskey in an effort to give him a drink. He had finally thrown her into the water and left her for someone else to fish out. But she had swum off and dragged herself to shore where she sat and waved at him while she finished the pint of whiskey.

Cain had been delighted with his discovery and started to throw the remainder of the party off the boat in the same manner. After two had gone overboard, the rest took the hint and departed. Cain had never seen Lisa Simms again until now.

He looked at her. She said, "Cain again." She had a throaty voice, her words slow and thoughtfully spoken. "I remember when you used me for bait one night."

Even though she was seated, her tallness was marked. Cain guessed her at very close to six feet. She was slender and quite small boned but definitely not underweight. There was a good deal of woman inside her white evening gown. She was sober and, Cain saw in surprise, beautiful. Her features were unconventional but there was something about them, the planes of her face, the slight off-center tilt to her nose, the almost oriental angle of her wide eyes that impressed Cain's sense of the aesthetic.

She let him inspect her and then she raised her eyes. He liked them when she looked at him. They were a debatable shade of brown flecked with bits of amber, and were quite serious. He was interested because there was little sign of the dissipation, the soft flabbiness about her that stamped the rest of the group.

"I'm sorry," Cain said.

"I'm the one to apologize," she answered. "I made an ^{*} unholy mess of myself that night. It doesn't happen often. But when I get a few drinks I think everyone should have some too. It's just my friendly nature."

"I could see that," Cain said. He felt a sudden pain as a sharp heel came down on his instep.

"You brought *me*, remember?" a voice said in his ear.

"I was just apologizing for having thrown the lady into the water once," Cain said.

"You — apologizing?" Honor tried the fresh rye and water that was placed before her. "Anyway, you should have held her head under."

Before Cain could comment on the frank dislike in Honor's voice, Toby said something and caught her attention. Cain surveyed the crowd. Most of them were swilling their liquor now as if anxious to reach a stage where a lot of things made little difference. He saw the doctor set down his glass and smile at the redheaded girl. But when he looked at Toby Patton his amiable expression changed to one of ugliness. Norene kept giggling and pulling Curtin's hands into sight. They would promptly disappear again. Smathers was having a long conversation with his wife. The redhead kept glancing toward Cain and sneering and turning to bite the doctor on the ear again.

Lisa said, "Having fun, Cain?"

"Hardly. But if I had to spend much time with this crew, I'd stay drunk in self-protection."

"Don't," she said in a low voice. "Spend much time with them, I mean."

"I have no intention of it," he assured her.

She looked away from him and spoke loudly, addressing Toby Patton. "What's the occasion for this brawl anyway?"

Cain saw a smile flicker across Toby Patton's lips and he thought, "The guy's been waiting for this."

Toby got up and looked down at Honor's cap of blond curls, then across to Cain's dark visage. There was no longer emptiness in his pale eyes. What there was Cain could not quite define. Toby said, "Tonight we are here for a serious purpose. That purpose is to get sufficiently oiled to perform an unpleasant but necessary duty."

There was sudden silence around the table. His voice carried no levity, and even Curtin set down his glass and tried to focus his eyes on his host.

"And that duty is to have a treasure hunt on my farm."

"Oh, God!" Lisa Simms whispered.

Toby's voice dropped to a carrying whisper. "We are going to hunt for the body of Paula Ryerson."

CHAPTER FOUR

IT all happened very fast. Cain saw Honor stand up and push at her chair. She made a whimpering sound like a puppy and then slumped into a faint. He turned and caught her, struggling to rise at the same time. Lisa stepped beside him and took Honor's weight from his hands.

"You sonofabitch," she said in her throaty drawl to Toby. "You did that on purpose."

Toby was smiling lightly, his eyes flicking from her to Cain. His hands empty now, Cain stepped around Honor and Lisa Simms. He caught Toby by one thick shoulder and turned him. When he was in just the right position, Cain swung a hard fist that caught Toby behind the ear and sent him sprawling sideways across the table.

Toby slid neatly through the glasses into Curtin's lap. Cain dove after him head first and Toby went over with Curtin beneath him and Cain on top. Cain's fist was cocked when the goon squad appeared. He found himself neatly wrestled to his feet, and propelled outside. The door slammed behind him.

Cain turned and pushed open the door and looked into the broad, pallid face of Anse. "You again," Cain said.

"Go away."

"My hat," Cain said

"Go away."

Cain stepped forward and slammed his fist into Anse's belly. It was like swinging on corrugated iron. The fist bounced. Anse put a hand over Cain's face and pushed. Cain went backward until the fender of a parked car caught him in the kidneys and straightened him up. He waited for his breath to come back and then walked slowly forward. Anse still stood in the doorway. Behind him stood Lisa Simms with Honor holding on to her arm.

Cain put his head down and rushed, stopping just short of Anse's reach. He ducked under an outstretched arm and took a swipe at the dead-white face. Something chopped down on the back of his neck and he went to his knees. He saw the foot coming and rolled, taking a heavy heel on his shoulder. He caught an ankle and jerked and Anse had to twist around to free himself.

Cain, his head pounding, watched as Lisa stepped away from Honor. He saw her lift her white evening skirt, and drive a sharp-pointed and good-sized shoe into Anse's groin.

He made a high-pitched squawl and bent over. Cain got to his feet and hit Anse in the rump with his shoulder. Anse went forward on his face. Lisa stepped aside and Honor jumped into the fight coming down on Anse's neck with her spike heels. She teetered, bounced off, and then seemed to be trying to kick his eyes from his head. He put his arms over his face and howled.

Cain took his hatcheck from his pocket and gave it to the girl behind the counter. "The lady's wrap. My hat."

A voice from a side door said, "What is the trouble?"

Cain turned. A slender man stood there with both hands in his coat pockets. He had a thin face, a thin mustache over his slice of a mouth. He stared from Anse to Cain. Honor stopped kicking and stood panting. Lisa held her handbag much as if she thought of making a club out of it.

Cain recognized the man. It was Pepe and he and Cain had been together the night Munger's load of liquor and dope had gone into the Pacific Ocean. Cain wished now he had messed things up a little more. Every time he saw the man he liked him less.

"I want our wraps. Your friend Anse wouldn't let me have them. That's all, Pepe."

"Ah, it's Cain." The man turned to the bored-looking girl. "Give Cain the wraps, Milly."

She did so. Cain bent and pulled some change from Anse's pocket. He dropped the money into the tip bowl and held out his arms, one to Honor and the other to Lisa.

"Don't come back," Pepe said. "We won't forget any of you. Just don't come back."

"I'm scared as hell," Cain said. "Tell Munger that."

He walked out, Honor's weight noticeable on his arm. When they reached her car, she seemed glad of his suggestion that she lie down on the rear seat. Lisa slid in front with Cain.

"You sure learned a lot," Honor said.

"He was lying," Lisa told her. "The damned sadist just said that to hurt you."

"I suppose so," Honor said. "But why?"

"Who knows why Toby Patton does things?"

"I should have stayed," Cain admitted. He started the car and worked back to Broadway. "But I'll do it the hard way before I take that kind of thing from Toby." From the corner of his eye, he saw Lisa glance at him. "I doubt if it's a secret that I'm looking for Paula Ryerson."

"I didn't think you joined Toby's gang for fun." Lisa felt in Cain's pockets and brought out his cigarettes. She lit three. "Paula will show up when she's ready."

"It can't wait."

"The old man's business again?" Lisa passed one of the cigarettes to Honor and another to Cain. "As far as I know, none of the crew has seen her since the last party."

There was a silence and then Honor said, "I'm sorry I fainted but I love my sister."

"Of course you do," Lisa said. She made it sound as if she were someone's maiden aunt. Cain estimated her age to be on the thin side of thirty. "Don't believe anything that bastard says, Honor."

"I love her," Honor repeated. "Even if she is a — a stinker. I still do. Damn it!" She sounded very fierce, very young.

There was silence again. Cain drove slowly along Broadway. "Mind if I leave you when I get to my place? I still have work to do."

Lisa said in her throaty voice. "You can get us a cup of coffee first. Payment for kicking Anse."

Cain laughed. He liked this woman if only for her contrast to the others that hung around Toby Patton. He liked her frankness and he liked her for something else he could not quite put into words. "I'll even make the coffee," he said.

Lisa helped even though there was barely room for them

both in his kitchenette. Honor had stretched out on the couch and closed her eyes.

"I didn't mean to butt into your fight with Anse, Cain," Lisa said.

"I needed the help," he admitted. "That boy always has been too big for me."

She got cups and saucers from his cupboard, cream from the refrigerator. "He's not very bright. He can be fooled."

"I've always been in too big a hurry to think of a way," Cain said. "Someday I'll try a leisurely brawl with him." He poured the coffee.

Lisa glanced toward Honor. "The poor kid took a beating emotionally from that louse. She's bushed."

"I'll get her home," Cain said in a low voice. "She's not in any shape to take more right now."

Lisa paused as she started for Honor with a cup in her hand. "Do you intend to go after Toby again tonight?"

"I've got to find out just how much of what he said was true."

"That suits me," she said cryptically. She took the coffee to Honor, set the cup on the coffee table. When she returned to the kitchenette, she said, "And don't tell me not to be noble. I can steer you around Toby's place — unless you've been on his parties and know about it."

"Christ!"

"You'll see something," Lisa told him. "I know. I furnished the costumes. I always do, of course."

"I've heard. William Tell. Knights in armor. Horse costumes."

"Those are just the simple ones," she said.

Cain sipped his coffee. "Do you enjoy hanging around a crowd like that?"

"Not when I'm sober. I'm careful to stay away from them as much as I can."

"Then why do it at all?"

"My business." She was brusque. Taking her cup, she went to a chair.

Honor opened her eyes and sat up, smiling. "Sorry again."

"You just aren't used to it yet," Cain said dryly. "And

drink your coffee. I'm running you home, child. This is one night you can forget about the stars and get some sleep."

"Yes, sir," she said with suspicious docility. She tasted the coffee and then drank it at a gulp. "Cain, do you think . . ."

He looked at her closely. Not even her make-up could hide the fact that she was very young and very frightened. "No, I don't. And I'm going to try to prove it, if you'll give me room to move in."

"I'll be good, Cain."

He didn't care for the way she said it, but she looked so tired, so completely done in that he suspected she would fall asleep whether she wanted to or not.

Honor rubbed her eyes and yawned. "But just the same, Cain, you need my help. You'll see."

"Have you got something else to tell me?"

She yawned again. "You'll see." Her eyelids drooped and her head went down.

"Damn it, Honor, if you have something to tell me, now is the time to . . ." He stopped. Honor lay back and went to sleep.

"Damn!" Lisa said. "I slipped a mickey into her coffee. I didn't know she'd pull this."

Cain shrugged and prepared to leave. "She resents being left out," he said. But he wasn't so sure. That wouldn't be Honor's way. He had an idea that she knew something she had not yet told him and had been holding it back to use on him later. He picked Honor up and carried her outside to her car. Lisa followed.

He drove the Buick and Lisa Simms tagged behind in his coupe. Thomas looked surprised when Cain rang the Ryerson's bell. It was not yet midnight.

"So early, sir?"

"Someone gave her a sleeping tablet," Cain said. "Miss Simms can put her to bed."

"Mrs. Simms," Lisa corrected. She lifted Honor and carried her as easily as Cain had. When she returned and they were on the porch, Cain glanced questioningly at her.

"Where is this party?"

"At Toby's farm on Kitsap. He has a little point of land

on this end. We can beat them there maybe. He always takes the ferry or drives all the way to Tacoma and up."

"We can beat them with a boat," Cain agreed. He led Lisa to the boathouse and got out Honor's runabout. It was her favorite boat and she had honored him by declaring he could use it whenever he wished.

Lisa was about to step aboard when she stopped and looked down at her white evening gown and satin slippers. "Hold it a minute, Cain." He throttled down and she kicked off her shoes and stepped into the cruiser. She rooted in the locker and came up with a pair of greasy overalls, a mechanic's cap, and a pair of sneakers. She glanced at Cain, saw that he was looking the other way, and changed her clothes.

She limped back to the runabout. The shoes were far too small and so were the coveralls. The bottoms of the legs were halfway up her calves and the sleeves barely passed her elbows. She sat down by Cain and hauled at the crotch of the coveralls.

"Must be Honor's," she said. "I thought she was bigger."

"We can go to my place for something," he suggested.

"This will do. I don't want to take the time." She tucked her dark hair beneath the cap until only a few wisps showed. Then she rummaged around the runabout until she located a two-cell flashlight and a package of cigarettes. She lit cigarettes for herself and Cain and then removed her shoes, sighing.

"I seem to have big feet," she said.

"You should," he said. "You're a tall woman."

"How delicate, Cain. I'm a horse. You look more like a stork. But then a man can get away with it." She leaned back comfortably, smoking.

She took their mission as casually, Cain thought, as if they were on a pleasure jaunt. Yet he was sure that her actions tonight would change her relationship with Toby Patton. He suggested as much to her.

Lisa was silent for a moment, staring over the water. Outside of a brightly lighted ferry off to the south there was nothing but darkness about. Cain had the powerful search-

light of the little runabout aimed along the bow and now and then he switched it on.

When Lisa got around to answering his question, she said, "I'm what you might call the King's Costumer. My shop is in the same building as Toby's so-called Art Gallery. I always furnish the costumes for his parties."

"What's it to be tonight," Cain asked, "nymphs and satyrs?"

"He's done that one to death," she said. "Tonight it's chain mail and helmets."

Cain turned his deep-set eyes on her. "Chain mail?"

"For the ladies, yes. It isn't real, of course. Just a kind of fiber stuff. I think the idea is they're supposed to make it tougher for the men to get at the women — if they catch them. I imagine it's going to be one of Toby's 'chase' parties. And the helmets supposedly keep the women from being identified."

"Childish," Cain said.

"Not the way Toby does it," she told him. "Vicious is a better word."

"Is that why you go to his parties, because he's a customer?"

"Sure. I want to keep an eye on my costumes."

Cain tried a different tack. "My error back there. I didn't realize you were married."

"Let's forget Mr. Simms. I have."

There was another silence. Then Lisa said, "I'm not doing this for you or Honor or Paula, Cain. I'm doing it because I hate Toby Patton." Her face lost its beauty for the moment. "And if you think he needs killing, tell me. I'll be glad to help you."

They ran inshore without lights, Lisa lying in the bow and steering Cain to the dock by her voice. When they were tied up, she put on her shoes again. Cain said, "Now what?"

"The best bet is to go up the beach and cut inland," she said. "There are two or three clearings in the forest and Toby usually has his 'prize' in one of them. That way, if they're ahead of us, we can meet them coming in this direction."

Cain got out his pencil flashlight. "Besides annoying Toby, what do you get out of this?"

Lisa tugged down the crotch of her overalls. "If he has anything to do with Paula's disappearance, I'd like to know it so I could help mess up his plans. I meant what I said back there."

Cain didn't doubt her. "Why should Toby want Paula to disappear?"

"Why does Toby do any of the things he does? Who knows?"

It wasn't an answer to satisfy Cain. He said, "I've heard that Toby is Munger's man. Maybe he's doing something on Munger's orders."

She was abrupt. "Could be." She started off down the beach.

Cain caught up with her and tried again. "What does Toby do besides skill for Munger?"

"He runs an art gallery of sorts. It's really a place to display his and his friends' work — such as it is — and to sell pornography under the guise of art."

Cain remembered something. He said, "Paula dabbles in sculpture."

"That's how they met," Lisa said. "They both model in clay and wax a good deal. She's much better than he."

"And he sells his stuff?"

"Now and then. But he operates strictly by appointment." She was limping in the tight shoes. "Mostly he fills orders for people. Curtin is his legman for that. He travels all over for Toby. And through their obscenities — antiques, of course — Toby makes a lot of contacts for Munger."

He must, Cain thought. To live in the style Toby affected would require a large income. Cain said, "Is this a producing farm he has here?"

"Farm is a misnomer. There's a house and an old barn. He just uses the place for parties. There is a caretaker and his wife. They do his cleaning up. And most of the time they aren't around."

"Nice, working for Toby."

"Nothing connected with Toby is nice," she said in an ugly voice.

They walked in silence a few moments, the beach on their right, the thick stand of timber on their left. Cain used the silence to think over a few of the things he had heard to-night. He was a deliberate man and most of this had come too fast for his taste. He knew he could not judge logically under pressure. He was glad for the respite afforded by Lisa's silence and slow pace.

Questions piled in on Cain: Why did Honor seem to dislike Lisa so? What was Lisa's stake in all of this? She claimed she hated Toby enough to kill him, yet she tagged along with him and his crowd. And above all, Cain could not help wondering why Toby would lay himself open by publicly stating that he was going hunting for Paula Ryerson's body if he had actually done harm to her.

Cain had a few more questions to ask himself but Lisa made a sudden turn inland and he found himself busily fighting underbrush and tree branches.

Her arm came out, stopping him. "Listen."

He listened. Somewhere ahead of them there was a crashing as though a person or a large animal were blundering through the forest in the dark. The noise grew. Then there was a shout. "I found it! There it is!" It was a woman's voice, oddly muffled.

"They beat us," Lisa said. "Let's go." She increased her pace despite the tight shoes that now had her limping badly. She guided herself with the two-celled flashlight she had in the runabout. Cain trotted behind her, and they burst into a clearing. Lisa swung her light up, outlining someone on the far side.

Cain stopped dead. "My God!" He wouldn't have believed it if he hadn't seen it. As he watched, a woman wearing an evening gown and high-heeled slippers was running toward an oblong wooden box placed in the center of the clearing. From neck to waist she was encased in "chain mail" and over her head was a knight's helmet, the visor down. One hand clutched a good-sized flask.

Behind her ran a man. He carried a flashlight in one hand and a flask in the other. It was Curtin and he was very drunk.

Lisa snapped off her light. Neither the man nor the woman

had seemed to notice it. The woman shouted, "See, there it is!"

There were other sounds now. A couple appeared arm in arm. Cain recognized Smathers, the lawyer, and assumed that the costumed woman with him was his wife. Then the doctor came staggering out of the trees, tripped over a root, and fell headlong. He lay where he had fallen, hiccupping gently. Each of the men carried a flashlight.

The first woman had reached the oblong box by now. She lifted her skirt and clambered to the top and started kicking at Curtin as he tried to join her. He backed off and took a long drink from his flask. The woman took advantage of the respite to pull off her helmet. It was Anne, the redhead. She busied herself with her flask.

"Congratulations," a voice said, and Toby Patton came into view. He walked as if he were quite sober, swinging his light negligently.

Lisa said to Cain, "Let's angle to the left. We can get a little closer to his damned 'prize' that way."

They worked around the edge of the clearing until they were some distance closer to the oblong box. There Lisa stopped. She said to Cain, "Toby tried to get Robin Hood costumes for the men but I didn't have time to order them. This is supposed to be Sherwood Forest, I think."

"Where's Maid Marian?" Cain asked.

Toby was talking again and Cain left his question hanging to listen. Toby called, "Where's Norene?"

"Here!" She came giggling from the timber, weaving badly as she walked. She carried her helmet in one hand, her flask in the other. "I hid!"

"Ah," Toby said. "Now for the unveiling!" He reached out and caught Anne by the ankle and pulled so that she had to jump from the box. She fell onto Curtin and they went down together. Toby laughed, took a small key from his pocket, and opened the small padlock on the side of the box. He threw back the lid with a gesture.

"Voilà"

By now everyone but the doctor had managed to crowd around. Lights swung up and into the box. Cain heard the redhead scream. Smathers' swearing was definitely not of

the legal variety. Cain said, "What the hell?" and darted forward.

He and Lisa reached the box at the same time. Curtin was in Cain's way and he snatched the man up and flung him to one side. He heard Toby's exclamation of surprise and then he looked into the box.

Cain felt Lisa beside him, felt her stiffen in horror. Then he turned and made a grab. He caught Toby Patton by the coat lapels. Cain swung on Toby with everything he had in his long arm and fist, enjoying the feel of the contact, enjoying the sight of Toby lifting up and arching over the box to land on his back on the other side. Snarling, Cain went after him.

Even in his satisfaction of hitting Toby Patton, Cain could not get out of his mind what he had just seen: Stretched out in the coffin, clad in a shroud, was the still, pale form of Paula Ryerson.

CHAPTER FIVE

"*MY GOD!*" Lisa said hoarsely. "I'm glad Honor wasn't with us. What a disgusting brute. I've never known Toby to be that bad before."

They were back in Cain's coupe and almost to Cain's apartment. Lisa was in her evening gown again but she had her shoes off. When Cain glanced at her, he saw that she was troubled by more than aching feet. She was nearly worn out.

He said, "Maybe we'd better not bother with something to eat, Lisa. I'll take you home and give you one of your pills."

"I don't need a pill to make me sleep," Lisa said. "I might have nightmares, though, at that." She fumbled for his cigarettes. "But I'm okay, really. Some food will fix me up, I think. Stop at your place and get some coffee — I'm out — and we can eat at my house. I don't want to face a lot of people right now."

"Can do," Cain said, and swung left up the hill.

Lisa handed him a lighted cigarette. "That fight did me a lot of good," she said. "It was a genuine pleasure." She laughed a little. "I think you really enjoy hitting people, Cain."

"People like that I do," he admitted. He pulled into the curb across from his apartment and started to get out. He stopped, one foot on the pavement. "Did I leave a light on?"

"I turned them off," Lisa said. "You were carrying Honor and I flipped the switch. I remember it distinctly."

Cain said, "I'll be right back," in a thoughtful voice. He flipped away his cigarette as he reached the building and took the stairs two at a time. He paused at the door, one hand reaching for the knob. The door was ajar about an inch and he could see marks by the lock as if someone had used an instrument to pry it open.

He pushed the door suddenly, stepped in fast, and stopped as quickly. There were three men on his couch. The man in the middle was the tweedy, masculine type, complete with sandy mustache and pipe. He sat relaxed with his heavy, handmade brogans thrust carelessly in front of him. He had a rugged, intelligent-looking face with sandy eyebrows and hair to match the mustache. His eyes were wide and gray and smiling — and a little vacant. On either side of him were men who could almost have passed for twins.

One was the slender man Cain had thrown at Anse earlier. The other was equally smooth faced, equally over-dressed. Both were of medium height, thin faced, dark eyed, their hair slicked back with grease, their pale hands restless. Cain could see the bulges made by their shoulder holsters even though their coats were made to conceal them.

He said, "Hello, Munger."

"I figured you'd be back."

Cain stood where he had stopped, not nervous, not even irritated at the moment. He was only surprised that Munger had included himself in this visit. He usually called for people, not on them.

"I came to turn out the light," Cain said. "When you go, I'll do it."

"Sit down, Cain. There's plenty of time."

"Not for me. Check out."

Munger said to his men, "He wants to be rude."

"Smoky said, "Yeh."

The other one said, "Yeh."

Cain said, "Nuts. Let's go home before I call the police and have you thrown out."

"Don't be foolish, Cain. I came for a friendly chat."

"Like the one I had with your monkey here earlier tonight?"

Munger smiled around his pipe. "Smoky isn't very subtle; sorry." He removed the pipe and stared at the bit. "Let's put it this way, Cain. We can remove you with no one the wiser. Or work you over or . . ."

"Or you can go to hell," Cain finished for him. "You don't dare, Munger, or you would have a long time ago."

"There'll come a time," Munger said.

Cain moved across the room toward the telephone. Smoky lifted a hand toward his coat lapels. Cain said, "You do and I'll slap your ugly teeth down your gullet with it."

Smoky snarled. Cain put a hand on the telephone. "Did you ever notice, Munger, that the intelligence level of the lower echelon hoodlum is barely above a moron? That goes for dope peddlers, pimps, prostitutes, and most persistent juvenile delinquents. It especially fits the little tough boys who play cops and robbers with their two-bit hardware. They're animals with gifts of limited speech, that's all. Doesn't it bother you to have them around?"

"They're useful," Munger said. His eyes were on Cain's hand. "Don't lift that phone, Cain. I won't like it."

"All right," Cain said amiably. "What do you like?"

"You. I wish you were on my side."

"I don't like your pets," Cain said. "I don't like their hairs all over my sofa. Next time you pay a social call, leave them in the kennels."

