

**ACE**  
DOUBLE NOVEL  
BOOKS

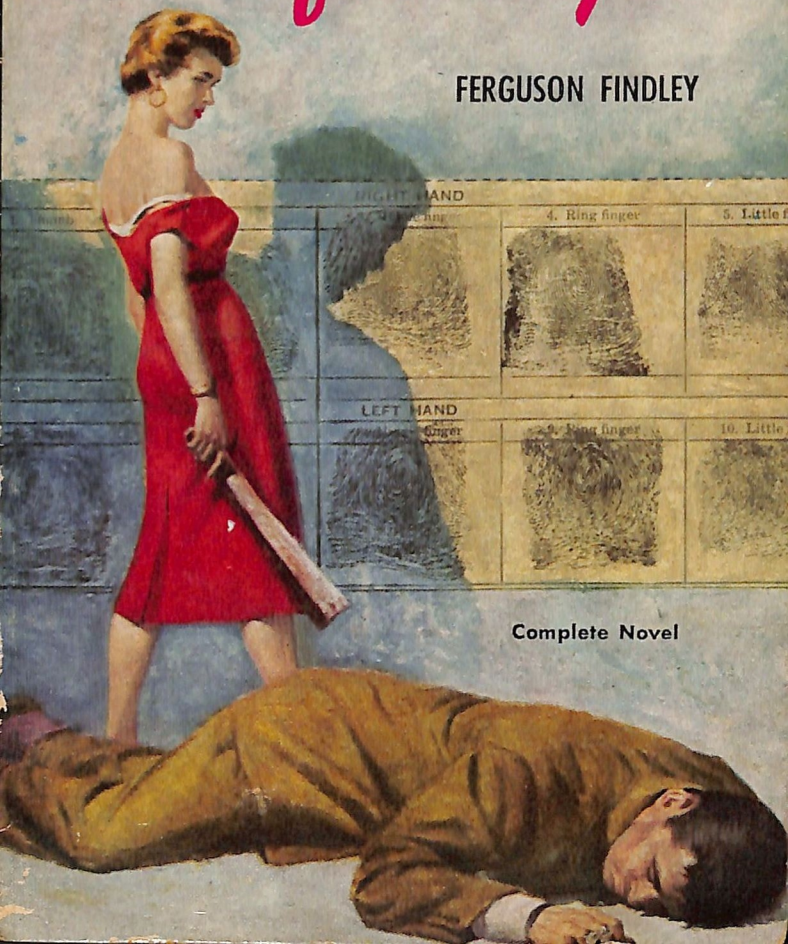
**TWO COMPLETE NOVELS 35c**

**D-197**

His home was a rendezvous for the murdered

# *Counterfeit Corpse*

**FERGUSON FINDLEY**



**Complete Novel**





## HARVEST TIME FOR THE GRIM REAPER

The first corpse made a mess of the flower bed. But when the second one soon appeared, Don Ivy stopped worrying about his crocuses. For one thing, the police were beginning to dig around. After all, his strange reputation had never inspired confidence in that staid New England community. And now that his lawn had begun to resemble the morgue—well, he couldn't blame the cops for doing their job.

It was all a neat frame-up. If the cops didn't get him the killer would. Either way Don Ivy would burn—unless he could find the feet that fit a killer's footprints.

---

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

---

## CAST OF CHARACTERS

### DON IVY

He was good at engraving money, but he couldn't use a counterfeit alibi.

### BILLIE. MATAZE

This luscious blonde bait caught a greedier fish than she'd angled for.

### JOHN SULLIVAN

No heavyweight this Sullivan, but a good man to have around in the clinches.

### JUDY THAMES

At least *she* wasn't a counterfeit niece.

### SAM ROAMER

He was a G-man greedy for gold.

### TERRY

Her smooth operation was learned at the switchboard.

# *Counterfeit Corpse*

**FERGUSON FINDLEY**

**ACE BOOKS**

A Division of A. A. Wyn, Inc.

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



COUNTERFEIT CORPSE

Copyright ©, 1956, by A. A. Wyn, Inc.

All Rights Reserved

---

TNT FOR TWO

Copyright ©, 1956, by A. A. Wyn, Inc.

---

Printed in U.S.A.

## CHAPTER I

THE FIRST CORPSE made a mess of the flower bed.

Along about ten o'clock that morning, after the sun had warmed the front yard to a degree that an indoor man by habit and preference could chance with safety, I stepped outside my little white house, sat on the front step, and looked around.