The other one snarled this time. Smoky licked his lips and looked hopefully at Munger. He said, "I came for a purpose."

"Tell me in ten seconds and then get out. I can't wait all night."

"Tough guy, Rhumba," Smoky said.

"Yeh," Rhumba said and spat on the carpet.

Cain left the telephone and took two long strides, put out a hand and got a fistful of Rhumba's coat front. Rhumba tried to reach past Cain's fist for his gun and Cain slapped his hand down. He pulled and Rhumba came up swinging. Cain let loose of the coat and grabbed an arm and moved it into a hammerlock. Rhumba began to curse in a shrill voice. Munger lifted a hand, holding Smoky back. His gray eyes were interested.

Rhumba's curses turned to gasps as the pain of the hammerlock forced him to his knees. He fought against the pressure, sweat coming out on his forehead, but slowly his knees bent and he was driven down until he was kneeling. Cain's big hands and long arms applied more leverage, making Rhumba's trunk arch. Finally it gave and he slumped. Cain took one hand and put it to the back of Rhumba's head and pushed.

"Wipe it up!"

Rhumba's neck was stiff, the cords standing out rigidly, but he couldn't hold his position and his face went down to the spot where the spittle lay on the rug. Cain moved his head back and forth as if it were a rag. Then he released Rhumba and stood up.

"You should housebreak them better, Munger."

Rhumba got to his feet, holding his arm. Foam flecked the corners of his mouth. Munger said, "A gentleman doesn't spit on his host's rug." Rhumba cursed vividly and Munger lifted a heavy shoe, driving it lightly into his groin. He doubled up, gasping.

"We don't do that either," Munger said. "Sit down."

Rhumba sat. Cain returned to the telephone. He waited, looking at Munger and then at his watch. Munger relit his pipe. "I came to suggest you forget about Paula Ryerson, Cain."

"Maybe I don't want to."

"Is the job worth that much?"

"How much is that?" Cain asked. "Maybe I just want her to do what she tried two years ago. Maybe my bed is cold."

"I can give you a better hot water bottle," Munger said. "Free, as long as you want to use it. Now give me an answer."

Cain bowed mockingly. "I like the job. I'll keep it."

"How much?"

"Expenses."

"Cain and his ethics."

"And a chance to annoy you," Cain added.

Munger smiled. "A compliment, that. Someday you'll push me too far, Cain."

"I like to push certain people," Cain said. "Like your friend Toby Patton. I beat Toby up twice tonight. The second time I got in a few licks at some of his friends. I enjoyed it."

"Where is Toby now, Cain?"

"In his coffin," Cain said.

Munger shifted his position. "Let's talk about Paula Ryerson, Cain. How much do you want to lay off?"

Cain looked as if he were considering it. He said, "Your viscera on a silver tray, Munger. Pickled."

Munger got to his feet, his amiability gone. He took a deep breath and jerked his head toward the door. Smoky and Rhumba stood up and walked toward it. Rhumba hobbled a little. His face was pale and nasty looking. Munger followed slowly, herding them. Cain thought he heard a noise on the other side of the door and shifted his weight, wondering if Munger had more like this pair.

"Someday," Munger said, "I'll turn my friends loose on you, Cain."

"Your privilege," Cain said.

"I'll see you again," Munger told him. "You know what I want. I don't intend to say it over again."

"Yes, God," Cain said. He held the telephone until the door shut behind them. He heard their footsteps go down the hall, down the stairs. He crossed to the window, saw them leave the building, enter a big car, and drive off. He turned from the window and discovered he was drenched with sweat and shaking all over.

A noise at the door swung him around. It was Lisa. She carried the handle to his car jack in her hand. He sat on the sofa. His legs were shaking too hard to hold him up.

"That looked like Munger."

"It was Munger."

"Are you so afraid of him?"

"Yes," he said. "Don't you know Munger?"

"I've seen him. I don't know him." She said it so quickly that Cain thought she was lying. He didn't know why nor did he care at the moment.

"Did he see you?"

"I ducked to the dark end of the hall," she said.

Cain rose wearily, got the coffee, and went out with her. He turned out the light but left the door ajar. There would be time to fix it later. He got in the car and then slid over, away from the wheel.

"You drive," he said. He put his head out the window and fought being sick to his stomach.

Lisa parked at the rear of a two-story building just off Pike and nearly downtown. The downstairs, Cain saw, when they had gone around to the front, consisted of two stores. One window said: LISA SIMMS, COSTUMERY; the other, PATTON GALLERIES, OBJETS D'ART. Upstairs, Lisa had three rooms for an apartment. The rest, she explained, belonged to Toby. He had a very fancy apartment, she added.

"Handy," Cain commented. He sat wearily on her divan and let himself slump.

She swore at him. "Our service porches connect," she said. "And that door . . ." She pointed to one in the living room wall. "It's locked and bolted on *my* side."

"Would Toby go for a woman anyway?" Cain asked.

What he thought was almost an expression of pain, crossed her fine features. "I don't know. I'm not really sure." Then she glared at him. "Damn it, why should I defend myself to you? It's none of your business if I play footsy with him every night."

"No," Cain agreed. "Do you?"

Lisa stalked into the kitchen. Grinning his evil grin, Cain looked around. The room was small but decorated to give the illusion of more space. He liked, the wallpaper, the few prints on the walls, the small case of interesting-looking books. He was still liking it when he fell asleep.

He awoke to find a tea cart piled high with sandwiches being wheeled up to him. He sniffed the fragrance of strong, fresh coffee and came wide awake. "I'm not really hungry," Cain said.

A little later he looked in surprise at the empty plate and at the empty coffee pot. Lisa laughed. "We're both long people, Cain. It takes a lot to fill us up."

"Including my head," Cain said. "Why didn't I just listen to Munger tonight instead of trying to throw my weight around? Like he said, someday I'll push him too far."

"You're made that way, Cain. You're a damned fool idealist."

"Not at all," Cain said stiffly. "I'm a realist."

"It's too late for semantic argument," she said. "But, Cain, is Munger really so bad?"

She made it sound much as though she hoped he would say no. He said, "Don't tell me you're in love with him?"

"How could I be?"

"Lots of women fall for men they don't know. They get a mental picture. Maybe big, square, masculine guys of the tweedy type are the ones you go for?"

She gave a harsh, abrupt laugh. "I only go for what I know, Cain. I've grown out of the hero-worship-from-a-distance stage. Maybe I like mine long and lean and bony."

"Now, look . . ."

"I just asked a simple question. Shall we get back to it?"

Cain knew when he was licked. He said, "I'd say that Munger's most endearing trait is his resemblance to a mad cobra. Otherwise he isn't nice at all." He told her a little about Munger, the things he did for profit, the things he had done to people who bothered him. A lot of them sounded like the type of pleasure Toby Patton would go for.

"You pick on the nicest people to mess up," she observed.

"Three of his friends," Cain said, "if you count Toby. Although he didn't even react when I told him Toby was in his coffin." He lighted his pipe and leaned back, remembering. It made him feel fine to recall it. His anger hadn't lessened because "Paula" was made of wax.

Even Curtin had been a little disgusted after the opening of the coffin. But that hadn't stopped him from trying to fight when Cain had obviously been intent on beating Toby into complete insensibility. Cain chuckled at the memory.

"We managed to devastate that party," he said. "I liked

the way you turned that Smathers woman upside down in the bushes."

Cain doubted if anyone but Toby had been completely knocked out but certainly all were too drunk from liquor and exertion to be of much use. They had all finally lain where they had fallen or been knocked while Cain tucked Toby into the coffin with the wax image of Paula, locked the box, and threw the key into the underbrush.

"What if Toby dies from lack of air, Cain?" Lisa asked.

He shrugged indifferently. "It wasn't a tightly made box. He can probably kick out the top. Besides, who gets excited when a piece of scum gets killed?" He yawned widely. "Anyway, someone was up and around."

Lisa nodded. As they were leaving, they had heard a man cry, "Ah, Hebe, the cupbearer to the Gods." They had not turned back to see, but Cain suggested that one of the women had got a flask and was going about reviving the rest with it.

Now, though, it didn't really matter. Cain's head drooped and his pipe slipped from his teeth. Lisa caught it deftly. "Come on, Cain, time to hit the sack."

He allowed himself to be steered into a bedroom. When she started peeling off his coat, he awoke long enough to protest. "Oh shut up," she said. "Do you think you're in any shape to go to that boat of yours? If you didn't fall asleep on the way, you'd be out before you hit the bunk. And you'd be a sitting duck for Munger or Toby."

Cain said, "Yeh," but when it came to getting off his trousers, he made her go out. Finally, down to his shorts, he crawled into the bed, rolled over, and was asleep.

Lisa came back after turning off the living room lights, spent a moment looking down at Cain, then removed her clothing and crawled in beside him. She wasn't worried about Cain. She certainly wouldn't worry about any man who slept that hard.

She lay awake for some time, listening to his breathing. Then she said softly into the darkness, "You poor damned fool. You don't half know what you've got into."

CHAPTER SIX

CAIN awoke refreshed with the sun slanting in his eyes, sat up with a cavernous yawn, and put his legs over the side of the bed. His toes felt for the familiar matting of the cabin floor. He was startled when his feet flattened out on a soft rug instead. Blinking, he looked around, and slowly his memory swam back to the surface, quickly pushing away sleep.

He turned and looked at the bed. The other pillow was indented and faintly fragrant. He plucked a long dark hair from the white case and dropped it hurriedly.

"Hey!"

"Toothbrush and razor in the bath," a voice called from beyond the door. "Hurry it — breakfast is coming up."

Cain trotted into the bath. He felt better when he had shaved and showered. He found Lisa in the kitchen. She wore a bright yellow housecoat and her hair was done loosely so that she looked fresh and gay and young. The platter of food on the table looked good, too, and Cain sat down to it. Lisa joined him in silence.

Cain helped himself to bacon and eggs and toast. He lifted his fork and then set it down. "Look," he said. "Where did you sleep?"

"With you."

"You needn't be so damned matter-of-fact about it," he said. "Did — I mean, we . . ."

Maddeningly, she cut open a fried egg with the side of her fork. "I should be insulted, I suppose. No, Cain. No log could have done a better job of sleeping. Now eat your breakfast."

"Ah," Cain said with obvious relief. He ate rapidly and steadily.

When they were done, Lisa handed him an envelope containing a single sheet of notepaper. Cain unfolded it slowly.

There was a printed heading: *Patton Galleries*, and beneath it a formal letter, very brief.

"Your lease is terminated immediately as per our contract. You are requested to vacate by six P.M. today. T. Patton." Under the typed signature was scrawled, "By J. Merton."

"That's his valet or secretary or whatever you want to call him," she said. "Toby probably woke up with an aching head and phoned the order here. Well, so I go back to the beach where I came from and dig clams."

"What kind of a contract did you have?"

"My lease is at Toby's pleasure. He owns the building. He invested the money in the costumes I rent. He owns everything here except my clothes and a few books." She made a wry face, rose, and brought more coffee. "But let's not let it spoil a beautiful morning. It isn't worth the effort."

Later she said, "Well, what's for today, Cain?"

"I'm seeing Honor to find out what she's been holding back," he said. "But there's no need for you to get mixed further into it."

"Today is Friday," she remarked. "You only have eight more days to find Paula."

"How in hell did you know that?"

She gave him a mocking grin. "I'm not clairvoyant, Cain. Honor told me. And you will need help."

"So will you," Cain said. He looked around pointedly. He wanted to ask her how she had got mixed up with Toby Patton in the first place. But he remembered that it was none of his business and said, "Let's get started."

Lisa packed after she had washed the dishes and straightened the place a bit. When she was done, everything she owned filled two cardboard cartons and a suitcase. They took them out to the car.

"Off to the beach," Lisa remarked.

"I'm sorry," Cain said. "I got you into this."

"Let's say you got me out," she corrected. "I'm eight years over twenty-one. I knew what I was doing."

"Got your beach picked out?" he said dryly.

"I'm serious," she said. She tapped her purse. "I've got eighty-nine dollars and all my worldly assets are in this car."

"You can have my apartment."

"Will you be there?"

Cain glanced sideways at her. "No, you're safe."

"I'm aware that I'm safe," she said sharply. "I just intended to be closer to where you are, that's all." His startled expression was as plain as a yelp of anguish. "Stop it, Cain! I'm not propositioning you. After last night, I just think you need help. I can't give any if we're miles apart. Let me use a corner of your land and I'll set up camp."

"I can see you coming out of the bush every morning. Will you wear skins?"

"I mean it."

Cain made no answer. He didn't doubt her. In silence, he drove down the gravel road that led to his land and then bumped over the half-cleared set of ruts he had chopped from the road to his dock. His boat rocked gently on the blue water, his dinghy beside it. He parked in front of his garage of rough lumber, lifted out her boxes, and started for the dock. She stood a moment, then lifted her suitcase and followed. There was a light smile on her lips.

Cain said, "I'm almost isolated here. Not even Honor can see me very well with her damned telescope. If her proximity doesn't bother you, you're welcome here."

"I like Honor," she said briefly.

Lisa stowed her few things in the cabin, in what she thought was a dresser, added her few groceries to those already in the galley, and took time to prow around interestedly. The boat, she saw, was built for Cain and no one else. The hold was large in case he should decide to do some long-term fishing, but the galley, head, and cabin were small with the compact equipment found in trailers. One thing she noted — Cain had sacrificed one type of design for another. Everywhere on his boat there was headroom for him.

When she returned to the deck, Lisa found Cain smoking a pipe and frowning across the rail toward Whidby Island northward.

"I'm a long-time bachelor," he said. "You won't be comfortable."

"Eight days isn't forever," she said. "You go see Honor now while I find myself a place to bunk."

"Use my bunk," he said. "I've made out on deck before."

"What if it rains?"

"I have a tarp," he told her. He moved away in long-legged strides.

She watched him go. "And you'd use it, too," she said aloud. "You damned puritan."

Cain was disturbed. It wasn't Lisa particularly; he just didn't like the idea of anyone being underfoot. But he felt he owed her a bunk for a while, at least. Besides, she was a determined woman and he had an idea that if he hadn't asked her to stay, he would have waked up to find her bivouaced on his beach. She might as well be comfortable.

Cain shuddered. He didn't want anyone to think that he needed them — especially a woman. It smacked too much of permanence. He had avoided matrimony so far by being nimble witted and, sometimes, nimble footed. But here he was besieged in his lair.

At the Ryersons', he asked Thomas for Honor. "She's sunbathing, sir. And Mr. Ryerson asked that you see him, if you would."

"I'd prefer it," Cain said. Honor Ryerson's physical attributes were more disturbing than he liked to think.

He was shown into the book-lined library. Despite its being a bright blue and gold day outside, Ryerson was sitting before a fire blazing high in the fireplace. Cain dropped into a leather chair.

"Drink, Cain?"

"Don't use it."

"Any progress?"

"You've heard something," Cain said.

"I've heard that Honor talked you into taking her to a place called Pepe's where you knocked down Toby Patton. I wish I'd seen that. And I heard that you fed Honor a sleeping tablet and got her home and into bed somehow."

"That's all," Cain said. "No report. But I do have some questions."

"Go ahead. I won't guarantee answers."

"Do you know Toby Patton?"

"I met him through Paula. He's foul."

"Could he have been blackmailing her?"

"I couldn't say. I've had him checked but he seems to be hard to trace when it comes to source of income. I wouldn't put blackmail past him, though."

"He's Munger's man," Cain said. "Do you know Munger?"

"Not by sight."

Cain switched the subject. "What kind of reputation does Honor have?"

"Of being eccentric." Ryerson put back his head and laughed, a dry sound. "She has three passions, Cain. Astronomy and a conviction that nudism is the key to longevity."

"That's only two."

"And you," Ryerson said. "You're the omnipotent one in these parts."

Cain said hastily, "That doesn't tell me anything about her reputation."

Ryerson's eyes were sharp. Then he shrugged lightly and said, "I've never had trouble with her. Not like Paula. I even suspect that she's innocent."

"She seems frightened of Toby Patton."

"I think she's afraid because of Paula," Ryerson said. "For some reason, she's devoted to Paula."

"But she doesn't try to emulate her."

"You'll find, Cain, that Honor is surprisingly mature in many ways. She's past that stage."

If there was anything, Cain thought, Ryerson certainly wasn't giving it to him. He said, "I want some details on Paula's place on Whidby."

"I'm the last person who would know," Ryerson said. "But I understand that she has a charged wire fence to keep people away. Whidby's out, though, Cain. Honor has been over recently."

"Maybe she's hiding even from Honor."

Ryerson shrugged. "Maybe. I've checked all I can. The day after she disappeared someone resembling Paula took a plane. It was a different name. I didn't pursue it because seven days later the same person came back."

"What was Paula driving when she left here?"

"Her black Cadillac club coupe." He gave Cain the license number.

"Wearing?"

"How would I know?" He paused and added, "Why didn't you ask me these things last night?"

"Because I wasn't interested." Cain rose. "I'll report when I have something." He walked out and up the stairs. He knocked on Honor's door. A faint voice told him to come in. He did so and saw that the door to her "observatory" was open. Without thinking, he climbed up and stepped onto the flat roof.

"Go get something on!" Cain said sharply. He turned around and looked at the Sound.

"Anyone would think you never took a sunbath."

"Not publicly." Cain wandered to the telescope. When she told him to turn, he did. She wore an almost negligible sunsuit now.

She smiled brightly at him. "In two years I get a lot of money, Cain, and then I'm going to buy a desert mountain down in Arizona and build a real telescope."

"Uhm," Cain said. "Been using this one today?"

"Yes." Her grin dropped and she faced him with her hands on her hips. "And I saw you and Lisa. That was fast work, Cain. What's the matter with me?"

"You," Cain admitted reluctantly, "are fine." He glared at the telescope. "How did you see my place from here?"

She was grinning again, impishly. She moved to the telescope and swung it around, made some adjustments, and straightened up. "I raise the base a little and . . . Take a look."

Cain looked. The angle was downward now and there were a few trees in the way, but Honor had found a gap in the treetops that led right through to his dock and his boat. As she had said, everything was upside down. Lisa was in a chair at the moment, her feet on the rail, a drink in one hand, and a book in the other. In shorts and halter, she was soaking up the sunshine — upside down.

Cain groaned and walked away from the telescope muttering about infernal machines and his lack of privacy. He glared at Honor. "Peeping Godiva."

She said for the second time, "What's the matter with me that you have to go hauling practically a stranger onto your boat? And only one bed, too."

"There's nothing wrong with you, Honor. It's just that I'm in Lisa's debt."

Honor pouted a little. "Can I move in when you're in my debt, too, Cain?"

He said irritably, "Damn it, because she chose to help us last night she's lost her business and her place to live and she's broke. Toby owned almost everything she had."

"Serves her right," Honor said. Then she kicked at the rooftop with her toe. "No, it doesn't, really. That was mean." She looked at Cain, her eyes big. "But why does everyone get mixed up with Toby?"

"If I knew," Cain said, "I'd have some answers to things I don't understand."

She looked a little sad. "Cain, why did you come today?"

"To see how you were and to tell you that Paula — it wasn't true what Toby said." He told her of the rest in such a way that there was no shock.

"I'm glad I didn't see it," she said. "He's such a beast."

Cain moved in without waiting any longer. "You were going to tell me something last night before you went to sleep."

She picked a cigarette from a table and lit it. "About Paula, wasn't it?"

She was teasing him again. He nodded warily. She said, "It was just that I saw her yesterday evening, just at dark."

"Here?"

"I won't tell you," she said. "But I'll show you."

Cain took a deep breath. "Look, child, this is no longer a joke."

"I'm no child and I'm not joking, Cain." She put down the cigarette and walked up to him, tilting her head to look in his face. Her impish expression was gone except for the parts she couldn't erase without refuting nature. "I'm serious, Cain. Do you think I'm going to let that — that woman take you away from me?"

Cain felt himself writhing inwardly with violent embarrassment. He looked off at the Sound, a tracery of whitecaps on the sparkling blue surface. He looked at the timber, rustling gently in the breeze. There was no comfort from

either of them. He said, "But you haven't got me!" His voice was anguished.

"I'm going to have," she informed him flatly. "I'm going to have."

He looked into her face. She might be nineteen going on twenty and as unconscious of her nudity as a three-year-old child but there was no immaturity in her expression or in her eyes at the moment. She was very much a woman, a determined one. Cain could only gulp.

"Why?" he demanded. "Why me?"

Honor stepped back a pace. "Because you're the only intelligent and mature man that ever interested me, that's why."

Cain understood now and he felt sorry for her. His embarrassment ebbed away, leaving him more able to handle the situation — so he thought. This would pass, of course, and someday she would catch up with herself: her emotional life would mature enough to reach her mind. But right now she was in an uncomfortable position, wanting emotional maturity and having none. She was reduced by her age and status to going with fraternity men and their ilk. And Cain was sure they were no brighter nor older in outlook than they had been in his day. Or she could take the young-old men who hung around campuses, the seedy men, the burning radicals, the unwashed poets. They weren't any improvement.

"I'm a free man," Cain said gently. "I intend to stay that way."

But the gentle approach appeared to be without effect. "Only for a little while," she said. Her eyes said, "Cain, you're doomed."

She wanted him, he thought, like she wanted her mountain and a new telescope. He said, "About Paula . . ."

"I won't tell you!"

Cain said angrily. "Can't you understand that your sister's life may be in danger?"

"I thought so. I don't now."

Cain said, "I'd like to tan your bottom."

She obligingly turned around and bent over. "I'd love it — from you."

Cain glared at her. "All right, when you get dressed, come to the boat and we'll talk it over." He stomped out, slamming

doors, not angry but hoping he sounded enough so as to impress her. He was reaching for the handle of his car door when he heard her voice.

"Cain!"

He looked up. She was at a front upstairs window. "I'm hurrying, Cain."

He swore lustily, wiped sweat from his forehead, and drove off.

CHAPTER SEVEN

CAIN was still swearing when he stomped onto the dock. He had gone through all the words he knew in English, all those in the Portuguese and Spanish which he had picked up from fishermen and was starting in on Indian when he saw Lisa and shut up. She was still sunning herself but now she was drinking coffee.

"Fresh," she said. "I made it when I saw you leave the roof."

Cain glanced up at the trees. She picked his best field glasses up from where they lay by her side and handed them to him. He grinned a little as the gap in the trees swung into view and through it he could see the flat roof and the telescope.

"Two can play at that game," he said. Returning the glasses, he ducked into the galley and came out with a cup of coffee. He squatted by the rail, sipping it. Lisa stretched luxuriantly in the sun, not speaking, waiting for him to simmer down.

He began to look relaxed. She grinned. "What you said — in Siwash."

"I know some more," he growled.

She laughed. "But she is cute, Cain."

"So's a baby shark."

"Man-eating variety, I presume. I mean her figure."

"I've spent years not noticing her figure," Cain said. "But she'll be bringing it along soon. Clothed, I hope."

Lisa said, "Oh," and got up. "She knows I'm here, I suppose."

"She had the telescope on us when we arrived with the bags." He shrugged. "She thinks you're trying to steal me from her." Lisa started to giggle but as he told her the whole thing the laughter left her. Cain did not think he was breaking a confidence; he trusted more than that in Lisa's judgment. "She's all out of key," he said.

"I know," Lisa admitted. "With me it was size. I was tall and gangly and I would have given every A grade I had to be short and cuddly and have a boy friend — any boy. But they were all undersized. Most of them still are."

He glanced at her, taking in the long, finely shaped legs, the solid thighs, the well-balanced hips and bust. She would never be fat; she wasn't the type. She was no lightweight but she was well proportioned. There was nothing grotesque about her. And her face was beautiful with its fine bones and wide set eyes and the humorous, warm mouth.

"I like it all," he said.

"Reaction from attempted seduction," she laughed. "What are you going to do, Cain?"

"Between us maybe we can get over how important this is. She's too damned coy."

"Honor doesn't like me," she said. "Between us we'd get zero. I'll take a walk."

"Like hell you will," he said in a panicky voice.

Ignoring him she put on her sandals. "The easiest way, Cain, is to do what she wants. After all, she's nearly twenty years old. And she's determined."

"Why doesn't she like you?" Cain countered, ignoring the advice.

"Because Paula doesn't like me," she said. "Honor only saw me once before. I was obnoxiously drunk."

"And Paula, why doesn't she like you?"

Lisa's eyes were amused. "Cain, you have a one-track mind. I don't think she trusts me — I worked pretty close to Toby. I don't really know. Now get busy and think of something to do

with Honor." She stepped onto the dock. "I'll whistle like a fish or something as I come back."

"Hey!"

She turned and waved. "Do it the easy way, Cain."

He was swearing again, trying new combinations in various languages when the speedboat raced around the point and darted into his dock. Honor threw Cain a line and hopped onto the dock and then to his boat. The wind had whipped color into her face. She wore a peasant skirt and a light blouse and apparently nothing else but sandals. But Cain was fooled. As soon as she discovered Lisa was gone she peeled to a less-than-Bikini suit and stretched out on the warm deck.

"This is nice and warm out of the wind. There's too much breeze on the roof."

"Coffee?"

"No thanks." She smiled her pouting smile. "Have you decided, Cain?"

He studied the whitecaps. She had the body of a mature woman, the detached and determined mind of the scientist and the morals of a baby animal. He sighed. She said no more and he glanced at her. She lay with her eyes shut against the light and he saw the naïveté and youth in her features now that she was off guard. An evil grin spread over his bony face.

"Yes," he said. He sounded fierce, hard. "Get up and come with me." Her eyes opened wide but she didn't move. He reached down and got a wrist and pulled. "I can't wait all day."

Her eyes grew wider in surprise, "Cain . . ." He could feel the momentary reluctance of her feet seeking purchase on the deck as he pulled her toward the cabin. He grinned again; it was not a pleasant grin.

He let loose of her and she went down the steps, slowly, and he followed, shutting the doors and drawing the curtains over the portholes, putting them into near darkness. When he turned she was standing by one of the wide seats.

He walked up to her and grasped her shoulders, pulled her against him, kissing her with his mouth hard, hurting her lips. She was rigid a moment and then she yielded, her

own arms going up about his neck. But he could feel her trembling and not quite relaxed.

He made huffing sounds like a marine motor trying to catch, ran a hand down her back to the halter strap and pulled. He stepped back, tossing the wisp of cloth to one side. "Come on!"

She crossed her arms over her breasts in sudden and futile modesty. He could see her lips trembling and see her fighting, but despite her efforts two large tears formed on her eyelashes and came tumbling down her cheeks.

"Cain . . ." It was a wail.

"Damn it," he said hoarsely, "that's what you wanted, wasn't it?" He put out his hands as if to hook them in the sides of her brief shorts where the string held them together. She took a step backward and was pressed against the edge of the seat. The tears were coming openly now and she was sniffing.

"I — I didn't think it would be this way."

"What did you expect?" His voice was like a slap.

"I — I thought it would be — be beautiful and — beautiful."

"Since when is blackmail beautiful?" he demanded.

She stopped sniffing and stared at him, her lips parted. "Why," she whispered, "I never thought of it that way. Honest I didn't."

Cain sneered his disbelief. He took a step forward, grasping her arms, drawing them away from her breasts. "Come on, baby. Let's get about it. You started this."

Her eyes, dry now, grew wider and wider as she stared into his face. Her own muscles grew taut and she took a deep breath, fighting obviously for control. Cain had a hard time keeping his face straight. Then her mouth opened. "I'm scared!" she wailed.

Cain dropped her wrists, turned and smothered a laugh with a cough, swung around, glowering at her. "We made a bargain, baby. I'll keep my half and I expect you to do the same." He caught her by the waist and lifted her, tossing her onto the wide, padded seat. She lay there, staring into his hard-lined face.

"I'll keep my part, Cain. You — you don't have to if you don't want to, though." Her voice was weak and far away.

Cain looked at her a moment longer and then started to unbutton his shirt. He was on the second button when there was a flash of legs and she was gone onto the deck. He went into the head and turned on the water to cover his laughing and howled until he was all loose inside. Then, wiping the tears from his eyes, he strode up on deck. Honor was modestly dressed in her skirt and blouse. She sat on the railing with a cigarette.

"Can I have that coffee now, Cain?"

He got them each a cup and handed one to her silently. He filled his pipe and took the chair Lisa had vacated, putting his feet on the railing. She wouldn't look at him; her eyes were studying something important in her coffee cup.

"I saw her on Whidby last evening."

"I thought she'd left there."

"I guess she came back."

"You had your telescope on her?"

"No, it was too dark. It was a little before you came. I was over there with the runabout." She looked at him now. "And Toby saw me!"

He let her tell it. At first she was disorganized but soon she had it all in order and it came out easily. She had received a telephone call from her sister. Paula had asked her to bring some clothing to Whidby at a certain time and had sworn her to secrecy. Honor took the clothing to the dock on Whidby at the specified time and found Paula there. They talked a few minutes, Honor trying to find out where Paula had been and why she was hiding but had got nowhere.

"You didn't learn anything?" Cain asked in surprise.

"Just that Toby was giving a party but Paula wasn't going," Honor said.

"Did she say why?"

"No. But if she was hiding, obviously she wouldn't plan to go."

Cain let her go on. She explained that she was curious and a little frightened by Paula's actions and when she left she went around the point and idled there a while. Before long a launch came from the direction of the peninsula and docked. Figuring she was far enough away not to be seen, Honor swung into open water and looked through her field glasses.

Toby had come in the launch and he was on the dock, talking to Paula.

"How could he see you?" Cain wanted to know.

"I was right out there in the open," she said, "and even if it was dusky, I stayed so long that he got suspicious and I saw him put the glasses on me. Like a fool, I ducked and hightailed it for home and that gave everything away."

"And then?"

"I don't know," Honor said. "But he saw me and now he knows I know he's been seeing Paula."

"What's so terrible about that?"

"After he's been denying he saw her since that party almost two weeks ago?"

"What is her relationship with Toby?"

"I don't know," Honor said frankly. "Sometimes I think she's afraid of him, awfully. But I notice that she hangs around him a lot."

"What about Munger? Did she ever mention him?"

"Yes," Honor said. "Not long ago she told me he had cheated her."

"I can believe that," Cain said dryly. "It's hardly news."

Honor set down her cup. "All I know is that she said, 'Damn him! He cheated me, but I'll get it back if it kills me.'"

There was no more. Cain asked a few questions but Honor had evidently dredged up all that she knew. Her fear, he saw now, was that Toby had killed Paula last night and had done something with her. Honor's relief that it had been a wax dummy in the coffin had been obvious.

Cain studied the pinkish-gray cast the setting sun laid over the quieting water of the Sound. Then he said, "Why did you lie to me, Honor? You gave the impression you weren't sure Paula was around."

She looked very lost, very much the small girl. Then she lifted her head and looked defiantly at Cain. "Because Paula's in some kind of trouble and I want her helped. I — I thought if I could get you to start on the problem, we could find some way to help her."

"Because I wouldn't do it for Paula alone, is that it?"

"Yes. I guess I made it worse than it was because of that."

Cain said, "I'm not sure you made it out worse, Honor. Just because Paula hasn't really disappeared doesn't mean everything is all right, you know."

"I know, Cain. Because something is making her hide. Something besides her fear of Daddy."

"That's true, then, what you said about her being afraid to come home?"

"Yes."

Cain thought about it. He didn't want to worry Honor unduly but neither did he want her to think everything was taken care of. He said, "Munger shows too much interest for everything to be all right, Honor. If you get a chance to talk to Paula again, try and find out if it's he she's worried about."

Honor got up and went to her runabout. "I do want to help, Cain. I'll do all I can."

"Keep your eye on your telescope then." He watched her putt out of sight around the point. He was still standing, looking at the spot where he had last seen her when a sound like an owl with bronchitis turned him.

In a moment Lisa came on deck. "Well, Romeo?"

"I got the information," Cain told her. He gave her the gist of what Honor had told him. He did not describe the method he had used to get it. When he was done, Lisa did not comment. Instead, she headed for the galley.

"What now?"

"If you're going back to Toby's madhouse," she said, "we'll need some warm food inside us."

"Am I going to Toby's? I'd thought of starting from Munger's this time and working in another direction."

She shrugged. "I guess my evening gown can take one more outing. But you'll need food anyway."

"I couldn't eat his," Cain agreed. "It's liable to be seasoned with strychnine."

"You poor idiot," Lisa said. "But I know better than to argue with you." She went off to the galley and Cain set a table on the deck. She didn't argue with him but she did talk and by the time they were through eating, she had made out a better case for going to the farm than to Munger's.

Cain grinned ruefully. "You win. And maybe you're right.

I would like a better look at that wax image of Paula. And I'd like to know the reason for it. It was too much work for just a party gag. But that doesn't mean you have to get tangled up any more than you are."

She mimicked Honor's piping voice. "Do you think I want to lose you now, Cain?"

CHAPTER EIGHT

FOR the second time in as many nights Cain found himself on the Peninsula. Only this time he took his car via the ferry. From the highway, Lisa directed him along the narrow black-top road that twisted around and ended in front of the farm. From there they went on rough gravel through a thin grove of timber. Cain cut the motor and coasted down a slight slope to the garage beside the house. There was only one light showing from an upstairs window.

Cain sat quietly with his hands on the wheel studying the big, sprawled place. It was a two-story house with a one-story wing off the rear. The night was clear with a fairish moon shining whitely down on the buildings, giving them a softened look. The one light was all Cain could see.

"The caretakers live in that wing?"

"Yes, when they're home." Lisa pointed to the lighted window. "That looks like the bath between the two bedrooms."

"Two?"

She smiled. "It isn't as big as you think. There are just two bedrooms upstairs. Toby has one and the other is huge and full of bunks. He likes his guests to be uncomfortable and embarrassed when they stay with him."

"Damn Toby," he said. "I wish I'd hit him harder."

"You may get a chance to hit him again," she said. "Shall we go see?"

They went together to the porch and Cain pressed the doorbell. There was a chime from inside but no answering foot-

steps. He listened a moment and pressed the bell again. He thought he caught a faint sound but nothing came of it. There was only silence.

"Let's try the caretaker's side," Lisa suggested.

But that was dark and their knocking raised no one. Cain said, "Maybe he saw us and is hiding out."

"Not Toby, if he didn't want to have anything to do with you he'd tell you so with a gun. He wouldn't hit you but he'd come close."

"To hell with Toby," Cain said and went back to the front door. He rattled the knob but it held. Swearing softly, he circled the house, throwing the beam of his pencil flashlight on the windows. He made the full circuit and found Lisa by the porch. "Tight as a drum," he said.

"What did you expect to find — Paula?"

"Maybe. Maybe Toby. How do I know?" Cain demanded. "It was your idea we come."

"Why so it was," she said. She started for the car, a frown marring her forehead. "I guess we go get our glad rags on for Munger after all."

Cain hated to give up. He scowled at his car and then at the garage in front of which it was parked. And because he was stubborn, he tried the garage door; it slid upward with no fuss.

"No car," he said. His light swept the interior, hovered and stopped near the back. "Look . . ."

Standing on end was the crude coffin he had shut Toby in the night before. Cain went up to it and Lisa followed. He reached out to open it and let his hand fall back. "Locked," he said. He bent down. "That's a different lock than the one last night, I'll swear it." He gave Lisa the flashlight and had her hold it while he tugged at the lock.

"I suppose Toby put on another. He'd have kicked the other one to pieces getting out."

"Probably. But why put on another?" Cain demanded. "The thing had served his purpose."

"Toby does odd . . ." She stopped. "My God!"

Cain heard it too, a shrill, metallic shriek, rising in pitch to the point of agony. It stopped abruptly. Cain was out of the garage and heading for the house, Lisa following. She

stopped as the sound rose once more and then was cut off. It was shorter this time but the pain of it made her ears ache. She hurried to catch Cain.

She saw his long legs take him around the corner of the house. There was a crashing sound before she reached it and then she heard Cain's footsteps hammering from inside. When she made the corner all was quiet again. Then a light came on, flooding out through a downstairs window. Lisa stopped. The French windows of the library were open. In a moment she saw why: Cain had kicked them in with his big feet to gain entry.

In slacks, sweater, and sneakers, Lisa was as agile as most men. Without hesitation, she ran forward, jumped, caught the sill and pulled herself belly down over it. She tumbled into the room and scrambled to her feet. The light came from the hall. She listened a moment, thinking she heard footsteps again but the noise she made out was indefinable, hard to locate.

In the hall she noticed a light on above, shining down from the landing through the stairwell. Then the lights went out — all of them. She hurried upstairs, getting out the flashlight, and taking the steps two at a time and then pausing on the landing for breath. Three doors faced her — the two bedrooms and the bath. She tried the bath first. It was empty, though the steamy smell of a recent bath or shower hung in the air. She saw a crumpled towel by the wet bathmat on the floor and that was all. Turning she tried the bedroom to her left.

The door opened onto blackness. Quickly she aimed her light inside. She saw the unmade, empty bed, the masculine clothing strewn about. Toby's room. She shut the door and tried the other. It gave easily. The line of bunks, two-tiered along two walls, the dressers, the chairs — all were impersonal. But, she noted, some of the bunks were messed up, unmade.

No one. She felt the rising panic threatening to choke her and involuntarily she felt her throat constrict and then the sound came out. "Cain!" My God, she thought, I sound like a bawling calf. "Cain!"

There was silence. She had her mouth open again when "here" came faintly and hollowly from in front of her and

beneath her. From the bath, she thought, and went there again. "Here!" It was a little louder this time.

She knew now. The square door of the laundry chute was just to her right. She opened it. "Cain?"

"Uh?" There was a grunt in his voice. He swore.

"How did you get down there?" she asked stupidly. The relief made her shake a little.

"I walked down. Uh — damn it! Ouch!"

There were more sounds, scuffling, a slap of flesh on flesh, a curse of pain from Cain. Lisa said brightly, "What are you doing?"

"Making love to a naked woman if she'd hold still!" he flung at her. There was another slapping sound.

Lisa turned and fled down the stairs, rounded the corner of the bannister behind the stairs and jerked open the door to the basement. Automatically she tried the switch there. There was no light. She started down, carefully, afraid to stumble on the steep stairs, her flashlight probing ahead of her into the thick darkness. She could hear strong breathing now. There were no more slaps, no more curses, just the harsh breathing that comes from dogged effort. Her light caught a corner of the pool table, the edge of the bar. Then somewhere glass tinkled and she turned the light that way. She had a glimpse of flesh, white buttocks, the blur of a leg in rapid movement. Before she could raise the light it went spinning from her hand and someone drove a knee or a shoulder into her, knocking her off balance. She reached as a foot came down on her stomach, felt an ankle torn from her grasp, sought for air. A heel struck her forehead, rapping her skull against the stair.

She pushed herself up, staggered forward into the darkness after the little pinpoint of light that was her flash and crashed head on into someone. For a moment there seemed to be a dozen flailing arms and legs and then she was down again. This time she had cloth in her hands and she hung on grimly, dazed but determined. Whoever it was above her suddenly came down on top of her. She sucked in a great, triumphant gasp of air and rolled over, pressing the other person flat.

"Cain!" she howled. "I got one!"

"Mel" he said and suddenly twisted out from under her

and rolled free. She let him go, listening to him clamber up the steps and charge off somewhere. She lay where she was, crying softly, not from fear but from near hysteria. She wanted to laugh and she could only cry.

She was sitting up, gurgling into the darkness when heavy footsteps clumped down the stairs and Cain's voice came to her in steady vituperative swearing. He found her flashlight and pinned it on her and she sat and blinked and giggled at him. He swore some more and went somewhere and in a moment the overhead light came on brightly. Lisa blinked into it and began to laugh. The more she laughed the more she wanted to laugh and in a moment she was rolling on the linoleum of the floor, gasping for breath.

She felt Cain's hand sting her face and the laughter caught in her throat and stopped. She took a deep breath and then she was all right again. She got slowly to her feet.

"I'm sorry, Cain. Honest I am. I thought I was helping." She started to giggle again, thinking of throwing herself on this great crane of a man, fighting him so determinedly. She cut the giggles off sharply.

"My car," he said and his language became sulphurous. "She got into my car stark naked and drove off. And here we are."

"Who?" Lisa demanded.

"How would I know who? It was dark. I don't recognize women by the feel of their hides."

"Paula probably," Lisa said. "Drunk."

"Why drunk?"

"When Paula is sober she'd have meggrims before she'd let even a woman see her bare knee. She's very odd."

"To hell with Paula," Cain said. "This woman was sober — I couldn't smell any liquor and I was all over her. Besides . . ."

"Start at the beginning," Lisa said quickly. The thought of Cain doing battle desperately in the dark with an unclothed woman almost set her off again.

Cain said, "Those screeches, remember?" She did. He pointed to the laundry chute. A metal foot locker rested on the floor, one end in the chute. "She shoved two of those damned things down that tin throat. They made it but put up an awful howl." Cain laid hands on one and jerked. It

came out squealing, a miniature of the sound they had heard. The other tumbled into the place the first had occupied. "See?"

"Those are Toby's," Lisa said. "So?"

"I broke in the window and started up the stairs for the bath but there was a noise from below. I finally found the damned stairway down and I got about two steps and the light went out in the basement. I had to feel my way back up and find the light switch. I'd brightly closed the hall door. I no sooner snapped it on than it went off again. We played that game for a few minutes and then it stayed on so I took a chance, opened the door for the hall light and started down the stairs and then all the lights went out."

"Yes," Lisa said, remembering.

"I got to the bottom and I heard someone. She was over there by the master switch. I stayed close to the stairs, figuring to block her, and tried to find my damned flashlight."

"You gave it to me."

"So I did. Anyway, it was a cat and mouse sort of thing. It couldn't have lasted over a minute but it seemed like an hour. I heard a foot scrape near me and made a dive and caught something and then you started bellowing. Whoever I had went up like a rocket then. I nearly lost her. Finally we got wrestled into the middle of the room. And . . ."

"You told me it was a woman when I was upstairs," Lisa said. "Did you know then?"

"I knew on the first grab. There are some ways in which a man and a woman differ."

"Uhm," she said, mocking him. She had to laugh a little.

Cain glowered at her and scouted around the room and came back, two diaphanous pieces of lingerie dangling from one great hand. "I got this on grab two." He handed her a brassiere of very fragile violet material. "And this the last time. That's when I let go for good."

She took the panties. They were pretty badly torn. "Flimsy," she said. "They match, don't they."

"Have you seen them on someone," he said.

"No. Sorry."

"She was like an eel," Cain said as if he were apologizing.

"What did she smell like?" Lisa asked interestedly. She

could close her eyes and see Cain reaching and clawing with his huge hands, finding he was getting a bit too intimate even for the circumstances — or so he would think — drop his grip and grab again. She could conjure the vision but she didn't dare or she would have hysterics again.

"Smell like? People, I suppose."

"No. Her hair, perfume, sweat?"

"Ah," Cain said. "I got a faceful of hair and that was sort of sweet. And she was dusty. Bath powder, I think."

"She bathed," Lisa agreed. "Then I guess we interrupted her and she had time to get on her underwear and . . ." She stopped. "Only there weren't any clothes in the bathroom."

"The bedrooms?"

"I don't think so." She told him about her search.

"We'll go check," Cain said, "after we look at these foot lockers."

He manhandled one more into the open, found it unlocked and lifted the lid. He stared for some time at the contents, looked at Lisa, and then dragged out the other. He opened it. Their bewildered gazes met.

"God!" she said. She looked a while longer and then began to laugh again. Cain gave her a worried look and instead of slapping her went to the bar, reached down and found a fifth of something and brought it back. He twisted the cap off and thrust the bottle at her.

Lisa drank, gasped, sputtered and drank again. "Rum! Good rum."

Cain took the bottle and looked at the label. "Demerara," he said in awe. "Hundred and fifty-one proof, about eight bucks a bottle. He keeps a nice cellar." He sniffed and sighed reluctantly, setting the bottle on the pool table.

"Go ahead, Cain, you need a drink after that."

"No," Cain said. He looked into the trunks again. Lisa slyly put the bottle in his hand. Concentrating, Cain took a pull at it without removing his eyes from the trunk.

"Who," he asked thoughtfully, "would go to so much trouble for this stuff?"

He took out the contents piece by piece: Wax faces, whole and broken, bits of paper mache, wire, paints, brushes. "Start your own waxworks," Cain said.

Lisa no longer felt like laughing. Now somehow, it was frightening. She took a drink and Cain followed suit. He busied himself emptying the other trunk. At the bottom he located a wax mask which he brought out carefully. It was crushed on one side but the features were recognizable. It was Toby Patton.

"Paula did that," Lisa said. "And I'd swear she did the one that we saw in the coffin. Toby kept it in his living room. She's very clever."

Cain said, "But why try to run off with this stuff? Why? And who?"

He took a long pull at the bottle, lighted a cigarette and took another drink. Suddenly he became aware of what he was doing and he nearly dropped the bottle. But it was too late. He could feel the liquor running through him, potent, warming, relaxing. He would have preferred a clear head to cope with this situation, but he knew his own weakness well. He went to the bar and got another bottle.

Lisa watched him worriedly. "Let's go upstairs and look for those clothes," she suggested.

"Uhm," Cain agreed. They went in dignified fashion up the steep stairs and up the broader ones to the landing. The guest room revealed nothing, nor did the bath. Toby's room was also empty. Cain followed Lisa into the guest room and sat on one of the made-up bunks. Lisa stood and looked at the lingerie still dangling from one of her hands.

"This is all she had," she said fuzzily. She tipped her bottle to her mouth and was surprised to find it empty. Dropping it, she borrowed Cain's. He just sat and stared at the underwear.

"There's something odd about it," he mused. Reaching out, he rolled the cloth through his fingers. "It's purple."

"Lavender," she corrected.

"Uhm. It's something else too." He peered as if he were near-sighted. "What size is it?"

Lisa gave him back the bottle and examined the underwear. "The mark got torn off," she decided.

"What size are you?" Cain asked.

"Thirty-four."

"How big is Paula?"

"How would I know? Probably thirty-two. 'A' cup, like mine."

"What about Honor?"

"I don't go around measuring, Cain, you don't think she . . ."

Cain said solemnly, "I suspect everybody."

"Cain, you're drunk."

"Not yet," he said and was reminded of the bottle. He drank.

"This thing feels odd," Lisa said. Suddenly a surprised look crossed her face. "I know, Cain. It's damp! It's not even half dry."

"That's it," Cain said. He got up excitedly. He sat down again and fumbled for a cigarette. "Who do you know that takes baths in her underwear?"

"No one."

Cain picked up the panties and squeezed them. A drop of water formed and fell onto the edge of the bed. "See?" He cocked his head to one side and looked at her and then at the panties.

She backed off. "Uh-uh. Besides they're ripped. And they won't fit. I can see from here that they're too small."

"Me too," Cain admitted. He sat with his chin in his hand. He stayed that way for some time. Then he stood up, smiled at Lisa, turned around, and fell face forward on the bed. She could hear him snore before he stopped bouncing.

"Softy," she said. She studied his attenuated length and then giggled slyly to herself. Carefully, she tiptoed to the light switch and snapped the room into darkness. Then with the same exaggerated care, she returned to the bed and felt for Cain. When she found him, she quietly removed all his clothes. She stretched out beside him.

"That'll make him sweat," she said aloud, and fell asleep.

CHAPTER NINE

CAIN awoke suddenly, sharply. He lay listening to soft breathing coming from somewhere close by. Tentatively he put out a hand and felt flesh. He jerked back his hand but not fast enough. A sleepy voice said, "Huh?"

"Dozed off," Cain said hastily. "Where were we?"

"Here," she said.

Cain felt the coolness of night air on his bare skin. He swallowed. "Like this?"

"Certainly." She added slyly, "Don't you remember?"

The ambiguity of the question would have struck Cain had he been fully sober. But he was not, not even half sober. He said plaintively, "Lisa . . ."

She sat up in darkness and bent toward him. "Yes, Cain?" Her voice was soft. He could feel her hair brush against his face. She smelled faintly of perfume and powder and rum. He thought about pushing her away but his mind was fuzzy and he found that he didn't want to push her away.

He said something to himself about sheep and lambs and being hung for one or the other, hiccupped gently, and reached for her.

When she took her lips from his, she said, "I wondered what you'd do when you were half sober."