There was a lot of work to be done. A lot of work that I would have to do, that is.

The hardy New England honeysuckle, which begins its battles early in the spring, was slowly winning a decision over the lilacs and dogwood trees. Last autumn's leaves, which my mother would have raked and burned, still clotted in the corners where the winds had dumped them. And the moles, done with their hibernation, had already tunneled my modest lawn into lumps.

Patches of paint were curling off the window frames on the northeast side of the house.

"Oh to be in England," I quoted, "now that April's there." But England didn't want me, they had made that politely clear. "Don't think it hasn't been fun, Donald, old boy," Deputy Inspector Brisk had said as he saw me safely and finally aboard a vessel bound out of Liverpool, "because, except in spots, it hasn't been fun at all for us, though I imagine you liked most of it, especially the ending. So good luck wherever you go, and just don't come back, old boy, just don't ever come back at all."

My one-way ticket had taken me to Lisbon, which held only a few opportunities for a man of my considerable but specialized talents. To be sure, I was able to undertake a few assignments for an elderly Armenian gentleman, who

hired me to locate and purchase some items for his extensive art collection. But his main interest was oil wells in the Middle East, about which I knew nothing and cared less, so we parted on a friendly basis, and I went on to Tangier to see what I could find.

Tangier held out all the opportunity in the world to me, and I did very well. There were legitimate fortunes to be made on the money exchanges in Tangier in those days right after the war, and other kinds of fortunes to be made in the import and export business, as we called it, especially if you didn't bother with customs inspections and duties.

And so our bank balances mounted every day, and we bought gilt-edge securities in the United States and Canada, oil companies in Texas, Liberian steamship lines, godowns in Hong Kong, and apartment houses in San Paulo. We lived in expensive white villas with French chefs, English butlers, bodyguards who had served in the Foreign Legion, and the most beautiful girls in the world, and had a wonderful time counting our money. I might still have been in Tangier, except for two things.

First of all my mother, whom I had not seen for years, died and willed me the family house, land, and outbuildings.

And just about the same time one of my business competitors in Tangier, von Hauser, invited me to leave. Since the invitation was delivered by five Moroccan thugs and accompanied by a dislocated shoulder and sundry other bruises and lacerations, I left. It was high time to go home. Most of my money was tucked away in Swiss and American banks, and von Hauser left me my cash and the speedboat, which I sold to a rich Greek on the Spanish Riviera before I took the westward plane from Barcelona.

The old homestead was snowed in when I drove up in the little Triumph two-seater I had bought in New York right after I landed. The drive north almost froze me blue. I had forgotten how cold New England could be in the winter.

Now spring was definitely in the air, and the sun was



coming up early and staying later, and if I was going to be a respectable country squire I would have to do some work around the place—at least, until I could hire somebody to do it.

There was an old rake in the barn, in one of the horse stalls behind the open section I used as a garage. The sun was still in the southeast, and since there were a lot of leaves in the shrubbery on that side, it seemed like a good place to start raking.

The dining room and kitchen are on that side of the house, with the dining room at the front. I had raked past the dining room, accumulating a huge amount of leaves, and was almost to the kitchen window when I saw the body between the dwarf yews and the wall of the house.

"Damn!" I said. "I wonder how long this has been lying around."

I gave it a tentative poke with the rake handle. It was stiff, so I carefully leaned the rake against the wall and went right in the kitchen door to the telephone in the living room and called the Tombury police. Ivy is no fool.

"This is Donald Ivy, out at the old Ivy place on Eddystone Road, and there's a body lying dead, I believe, behind the bushes under my kitchen window. . . . I don't know whether it's a man or a woman, but it's wearing trousers. . . . I think it's dead because it's fairly rigid. . . . That's right, the old Ivy place on Eddystone Road. . . . Yes, I'll stay right here. No, I won't touch it."

I hung up the phone and walked outside again. The body was still there. Though I had promised the Tombury Police Department that I wouldn't touch it, I saw no harm in parting the evergreens to get a better look, especially of the head end. It might be someone I knew.

The body was lying face down, the back of the head was bashed in, and the red and gray brains were bashed out. I let the evergreens go back into place. Even if it were somebody I knew, it was too late to do anything for him.