"Uhm," Cain said.

When he awoke again, it was still very dark. The room felt empty and he reached out a hand. There was a warm spot beside him but that was all. Groggily he got to his feet and fumbled his way to the hall. The light was on and noises came up from below.

"Lisa?" It was a tentative call.

"In the kitchen."

Cain turned and padded to the bath. He let the cold

shower sluice him down until he was chattering. He dried and dressed, conscious that something in the back of his mind was bothering him. He was not quite sober. He still had a fine edge. But he knew it was unwise to keep that edge, and so when he went downstairs, he gulped at the coffee Lisa served him.

He took the second cup more slowly. "Guess I passed out," he said idly. He leaned forward and took a freshly lighted cigarette from Lisa.

She scowled at him. "You just passed out the first time," she said. She looked faintly like a comfortable tabby cat.

Cain felt the something that was bothering him tug insistently at his mind. "First time?" he echoed.

She was staring at him, her eyes wide. "Cain . . ." And then she laughed, shrilly. "You don't remember!"

He did now; it showed in his eyes. He remembered faintly, too faintly to be sure that it wasn't just a dream. He gulped. "Lisa, I . . ." And then it came to him and a sigh of relief burst out. "But you're already married!"

She laughed again. She laughed until the table shook and the coffee slopped out of their cups. She said, "If I weren't, it wouldn't matter. You moralistic idiot. There are no strings, Cain."

He was silent, gulping at his coffee again. Finally he said, "A profitless evening."

"Thank you." Her voice was acid.

Cain flushed. "I meant that even if we have the underwear, we don't know whose it is."

"We can try it on Honor. I mean — I can."

"No strings," Cain reminded her dryly. Finishing his coffee, he got up. "Back a ways, it seems I was interrupted. I'm off to work."

He fled. Outside, he got out his flashlight and made his way to the garage. The coffin sat as before as if waiting. He approached it swiftly. He wanted a good look at that wax mask of Paula. In fact, he wanted to take it with him. He was prying up the lock with a crowbar when Lisa came softly up behind him. Cain grunted as the lock gave, dropped the bar, threw back the lid and let his light shine inside.

Lisa's scream shattered the night. Toby Patton lay there — a knife buried to the hilt in his chest.

Lisa's screams kept beating on his ears until he turned around and slapped her viciously. She went to one knee, gasped, struggled to her feet and ran. Cain caught her in the kitchen and hit her again. She stopped fighting and her eyes became clear. "That was no dummy," she said.

"I know," Cain told her. "Toby really got it this time."

"Cain, let's get out of here. Let's clean up and go — if we have to swim."

They started with the basement, cleaning what they had touched. Lisa showed Cain a door that led into an old basement, a room lined with shelves of empty jars. He pushed the suitcases in there. Lisa pointed out the old-fashioned cellar door at the far end. "We can always come for them that way."

They finished upstairs and Cain went down to dispose of the empties and replace the nearly full bottle. The sight of it made him gag. He was about done when he heard Lisa. She appeared at the head of the stairs.

"Cain, car coming."

He jumped across the room and threw the master switch, plunging the place into darkness. He stood silently, listening to her move about. Then she said, "It's that damned caretaker, Cain. He and his wife must be coming home from a damned party or something. They're driving into the garage!"

Cain said, "Come down here, damn it," and flashed his tiny beam on the stairs.

In a moment she was stumbling into his arms. He wrapped them around her and held her briefly while she got herself together. Then they went into the cellar and out by the old doors and stepped into the weed-grown backyard where the wing met the house. Lisa gasped as she ran beside him.

"Snap out of it!" he ordered her. "How do we get away from this damned place?" He stopped suddenly. "Why in hell are we running? We can face the cops, can't we?"

He felt the shaking of her body and the blubbering of her breath and he slapped her. She said, "No. Not yet, Cain. Please. We can't. I can't. Let's get home."

Cain felt the conflict within him. He knew that he should

call the police even if he didn't have much use for them. He knew, too, that such a call would see them in for possibly endless questioning. Also, he felt that to call them might throw Lisa into trouble that she could not get out of. He didn't reason it very clearly; he just knew that somewhere along the line she had been forced into playing ball with Toby. That was the only logical explanation for her staying close to him.

He wanted more time to think about it so he caught her hand and started forward again. They were on the edge of the woods, some distance from the house and they didn't look back.

"We'll find a boat of some kind," he said, and felt her pulling at him to hurry.

They reached Toby's dock but there was no boat. Cain started up the beach and she followed, stumbling once in her haste. The second time she went down she stayed that way, her head hanging, her arms supporting her weight.

"You're wasting our time," he said harshly. "Go back to the dock and wait for me. Get!"

She rose and walked slowly away from him. He turned and hurried on. He went as far as the terrain would permit and saw nothing but a sunken rowboat half filled with sand. He started back, seeking an answer to the problem. They could, of course, hike to the highway and hope for a bus in the morning but, dressed as they were, looking as they did, that would be painfully obvious.

He stopped and looked across the water wistfully. He could almost guess which was his place, which the Ryerson estate with all its boats. He started to turn and stopped again. It was just a dot suddenly touched by the path of moonlight and yet he could have sworn he saw someone standing up, moving around. He strained his eyes, then eased up, looked away and back. It was a boat though it was barely moving, coming in easily as if it were drifting.

Cain walked on slowly, still watching. There was no further movement aboard and then the boat drifted out of the moonlight into darkness. Cain wondered if someone were in trouble. If so he just might be able to make a deal for his passage back.

He got out his light and blinked it. There was no answer. He tried again, waited and gave up. Even if it were empty he might have transportation. He was still watching when it drifted back into the moonlight. Now it was closer and he saw no one at all. It was, he noted, a little runabout like the one Ryerson's had. A common enough boat and capable of being rowed.

He waited no longer but struggled out of his shirt and trousers, kicked off his shoes and plunged into the surf. The cold water chilled him but after a few strokes the warmth began to come back and he propelled himself powerfully across the smooth water. He reached up when he hit the hull, grabbed a handhold and swung himself on board. The boat rocked sharply.

Someone yelled, "Hey!" and Cain turned to see a head appear over the stern.

He said, "Oh no!" as the whole body followed the head. It was Honor Ryerson and she wore even less than he.

Cain retreated behind the tiny cabin and crouched. "I won't answer any questions until you get me something to put on."

"Want my jeans, Cain?" He was silent and a towel came damply out and hit him. He grabbed it and put it around his waist and waited. She said, "I'm dressed. I just got undone because I had to go overboard."

"You should carry a bathing suit."

"Like you?"

Cain shivered miserably in the knotted towel. She said, "It conked out on me. And I can't find the trouble."

He took her flashlight and peered down at the motor. Honor stood beside him, grease on her snub nose and on her chin. Cain handed up the light, and directed her to flash it as he moved his hand. He couldn't see very well and finally his hand went out of sight. He felt a wire where no wire belonged, ran it down and got his hand around an object that felt like an oversized coil. Gingerly, he traced the wire and loosened it, traced its partner and loosened that and then removed the coil and carefully brought it to light.

The edge of the flashlight touched his face. His jaw was

set hard as he looked at what he held. He set it down gently. "Who runs this rig besides you?"

"No one. It's my special job. I'm careful with it."

"I used it."

"Because I told Thomas you could have anything I've got."

Cain said, "That would sound just fine to strange ears," and dived back into the machinery. When he came up for air he had the carburetor in his hand. He began to disassemble it with the tools he had found by his feet.

"When did this conk out?"

"When I was a little over halfway here. I couldn't go back as easily because of the current."

"Uhm," Cain said. He unscrewed the jets and squinted through them at the light. "You should clean this more often," he said. He blew mightily and the jets cleared one by one. In ten minutes the motor was purring at him.

"Thanks, Cain," she said. "I don't know why the carburetor didn't occur to me."

"Didn't it spit a while before it died?"

"Yes, it's been doing it all evening." She handed him some waste. "Where can I take you?"

"To Toby's dock for my clothes and Lisa and then home."

"Oh, she's with you."

"Damn it," Cain said. "She helped you out last night and you can do the same for her tonight whether or not you have a fancied grievance."

"Oh, does she need help?"

"Yes," Cain said. He added grimly, "And so do you."

Honor made no answer but appeared to be concentrating on getting the boat into the dock. For the first time Cain became aware that she had been and still was running without lights.

Lisa stood up and jumped aboard as they came abreast of her. "Well!"

Honor said cheerfully, "Hold tight while Cain goes for his clothes."

"Is he undressed again?" Lisa saw the towel and began to laugh. "Cain, you're becoming positively psychopathic about this."

Cain told her where to go and stalked off down the beach.

In a few moments he was back, dressed and in better humor. Clothing gave him a dignity he found he could not possess without it. When he came on board Lisa was walking nervously in the tiny space.

"Let's hurry," she said. She kept looking toward the trees as if expecting someone to appear there at any moment.

"To my place," Cain told Honor.

She asked no questions. Cain sat on the motor hatch, cradling the coil he had found. There was no conversation at all until they had tied up at Cain's dock and were in the cabin. Lisa, as usual, busied herself making food and coffee and, though Cain did not feel he could eat, he found himself wading into a pile of sandwiches with a will. Only Honor seemed unenthusiastic. It was gray, dull daylight with clouds coming up when they had finished.

Cain said, "Honor, has anyone but me used your boat lately?"

"No. I don't let anyone."

"But they could have access to it?"

"I suppose," Honor said. She sounded puzzled. "But it's in the boathouse and we keep it locked. There's a good view of the door from the house and access would be pretty difficult."

"Unless someone swam under," Cain said. He shook his head. "Not likely." He took the coil and motioned for Honor to follow him outside. He set it carefully on the sand, a good distance from anything and pointed. "That was hooked to your motor."

"I thought a dirty carburetor was the trouble."

"Most of it was, fortunately. This stops motors permanently."

Honor looked it over carefully and then looked at Cain and shrugged. "It looks like one of those whistle smoke bombs to me. Who was the practical joker who . . ." She stopped. "But it didn't go off."

"One of the delayed types," Cain said. "There'll be a series of little relays inside, each requiring so much current built up before they release and let the juice through. That way it wouldn't go off until you'd run the motor for a pre-determined length of time."

"But I've been running it a lot tonight. I . . ." She stopped and flushed. Cain heard her whisper, "Damn!"

He ignored her obvious blunder for the moment. He said, "Honor, I'll give you odds that this little gadget doesn't just whistle. It's a miniature mine. The Navy had some." He didn't add that smugglers did too, with a switch ready to throw if they needed to jettison both cargo and ship. Throw the switch and you still had so many minutes to get away before the Revenue boys got there. Cain had seen it work once — on a full-sized fishing smack, not a dinky little run-about. There was some wood and an oil slick. That was all.

"Cain?"

He turned to her and saw the struggle going on inside her written on her face. She was finding it hard to believe him. Then as she had a good look at his face, he saw horror and fear in her eyes. He said, "What were you doing cruising at this time of night?"

"Maybe I have insomnia," she said, looking squarely at him.

"Damn it . . ."

"For that matter, what were you doing over there without a boat?"

"I went by car," Cain said. "Someone stole my car. Therefore, I had no car."

"There are taxis on Kitsap and Toby has a phone, I'm sure."

Lisa laughed. "You can't win, Cain. Why should she answer you if you don't answer her."

Cain said, "Let's go back inside." He saw that Honor was nervous now, unable to stand still, shuffling her feet, moving a few steps one way and then back. She was frightened, too.

"Who would want to blow you to hell?"

"I don't know." She looked miserable. "I want to go home. I'm sleepy."

Cain and Lisa watched her turn and walk off a few steps and then begin a trot and finally break into a run that carried her swiftly to her boat and away. As if, Cain thought, she were afraid they would stop her. When she had disappeared around the headland, he went to his garage for some tools. The bomb was on his mind. He hated to think of it there on

his land, evil, waiting to burst and destroy. He opened the shed door and stopped.

His car was there, its dusty rear end facing him complacently. He walked around it slowly, studying it. But everything appeared normal. The keys were in the ignition and he pocketed them. He turned on the shed light and opened the hood and looked down. He took a flashlight and made a careful survey. There was no sign of anything extra attached to the motor. Satisfied, he gathered his tools and returned to the beach.

Lisa was still there. He said, "My car is back."

"That was considerate." She watched him work. He made her stand far back but she kept edging closer, peering. "Cain, how would anyone get a bomb like that?"

"Munger could. He had some, I know."

"Then so could Toby."

"If Munger wished it, yes."

"Of course," she said quickly. "But Toby is dead, Cain. He couldn't have put it on her boat."

"No," Cain said. "Not unless he did it before he was killed. I don't see how . . ."

"Who killed Toby, Cain?"

He didn't answer. He was pulling the fangs on the bomb. Trickle of sweat coursed down from his temples along his bony cheeks and dripped from his chin. Once he stopped and took a deep breath until his hand ceased shaking. He was glad the Navy had taught him something during the war besides how to kill.

He stood up and looked at the detonating assembly, turned and threw it as far as he could into the water. Then he took the bomb and tools to the garage. Lisa walked by his side.

He said, "I don't know who killed him, Lisa. But I'll be the chief suspect."

"Why you?" She sounded very sleepy. Cain was bone tired, abysmally weary. He stumbled a little as he climbed on deck.

"Because," he said, making out the bunk, "I worked him over twice in one night."

"I think I'll be suspected first," she said. "He evicted me."

"Hardly a murder motive."

He had the bunk out now and he started to strip back the

blankets to get at the top mattress. Lisa put a hand out, stopping him. "Don't be silly, Cain. It's too light to sleep outside."

"No," Cain said stubbornly. He reached again but she hipped him aside and climbed into the bed.

Lisa yawned. "Pull those curtains, Cain."

He did so and when he turned, she had her back to him. He undressed, glowering at her. Sleeping on the deck was going to be hard. He reached for some extra blankets. Lisa said sleepily, "They'll suspect one or the other of us, Cain. It won't make much difference."

"It seems to me it makes a lot of difference," he said.

"We're linked together now, Cain. Irrevocably."

Cain said, startled, "We are?"

"In the eyes of the public, the newspapers. It will come out that you put me up here. Anyone can see this has only one bed. The papers will imply things whether they are true or not."

Cain stood with his armload of blankets and looked at the back of her head. He shrugged, "Well, in that case . . ." He put the blankets back and crawled in beside her. Lisa turned, putting her head on his shoulder. He could feel the strong line of her leg and thigh against him through her pajamas. Reaching out, he found her hand and held it.

"I sure got you into something," Cain said. They were both asleep before she could point out the fallacy of the statement.

CHAPTER TEN

CAIN could feel someone's hair tickling his ear. He opened his eyes halfway, lazily, sleepily. It wasn't hair after all. It was a pair of warm, full lips. He could feel them when the voice said very softly:

"I've always wanted to lie in bed and have my breakfast cooked by a personal maid."

"That's not me," Cain said. He shut his eyes again.

"Sniff!"

It took him a moment to understand. Then he sniffed obediently. He smelled coffee and something that seemed to resemble bacon. "How'd you do that?" he asked suspiciously.

"I've got long arms," she said. "They reach all the way to the galley." She stopped and it was her turn to be suspicious. "Say, who do you think's in here with you?"

Cain turned his head, grinning lazily. The lips were just under his nose now. Lisa's eyes were dreamily half open. Since her lips were so convenient, Cain kissed them. Half asleep, he enjoyed the sensation. He kept on enjoying it until he felt an arm reach up and grasp his head and draw his face down hard.

After a moment he sat up with a yelp. He was wide awake. "Stop that. I was just saying good morning, damn it."

"You're so utterly moral, Cain," she said. She sounded as if she were wallowing in luxury. "I wonder who's making those good smells for us."

"The cops, probably. They want us to be strong when they give us the works." Cain lay down again. It was a chilly day, overcast, and the blankets felt good. He snuggled under the covers, enjoying the warmth of Lisa. He wasn't awake after all or he wouldn't have just lain there calmly. But after last night, there was no point in running.

Lisa said, "I suppose you'd better marry me now that we're so thoroughly compromised."

"Coffee and bacon," she said sniffing again.

"You're already married," he said. Only his forehead was out of the covers.

"We can go to Idaho. What's a little bigamy in Idaho?"

"There aren't any laws in Idaho," Cain admitted. His voice was muffled by the blankets. "But that's no reason to go there and get married."

"Married people don't have to testify against each other."

"Uhm," Cain said. "It's a thought."

"Do you want to marry me, Cain?"

"No," Cain said.

"Do you want to eat breakfast?"

Cain's head came out like a gopher out of a hole, the last question having been asked by a different voice. He twisted

around and saw the bright, wide-awake features of Honor Ryerson peering down from above.

"It's ready, cap'n. And it's past noon, so get up and eat."

Cain looked again at Honor and then felt the comfortable warm lump of Lisa at his side. He said, "Er . . ." He took a deep breath. "On deck?"

"Not in bed," she said flatly. "And the sun is trying to come out." The doors closed, plunging them into semi-darkness.

Cain said, "Two tickets to Idaho coming up. Turn around," and bounced out and grabbed his clothes and wriggled into them. Then he did a broad jump over the bunk, landed in front of the head and popped in. When he came out Lisa was dressed and the bunk was folded back. She took her toothbrush and disappeared. Cain stripped quickly, put on swimming trunks, grabbed a towel, and went on deck. The sun was indeed coming out, burning away the clouds and lying warm and pleasant over the faintly ruffled surface of the water.

He dived over the railing, splitting the water cleanly, took a few underwater strokes, surfaced, blew, and stroked back to the boat. He climbed on board, towelled himself, and grinned at the bright day. Honor was busily and silently setting breakfast on the portable deck table.

"Swim always sets me up for breakfast," he ventured.

"Other things too, no doubt," she said icily.

"Now, look . . ."

"I know," she said. "There's only one bed and you both were tired and you slept."

"That's the truth."

She turned and an impish grin was on her features. "Knowing you, Cain, I couldn't doubt it. Besides, it's not my business."

Lisa came on deck and Cain went down to dress. He hurried, not knowing quite how Lisa and Honor were going to react on one another after this. Lisa was regally sipping orange juice when he arrived and Honor came up and slammed a plate of toast on the table and sat down.

The breakfast was superb. Cain commented on the bacon, the eggs, the coffee, until Lisa urgently thrust a piece of toast whole into his mouth. Then she wiped up her plate, lit a

cigarette, and leaned back. "What a way to live," she said.

"Wouldn't you like it?" Honor asked sweetly.

Lisa cocked an eye at her. "Don't try to teach grandma to suck eggs, honey. I'd love it. All this sunshine and air and . . ."

"It rains here sometimes," Honor answered.

"Then it's so nice and cosy inside, under the covers, snuggled down."

"Not inside, below decks," Honor corrected sweetly.

Cain glared at them both. "Shut up!" he roared. He glared from Honor's overly sweet smile to Lisa's cow-like contentment. "Leave me alone, the both of you."

Then he saw the utterly inexplicable take place: the enmity between the two women dissolved; they smiled understandingly at one another, and joined forces. Cain finally had to take his coffee and go forward where he sat and mumbled to himself.

Honor raised her voice deliberately. "He is awfully bony, though."

"All knobs," Lisa agreed. "And he snorts in his sleep."

"He scratches himself, too," Honor said. "I've watched him nap."

Cain went back for more coffee. "Have your fun," he said. "But it just occurred to me that I might be eating breakfast with a murderess."

Lisa's cup clattered to the table. "That wasn't fair, Cain."

"It wasn't meant to be," he said. His eyes moved from one to the other. "Things like bombs wired to motors and knives in people don't appeal to me, not when I'm this close to them."

Honor said, "I heard it on the radio. They found Toby last night. That's why you were running, wasn't it?"

"Where were you going?" he countered.

"Just riding. I - couldn't sleep."

Cain blew up. When he finally quieted down, he said, "This is no time to play cat and mouse. In Toby's house - before we found the body - I tangled with a woman who was trying to get away. It could have been Paula. It could have been you." He stopped. "What color is your underwear?"

Honor lifted her t-shirt. She wore a pale green brassiere, very filmy. "What size is it, Honor?"

"Thirty-four."

Cain said, "You don't sound very curious at curious questions."

"I thought I was just supposed to answer, not ask."

Cain knew that she was still playing with him. Angrily he got up and stalked into the cabin and brought the lavender underwear. He tossed it to her. "Yours?"

She held them up. "If they were mine, Cain, how would you get them ripped that way?"

"I tore them off someone in the dark."

"You know you wouldn't have to tear my underwear off, Cain." She sounded very serious.

Cain blew up again. Then he sat on the railing, his head in his hands. Finally he looked up. "Honor, that is your underwear. I'll bet on it. I can take it to a lab and have it tested. No matter how much it's been washed there'll be traces of your bath powder and things. Then I'll have to turn my findings over to the police. This is murder now; it's no joke any longer."

He didn't know whether or not he was telling the truth about the laboratory test but she appeared to believe it. She said, "It's mine, Cain."

Lisa got up abruptly. "I'm going to walk off some of my breakfast."

When she had gone, Cain said, "You'll have to tell me some time."

"I know it." She reached for a cigarette. "I've made a mess of things, I guess, Cain. But I was only trying to help."

"What were you doing charging around Toby's in your — those things?"

"I wasn't. I didn't. It was Paula."

"What was she doing there? How did she get there?"

"I took her," Honor said. "She called me up early in the evening and asked me. I have a private phone. She said there was something at Toby's she just had to have. I went and got her and took her there and about a hundred yards out the motor began to sputter and then stopped. Paula seemed in an awful hurry and when I couldn't fix it right away she

said she'd swim for it. She did, telling me to go up one dock beyond Toby's. It's abandoned. The motor fixed itself and I went there and waited. There's an old road there and pretty soon she came in your car. Because she didn't have any clothes on, she took the boat — she hates running one — and I took the car. I drove it home and got her some clothes and brought them here. She was waiting and then I took her back to her place. That's all."

"That doesn't explain your being out by Toby's after midnight."

"Paula told me she had to run for it and left two suitcases in the basement. She was awfully upset at having left them. She kept saying, 'I've got to get them. I've got to' and she looked sort of sick. I know now: she found Toby's body and it scared her. Anyway, after I took her back, I waited until I thought you'd had time to get away and then I decided to be real smart and get them for her. The motor conked out for good and you rescued me."

"I think the cases are safe enough," Cain said. "But I don't see what damned good they are." He got out his pipe and sucked on it. "While you were waiting, how long was the launch left untended?"

"About an hour."

"Did Paula know you were going after her stuff?"

"No. I thought I'd surprise her."

"Did the motor limp between the first time it quit and the last?"

"Badly," Honor said. "About half the time. Then it would clear up and be fine."

"You can thank the balky motor you're here," Cain said. "I haven't checked the relays for time but apparently every miss gave you that much longer to live. And it was wired poorly, too. Poor wiring could have caused part of the missing — shorting out some of the plugs."

"But who could . . ."

"I don't know," Cain admitted. He filled his pipe and lighted it. "But I still don't know how Paula got into your underwear nor why it was wet nor why she stopped to take a bath."

"It's very simple," Honor said. "When she had to swim

for it, she took off her clothes and made a bundle of her slacks to keep them dry. But Paula hates being nude in front of anyone — when she's sober. So she borrowed my underwear because I didn't really need it. When she got almost to shore, she caught a cramp in one leg and had to use both her hands and her clothes were caught in a wave and went out to sea, I guess. So there she was in my underwear, all wet. She thought she'd get clothes at the house and she bathed to get the salt water off only you came and interrupted her and she tried to shove the cases down the chute, get them into the old cellar and out that old door. Only she didn't make it."

"Is she afraid of me?" Cain demanded. "She couldn't help seeing who it was when I drove up."

"She is."

"Why?"

"She thinks you'll make her come back. And she doesn't dare yet."

"Why not?"

Honor said with intense seriousness, "Because she's afraid she'll be murdered."

CHAPTER ELEVEN

WHAT had started out as a beautiful day turned sour for Cain. Getting no more out of Honor, he drove grumpily into town and loaded up with groceries and the various editions of the papers. He returned to find Honor gone and Lisa sitting on deck. He turned the groceries over to her and went through the papers. The murder had made the late morning edition.

When Lisa returned, Cain read aloud to her. The gist of the story was that the caretakers of Patton's place had returned from a week's vacation after midnight to have their headlights light up a coffin in the garage and in the coffin was

the owner himself, dead. The house lights had been on but they went out suddenly; someone pulled the master switch and disappeared. The Harkness couple called the police but couldn't trace the person or persons running away. A window had been forced but they saw no signs of robbery. Friends and acquaintances of the dead man were being questioned.

The afternoon paper had an interesting item concerning the fact that one Lisa Simms, a business partner of Patton, had disappeared. An eviction notice given her two days before by the aforesaid Patton explained the disappearance in part. She left no forwarding address. The article did not intimate that she was suspected yet.

"I will be," Lisa commented.

Cain discovered that at a party at Pepe's and later at a continuation of the same party, a fisherman, one Abel Cain (former University All-Coast basketball star) had had altercations with Patton.

"That came from the friends and associates," Lisa said. "Now you're in it, too."

"I'm looking for the cops at any time," Cain said. "But I suppose we can explain and . . ." He stopped.

"Lay ourselves open to a charge of breaking and entering," Lisa said sweetly. "Or getting Paula into it. You'll have to lie, Cain."

"So will you." He had the uneasy feeling that lying would not be too difficult for her.

"I'm going to disappear," Lisa said. "Lend me your dinghy and I'll go visit Honor for a while."

"So I stay and lie to protect you, too, is that it?"

"Partly. Do you mind, Cain?"

He looked at her. She was not smiling but studying him quizzically. She was, he thought, a very attractive woman. She was a little . . . He could not quite find the word. She was gay and easy and not coyly modest around him. She was a good companion. But he realized that he didn't know much about her. Not very much at all.

"I mind when I don't know what I'm supposed to be protecting you from."

"My own folly. Mistakes I made. Will that do?"

"Criminal?"

"That depends on interpretation," Lisa said. She got up and walked to the rail restlessly and swung back, facing him. "I ask you to trust me, Cain."

"Yet you aren't willing to trust me," he said.

She was silent a moment. "I hadn't thought of it that way," she said in surprise.

"Sure," Cain said. "I trust you enough to lie for you. That's my neck we're perjuring. But you don't trust me with what you've done. I know it's something pretty big in your mind. Last night you were so scared the police would tag you, you were in a funk. Maybe you killed him. How do I know?"

"I was with you last night."

"I don't know when he died," Cain said.

"Maybe I did it yesterday afternoon when Honor was here and I went for a walk," she said. "Or maybe the night before — after you went to sleep on my shoulder, Cain." She took a cigarette from her pocket and her fingers shook a little.

"I like you a lot, Cain." Her voice was low, unsteady. "In my apartment when you went to sleep there after inviting Munger's little apes to kill you — For what? Because you'd taken a job to find someone you dislike and you were going to stick with it. After you'd done that, I decided you were a guy worth helping. And maybe a guy worth wanting — permanently.

"And there are things I've done I'm ashamed of. If they come out you'll think less of me."

Cain didn't like being crowded this way. But he said, "We've all done things we're ashamed of. I can think back to when I was a kid and I blush right now at my own asininity. I'm not holy enough to make it matter whether I think less of you or not."

"That goes on the assumption that you think something of me to start with."

"Yes," Cain said without inflection. "Or I wouldn't have asked you here."

Lisa's smile was brief and pained. "I'm stubborn, Cain. You can't get rid of me now without turning me over to the police."

"I have nothing to turn you in for yet," Cain said. He got

up and walked as far away from her as he could get and then returned slowly. He said in his deliberate way, "I haven't got much respect for the forces of law and order. Not that they aren't occasionally competent. It's what they represent: man's need to police himself against his own nature. It doesn't speak well for a civilized humanity, does it? That's why I live alone."

"This is no time to get philosophical," Lisa said.

"You want to know why I'm doing this. I've been called an idealist. But I'm not interested in changing the system. For that we'd have to all get killed off and start with some other organism that didn't have greed and stupidity bred into it. I'm lazy. So I say to hell with it and crawl into my hole."

"And I come and try to get in too and there isn't room, is there, Cain?" She smiled. "And now the police are coming to pull you out."

"Yes," Cain said, "and I'll commit one of the human foibles I decry: I'll lie to get myself back safely into it."

"But you can't lie for yourself without lying for me."

Cain laughed aloud. "Trumped my ace. I didn't intend to, Lisa. I just asked what I'm supposed to be lying to save you from."

"Let's just say that I publicly threatened Toby's life."

"I can imagine a lot of people have."

"Lots," she admitted. "But I don't know of any but myself who tried and failed and did it so stupidly. Toby got proof."

"Blackmail," Cain murmured. Toby's set-up had all the earmarks. Too many people who hated him stayed around him, served him.

"Yes," she said. "Not money, not me. More subtle uses, you might say."

She turned and went into the cabin. Cain stayed where he was, staring at the water and thinking of what she had said. Little ugly things that he couldn't push away kept crawling through his mind.

When she came back, she carried her luggage. Cain watched as she got in the dinghy, started the motor, and then sat there, bobbing on the water and watching him.

Cain said, "You were ordered to tag me from Pepe's?"

"One way or another," she admitted. "You created an incident and made it easier."

"And you were supposed to find some way to keep tab on me and report my actions. Was that eviction notice set up in advance?"

"Yes." Her voice was low.

Cain said, "And you were supposed to maneuver me to Toby's farm last night. When did you get that order?"

"When I went for a walk so you could talk alone to Honor." She was silent a moment. Then she said, "I'm sorry as hell, Cain. That's the way it was." She put the motor into gear, and Cain watched her chug off, picking up speed, and then sweep wide around the point and disappear.

Cain was having iced tea, his feet on the rail, his face turned to admire the sunset when the police came. He heard the car, turned his head, and saw them, and turned away again. When they hailed him, he asked them aboard.

There were just two and Cain knew them both. The tall, graying man almost as thin as Cain himself was Lieutenant Wilson. The other, in uniform, was Bergen. He came aboard gingerly because of his bulk, clutching his inevitable shorthand notebook. They took chairs and refused Cain's offer of tea.

"I read where Toby Patton was killed," Cain said. "I've been expecting you."

"You could have checked with us," Wilson said. He lit his pipe.

"This is nicer than the city. You got a ride out here, didn't you?"

"Nice place," Bergen agreed. "How's fishing?"

"I was going out later but you came," Cain said.

"Eat canned tuna," Wilson told him.

Cain said quickly, "Kitsap isn't within your jurisdiction."

"Let's say we were asked to come in because Patton's interests were primarily in the city," Wilson said. "How long did you know him?"

Cain told him. Wilson asked, "What were *you* doing at a place like Pepe's?"

"I'm a philosopher," Cain said. "I like to observe people now and then so I can come back here and be happier."

"Did you take Honor Ryerson along for observation?"

"She's an astronomer. She's trained in observation."

Wilson smiled without much humor. He never seemed to have much humor. He said, "She's under twenty-one."

"So I get taken in for contributing to the delinquency of a minor?"

"It's one way, Cain."

Cain had an idea that Wilson was walking on eggs about now. Ryerson was wealthy and so subject to more respect than the average person — even in a homicide. The papers, he had noted, said nothing of Honor's being at Pepe's with him.

"Officially she wasn't there, Wilson. I won't admit she was."

"What do you care about the Ryersons?"

"I like the girl; she's intelligent. She has a good career ahead of her. She wasn't involved. Why drag her in?"

"I won't unless I have to."

Cain had found out. He sipped his tea. Wilson said, "Why did you hit Patton?"

"He was making nasty remarks. I didn't like his face."

"Were you drunk?"

"No. I'd probably have killed him if I had been."

"Cain don't drink," Bergen said. "Often," he added.

"That's why," Cain told him.

"I understand that Miss Simms gave you a hand."

"Honor was upset," Cain said. "She isn't used to brawls. Lisa Simms helped her."

Wilson had apparently tired of fencing. "To the point where all three of you took off, after working Anse over. But you still ended up with Patton later."

"Lisa — Mrs. Simms — suggested it," Cain said. "I wanted to see what one of Toby's parties really was like. We took Honor home first."

"And went there to hit him again?"

"No, just to observe. The hitting was incidental. . . . He was drunk. He started it."

"And his friends pitched in to help him."

"Naturally. I spoiled their party." Cain wondered how much Wilson knew, how much Curtin and the others had

told the police. He decided it was about time he saw them himself.

"So you put him in a coffin. That was an odd thing to do."

So he knew that much. "Well," Cain said, "you don't run across a coffin every day. It was handy, and I put him in it."

"Did you stick a knife in him first?"

"I don't like knives," Cain said.

"Maybe Lisa Simms does."

"She was busy cleaning up the odds and ends — Curtin and the others."

"Patton was found dead — in a coffin. The same coffin."

"A good deal later," Cain said. "I put him in night before last. He was alive then."

"He was killed sometime between then and early yesterday morning," Wilson said. "He'd been dead a number of hours when he was found. The closest we can come is about eighteen hours."

"Uhm," Cain said. That made a lot of things different. "Is that public news?"

"Not yet."

"Then why tell me?"

"To get your alibi."

What Wilson had told him was new and interesting. Cain tried to think back but Wilson was talking again and he listened.

"Out of six people, Cain, I got enough of a story to know why you were at Pepe's with Honor Ryerson, why you hit Patton, and why you went to his place on the island — and why you hit him there. I talked with Ryerson a few moments ago, too."

"Then why badger me?" Cain demanded. "Or do you want to make the whole thing public?"

"Not unless we have to. Money has its privileges but sometimes they stop when it's homicide."

"Patton wasn't worth stewing about."

"Your opinion. Where did you go after you stuffed him into the coffin?"

Cain hesitated. He didn't want Lisa dragged in at this point. Their apparent relationship would be duck soup for

police and reporters. "Back for something to eat. We were hungry. I drove Mrs. Simms home and we ate there."

"Where did she go after she was evicted?"

Cain shrugged. Wilson asked, "What did you do yesterday — last night, particularly?"

"Thought about things. I'm still looking for Paula Ryerson."

"All day and evening?"

"Why not? I think slowly."

"And you don't know where Mrs. Simms is?"

Cain hesitated. He saw that he was working himself and Lisa into a trap. He said, "How confidential is what I tell you, Wilson?"

"Not at all if it leads to murder."

"And if it doesn't?"

"I'm capable of keeping quiet."

"I can provide an alibi for Lisa, if that's what you want. But it's a bit compromising."

"That's better. Go ahead."

Cain had a hunch that Wilson had talked to Lisa and he tried to think how she would have done it. Her reputation would be regarded less by the lady than her neck, he was sure. He said, "All right, we stayed together after the party and all day yesterday and last night."

"All the time?"

"There were a few moments when she wanted to be alone — people are funny that way."

Wilson was not amused. "You were together all night before last, last night, yesterday and today?"

"Most of today. The rest is right."

"That's no alibi, Cain. You had to sleep some of the time."

Cain grinned evilly. "Have you met Lisa Simms?"

"Yes."

"Would you have slept, Wilson?"

Wilson tugged at his pipe. "According to her, you slept most of the time."

"You know how women are," Cain said. "Modest. Besides, if she could claim that she must have been there to watch me."

"Why are you protecting her, Cain?"

Cain raised his eyebrows. "I'm telling you the truth, damn it. If it protects her, fine. If not . . ." He shrugged. "You disliked him, too."

Cain said slowly, "Meaning we could have killed him together?"

"It's a possibility, Cain. I'm a policeman, remember. Even if I thought it absurd, I couldn't overlook it."

"And do you think it's absurd?"

"No," Wilson said. "Not in the least." He got up, nodded to Bergen who closed his notebook and stood, and they walked away together. Wilson turned and called back:

"Don't go away, Cain."

He wouldn't, Cain thought, not unless they came and took him away.

CHAPTER TWELVE

CAIN ate a sandwich and drank a glass of milk and headed for town. He thought of calling Lisa for information and decided against it. The idea of what she had done still bothered him. In a way he did not blame her, knowing as he did now that Toby had been blackmailing her. But he thought of the easy way she had euchered him into taking her to the farm instead of letting him go to Munger's, and his pride was hurt.

He was ambling along at a conservative thirty-five when the realization hit him. He slowed the car, causing horns to honk from behind. Cain signaled and then pulled onto the wide gravel shoulder of the road and stopped.

Lisa had told him that she had received an order to get him to the farm last night and that she had got that order when she had gone for a walk in the afternoon. But Wilson had pointed out to Cain that Toby had been killed sometime the night before. Which meant, Cain thought, that she had

either called Toby via a spirit telephone or had taken the order from someone else.

The whole thing made Cain a little ill. He didn't like any of it. He liked it less because when he thought of Lisa, he remembered the nice things about her. But the more he thought of it, the madder he became. He drove on again and by the time he reached town he was ready to bid for a box seat at her hanging.

He thought, Who else could have given her an order like that? And there was only one sensible answer: Karl Munger.

But why? What good did it do Munger to have Cain go out to the farm?

Cain pushed it aside temporarily. Stopping at a drugstore, he copied the addresses of Curtin and Smathers from the phone book. He was surprised to find Curtin at home, sober, and looking the worse for wear. Cain suspected the police had given him a psychological working over as rough as the physical one he had had the night before. He did not look happy to see Cain.

He stood in the doorway, blocking the entry way. "I don't want to see you."

"You're going to," Cain said. He saw Curtin's eyes become ugly. Reaching out a hand, Cain tapped Curtin on the chest and, as Curtin recoiled, Cain stepped forward, slapping Curtin aside with his shoulder and kicking the door shut with his foot.

"Don't get excited," he said. "This isn't my idea of fun."

"Now look here, Cain . . ."

"Stow it!"

Curtin went sulkily into his living room and Cain followed. The place was untidy but beneath the litter Cain could see the signs of wealth in the furnishings, in the bric-a-brac about. There was also an expensive-looking bar at one side of the room and Curtin made a bee-line for it. He gulped a drink straight, then mixed one and sat down with it.

"I've told the police all I know, Cain."

"I'm not the police. I'm just a poor boy trying to get out of a murder charge. Between you and the others, Lisa and I are being crucified. I think it's deliberate. I want to know why."

"I haven't anything against you."

Cain lit a cigarette. "Maybe not. But you might have something *for* me. Information, perhaps. What was Toby blackmailing you about?"

Curtin didn't blink. "My business, sorry."

"The police will find the stuff," Cain said. He didn't know what he was talking about but he knew that if he acted that way to Curtin, he would get nowhere.

Curtin said, as if Cain knew all about it, "Wilson thinks he can hush it as long as I can't be prosecuted."

"If Toby was foolish enough to let you get your hands on the stuff," Cain said, "you'd have a good motive for killing him. You, or the doctor, or Smathers, or the women."

Curtin looked less pallid with liquor working on him. He lit a cigarette with fairly steady hands. "Toby wasn't that foolish," Curtin said. "And why should I kill him anyway? I worked for him. It was good money."

"You didn't need it."

"Sometimes," Curtin said. He seemed easier now, more amenable. "And not what you're thinking. None of us paid Toby money. That's the truth, Cain. We did a lot of things for him for free but we never gave him money. Toby liked the power his knowledge gave him, I suppose. And he always had money enough."

He blurted it out. As if, Cain thought, it would get things over and he, Cain, would go away. Cain accepted what Curtin said but he didn't like it. Too many things were left unexplained, and some were left even more hopeless of explanation than before.

Cain said, "I want to hear about the night Paula disappeared."

Curtin looked almost eager. He said, "We were on the farm. Paula was pretty drunk and she kept saying something about Munger cheating her. Toby kept trying to shut her up and finally he slapped her. She got vicious then and said she was going to see Munger and walked out. Toby took after her. He came back alone and the party went on."

"Then what?"

"That's all. I suppose I went home. At least I woke up here. I didn't even hear from Toby for five or six days."

"And when you did?" Cain prompted.

"He called and told me to fly to San Francisco and get some stuff for him. I did. Then he called me day before yesterday and said we were having a party. We met at Pepe's."

"Why Pepe's?"

"I suppose because it's one of Munger's places. Toby gets what he wants there."

"And you didn't see Paula in all this time?"

"No," Curtin said.

"Or wonder where she was?"

"If I thought about it at all, I imagine I figured she was at her place on Whidby."

Cain said, "Now what happened after I left the farm with Lisa?"

Curtin smiled ruefully. "I was pretty groggy but I remember somebody bringing me a drink — and that's all until daylight."

"Who was up and around enough to give you a drink?"

"One of the girls. Larson said, 'Ah, Hebe, the cupbearer to the gods!' I remember. Then I passed out."

"Who is Larson?"

"The doctor," Curtin said.

"Which girl?" Cain asked.

"How would I know? She had one of those crazy masks over her face."

"And what happened after you woke up?"

"It was early daylight," Curtin said. "I staggered back to the house to go to bed. Only Toby's door was open and I could see and hear him asleep in there so I sneaked out and went home."

"Sneaked?"

"Toby wakes easily and in the morning he's mean," Curtin said. He grimaced. "And after what happened to him, he would have been vicious. I went home."

"You were alone?"

"When I woke up no one was there. The coffin was gone and I thought everyone had left. I guess they had since my car and Toby's were the only ones there."

"Have you heard anything from the others since? What happened to them?"

Curtin looked weary of answering questions but he said, "I know that Annie was out for two days. Whatever was in those flasks was murder. Everyone was in bad shape for a while."

"I see," Cain murmured. He said, "Give me Larson's address and I'll take off."

He got it and drove next to the Smathers' as it was closer. There was no one in. He tried the doctor's place and a maid said that he had gone out. He had walked. So Cain walked too, and he found Larson seated alone in a small neighborhood bar getting himself thoroughly drunk. Cain sat down and started talking. He got substantially the same story Curtin had given up to the point where the doctor had wakened.

"It was dark when I woke up," he said. "Just turning gray. I stumbled around for a while and everyone was lying on the ground out. It was a hell of a mess. I looked for the coffin but it was gone so I figured Toby had got out."

"What about the wax dummy of Paula?"

"Gone, too, I suppose. I didn't think about it to tell the truth." He smiled ruefully, the smile slightly sideways. "But the police haven't found it, I understand."

"So?"

"So I felt my way to the house and by then it was daylightish. I saw Toby asleep in his bed and decided to go back and warn the others. If we woke him after what you did to him, there would have been hell to pay."

"He was alive at daylight?"

"I guess he was. He breathed. I was wishing I couldn't."

"Then?"

"I went downstairs and got some buckets and lugged them back. I woke Norene and Anne and then Smathers started coming around. He got his wife up, but he couldn't wake Curtin so we left him. We all went home, that's all."

Cain said, "What happens if the police find the blackmail stuff Toby had on you?"

"Blackmail?"

"Don't tell me a respectable physician is going to hell this way without a reason."

Larson tried to look belligerent and then gulped his drink and ordered another. "I'm done, that's all."

"Abortion?"

"Yes."

"She die?"

"No. Toby took care of her by flying her to California to a hospital."

"Then what happened?"

The doctor laughed mirthlessly. "He sold her to Munger."

"For God's sake, man!"

"No. She was attractive to men. She still is. Munger uses her as a come-on." Cain looked at him. The man was miserable for more reasons than one.

"Anne?"

Larson nodded and reached for the drink as it was brought to him. "Anne."

"Messy," Cain said. "So she keeps tabs on you for them — and you've fallen for her. You're sweating in two ways."

"It's not your goddamned business!"

"It would give you good reason to kill Toby while he was out in that coffin."

"I didn't. I wouldn't until I got my hands on the stuff he has on me."

"Maybe," Cain said. "Who brought you the drink after the fight?"

"I think it was Smathers' wife. She looked about her size."

Cain nodded. "How long since you've seen Paula?"

"The night she disappeared."

He gave the same report as Curtin. Cain got up. "What has Toby on Lisa?"

"I wouldn't know," Larson said. "But she hopped when he cracked the whip."

"Until the other night."

Larson's smile was half hidden but obvious. So they all knew, Cain thought. They all knew he had been taken for a ride, suckered. And it was funny because Cain was noted for disliking women. That made it twice as funny. Funnier than hell. Cain sat down.

"How did you know?"

Larson worked on his drink and shrugged. Cain leaned over and grabbed a handful of coatfront. *"How did you know?"*

Larson pushed at Cain's hand. His own was clammy. "What difference does it make whether or not I tell you?" he said as if to himself. "When you and Honor came into Pepe's, Toby told Lisa: quote, 'Latch on to Cain and see how far you get.' She said something and he said, 'That's an order.' That's all."

Cain said, "I see." So they didn't know what she was ordered to do actually. They would all have taken it as a joke — as something amusing. But, Cain thought, to Lisa it had meant more than that, more than the funny business of a woman trying to get next to a man who was known as a misogynist. To Lisa it meant finding out how far Cain had got in the Paula affair. So Lisa had had previous orders from Toby, that was obvious. The fact that the eviction notice had been prepared in advance was proof enough.

But why was Toby so interested? Had Munger put him up to it? That was hardly Munger's way. His way would be to let Cain amble along and keep an eye on him, then call him in and rough him up to get information. Yet Munger hadn't wanted him to do anything. He had wanted him just to drop the whole thing. If he had given Toby orders, would he have then visited Cain as he had?

Cain didn't get it. There seemed more to Toby than he had first thought. He said now, "Did Toby ever make passes at you?"

"No." Larson sounded quite unsurprised. "Nor at any of the others — men or women — I'm sure."

"He didn't like women."

"No. But he liked to see other men make fools of themselves over women. He'd laugh because he didn't have to."

"He must have had a boy friend then," Cain probed.

"I suppose so."

Cain saw Larson's eyes slide from his face and peer into the glass. He said quickly, "Who?"

"How would I know?"

"You do know," Cain said. "What difference does it make now? Who?"

"Go to hell," Larson said thickly.

Cain said, "Maybe I should go to the cops and tell them about the abortion deal."

"Go ahead. They'll find out sooner or later."

Cain could see that he was frightened. He continued, "You're hoping they won't find out, though. But if I tell them they can work on Anne and check the California hospital she was in — they can build a case if they have something to start on."

Larson looked as if he wanted to hit Cain. He rose in the booth and leaned forward, one arm lifted, his face inches from Cain's. Cain just looked at him. Suddenly, Larson dropped back into the seat, trembling. He began to cry.

"Leave me alone. I've paid for that. Damn it, leave me alone."

"Who, Doctor?"

Larson gulped some more of his drink and lifted his hand for another. "It's just rumor. What difference could it make?"

Cain's voice was low and cold. "Who?"

Larson said, "Munger."

Cain stood up and laughed in his face and walked out.

CHAPTER THIRTEEN

CAIN was nearly back to the Smathers' house when he started to laugh again and the laughter froze in his throat. Munger? Karl Munger of the tweeds and the pipe and the excessive masculinity?

Why not Munger? Who was the psychologist who had said not to worry about the boys who wore lace? The dangerous ones looked and acted like truck drivers. And sometimes were.

Cain sucked in his breath, "Damn!"

He drove faster now, skidding to a stop and half running up the steps of the house when he saw the light in the living room. His ring brought slow steps and the door opened.

He saw Smathers' wife. She looked harrassed and weary. She just stared at Cain.

"I'm looking for Mr. Smathers."

"He isn't in. His office . . ."

Cain said, "I'm Cain," because obviously she didn't remember him. "If he isn't here I'll talk to you."

"Cain — the one who hit Toby — I remember now," she said. She smiled at him. "I wish I'd been sober enough to remember it clearly."

"I want to talk to you," Cain repeated.

He saw speculation come into her eyes as she surveyed him. He thought, Oh God, another one. And he wondered why some women seemed to think he was a challenge to their sex simply because he had the reputation of not chasing after them.

"Come in, Cain."

He went. Her living room was big and was obviously made for entertaining. She went on through it to a smaller room, a more homelike place with books and a fireplace and a sewing machine open with a partly finished dress on it. There was a chaise longue looking out of place but comfortable and she sat down. Cain remained standing.

"Drink?"

"Have one," he said. "You look bushed."

She got up, showing him that her stockings ended a little way above her knee. He was not impressed. She made herself a drink and came back. "Cops, questions — what a mess."

"And worry about what they'll find at Toby's, I suppose?"