My pipe had gone out, and as I turned away from the wall and put another match to it, a black sedan went racing around the curve and away from the house. Then there was a noise of slamming brakes, and the sedan stopped and backed to the section of the old road that is closest to the house. Eddystone Road, I might explain, used to make a sharp curve right in front of the house, but a couple of years ago the highway engineers eased the curve so that now the new road is on the other side of a clump of trees. The old part, with its curve, still runs close to the house but I am the only person who uses it regularly.

The black sedan drove in the old road and stopped at the driveway that leads back to the barn. Two men got out. One was in uniform and the other carried a black bag. I walked out to meet them.

"You Don Ivy?" the uniformed policeman asked. He was a big man, young, with more fat than character around his jaw, and he tried to fix me with his bright blue eyes. He failed. I've been eye-fixed by better policemen than he.

"I'm *Donald* Ivy," I said. "Are you the local gendarme, the minion of the law?"

It bounced right off. "I'm Patrolman Kilgore," he announced. "Harry Kilgore. This here is Doctor Dann, who I got to come along because you don't know if a stiff body is dead or not. Where is it?"

"Good morning, Doctor," I said, extending my hand to the elderly man who smiled calmly at me. "I don't know whether you remember me or not. It's been a long time."

He took the hand. "I was the first person in the world to see you, Donald"—he smiled again—"and I saw you through the measles and the whooping cough and a broken collar-bone you got playing basketball for Tombury High, if my memory doesn't fail me. How are you now?"

"Where's the body?" Kilgore asked.

"I've weathered my first New England winter in almost twenty years, Doctor," I said, ignoring Kilgore. "I can't



say I liked it, but I lived and don't seem to feel any worse than I ever have."

"You should have come home sooner, Donald," the doctor admonished me gently. "Your mother missed you a lot."

"Where's the body?" Kilgore demanded.

"Under the kitchen window," I told him, and started toward the house. To the doctor I said, "I wish I had known."

"Nobody ever knew where you were, Donald. But you're home now and, as I understand from my young friend here, you are blessed with a body, type and condition unknown. Under the kitchen window, you said?"

I nodded and he walked over and parted the yews. "Come here, Kilgore, and take a look for yourself," he said. "I believe Donald is absolutely right." He leaned over and felt the body. "And the poor devil is absolutely dead."

"Who killed him?" Kilgore mumbled, turning around and looking at me. "What do you know about this, Ivy?"

"Not as much as you. I don't even know if it's a him, her, or storekeeper's window dummy. I found it, called the police, and now I leave it all in your capable—if I may use the term—hands."

He turned away. "What do you think, Doc?"

"I would say this man has been murdered," Dr. Dann said. "The back of the skull has been banged in with something or other, and just by looking at it I don't see how it could have been an accident."

"Got any idea who might have done it?" the patrolman asked.

"I am a medical man," Dr. Dann reminded him gently, "but if I were forced to guess, I would guess that it was a person or persons unknown."

"Nuts," Kilgore muttered. "Where's your phone, Ivy?"

"In the house."

"Yeah, I know. *Where in the house?* Let's go. You heard the doc say it was a murder case, let's get moving."



With my native New England sense of hospitality well hidden, I showed him to the telephone and he called his own headquarters and then the local headquarters of the state police. He wasn't at all happy about calling the state police, but I judged he had been ordered to do it.

"You owe me maybe twenty cents plux tax for that last call," I told him.

"I'll send a check to your bank," he said. "Your Swiss bank." He walked back through the kitchen and outside, while I wondered how—and why—a village patrolman would know that I had an account in a Swiss bank.

"The state cops will be right over, Doc," Kilgore announced as soon as he was outside. "They said not to move anything, and they'll bring an ambulance and all the rest of their junk with them."

"You might show them this when they get here," the doctor said. He pushed aside a low yew and pointed to a length of firewood lying beside the body's feet. "There's your murder weapon. A piece of split firewood, just the right wedge shape to split a skull. You'll even find blood stains and hair on it."

"Where'd it come from?" Kilgore wanted to know. He looked at me.

"There's still about a quarter of a cord of firewood stacked just around the corner," I said. "Right where I had it put last winter. Even without looking, I'd imagine it came from there."

"You seem to know a good deal about this murder, Ivy," he said. It was obvious that *he* didn't know much about it.

I ignored him and stepped over to Dr. Dann, who was stuffing a stethoscope into his black bag.

"Anything else?" I asked him.