Her breath went in sharply. She hadn't been expecting it. She tried to look blank but it was a miserable job. She wasn't a bad-looking woman, Cain noticed. A little short for his taste and too much uplift and too much effort expended to hide thirty-odd years. She had very dark hair and young-looking features. If she hadn't spent so much time with Toby Patton's gang, she wouldn't have needed the effort, he thought.

"What did you want to talk to me about?"

He went through his routine questions and the answers seemed to tally with the others he had got. "What did Toby have on you?"

"Nothing. Should he have?"

"On your husband?"

"If anything, why should I tell you?"

"Where is Smathers now?"

"I don't know. Out."

She said it too quickly, too flatly. Cain let it ride for the moment. He said, "With another woman?"

"George?" She laughed. "Hardly. George wouldn't bother with another woman. He doesn't have to."

"You're a perfect couple then?"

"Even at Patton's parties," she said mockingly. The drink seemed to give her a lift and now she stood up, stretching a little to remind him that she had a figure, and took a cigarette from a nearby table. "Lovebirds, that's us."

"You disappoint me," Cain murmured.

Her eyes squinted almost closed and she looked at him steadily through the cigarette smoke. "I'd hate to do that."

Cain went close to her. He took her cigarette and put it to his lips and took a long drag and then set it in the ashtray. He took the drink from her hand and set it on the table. He ran his hand behind her head, ruffling the hair at the base of her neck. She stood very still, her lips slightly parted, her eyes half shut.

Cain ran his other hand behind her back, catching her right wrist as he did so and caressing it gently. Then with no apparent hurry, his fingers closed down tight on her neck and he brought her arm up her back, turned her and she was face down on the chaise longue. He kept the arm up her back, put a knee on her buttocks.

"Where is your husband?"

She tried to get loose but the position was easy for Cain to maintain. A little leverage, a little pressure — she began to kick her legs. She twisted her head and tried to bite him. He dug his fingers into her neck and she whimpered and stopped.

"Where is Smathers?"

"I don't know. You're hurting me!"

"I intend to. Where is Smathers?"

"Are you proud, Cain, picking on a woman?"

"Save that," he said. "The kind that mess around with Toby

Patton are all the same to me: man, woman or neuter. Where is Smathers?"

She made no sound at all. Cain raised her arm a little causing her to gasp. "I'll count to ten. On ten it will break."

"I don't know."

"One . . . two . . ." She gasped again. "Three . . ." One more notch. He could feel her buttocks writhe with the pain. She gave a convulsive heave as he said, "Four. Don't do that. It hurts worse that way."

"Five . . ." Cain said. "Six . . ." She began to cry.

"At Toby's place."

Cain released a little pressure and she whimpered in relief. "Looking for the stuff?"

"Yes."

"What had Toby on him? On you?"

"What would be the point in getting and destroying it if he told you?" She talked jerkily, gasping.

"I'd have no proof. I just want to know if it's enough to cause you to kill."

"We didn't. I swear it. It's just . . ."

Cain said, "Six again and seven," and felt another gasp tear out of her.

"Just a legal affair."

Smathers, Cain knew, was a prominent civil lawyer. He said, "Munger's enterprises."

"Yes."

"That's messy," Cain said. He didn't let her up. "Is he Toby's lawyer, too?"

"Yes."

Cain let her up. She lay where she was a moment and then rolled over and sat up, letting her dress ride up her thighs and making no attempt to pull it down.

"Thanks," he said. Before she could answer he turned and left the room.

It didn't take him long to get to Toby's place. He parked in the rear and eased his way up the service steps. The back door was ajar very slightly and he paused there, getting his breath and listening. It was dark inside; the shades were all drawn.

He heard soft rustlings coming from somewhere up front. He eased himself in and unlimbered his flashlight. He was sweating. A man like Smathers might go off half cocked and if he had a gun . . .

Cain moved as if he were trailing a deer in a forest. He saw the guarded, tiny light when he was in the hallway and he eased through the door. The light was travelling along a big, modernistic bed, the kind with a fancy headboard that had shelves and contained books, a clock, a telephone. Toby's, no doubt.

Cain said, "Smathers!" and shot his light in the man's face.

The flashlight dropped from Smathers' hand and he made a gibbering sound before the fear went out of him. By then it was too late. Cain had his hands on the man. He felt him wrench and he put a knee in his back and pulled. Smathers held still.

"Just want a word with you," Cain said.

With the light on, Smathers seemed better. He stared at Cain until his shaking went away. "That was a hell of a trick. What do you want?"

"Some answers."

"How did you know I was here."

"Your wife," Cain said. "I made her tell where you were."

"That telephone. It's been ringing steadily. That was her then." He shrugged at his bad luck. "Why me?" he asked.

"You're Toby's lawyer. Munger's lawyer. I don't expect you to reveal professional secrets without some persuasion. If you talk nice and fast things will go nicely."

"The police . . ."

"You'd call them, Smathers? Would you?"

Smathers called him a few names. Cain smiled politely until he was done. Smathers said, "What do you want to know?"

"Toby's business. Munger's business. What took Toby away for the first week after Paula disappeared."

Smathers laughed. It was almost an hysterical sound. It gushed out of him and turned to a giggle and he stopped suddenly. "Sure, why not? What the hell's it to me? If I can find the stuff, my wife and I are fine: free of Toby Patton. Free of you too, maybe. I'll tell you." He got up. He talked quickly, jerkily.

"Toby and Munger are — partners in a way. Only Toby's the head man. Was the head man. Munger is his front."

"And his boy friend?"

"Yes," Smathers said. "How did you find that out?"

"Go on."

"Toby is — was the one with the brains. Munger is more imposing for a figurehead. He did everything on Toby's orders. Everything is in Munger's name but Toby has a protection. Munger has everything signed over on a long-term note. Toby could squeeze down any time if Munger got greedy. However, Munger's smart enough to know he couldn't go it alone."

"You're sure of that? Maybe Munger got tired of playing second fiddle. If everyone thought he was the top man . . ."

"Could be," Smathers said. "Yes, it could well be. Munger has the men." He stopped and looked toward the window. "But the way it was done — I don't know. Anyway, that's the set-up."

"Where does Paula come in? Why would Munger — or Toby — be so interested in keeping her . . . disappeared. Why try to stop me?"

"This is strictly under the table," Smathers said. "It's tied up so you can't prove it very easily."

"Unless I need to I won't even remember it."

"Paula put up the money in the first place for Toby to expand. He and Munger were a one-arm gambling joint. She put up the cash. They expanded. They even have some legitimate enterprises. Like logging."

Cain sucked in his breath. He said hesitantly, "You mean Paula is bucking her old man?"

"Through a dummy outfit, yes. You know that he uses old-fashioned methods. The deal is all set up. He can save himself by selling out. He's got the offer. He can get enough to sit back and retire and let Honor play astronomer. But if he tries to fight — he's licked. He needs Paula's vote to sell. If he doesn't get it then her dummy outfit will squeeze him and break him and she'll have it all."

"That doesn't make sense," Cain said. "She still wouldn't have to hide out for all that time."

"Ryerson knows. He's had detectives. He knows. If he gets his hands on her, he'll kill her."

"Bring back her body," Cain remembered him saying.

"So she's hiding from her own father."

"They hate each other. It's just one more week. I have the papers all ready."

"How does Toby's death affect this?"

Smathers laughed again. "That's the beauty of it. It doesn't, — in the long run. Paula owns the works now: Munger and all. Under community property law, she's the top man."

Cain said, "I don't follow you. She isn't married to Toby."

"She was, until he died. That's where he was that week after she disappeared. When she went roaring off to Munger's about some deal she thought he'd cheated her on, Toby called Munger and had her held. He went and talked to her and Paula let herself be persuaded into marrying him. That gave Toby a big hold on her. He kept her away for a week and then she got loose and headed for her sanctuary."

"You mean if he had killed her he was the boss man under community property."

"Certainly. But he didn't dare. Not until the lumber deal was finished. The way it would work if Paula were found dead Ryerson would get her proxy by court order and leave Toby in the cold. Then there might be an investigation if Toby tried to contest it. So to keep her from crossing him, he held her."

"How did she get talked into marrying him in the first place?"

"Drunk, I suppose. They flew to Nevada. Toby could be persuasive."

"I'm damned," Cain said.

"If only I can get my stuff from Toby. I went over this place a half-dozen times," Smathers said. "But so did everyone else, including the police. No soap."

"I have one more question," Cain said. "Are you Paula's attorney, too?"

"Only insofar as her and Toby's business affairs are concerned," Smathers said.

That was that. Cain nodded and Smathers quickly left, not looking back once. Cain soon followed him out of the house.

Quickly he entered his car and drove off. He stopped at a drugstore and called Ryerson's. He got Honor on the telephone. "Listen. I have a message for your sister. Get it to her fast. Okay?"

"Shoot." She sounded excited. It was like living a book to her, Cain thought.

"Tell Paula that if someone finds the stuff before she can get it, hell will pop. Got that?"

Honor said, "Yes."

"Tell her that if the police or the others get it, they won't be afraid to talk any longer."

"What stuff?"

"Later," Cain said. "Get the message through and then get your glad rags on. We're going stepping."

"Oh-h, Cain! But what about Lisa?"

Cain had an idea. He said carefully, "Send Lisa with the message." He laughed to himself. "See you in forty minutes."

"Hurry, Cain. I'm practically dressed already."

He could imagine. Hanging up, he went slowly back to his car. Munger, he thought, wasn't going to like him much longer. Maybe he wouldn't even tolerate him.

CHAPTER FOURTEEN

CAIN chewed on it all the way out to his place, even while he dressed and drove to Ryerson's. Much of what he had learned didn't seem to make sense. And insofar as helping him clear up the murder, he was worse off than before.

He grinned sourly to himself as he knotted his black tie. Toby Patton could have been killed for a number of reasons; a lot of people, in fact, seemed to have ample justification for sticking that knife into him. Cain ticked them off on his fingers: Curtin and Smathers and Larson, certainly. Only Smathers wasn't such a good bet — not if a sizable piece of his income came from Toby's business properties. And after

them there was Lisa, but Cain couldn't quite figure out when she would have had the time.

And Honor? How much did Honor know of her sister's business enterprises. She had been very loyal to Paula throughout and she had been in close contact with her. And maybe, in one of her "helpful" moments she had got the idea that Toby Patton needed killing. Maybe she had learned that Toby was behind her father's potential ruin.

Cain let it go. He hadn't enough facts yet. He thought about Paula Ryerson, as elusive as a will-o-the-wisp as far as he was concerned, though everyone else seemed able to get in touch with her. Paula was married to Toby Patton: Point one. Paula was a full partner in the ugly, nasty enterprises that Munger fronted for: Point two. Paula was out to cut her father's throat because of a mutual hatred, and yet she had to hide out because she was afraid of him and his power: Point three. If Paula had killed Toby, what could she have gained? Cain shook his head and struggled into his tuxedo coat. Not much more than Toby would have gained if he had killed *her* too soon.

And then there was Munger. Cain made a face at himself as he smoothed down a lapel. There was always Munger. He had been acting a part and doing it so well that few people suspected he wasn't the ruthless man he portrayed. But maybe he was now. Maybe the part had taken over Munger: maybe he wanted to be the big boy in fact as well as name.

Cain sputtered the little coupe to Ryerson's and walked slowly onto the broad porch. And maybe there was a motive he didn't yet know about. Maybe there was someone he hadn't taken into consideration. Like Theodore Ryerson himself.

Cain rang the bell. Thomas answered suavely. Cain said, "Will you tell Honor I'll be with her father for a few moments?"

"Yes, sir." Thomas escorted him into the study where the old man was hunched over the fire.

Cain nodded to Ryerson and sat down. "I'm taking your daughter to Munger's. We'll spend some of your expense money."

"Honor will like that. It's her birthday."

Cain let it go by. "The police were over to see me."

"I expected it. They were here. Very cooperative."

Cain waited a moment but the old man added nothing more. He said, "I understand that Paula won't come home because she's afraid you'll kill her."

The bright eyes set in the dry, stretched face looked squarely at him. "That would depend on whether I could get away with it."

Cain studied his nails. They were clean. "Why? Not just because you hated her mother and hate Paula for looking like her."

Ryerson studied him intently. "How much do you know, Cain?"

"More than you want me to know."

"You know of her connection with Munger then?"

"With Munger and other things."

Ryerson accepted it with a nod. He took a brandy snifter from a table beside him and warmed the glass bowl in his hands. "Paula has been working toward this for years. Very cleverly. I knew almost nothing about it until recently. The detective I told you about uncovered a number of things. And when they led him to Munger, he quit."

"Naturally," Cain said. "But if you kill her the whole thing would tie up in litigation."

"Not if it were made to look like accidental death. Then the court would favor me, give me her proxy." He sounded dryly academic.

"Then you didn't want to find her in order to have her vote with you next Saturday. You knew she wouldn't do that. You wanted to have her found so you could figure some way of disposing of her."

"You might put it that way."

Cain laughed. "In other words, I've been hired as a sort of executioner. Or the executioner's assistant."

"Your skirts would be clean."

"Thanks," Cain said. "Of course, the whole thing wouldn't have done you a bit of good as long as Toby Patton was alive."

The fingers tightened on the brandy glass. There was a long silence as if Ryerson were mentally weighing things. He said finally, "No?"

Did he or did he not know of the marriage? Cain couldn't be sure; the old man had lied to him before with consummate skill. He said, "They were partners."

"Not insofar as my affairs are concerned."

Cain still didn't have the answer. And it was too beautiful a proposition to let go: Ryerson had Toby killed because he knew of the marriage. That eliminated Toby as Paula's heir when and if the old man could have her disposed of.

"She was married to Toby Patton."

"I didn't know."

Didn't he? Ryerson added, "That makes the task much simpler, then. But the time is short. I'll have to ask you to hurry."

Cain stood up. "I can find her any time I wish. Getting her here is another matter. I don't think I want to do that now. As crummy as she is, as much as she makes my skin crawl, I don't think I want to lead her to death." He paused. "Of course, you dare not have her killed now. I could testify."

"Come, Cain, did you think I'd be so crude about it?"

Cain stayed where he was. "How much does Honor know of Paula's business affairs?"

"As far as I know, practically nothing."

"Honor is very loyal to Paula," Cain said. "Very close." He saw the old man's cautious nod. "I think I can hang Toby's killing on her, Ryerson."

The old man sniffed his brandy. "On Paula? Excellent."

"On Honor."

The silence was long. The old man set down his glass finally and leaned forward. "Cain," he said, his dry voice a bare, soft rustle, "I'd spend every million I've got to hound you into hell if you did that, if you even hinted it to the police."

Cain kept his smile to himself. So this old devil loved the kid. Cain could see the anguish on his face at the mere idea. He had been careless of her, trusting in her, but he was proud of her, and loved her deeply. Very few men were wholly evil. But Cain gave the one in front of him a corner on much of it. His love for her, of course, Cain reasoned, was because she reflected him: her genius, her attractiveness; her youth was all he had left of living.

"I just wanted you to know, Ryerson," Cain said, "that the record of what I've said is written and in a safe place. If anything should happen to me, it would find its way to Wilson," he lied blandly.

"You're very clever, Cain. It's a natural assumption that I couldn't let you live if I managed to kill Paula. Very natural."

"Now we know where we stand," Cain said. "But I'm still going to spend some of your money on Honor tonight."

"She'll like that, Cain. She asked me tonight if she could marry you."

Cain said stupidly, "That's nice."

"I told her yes, of course. And if I can get rid of my enterprises as planned there'll be a good cash settlement. A handsome one."

"Thanks," Cain said. "Still buying and selling, Ryerson. A son-in-law with wealth at his fingertips would hardly turn you in."

"I'll die in a few years. You can wait that long."

"I tried to explain: I'm quitting."

"My offer still stands, Cain. Bring her back — dead or alive."

Cain stalked out of the room. Honor was coming slowly down the stairs in a nicely-timed entrance. He felt his disgust evaporate. She looked very nice, very fine indeed. She was so young and so pathetically eager to learn things and do things, to absorb all of what she thought of as fun in life in a hurry — as if, Cain thought, she knew that it couldn't last.

He said, taking her hands, "You're terrific."

"Why, Cain! How nice."

He couldn't see how her costume stayed on. It was a rich blue dress with a full-length skirt suspended by, what seemed to him, a couple of scraps of cloth. There was no back, no shoulders and very little front.

"Anti-gravitational device?" he asked, handing her into her Buick.

She laughed. "The same as." She watched him slide under the wheel. "And all I have to do is give a good twitch and it's off."

"Uhm." What did one say? "Happy birthday, Honor."

She adjusted her fur wrap more closely about her. "Thank you. But is this business or my birthday present?"

"Both," Cain said. "Business first. Did you get the message off to Paula?"

"Lisa carried the message to Garcia," Honor giggled. "I rang Paula and she said for Lisa to come on. She took the runabout over to Whidby."

"The police talked to Lisa, I gather."

Honor fished cigarettes from Cain's coat pocket and lit two as she had seen Lisa do. She slipped one between Cain's lips. "They were at the dock when she arrived. She was very clever, though. She swore you slept all the time you were together."

"And I told Wilson we hadn't," Cain said.

Honor only sniffed. Cain said, glad to be off the subject, "Did Wilson question you?"

"A little. I just said I teased you into taking me to Pepe's. And that was all I knew. He believed me, I guess."

"Don't trust Wilson," Cain said, "to believe anything. But I don't imagine he'll bother you."

They were silent for a while. Then Honor ventured, "Cain do you know what Daddy gave me for my birthday?"

"Me, probably."

"Oh, you know! He said I could have anything I wanted and I asked for you."

"Why?" Cain asked sincerely. "Why me?"

"We could build an awfully cute place on a mountain, Cain. With a telescope and everything when all the money comes in."

"I'm no astronomer."

"But you're smart and a good navigator. You could learn so you could take over while I'm having babies and we could make all sorts of scientific discoveries and . . ." She ran out of breath and stopped.

This was all too close to the way one part of Cain would have liked it. The other part wondered how he had ever got tangled up in all this. But she was obviously serious.

He asked in a faint voice, "Where do you get this mountain?"

"Daddy said tonight I can have one for a present as soon as

I find one I want. It'll be down in Arizona. He said I might not get you right away so he'll give me that too."

Cain was silent. He began to understand Honor a bit more. Anyone, reared as Honor had been, able to have anything up to and including a whole mountain as a birthday gift, would hardly think it implausible to want just one skinny male, homo sapiens.

The silence lasted until they swung into the road leading to Munger's on the Sound. Then Honor said, "Lisa told me you didn't want her there any more. Is that true, Cain?"

"She can stay as long as she wants," Cain said.

"Because she's in trouble?"

"Yes."

Honor hesitated. "But you aren't . . . hot for her any more?"

The expression sounded odd coming from her. "Nor anyone else," Cain said.

"What do you do when you want a woman, Cain?"

"My God," Cain said. He swung into the lot which was dotted with large and well-separated trees. Cars were parked in the shadows here and there. Cain chose a big fir and nosed against it. He got out and went around to her door, dropping the ignition keys into his pocket. "You're too precocious for your own good, child."

The building was east of them. To the west was a brief, tree-clad slope leading to the boat dock. Cain knew how Munger operated. For those who wanted something noisy and a drink or two, there was Pepe's. This place, his headquarters, was a good distance out of town; the town was too tight. Here were the wheels, the chuck-a-luck tables, the poker and faro games, the crap table. On a high plane, of course. But if the customer wanted something more: the floor show without inhibition; a deck or a reefer, or a very exotic female of supposedly foreign extraction and talent, then there were launches to take them to these pleasures. It was carefully organized, well hidden and well protected. It was a lucrative business. Knowing Ryerson now as he did, Cain could well imagine Paula participating in such an enterprise. He wondered if Honor shared the Ryerson taint insofar as getting money was concerned.

"How much does money mean to you, Honor?"

She let him lead her over the gravel toward the building. "I don't know, Cain. I never thought about it. I've never had much — cash, I mean."

"But you've always had everything you've asked for. What if that were suddenly stopped?"

Honor paused under a small light that was above the doorway at the south end of the building. They had skirted the front with its covered veranda where a few people were taking a breath of air before going back into the gambling rooms.

She looked up at Cain and her expression was thoughtful. "I never thought of it, Cain. I don't suppose it would really matter much, though."

Cain rang the bell and a man, suave but bulky under his tailored tuxedo, opened the door. Cain showed a card. The man's eyebrows went up but he stepped aside. Cain took Honor's wrap, checked it, and they walked on into a dining room. It was nearly empty at this hour, it being too late for dinner and too early for supper. Beyond was a dimly lighted bar with booths around the wall. Cain chose one and seated Honor.

She ordered rye and water. He took club soda. Honor said, "Make mine double."

"We'll need clear heads," Cain said. "This is still business."

She grinned impishly. "I just want to get a weensy bit tight, Cain. It's my birthday and I'm scared silly. I really am."

He could see that now and he patted her hand. "No one will bother you, Honor. And I'll try to be careful."

The drink came and so did Cain's club soda. When he tried to pay, the waiter said, "Mr. Munger's compliments, sir."

Cain tucked the bill into the waiter's pocket as he turned to go. So the doorman had already sent the word along. Cain wondered how things were going to work out. He had only Munger's apparent disinterest in him to go on. Of course, the reason Munger had not molested him could well be that Toby's murder had temporarily thrown him out of gear. But Cain couldn't bank on it.

"He knows you?" Honor asked in surprise.

"He knows me inside and out," Cain said. "He hates me like I hate him."

"Why?"

"Because I've stepped on his face too often," Cain said and let it go.

Honor took her drink much too fast. Cain slowed her down and said, "You say it wouldn't matter if you were suddenly like other people, wanting things you couldn't have?"

"Do you want things you can't have, Cain?"

"Seldom. I've got everything I want. But I'm older."

"Pooh. Lots of people older than you are always wanting things. The papers are full of them doing this and that, even murder, to get to these things."

"All right. Then my wants are fewer."

Honor nodded. "So are mine, Cain. All I really want is a perch on a mountain under a telescope lens. And when I get my degrees I'll have that."

"What if it isn't your mountain or telescope?"

She said very seriously, "A lot of that is pipe dream, I suppose. Even a small telescope is going to cost a lot of money to build and transport and maintain. What difference does it really make if I own it or if I work for some foundation that owns one?"

She really didn't concern herself much with money, he thought. She took what she was given, but he was willing to bet that if she didn't have it she wouldn't really notice the difference. For a few years, perhaps, she would miss the fun of a cruiser, a big car, the respect given to her wealth. But in the long run he could see her perched, as she said, on a mountain, squinting at the stars and not really knowing whether she had money or not. In a way it was a shame to waste her figure on an astronomical dome. But, of course, there must be male astronomers about — young ones. Cain felt better.

"Shall we go in and gamble, Honor?" He said it quickly, stopping her from ordering a second drink. He let her stand and then sniffed the dregs of her glass. Munger's rye was potent and if his nose was any judge, more powerful than any regular double shot. But Honor seemed normal.

The first gambling room was large, with a stand-up bar modestly off to one side and slot machines along the wall next to the veranda doors. In the back of the room were three wheels, a crap table and a chuck-a-luck rig. The card games and the big no-limit wheel were elsewhere. This room was well filled with sleek, groomed people, their faces tense as they bent over the tables where they played. He saw the sick look of the loser on some of the faces, the suppressed emotion of those winning and worrying about riding their luck. He pointed out some of this to Honor as he changed a ten into half-dollars and led her to the one-armed bandits.

Cain was reaching for the slot machine when he saw someone familiar standing quietly by the veranda door. "My pal, Smoky!" Cain said. "How's Rhumba tonight?"

Smoky looked at him from small, empty dark eyes. "Don't getcha."

"Your sidekick." Cain felt as small and cold inside as Smoky's eyes but he kept his voice light. The gunsels were too quiet, too uninterested in him. "The boy I used for a vacuum cleaner on my carpet. The lad with no manners."

"He's around." Smoky let his eyes go over Honor, inch by inch, and then he turned away, opening the veranda door for someone wanting in.

Honor tugged Cain away. "Who was that man?" she whispered.

Cain told her while he fed half-dollars into the machine. He got nothing on three tries, made two cherries, and then went through half of his money without a win.

She said, "Cain, I'm so scared, I . . ."

"Why? What are you scared of, Honor?"

She gave him a half-hearted smile. "Not of, *for* you, Cain."

He patted her arm. "Thanks, but I've managed Munger for some time now." He dropped the remaining half-dollars into her hand. "Play these. I'll be back. *Don't go away.*"

He was nearly to the bar when he heard the clinking and Honor's squeal. He glanced back to see a flood of half-dollars rolling about the floor and Honor valiantly trying to scoop them up. No one but Smoky had moved and he was performing his function of helping her recover the money.

Cain went on. No one here gave a damn about a sixty- or seventy-dollar jackpot.

He came to the bar, paralleled it, and went through a small door at the far end. He chose the first on his left as he entered a narrow hallway. His rap brought a "Come in." Cain opened the door. He saw Munger at his desk and shut the door softly.

CHAPTER FIFTEEN

HONOR glanced up to see Cain go through the doorway and then she returned to her money gathering. It was unpleasant, having Smoky so close. His hair grease and his breath smelled funny. He breathed down her neck as he picked up half-dollars for her. When she stood, his little eyes appraised her again in a way that made her shiver. The word came to her — lewd.

She said, her mouth dry, "Thank you very much," as he dropped her money to the bar.

"Change some of this for the lady, Curly." Smoky went back to his station by the door.

The baldheaded bartender made a quick count and handed Honor a stack of bills. Going to the ladies' room, she slipped ten into her stocking for Cain. Then she returned to the machines.

She broke even on the fifty-cent machine, got more change, and tried the dollar one. She lost ten dollars and then hit the jackpot. "Golly!" she squealed as the silver cartwheels rolled across the floor.

Smoky again helped her scoop up the money and take it to the bar. The bartender said, "Ain't you a bit young to be winning so much dough?"

"I was twenty-one today," Honor lied. She took her money again to the rest room, decided Cain had a twenty-five per cent share as his investment, and put a little over fifty dollars

into her stocking for him. Returning to the bar, she ordered rye and water. When she finished, she turned to the roulette wheels. By now she was wobbling a little on her high heels.

The bartender sighed as she left. He sighed more as he saw Smoky signal the croupier to build her up for a while. Curly was glad his daughter had more sense than to mess in places like this.

Honor bought a hundred dollars worth of chips and then studied the lay-out. From things Paula had told her, she had often dreamed of a system using the mathematical laws of probability. Now she tried her system, placing a limit bet of ten dollars. When she walked away, she had over five hundred dollars in her tight, sweating fist. In the restroom she put a fourth of it into her stocking for Cain. She returned to the tables.

It was half past eleven before she became aware of the time. She had had to change the bills in her stocking to bigger notes to hide the bulge. A thousand dollars made quite a wad of money. She felt light headed, drunk, but not from liquor. It was excitement. She wished Cain would come out and see her.

Smoky came up. "You've ridden that luck a long way."

She turned, startled. He had not made any noise when he approached her. His smile made her spine crawl. She tried to sound airy. "I'd ride it more but that man won't let me bet a thousand dollars."

"There are no limit tables in the other room," Smoky said.

Honor hesitated. Cain had told her to wait here for him. She looked at Smoky. "Tell my husband I'm in the other room, please."

"Your husband?"

Honor smiled sweetly. "Today was my birthday and my wedding day." She walked off.

Smoky whispered. "The hell!" He went to tell the bartender. "So Cain broke down and got married. She'll make a good-looking widow, won't she?"

Honor found the other room nothing but four walls, a dozen well-dressed people, and a big roulette wheel. She lost a thousand dollars before she got her mathematics working. Then she won the money back, lost half, and then pyramided

the rest into eighty-seven hundred dollars. She went and sat down, her legs trembling.

She failed to see Smoky come in and signal "That's her limit." She wasn't aware that about twelve thousand dollars had been previously decided on as the top figure. It would make a fine piece of bait to get her back.

After getting Cain's twenty-five per cent into her stocking, she went to the bar and asked if Cain had returned yet. When she found he hadn't, she began to feel worried. For the first time she became aware of how long Cain had been gone. Nearly three hours.

It struck Honor that she knew no one here but Cain. And there were people around like Smoky and that doorman and she had nearly twelve thousand dollars. Then she stopped thinking about the money because she remembered Munger hated Cain and Cain had been gone for three hours.

Honor went up to Smoky, her bulging purse clutched tightly in her hand, and asked to see Munger. Without hesitating, he led her through the door where Cain had gone and into an office.

Honor had never seen Karl Munger; he wasn't at all what she had expected. He looked tweedy and very nice and masculine. Like the exchange professor from the University of London, she thought. She sat down and folded her hands primly in her lap.

"I'm Honor Ryerson Cain," she said. "My husband has been gone three hours. I thought you might know . . ."

Munger smiled and took out his pipe. "My best wishes," he said. "I'm sorry but I haven't seen Cain tonight."

"He came this way."

Munger looked puzzled. Then he said, "Oh, into the hall. He may have gone to the card rooms." He picked up the phone and spoke into it briefly. He smiled at Honor. "Men sometimes get carried away by cards."

He was so bland, so smooth. His smoothness seemed to rise up and choke her. Honor watched his eyes and felt a little shiver work up her spine. Whatever he was, he was too much of it, she thought.

Honor waited. Soon Smoky opened the door. "The poker guys said he was there a couple hours ago. He played a few

hands and then left. The faro dealer says he was there a while, but he ain't now."

"Thank you," Munger murmured. He looked helplessly at Honor. "I'm sorry, Miss — Mrs. Cain."

Honor remembered why Cain had come. She wondered if he had got a tip from the games and had gone off, intending to return soon. She looked numbly at Munger, knowing it wasn't so. She was sure this whole thing was a lie. Just looking at Munger made her feel that way. Suddenly all she wanted to do was run . . . get home.

Munger was still smooth. "Do you have your car?"

She started to say yes and then remembered that Cain had the keys. "We came in his."

"I'll call you a cab. With all that money . . ."

So he knew she had won, too. Naturally, he would, she realized. She nodded and swallowed and managed to thank him. Smoky escorted her to the checkstand and turned her over to the doorman. The final appraisal from his eyes made her nerves ache.

The doorman called a cab and when it swung around she saw the headlights strike the familiar outlines of the Buick. It was still where Cain had parked it. It wasn't proof except that it showed he hadn't left by it.

When the cab driver asked, "Where to, lady?" she almost said the police station. But she choked it back, giving her own address. Cain wouldn't want her to run to the police. She tried to sit back, to relax, fighting to keep from shaking herself to pieces. She wasn't afraid for herself or for the money; she was afraid for Cain.

When she reached the house, she thrust a twenty into the driver's hand and ran inside and up to her room. She threw herself on the bed and then the tears came, jerking out of her in great, soundless sobs.

She sat up suddenly. "Stop it!" she said aloud. "You're not a child, even if Cain does think so."

She sat on the edge of the bed, smoking a cigarette, thinking about what she must do. Finally she knew the way to do it. She had so few weapons, she realized, so little skill . . . But what she had, she must use.

She got up and wiped away the tears, took the extra keys

for the Buick, and, in Paula's room, found the little .25 that she kept there, and went out. She took Cain's dinghy that Lisa had left at the boathouse and worked around the point to Cain's. She found the place dark, and she stood on the dock a moment to regather her courage. In his cabin, she put the money she had won in a drawer. Then she got out his charts of the Sound and left.

She came into a dock near Munger's, her full skirt looped up over her shoulders. She made the dinghy fast and walked up the beach to a small road and followed it to the parking lot. She saw that the Buick was still there in deep shadow and only a few other cars were about. She realized then that it was late; dawn would break before too long and she knew she had to hurry.

She walked in shadow to the terrace and stopped at one side of the doors leading into the gambling room. This was one part of the plan she wasn't sure of. A few times during the evening she had seen Smoky go out here, probably for a smoke. She could only hope he would do so again.

She began to feel the chill and realized she had left her wrap at home. She was shuffling her feet nervously, ready to give up, when the door opened and he appeared. She waited until the door had shut behind him and he bent to the flame from his lighter. She stifled a sigh of relief.

She knew that she couldn't buy him; Munger had more money than she could get. That meant she had but one thing to offer. The idea made her crawl now that its possible fulfillment was so close. Back in her bedroom the thought had been in the abstract and it hadn't seemed too bad. It was a horrible plan but it wasn't as horrible as thinking about Munger getting Cain.

She took a deep breath and said softly, "Smoky."

He jumped and turned, his hand sliding into his coat. She moved to where he could see her and he let his hand fall away. He stared at her curiously. She licked her lips and smiled at him, fighting to make it a warm smile and make it hold still.

"I sneaked back," she whispered. "I knew you'd come out here. I've been waiting . . ."

"Yeh? Say, babe, you're shaking."

"I'm cold, Smoky."

His arm was hard and she didn't like it. His hand on her bare shoulder made her shudder. She almost drew away from him when his fingers slipped down toward the top of her evening gown. She made herself think, "Relax! Relax!" and she fought to remember that.

"You ain't bad, babe." His breath was funnier than before, she thought. A sweetish odor was on it. In the semi-darkness his eyes were hard dots coming closer to her. His lips were a thin line of wire bent into a cold sneer. She made her mouth go lax under them, made herself lift her arms and run her hands through the oily hair, press herself against him, let her mouth part just a trifle. She found when she pressed against him his hands couldn't operate. She pressed harder.

She drew back her head. "Not so fast. This is no place . . ."

His breath came from deep in his chest in little gushes. "Anywhere with you, baby."

She said jerkily, "I couldn't wait all night for Cain. How long does a woman have to wait on her wedding night?"

His laugh was low, making her crawl inside. "You'll never have to wait, baby." She shut her eyes as his lips went over her shoulder, along the neckline of her gown.

"Cain made me wait. You tell Cain I'll never have to wait."

"Cain won't care. Cain won't care about anything . . . ever." His snicker rubbed her ear.

She said hoarsely, "Let's go to my car. Quick!" She was almost sick now. "The blue one out there." His lips were still searching. "Cain doesn't count now."

He still held his cigarette, but it had gone out. He put it in his pocket carefully. She noticed as he did so that it wasn't a regular cigarette but looked more like a hand-rolled one. Some people liked them, she thought—and then it struck her. Smoky, and odd breath, a funny cigarette. Marijuana. And her skin crawled now and she felt a new fear, having heard tales of the viciousness and strength of people under dope.

She almost ran to the car, dragging him by the hand. He was laughing softly. "Eager, ain't you, baby."

They crawled into the back seat and he reached for her. She let her purse slide to the floor and got the clasp open and then she said, "Not so fast, Smoky. I have to get my wind."

"I don't wait, baby. Not with you."

She felt his lips again, under her ear this time. She said, "I'm scared, Smoky."

"Scared — of me?"

"Of Cain," she whispered. "Cain is tough. I'm afraid of him."

He made a snorting sound. "You married him."

"My father made me. I'm scared he'll find us." She shook now and it was easy to do.

Smoky's arm drew her closer. She felt the top of her gown go. He was panting now, clawing at her. His hands were cold and hard, breaking the fine stays. She said, "He does scare me."

"No more, baby. Just relax. Let me handle this. Relax!"

She couldn't stand it any more. She wriggled free and pushed away from him. "That doesn't stop me from being scared, I tell you!"

She saw his eyes, pinpoints in the darkness and she wondered if she had overplayed it. She wanted to jerk up the front of her gown to cover her breasts but she held herself from doing it. She said, "What if he finds us — like this?"

"No danger of that, baby."

She pulled the front of her gown up now. "It's easy to talk but I — I don't believe you. I have to know before we can — take a chance. Cain is dangerous." She let the top of her gown, its thin stays broken, slide a little now.

His breath came out in a gush of bravado. "I said he won't hurt you. Cain's took care of, see. The boss gave him to me and Rhumba, see. Cain won't bother nobody no more, see."

Honor let him see her disbelief. He said, "Hell, baby, he's taken care of. He's out on the Sound now. Nothing messy, see. A fancy job set up to look like someone else did it. Relax. Cain's done."

Honor made her body relax. "That's what I wanted to hear," she murmured. Shaking, fighting to keep from letting it show, she trailed one hand to where her purse was on the floor. Her

mouth was dry, her throat ached from strain. Her one thought was to get away — at gunpoint if necessary — and drive for the police.

Now she felt his lips seeking hers again. She fumbled to open the catch on her bag. And then she felt him stiffen. His gripping fingers dug cruelly into her. "What you pulling away for, baby? I told you he was safe. I . . ."

He stopped suddenly and drew away from her. She winced as his hand caught her chin, holding her head rigid. "Yeh," he said with suspicion, with the sudden change of mind of a marijuana addict. "Maybe you was after information. Maybe you'd like to run now and . . ."

His fingers hurt her viciously. She opened her mouth to protest, to lie. He let loose and slapped her. "Well, we'll take care of what you said you came for first, see. See, baby?"

She was twisted, thrown across the seat. His breath was hot and harsh and violent. "Then," he gasped at her, "we'll see you don't get no chance to talk."

He wrenched at her. She felt her hand being pulled from the bag and she grabbed desperately, hooking a finger into the trigger guard of the gun. It came free and she worked the butt into her hand.

She brought the gun down, slashing at his face. He swore as the muzzle ripped at his cheek. His fist caught her shoulder. His hand caught her wrist, forcing her arm backward. Pain shot through her, blinding her, making her cry out. He was taking the gun away, she thought wildly. He would get it and then . . .

She kicked with her legs, slashing at him with her free hand. The pressure of his grip slipped briefly. She could think of only one thing to do. She did it. Her finger squeezed on the trigger.

The shot was only a pop, a little sound. Honor was rigid, hearing it as an explosion in the confines of the car. And then the noise faded and she realized she couldn't hear his rasping breath any more, couldn't feel the weight of him on her. He had slid toward the floor, angled awkwardly against the back of the front seat. He still had a grip on her and she pried his fingers away. She was thinking that she would have to bathe and bathe and bathe.

She snapped on the inside light and saw the small, round hole where one of his eyes should have been. It was only then that she realized she had killed a man.

In sudden reaction, she tore open the car door and pushed at his body. Sobbing now, shaking, she pushed and kicked at him until he slid from the car and fell against the base of a tree.

Slamming the door, she crawled over the seat with her bag, found her keys, and stabbed them into the ignition. When the motor caught, she eased the car around and drove slowly, fighting to keep her trembling from showing in her driving.

Once she was on the road, she jammed the accelerator to the floor, throwing all the power she could into the big wheels, whipping the car forward into the fading night. At Cain's, she shut off the motor, climbed out, and walked toward his boat. It was in her mind now that there was nothing the police could do for Cain. It was too late. But she thought she might take his boat onto the Sound and find him. No matter what happened, she could only think that somehow she had to see Cain.

Half running now, she tripped on the edge of the dock and fell face forward and lay there, sobbing, shaking, retching. "A hell of a birthday," she thought.

She didn't even hear the car when it pulled up alongside hers. She didn't hear Munger when he got out of the car and walked toward her.

CHAPTER SIXTEEN

CAIN had the feeling that Munger was pleased about something when he went into the office. Munger took his pipe from his mouth long enough to say, "Have a chair, Cain."

Cain drew up his trousers and crossed his legs. He lit a cigarette and looked coolly at Munger. He didn't feel that way; even knowing Munger was only a figurehead, even

knowing he had been Toby Patton's boyfriend didn't change the fact that he was dangerous.

"Who are you pinning the Patton killing on, Munger?"

Munger's eyebrows went up. He smiled, showing his teeth. "How about you, Cain? I'm glad you came. I was about to send for you to tell you that. You'll do very well."

"I have an alibi."

Munger's eyes were amused. "You and the other chief suspect giving alibis for each other?" He shook his head. "Hardly, Cain. You and Lisa were playing games with Paula at Toby's house last night."

"So you've had Paula watched?"

"Yes." Munger seemed more amused. "And you and Lisa."

"But he wasn't killed last night."

"That makes no difference. You were there the other time, too."

"What I can't figure out," Cain said thoughtfully, "is what you get out of killing him."

"Who said I killed him?"

"Who else is better?"

Munger threw back his head and laughed. "You, Lisa, Paula, her old man, maybe even the kid."

"That's no answer."

"Paula did it, Cain. He was squeezing her."

Cain looked thoughtful. "A minute ago you said something that showed you know when Toby was killed. How about that, Munger?"

Munger smiled, showing a lot of teeth. "Maybe I was out there, Cain. Maybe I saw him killed."

"It's possible," Cain admitted. He stretched his long legs. "As a matter of curiosity, I'd like to know just what you did see."

"I didn't say I *was* there," Munger came back. Then he shrugged. "But why be childish about it? You should have stayed, Cain. It was very interesting."

Cain didn't like the way Munger was going at this. He was too easy, too agreeable. As if, Cain thought, Munger didn't really care what he knew. As if it no longer mattered what Cain knew.

Munger said, "After you and Lisa bulled in and broke up the party, Paula 'revived' everyone with a drink."

"The lady in the mask, then?"

"Yes," Munger said. He seemed to enjoy remembering it. "Everyone except Toby, of course. He was neatly tucked in the coffin. The joker was that Paula's flask contained a mickey, so the whole crew of them passed out cold."

Cain snorted. "Sure. She went there knowing I would break up the party and she just happened to be prepared with a flask of mickeys."

"It's that simple," Munger said. "She went there with a flask of mickeys hoping to find a chance to spike the drinks. The opportunity you created came along and she took advantage of it."

"Why?" Cain asked logically.

Munger said, "Look at it this way, Cain. She's Toby's wife, but that doesn't make her any safer — not with Toby. What's the best weapon in the world against him?"

"The blackmail stuff," Cain said.

Munger nodded and puffed a moment on his cold pipe. "It was the best opportunity for her to get a chance to find it. That is if she could knock them all out."

"Maybe he kept it in town."

Munger snorted. "My boys have covered that apartment right into the walls. He kept it out there."

"You know a lot about it."

"Sure," Munger said. "I watched Paula dope everyone and then go find the stuff. He had it hidden in his 'art' stuff. His waxworks equipment. He was smart enough to figure that one out. An unlikely place. So unlikely no one but Paula would have located it."

"Their minds may be alike."

Munger nodded agreement. "Then I saw Toby catch her at it. He kicked his way out of the coffin and caught her."

Cain dropped his cigarette in the ashtray and reached for another. "So she killed him, hauled the coffin out of the woods, and set him back in it — figuring me for the fall guy."

"Why not? A good angle."

"Then," Cain said, "she was set up as boss of Toby's enter-

prises, including this place, and she was also still in a position to crack down on her old man."

"That's right," Munger said.

Cain said, "Why did she marry Toby?"

"I told her to," Munger said. "I suggested it to Toby, too."

"Marriage broker," Cain said. Only he didn't want to laugh. You didn't laugh at Munger at a time like this. "You fixed it — why?"

"Maybe I like retribution on earth, Cain."

"You haven't finished the story," Cain said. "So she got the stuff and killed Toby. What did you do, help?"

Munger smiled pleasantly. "I let her. And then when some of the others started waking up and coming back, she put Toby in his bed, lay down behind him and made like he was breathing."

"No-nerves Ryerson," Cain murmured. He waited.

Munger said, "While she was occupied, I grabbed the stuff. She had stuck it in one of those steamer trunks along with some wax junk that just might be incriminating. Then I took off. I suppose she put Toby back in the box when all was clear."

"Sure," Cain said, "all five-feet-two of her juggled Toby around and a coffin to boot. I can't buy it, Munger."

"You have to, Cain," Munger said. "And it really doesn't make any difference. I've got it set up now so that Wilson will tag her or you and Lisa with it. It doesn't make any difference."

"You can't touch me, Munger. Not unless you want to spend the rest of your life in the federal pen. Remember I have documents dealing with you."

"Why," Munger said, "Toby was always the front man. He and Paula. I only worked for them. How was I to know that such things were going on? I only manage this business, you know."

Cain's stomach left him as he realized why Munger was so obliging. Because what Munger said was true. With Toby gone, Munger could make the shift stick. Cain felt the breath of fear on his neck.

He said, "How do you work this, Munger?"

Munger took the time to fill and light his pipe. "Simple.

You and Paula and Lisa will be found at Paula's place in a perfect lovenest killing. You'll be on the boat Lisa took to get over to Whidby. Neat, eh?"

"What makes you think they're there?"

"They aren't. According to my — informant, shall we say — they went looking for the blackmail stuff. They went to the farm, I suppose, since you sent Lisa to tell Paula to get the stuff fast. And Lisa knows where the steamer trunks are."

Cain felt a new sickness in his stomach. He hardly noticed when Munger pressed a button, summoning Rhumba and Smoky. Munger said, "Rhumba, you and Smoky load Cain into the cabin job and get him over to Whidby." He outlined his plan neatly: a triple killing that would look either like a love quarrel or an argument over the spoils.

Cain said, "So you're through with Lisa?"

"Yes." Cain waited but Munger wouldn't say any more. This was one angle Cain couldn't figure. He let it ride for the moment. Munger was talking to Rhumba. "No marks on him. This has to look perfect. Pad your ropes."

He turned to Smoky. "Give him a hand and then keep an eye on the Ryerson girl."

Cain didn't even see the signal. They had a clamp on his arms before he was aware of them. He relaxed, saving his strength. At Munger's nod he got up and walked out between them.

There was no trouble. Cain was escorted out a side door and down to the dock. On the other side someone started a speedboat motor. The fact that they ignored it made him think it might be Munger. But right now Cain was in no position to be curious about Munger's comings and goings. The guns the two men wore were not, he knew, for pretense. If necessary they would use them on him. But it would be sloppy work and Munger hated sloppy work. It was that one factor Cain could count on. They would not shoot until they had to.

They were very efficient in tying him. He was barely on the sleek cabin cruiser when the ropes were put about his wrists and then his ankles. He found himself on the floor. They padded the ropes about his wrists with squares of rag, did the same to those around his ankles and then rendered him

helpless simply by running another rope through those tying him, pulling his wrists, which were behind his back, toward his legs and his ankles toward his neck. He lay in a painful bow on his side. Smoky left them and Rhumba started the motor.

When they were moving smoothly and almost silently under running lights onto the sound, Cain said, "Got a drink?"

Rhumba told him what he could drink and Cain was quiet. While Rhumba applied himself to the cruiser, Cain tested the ropes. He had little fear of being seen. Rhumba was some distance forward of him, at the wheel, while he lay in darkness on the floor alongside the divan-like benches. He had no luck with the ropes but he did manage to roll into a position to see the dashboard. It was eleven o'clock.

It took them some time before Rhumba reached the dock and eased in and gave a grunt of disappointment. The house was dark. Cain lay there wondering what they would do if Lisa did not return with Paula. Munger, no doubt, knew of the alarm system around the house and knew, perhaps, of Paula's vagary about never letting anyone stay with her. Possibly he had people watching to bring Lisa should she and Paula separate. Cain was sure Munger would be as tidy at that end as at this.

He said, "We may be here some time. How about a game of blackjack?"

Rhumba told him what he would like to use a blackjack for, and sat still, staring out at the runabout Lisa had used. The time ticked by. The next thing Cain knew it was midnight and he had dozed off. He wriggled his hands and was surprised to find a little give. What was it escape artists did? Not expand the muscles? He must have relaxed in his sleep and done it automatically. He tried it. He wasn't successful, finding himself tensing up with eagerness. He rested again and dozed some more. It was past one A.M. when he next looked at the clock. He fought off impatience, forced himself to stay relaxed. He eased his wrists a little more. In a moment he had something in his bent back fingers. The edge of the rag. If he could draw that free, he might have slack enough to do something.

Rhumba sat without motion except now and then to light a

cigarette. He was not at all restless. Cain was convinced that the man could easily go into a state of mental emptiness and be like a hibernating animal any time he wished.

Suddenly he stirred, surprising Cain into losing his grip on the edge of cloth. He worked frantically and got it again. Rhumba turned and spat on the floor beside Cain's face.

"To hell with it. Maybe I oughta dump you overboard and tell the boss I hadda when you got rough, huh?"

So that was what over an hour of cerebation had brought forth? "Sure," Cain said, "and mark me up good first. That's your idea of fun, isn't it?"