He stood up with the black bag in his hand. "I didn't move the body, but I think it's a man. Either that or a woman with a fairly heavy black beard that hasn't been shaved for about two days. I didn't try to take any body

temperatures, but rigor is complete. From that and from the color of the blood on the back of the head and the firewood, I'd say this man was killed some time last night. And, without moving the body, that's all I can find out until the state police get here. Now let's go inside and see if you have any coffee."

I asked Kilgore did he want coffee, but he said he had to wait with the body until the other forces arrived, so the doctor and I went in, poured two cups of coffee from the pot in the kitchen, and took them in the living room. He looked around and then at me. "You haven't made many changes."

"The furniture is all the same but the rug is mine and so are most of the pictures."

"And that," the doctor said, "is that a genuine Monet or did you. . . ?"

I laughed. "That's the real thing, Doctor. Collecting French moderns is my one real weakness." I changed the subject. "Do you have any idea how my sister feels about me and my coming home?"

"I haven't seen her since your mother's funeral," he told me. "She said she was sure you'd have been here if it was possible. When you didn't come home after the war she was greatly disappointed. You ought to go up and see her, Donald. You can drive it in a few hours."

"I will," I promised. "I want to see Martha again, and that daughter of hers. I understand the girl's a real knock-out."

The door opened and Kilgore stuck his head in.

"Come out here a minute, Ivy," he ordered. He led me to the side yard. "A man came walking in here from the drive." He pointed to footprints in the soft ground. "The prints go this far, and then they get lost in a lot of other prints. Do you see what I mean?"

"Yes," I told him. "I must have trampled them out myself while I was raking leaves this morning."



He put his black-gloved fists on his hips, blew up his chest inside his black leather jacket. "Listen, Ivy," he said. "I know all about you. You're a crook. You served a stretch in an English jail. Now a man is murdered on your place last night. He and maybe the guy who murdered him probably left footprints all over the place—but you rake leaves all over the lawn and tramp out all the valuable footprints." He paused for breath. "So please tell me this—why is it that, of all the days in the year, you, who never did an honest day's work in all your life, decided to rake leaves today?"

"I just like to have things neat and tidy," I told him.

## CHAPTER II

WELL, HE DIDN'T like it but he took it, and while he was trying to figure out what to do next another black sedan drove up and two state cops got out. The one in front, who was wearing sergeant's chevrons, walked across the lawn, said hello to Kilgore and then turned to me.

"Mr. Ivy?" he asked. I nodded. "I'm Sergeant Sullivan, from the Springdale Barracks. Got over here as soon as I could with my helper and his cameras and stuff. An ambulance is coming along in about ten minutes. Understand Dr. Dann is here. We'd like to see him, too."

Sergeant Sullivan I understood. He was a professional, a cop who knew his job and could perform without popping his eyes, sniffing loudly, or making faces. He was in his late twenties, I guessed, stood a little short of six feet and probably weighed in at 180 pounds. He was smaller than Kilgore, but I'd pick Sullivan in a foot-race or a fight. Even if he shaved three times a day he could never be able to hide his blue-black beard. There was no great friendliness in his blue-black eyes, but there was no guile either.



"Anything new develop since you called?" he asked Kilgore.

"Doc Dann found a hunk of firewood that he thinks is the murder weapon," the patrolman told him. "And I found some footprints coming in from the drive and up toward the house—until they run into where Ivy has been raking leaves."

"We'll check them," Sullivan said. "Ralph," he called the other state cop, "get Kilgore to show you these footprints and stake them off so nobody else steps on them. After we look at the shoes on the body, we'll see if we need to take any casts or not. And you might as well get your cameras set up. Where is the body, anyhow?" he asked.

"Over there under the kitchen window," I pointed.

"Well, if you'll get Doc Dann away from the coffee I know he's drinking and bring him out here, we'll all take a look at it together."

The doctor finished his cup as soon as I told him who had arrived, and came out. "Hello, John," he greeted the sergeant. "They must think this is a pretty important case, sending you over here."

"I've been wanting to drop by here for some time," Sullivan said, with a quick glance at me that I didn't miss. "But what do you know about it?"

"He's been dead since sometime last night, I guess, and was killed with a length of firewood which somebody bent over his head. Here he is." Dr. Dann parted the trees and Sullivan went down on one knee for a better view.

The sergeant and his assistant worked quickly and efficiently for the next ten minutes, with cameras and measuring tapes. "Well, Doc," Sullivan said finally, "I guess we might as well drag him out in the open and roll him over. Come on, Kilgore, give us a hand."