"Damn right I'll mark you. You got it coming."

"Munger won't like it," Cain said.

"Hell with Munger."

"You won't talk that way after he gets through with you." Cain flexed his fingers a final time, pulled, felt the pad coming slowly. He hoped it was dark enough to hide the concentration on his face, the inevitable slight movement of his body. Then the pad was out and he lay still until he could relax and then his wrist came out too. Almost frantically he slipped the other one free. He did not like the look on Rhumba's face.

Rhumba said again, "To hell with Munger."

"Your vocabulary matches your manners," Cain told him. "Can't you wait for the ladies?"

Rhumba told him what he was going to do with the ladies when they came. He told Cain in detail, with relish, and Cain had to lie still because the sickness of anger beat up through him and made his hands shake too much to get at his ankle ropes.

Suddenly, inflamed by his own talking, Rhumba rose and stepped up to Cain and kicked him savagely in the face. Cain tried to roll and Rhumba's restraint left him. He kicked again, making savage sounds in his excitement.

Cain hoped his stiffened arms would work as the second kick came at him. They did. He felt the solidity of Rhumba's ankle in his fingers, the force as it was jerked back. His fingers clamped down, held, and Cain jerked this time. Rhumba went backward, curving over the wheel, grunting in pain and surprise.

He straightened up, clawing for his gun. Cain could barely move his feet. He knew the helplessness of a man unable to walk. He did the only thing he could do. He scrambled the loose ropes and pads in his hands and threw them at Rhumba. The shot missed and ripped glass out of a port.

Even as he threw, he heaved himself forward, his legs doubled up grotesquely. He saw the gun coming down but he had an ankle again. He put all he had into the jerk and twisted as he pulled. He thought every vertebra he owned had gone off in a different direction. But the explosion of the gun again brought the shattering sound of glass breaking and then Rhumba was falling forward.

A knee got Cain in the ribs before he could roll clear. Then his hands were on the gun wrist. His hands were big and used to hauling in heavy line. He put all he had behind the slow bending of Rhumba's bone. He received two wild swings in his sore face before the wrist snapped.

Rhumba screamed and lurched to get up. Cain deliberately twisted the broken bone, using his own size, half again that of Rhumba for leverage. The screams became a sob and then a slobber. Rhumba fainted.

Cain got the gun first, felt Rhumba's pockets, got his knife out and cut the ropes on his ankles. He stood up and stamped around a bit and then, tucking the weapons in his pockets, turned on the dome light and surveyed his prize. Rhumba was out cold and looked like he might stay that way a while.

Cain got a bucket of cold water and sluiced him down. He came around in a few moments, sputtering, and reaching for his gun. His wrist dangled grotesquely and the pain hit him and he stopped. He got slowly to his feet and looked at Cain. He was dead white and his eyes were dark coals in the pallor of his face.

Cain said, "Here's the knife," and showed it to him.

Rhumba looked at it until comprehension struck him. Then he began to cry and plead. Cain took all he could stomach, laid the knife and gun on a ledge where he could reach them, took off his coat, and walked forward.

"I'm not going to try to kill you," Cain said. "But if you live through this you'll wish they had destroyed you at birth,

as your kind should be destroyed." He hit Rhumba in the face.

Rhumba put up his hands, the one dangling limply. Cain hit him again. He kept hitting even after the man fell. Letting Rhumba lie, Cain headed the boat back to Munger's. When he docked it was nearly three o'clock and daylight was beginning to crawl over the eastern mountains.

Cain dragged Rhumba beyond the tideline, found a flare in one of the lockers, set it alight, and got back in the boat. If they found Rhumba soon enough they might get him to a hospital. Cain didn't care one way or the other.

CHAPTER SEVENTEEN

ALL the fire had gone out of Cain, leaving him exhausted. He idled the boat, heading for Paula's again. He watched the shore as he drifted past, noticing the trees spring slowly into defined shape out of the darkness. He saw a light. He bent forward and looked again. It was his place, all right. He swung the boat in that direction and picked up speed.

He saw his boat riding with a light coming from the cabin port. Carefully he drew into the dock. He was about ready to step from the boat when a man came from his boat toward him. In a moment, Cain saw that it was Munger.

He apparently recognized his own boat. He called, "What are you doing here? Did you get it set up?" His voice was edgy, Cain noticed.

Cain picked up Rhumba's knife and gun as he stepped onto the dock. Munger was close enough to recognize him. He let Munger look at the gun and Munger's hands, slowly dipping for his coat pocket, lifted.

Cain saw Munger's car. "Call out your gorillas, Munger."

"I came alone," Munger said. And the way he said it made Cain believe him. It was one of the few times Munger had

felt safe enough to come alone, and one of the times he should not have. The thought gave Cain a lot of pleasure.

"Who's in my cabin?"

"Honor Ryerson."

Cain could see naked fear on Munger's face and he was disappointed. For though Munger was a cut above his gunsels, he was just as rotten inside. "Honor!" Cain called.

Munger licked his lips. "She's passed out."

Cain took a deep breath and the gun shook a little. "What did you do to her?"

"She got drunk in my place. I brought her home. That's all."

"So now I'm supposed to thank you and let you go home?"

"We're square," Munger said. "If you got away from Rhumba, we're square, Cain."

Cain laughed at his pathetic eagerness. "Turn around and head for the cabin. If you try anything I'll shoot for your spine. I can shoot, you know, Munger."

Munger went ahead, slowly, ducking inside first. Inside, Cain put Munger against the door of the head. "Belt off! One hand only, Munger."

Munger's belt came off and fell to the floor. His hand went up and his trousers slid reluctantly over his hips and puddled on the floor. He wore mauve silk shorts. Cain darted a quick look at the bunk.

Honor was unconscious all right. She lay on her back, her eyes closed. Her arms were tied above her head, held by a rope into a painful, helpless position. She was naked to the waist and Cain could see the cigarette burns lined along her flat, smooth belly and up to the swell of her breast. One burn lay in the deep hollow between them. He slashed apart the rope that held her hands up in the air.

"That as far as you got when I came?" Cain asked softly.

Munger said tonelessly, "She killed Smoky."

"Who would revenge a slimy worm like that? What were you after?" Cain walked over and hit him in the stomach so that he gagged and bent over. Cain slapped his face, straightening him.

Munger gasped. "Information. How much you knew. How much she got out of Smoky before she killed him."

"Well?"

"All I got was she killed Smoky. That's all!" His voice rose and broke as he stared at Cain's implacable features.

Cain said, "You were afraid of something, Munger. What was it?" Munger only stood there, his hands high, his face an ugly white. Cain went on, "And I think you took a speedboat out as soon as the boys got me off the place. Why?" He was talking half to himself. He nodded suddenly.

"You cooked your little love-nest killing plan up when I came into your place. It was grabbing at an opportunity. Right, Munger?"

Munger said, "Yes." His voice was empty.

Cain said, "And then you had to go get Paula and Lisa. You had set it up for Lisa to lead Paula into a trap on the farm but now you wanted her on Whidby."

"Yes," Munger said.

"So you went after her and gave Lisa instructions to take her there. Only Lisa didn't know she was supposed to get killed too by your handyman. Right, Munger?"

"Yes," Munger said.

Cain was improvising, using what facts he knew plus what he knew of the way Munger's mind worked. He went on, "You went back to your place to await developments. But they didn't come. No one came. You got edgy and went out and found Smoky. Maybe you even saw Honor driving off. You tailed her here. You were scared, Munger, because something had gone haywire."

"Yes," Munger said.

"Were you afraid it had backfired? Afraid Paula hadn't been killed and that she would tell the truth about the way Toby died?"

"No," Munger said.

"Or that Lisa might tell?" He saw the flicker on Munger's face and took it for agreement. "You've already killed Paula then?"

No answer. Cain nodded. "It happened at the party the way you said, didn't it, Munger? Except that you killed Toby when you saw a chance to make Paula the goat. Did you cook it up with her to go there and get the blackmail stuff?"

"Yes," Munger said.

"You did the killing and she did the rest of the dirty work."

Munger's silence was answer enough. Cain said, "Then you tried to cross one another. She hid the stuff in the steamer trunks and you took it without her knowing it."

"Yes," Munger said. His voice was faint.

"That made you top man, didn't it, Munger? That made you the big shot instead of just front man. You craved that and you had it. You weren't going to let go of it. Only you had to get rid of Paula to be sure. But she was cagy and hid out on you."

"She thought she could get the stuff back, that it was still in the trunks," Munger said. His throat sounded dry. Cain didn't understand what he was getting at until he added, "Tonight I told her I had it. I was willing to make a deal, Cain. She wouldn't let me. She was half drunk. She was wild."

Cain realized Munger was trying to explain himself. He was appealing to Cain for mercy. Cain said, "You couldn't let her live, Munger. Then you wouldn't be sure you'd stay top dog. You've been waiting for this for a long time, haven't you? You talked Paula into marrying Toby as a way to crossing him out of his share in your place. And you talked Toby into it as a way to crossing Paula. Then when you had the chance, you killed him. Now you've killed her. You tried to get me salted away by having Lisa take me to the farm a second time. Only it didn't work. Wilson was suspicious but not enough to haul me in. Then I played right into your hands. First, by telling Lisa to take a message to Paula. That led Paula right to her death. I was just trying to find out if Paula had been the one I wrestled with at the farm. Then I walked into your place — and you had it all ready to sew up."

"Yes," Munger said.

Cain said, "Only something's gone haywire." He lifted the gun a little. "Let's take a ride, Munger. Let's go to the farm and see what happened, shall we?"

"Listen, Cain . . ."

Cain took a brief instant to glance at Honor. She was still out but her breathing sounded fairly good. He turned his

full attention back to Munger. "What else did you do besides use her belly for an ashtray?"

"Nothing. I swear, Cain. Nothing!"

Cain said, "No, you wouldn't. Not to a woman."

He saw that his knowledge of it was news to Munger. And what masculinity that was left in the man crumpled away and there was nothing there, nothing at all.

"I beat Rhumba almost to death," Cain said conversationally. "Honor killed Smoky. Good for our side!" His voice shifted. "Up the steps. Left hand on your trousers. Right hand high. Move!"

Munger went. He walked slowly now, and old man, a pasty-faced man whose entrails crawled with fear. He walked along the dock at Cain's direction and stepped aboard his own cruiser, moving awkwardly.

Cain was a little careless. Munger appeared completely handicapped, but suddenly he ducked into the cabin and threw himself sideways, out of the line of Cain's gun.

Cain swore and jumped to the right, trying to see Munger around the door frame. Munger was on his knees and straightening up. Cain could see the little hand gun that he had evidently hidden in his coat pocket. It was tiny. It would have been laughable except that the range was so close. Cain heard it go off, its crack a thin sound above Munger's hoarse, desperate breathing.

Cain moved and he felt the scrape of the bullet. And then the gun in his hand made its ugly sound and he saw Munger's look of sudden surprise. Munger's second shot was reflex and it plowed into the ceiling of the cabin as Munger went backward off balance and fell sideways and lay silently with a round O making a neat eye above the bridge of his nose.

"Damn it," Cain said. "I didn't intend to kill you." Munger was to have been exhibit A for Wilson. Now, Cain knew, Wilson wasn't going to like this at all.

CHAPTER EIGHTEEN

MUNGER'S coat yielded more than just a special pocket for his little gun. Cain came up with a thick envelope. One glance told him that here was the blackmail material. He wondered at a man who would do what Munger had apparently done with it. He had probably carried it to taunt Paula with before he killed her.

Cain ignored the material on Smathers and the others. Information on Paula was there and it was ugly. It disgusted him and he pushed it aside. He found what he sought pertaining to Lisa Simms and Karl Munger, né Simms. He read it slowly and carefully and then he folded everything into the envelope, found a wrench, and tied the envelope securely to it.

He headed the cruiser for the farm. In the middle of the channel, he dropped the wrench and the envelope overboard. Munger bobbed grotesquely to the motion of the boat as Cain went at full speed. It was full daylight when he arrived and he saw the person standing on the dock. Honor's run-about bobbed there as he had hoped.

He felt a little sick again as he cut the motor and swung skillfully to the dock. Lisa stood there and she hopped aboard as soon as she recognized him. She stopped in the doorway and looked down at Munger's body and then at Cain and at the gun in his hand.

"Karl?" she said, and the way she said it told Cain the answer to a lot of things.

"All right," he said. "It's all over. I killed your husband, Lisa. You're free, if that's the word."

"That's the word," Lisa said. Her voice shook. "Cain . . ."

"Tell it," he said harshly. "You stuck with him right up to the last. Why didn't you go to Whidby like he ordered?"

"He never killed before," Lisa said. "Not until Toby. Not

Karl himself, personally. And when I saw him kill her and when he told me how he had it planned for you, I—I couldn't go through with it."

"What were you doing here?"

"Waiting," she said, "to make up my mind what to do. I think in another hour I would have gone to Wilson."

"Tell it," Cain said, "from the beginning."

She said rapidly, "I met Karl when he worked for a small-time carnival. When we got married, he started the costume shop. Then he met Toby. Toby was on his way up and he saw Karl as a front for his enterprises. And Toby knew what Karl didn't even know about himself. I married a body, kid fashion, and after Toby met Karl, I didn't have even that."

"But you stayed around."

"Yes. I tried to kill Toby. The evidence is in the blackmail stuff."

Cain said scornfully, "And hating Toby, you hung around him, worked for him, lived next door to him. You had all the opportunity in the world to get something on him, even the score. But you didn't. Because all the time you were still working for Munger."

"Yes," Lisa said. "Don't you see? He wanted to be big, free of Toby. He was waiting for the chance and I was helping him. Even after he killed Toby, I helped him. I wasn't sure, Cain, until I saw him kill Paula. And then — then I couldn't go along."

Cain said, "Sure, he was your husband even if you did have to sleep with other guys to have any love life."

He saw the sadness in her and he knew that whatever compulsion had kept her close to Munger, it was bigger than she. He said now, more softly, "You almost suckered me, Lisa. Even after you admitted you were working for Toby, it wasn't too bad. But when I talked to Munger last night, I discovered he knew an awful lot — stuff that only you and Honor and I knew. That tipped me off. The information in the blackmail documents finished it."

There was nothing more to say. Lisa turned and went out of the cabin. Cain followed her. He smoked a cigarette,

watching her stare moodily at the water. He said finally, "Where is Paula?"

"Still in the runabout. I was supposed to deliver her to the island for the — the double killing."

"Triple killing," Cain corrected. "He was going to include you. He was through with you, had no more use for you."

"Down inside I think I knew it," she said.

Cain left her and went to the runabout. He found Paula Ryerson there. She was not pretty in death. He had to force himself to lift her, carry her to the cruiser. He laid her alongside Munger. Then he went to Lisa again.

"Take the runabout," he said. "Get your baggage from Ryerson's and then go to my place. Munger's car is there. I suppose it's yours now. Take it and go — and keep going."

"Cain!"

He walked into the cabin of the cruiser and started the motor. Lisa jumped to the dock and he backed away, swung around, and gunned for open water.

He was in the cabin of his own boat when he heard the runabout arrive, heard Lisa's footsteps, and then caught the sound of Munger's car as it pulled out of the driveway. He turned his attention back to Honor still unconscious on the bunk.

When he had greased her burns and covered her with a soft sheet, he left her and returned to the dock. There he set the controls of Munger's cruiser, kicked the throttle over, and jumped free. He stood and watched the sleek boat head into the Sound, a floating coffin for Munger and Paula Ryerson.

He was in the cabin looking for a blanket when Honor moaned. Cain went to her. Her eyes opened wide and he saw the stark and naked fear in them. He said as gently as he might to a small child, "It's Cain, honey."

The fear receded, disappeared. Her lips parted and she whispered faintly, "I should have known they couldn't get you, Cain. Kiss me, please."

He laid his lips on hers. There was a brief response and then none. She was asleep, her breathing normal, her relaxation obvious. Cain took a blanket, stripped off his blood-stained tuxedo, and went on deck to sleep.

He kept turning, finding the deck harder than he had ever remembered it. He got up and lit a cigarette and lay down again. He said aloud, "Hell, I'm too keyed up to sleep." He finished his cigarette and flipped it over the rail.

"A mountain in Arizona wouldn't be too bad in the winter time," Cain said. He went to sleep with a smile on his lips.

When he awoke the sun had reached its height and was striking straight down against his face. Yawning, he threw back the blanket and blinked at the sunlight. When he stretched, he felt a sharp pain and remembered that Munger's little bullet had burned his side. That brought back a crowd of memories and he rose quickly.

Blanket in hand, he tumbled down to the cabin. The bunk was smoothed over and empty. He grabbed his swimming trunks and slipped into them and went back on deck. He noticed that the runabout was gone, too, and he felt a stab of fear run through him. Then he realized that it was all over now, that Honor had no one to fear any more except herself.

He took a quick swim and went below to dress. He heard the boat arrive while he was shaving and when he went on deck again, he could smell the mingled aromas of coffee and frying bacon. He stuck his head into the galley and there was Honor. She wore dungarees and a man's shirt not tucked in. She looked perfectly normal.

"The resiliency of youth," he said wonderingly.

She turned an impish face toward him. "Hi, killer. Breakfast is coming up."

"Don't be so damned cheerful," he said. "Killing isn't fun."

Honor ignored him, choosing to be flippant until they finished eating and were on their coffee and cigarettes. Then she said seriously, "I know killing isn't fun, Cain. Even now when I think of it, I get scared."

"Bury it," Cain advised her. "It'll get easier. You'll probably have to tell Wilson, but after that bury it."

"Aye, Captain." She rose abruptly and ducked down into the cabin. When she returned, she had a wad of bills in her hand. She tossed them at Cain. "Compliments of Munger," she said. "I won it with my system."

Cain handed the money back. "You won because Munger

gave orders for you to win. He was setting you up for the future." He hated to destroy her pleasure at her own ingenuity but he also hated to think of her getting bitten by the gambling bug. He explained how the system worked. Then, quietly, he told her what had happened after he left her at Munger's.

"I know," she said when he was done. "It was on the radio this morning. Your friend Rhumba is in the hospital and they've found Munger and — and Paula."

"I'm sorry," was all Cain could say.

"I'm not," Honor said. "It's better. I tried not to think it of her, Cain, but after Toby was killed I began to put two and two together. I knew about her fight with Daddy, you see. And she hated me because she had all of Daddy's hatred and I had all his love."

"You mean she planted that bomb on your runabout?" Cain shook his head and to make it easier on her, he lied smoothly, "Don't forget she and Munger were working together, even if they were trying to cross one another. His boys made the plant, Honor. They were trying to get me as much as anything."

He didn't know if she believed him or not but it was a story she could turn to, he thought, when thinking about her sister got too bad deep inside. He said now, "Wilson will be along soon. And it won't be easy."

She smiled at him. "Easier than Munger, Cain."

Wilson sat on a folding chair with his feet on the rail and drank Honor Ryerson's best brewed coffee. Bergen kept his feet planted prosaically on the deck and tried to figure a way to balance a cup of coffee, a cigar, a pencil, and a notebook all on two knees. Honor finally brought him a wooden crate for an end table. Then she retired to her spot on the rail next to where Cain's feet were propped. Wilson got down to business. "Some people were killed last night."

"I heard," Cain said.

"You two were at Munger's last night?"

"It was my birthday," Honor said. "Cain took me as a present."

"That's nice," Wilson murmured. "She's still only twenty, Cain."

Cain was smoking his pipe. He studied it a moment. "Legally, Munger can't operate. Therefore his place doesn't exist before the law. So how could I break any laws taking Honor to a place that isn't?"

"Yeh," Wilson said. "It isn't in my jurisdiction anyway. You and your syllogisms." He drank more coffee. "That's neither here nor there at the moment. I want to know what you did there."

"I went for a boatripe," Cain said. "I spent most of my evening on the Sound. On Munger's invitation, of course. I spent it with a fellow named Rhumba. I hear he's not well."

"You wouldn't have any idea how he got in that condition?" Wilson asked mildly.

"I did it to him," Cain said. "He had me roped and on the floor and he decided to kick my face in. I won."

Wilson waited patiently while Bergen scribbled. Cain told the story briefly of Munger's idea to make a "love-nest" killing.

Wilson nodded. "Did Smoky do something to you, too?"

Honor said, "I did that, Mr. Wilson." She reached into her dungaree pocket and brought out the little .25. "With this."

He took it gingerly. "You shot Smoky with this?"

Honor said, "I must have. I put it to his eye and pulled the trigger and he died. Shouldn't I have?"

Cain clamped his jaw hard on his pipestem. Wilson just said gently, "It's not customary to go around shooting people, Miss Ryerson. Not even people like Smoky."

"He broke the front of my evening gown," she said.

"And why did he do that?"

Honor told him. She related the evening in detail with a vivid anatomical description. Wilson turned a bright pink. "In other words you killed him in self-defense."

"Of my virtue," she said primly.

Wilson let it go. He turned to Cain. Cain said, "Smoky was hopped up. She was trying to find out what had happened to me. He got suspicious and tried to kill her. It was self-defense."

"I'll buy it," Wilson said wearily. "That leaves three to go. Munger, Paula Ryerson, and Patton."

"Munger killed them both," Cain said. He saw that despite his resigned attitude, Wilson was getting edgy, and he decided Honor's horseplay had gone far enough. He told it now in concise detail.

When he was through, Wilson said, "We had most of it. And we got some more from Lisa Simms. We found her today stuffing Munger's money into a bag."

"It's hers," Cain said. "And she's clear as far as I can see."

"If she isn't," Wilson said, "you'll probably see that she gets that way. We won't hold her any longer than necessary." He drained his cup and accepted more from the pot Honor hurriedly brought. "So it's all wrapped up in a neat package for the county boys. Okay, Cain, but they'll want the answer to this question, too. Who killed Munger?"

"I did," Cain said quietly.

Wilson looked as if he might cry. "Self-defense, I suppose?"

Cain showed him the bullet burn on his side. Honor jumped up immediately and lifted her shirt, exposing her stomach to Wilson's startled gaze. Cain jerked her shirt down hurriedly. Then, briefly, he described what had happened. Wilson listened in silence.

"The avenging sword of Cain," he murmured finally. "Some day you'll kill one too many, Cain."

"I didn't do it for pleasure," Cain said.

"Why did you turn them loose in the Sound?"

"I didn't want Honor to wake up and find her sister's body," Cain told him. "I didn't want Munger cluttering up my share of the Sound."

"Or maybe you didn't want to be implicated," Wilson said dryly. "This place would have been swarming with County boys if you'd left the boat here."

"I like my privacy," Cain agreed. His voice was pointed.

Wilson got up. Bergen joined him. Wilson said, "Ten A.M. tomorrow, Cain, to sign a statement. Thanks for the coffee and the information."

Honor watched until their car had bumped out of sight. Then she said, "Doesn't he believe us, Cain?"

"It's a wonder," Cain said. "What were you trying to do to him?"

Honor giggled. "I did confuse him, didn't I?"

Cain said, "Yes," and walked to the rail. Honor followed. She had lost her bright look. Her face was serious.

"We have the money I made gambling, Cain. That will keep us for quite a while, won't it?"

Cain was silent. Honor said, "Now Daddy can afford to buy me a little mountain and maybe even a telescope."

Cain looked hard at the water. Honor touched him lightly. "Cain, this morning you kissed me and called me 'honey.'"

He said, "This morning you were a small child in pain, Honor."

Honor said, "I graduate pretty soon, Cain."

He turned on her savagely. "Get this straight. In the summers we're here, on the boat, on the Sound. Somewhere on water, anyway. We'll go to that damned mountain only in the winter."

"Yes, Cain."

"Now I'll have to brush up on my math, I suppose," he growled. He closed his mouth suddenly, grabbed her and kissed her. Finally he stopped.

"Go home," he said. "Go home. I'll call you later."

"Yes, Cain." She went silently.

He watched her putt away, disappearing around the Point. Then he looked at the sun on the placid water. "I suppose I can wait until she graduates," he said aloud. He looked away from the Sound and faced her place. Through the gap in the trees, he could see sunlight reflected from her telescope.

"Oh hell," he said. He ran a signal up his mast. Then he sat down to enjoy the few moments of privacy he had left.