The three policemen, under Dr. Dann's observation, raised the body, lifted it over the small evergreens, and placed it face down again on the lawn. Then they rolled it over on

its back. I couldn't see the face, but I heard Sullivan say, "It's a man, all right." Then he said, "Does anyone know him?" There was a unanimous shaking of heads.

Sullivan stepped away from the body. "Is this anyone you know, Ivy?" he asked.

I took the pipe out of my mouth and stepped closer for a better look. The face was that of a young man who was very old. "Yes," I said, "that's Henri."

"What do you mean, *onree*?" Kilgore wanted to know.

"That's the way the French pronounce *Henry*," I told him. "Henri was a Frenchman—a French boy, really, when I first met him."

"What was his last name?"

"I don't know," I said. "We hardly ever knew their names, you know. This one they called Henri, and he just turned up in a party one time and I took him along. The little bum went right back, too, as soon as he could. Finally he got caught, and they gave him a bad time. The last time I saw him was in Lisbon in 1946."

"What the hell are you talking about?" Sullivan asked. "I don't get it. Who was taking what out of where, for instance, and what kind of a party was this that Henri went on?"

"Not what you'd call a sociable affair," I said. "There were some of us Americans who thought we could help our French friends better by staying in France than by taking the first ship home. After France fell, at the beginning of the war, we helped set up a kind of a system for getting people out of France and into Spain or England."

"For how much a head?" Kilgore wondered loudly.

"For putting up with guys like you we couldn't get paid enough," I told him. "For important people the price was less. For the real wonderful people—the people who would come back later to build up the Resistance, for example, there was no charge. And the kids, they were free, too. Henri was one of them. He was about fourteen, I guess. Where



his family was I don't know and I never asked. He just joined a party one time and helped me a lot—although he always seemed to think that I had helped him. But that doesn't matter much now, does it?"

I looked at the face of the man on the lawn, old and tired and yet somehow peaceful, and remembered the bright-eyed youngster he had been. "That's Henri. If you can't find any family or relatives, I'll see that he gets a decent place to lie, and prayers for his soul. Any more questions?"

"That's all well and good, Mr. Ivy," Sergeant Sullivan said. "Of course we'll have to see if we can get a more positive identification. But right now, can you tell me what Henri was doing here last night?"

"I have no idea. As I said, the last time I saw Henri was in Lisbon in 1946."

"What was he doing then?"

"Well, that's a little hard to say for sure. Have you ever been to Lisbon?" I raised my eyebrows questioningly.

"No," the sergeant said.

"That's a city where almost any smart person can make a living, so long as he doesn't tramp on too many toes or get too smart. You can learn a lot in Lisbon by just keeping your ears open, and if you are smart enough to listen to the right people, and know other people who would like to learn what the right people said or did, you can do pretty well for yourself. Henri tended bar, waited on tables, and sometimes carried luggage in the Hotel Grande. The Lisbon police probably have a file on him."

"You mean he was a stool pigeon?"

"It's a little different in Lisbon," I said, "and hard to explain."

"And what was he doing here?"

"That I can't answer."

"Do you think he came to see you?"

"I can't imagine that he'd be here for any other reason," I said. "But what he wanted is beyond me."



The second state cop, the one Sullivan had called Ralph, came up just then. "He's pretty clean, Sergeant," he said. "He had a billfold with a hundred and thirty-eight dollars in it, and a dollar and sixty cents in change in his pocket. There was a piece of paper with *DI-Eddystone Road-Tombury* written on it in pencil in another pocket. He had a mechanical pencil and a fountain pen, and some cigarettes and matches, and a handkerchief, and that's all I've found so far. Maybe I'll get more when we get his clothes off."

"No identification?"

"None I can find."

"All right." Sullivan glanced at his wrist watch. "That ambulance ought to be here any time now. You can load him and Dr. Dann can go with him and get started on the autopsy if he wants to. Then you can get casts of the footprints if you need them."

"This one's shoes will fit one set of prints," Ralph said. "But there's another set that comes around the back of the house, by the woodpile. They don't match. I'm getting them now."

Sullivan's eyes dropped to my feet.

Ralph shook his head. "Bigger," he said, and walked off.

"You know, Ivy," Sullivan began, as he stuck a cigarette in his mouth, "I've been wanting to come by here for some time." Smoke rolled from his nose. "Wanted to talk to you a little."

"Anything special?" I asked.

He walked over to the front door and put his foot on the doorstep. "Well, Ivy," he said, "we don't generally have much trouble in this part of the state. A little reckless driving, and now and then somebody gets drunk, or a kid steals a car for a joy ride. But real trouble? Very seldom."

"Go on, Sergeant, I'm listening."

"And we don't want any, either." He took a long drag on his cigarette. "Now for example, if any of those New York crooks moved up here we'd soon get rid of them. Even

if they didn't do anything, we can always bother them by just checking them all the time. Makes them nervous. They soon sell out and go away."

"I'm still listening."

"Well, I'm just doing a little checking now. I'll probably have to do a good deal of checking around here, now that you've had a murder on the place."

"Check and be damned!" I told him. "You and your New York crooks! You've got no reason to run me down. There were Ivys in this part of the world before the Sullivans were out of their Irish bogs, and never a man has been able to say a word against us and make it stick!"

"Did you or did you not serve a term in Dartmoor Prison in England for counterfeiting?"

I held his eyes with mine while I slowly and deliberately refilled my pipe and touched a match to it. "I'll make you a deal, Sergeant," I said. "You get off a cable to the Criminal Investigation Department of New Scotland Yard and ask them if they have any record of Donald Ivy ever serving a sentence for anything, or ever having been convicted of any crimes, felonies, misdemeanors, or what not. If the answer comes back yes, I'll leave this state and give you this house and the land around it as a gift. If the answer comes back no, you'll stop this business of checking and we'll all get along fine. How about it?"

"I can't take you up on a deal like that," he said, "but I will send a cable to the C.I.D. No matter what happens, however, don't you leave here until we're finished with this killing." A siren shrilled in the distance. "Here comes the ambulance."

The next thing I knew, the lawn was full of ambulance attendants, curious bystanders, a reporter from the *Tombury Times*, and flash bulbs were going off. The hubbub lasted until Dr. Dann and the ambulance people loaded the body and drove away, and almost everybody followed. Only the



three policemen remained, and Ralph was busy loading his gear into the state automobile.

"Did you hear anything last night?" Sullivan asked me. "Anything out of the ordinary."

"No," I said. "Nothing."

"What time did you go to bed?"

"About ten."

"Where do you sleep?"

"In the room at this end," I pointed. "My bed is between those two windows up there."

"Sleep with the windows open?"

"I sleep with the one window open, the one directly above where Henri was lying. I neither heard nor saw anything."

"Can you prove that?" Kilgore demanded.

"You know I can't. Why should I have to? I live here alone and I sleep here alone and I'll be happy when you go away and leave me alone!"

"Don't get so hot-headed, old man," Kilgore laughed. "You know too much about this case to start throwing your weight around. See you in jail, ha ha." He walked over to his automobile, got in and slammed the door, and drove away.

"How close to the house do you want me to stay?" I asked Sullivan. "I'm a little short of food and stuff and have to go into Tombury pretty soon."

"Just don't go any farther without calling up headquarters and checking with us first." He started toward his car, then stopped. "Don't say anything about that second set of footprints coming from behind the house," he said. "That's about the only thing keeping you off the hook in this case, so let's not scare the guy who made them. Now I'm going to send a few cables and see if I can find out why you killed Henri. I'll be back. Good-bye."

I watched them drive away with no great sense of personal loss. Kilgore was a blundering amateur, and no matter what he did I could hardly care less. Sullivan was a pro-



fessional, though, and I was almost looking forward to matching wits with him, just *pour le sport*. I should have had my head examined.

A horn tooted urgently. It was the mailman, in his automobile. I walked across the lawn and he gave me two advertising circulars and a letter addressed in a hand that I didn't recognize. Ordinarily he would have put the mail in the box, but this morning he wanted to talk about the murder, so we killed time, if you will pardon the expression, for about ten minutes. As he drove off on his appointed rounds, I looked at the strange envelope again. The postmark was smudged. The address was scrawled in pencil. Inside the envelope was a single sheet of cheap notepaper, and on it was this message:

*Donald. I will be dropping around to see you soon and expect a real old welcome because I hear you are doing very well for yourself. Your old pal—Wusky.*

"Good old Wusky," I said to myself. "Once a rat, always a rat." I put the note in my pocket and walked toward the house. Suddenly I was hungry.

### CHAPTER III

THE IDEA STRUCK me all of a sudden, while I was heating some soup on the stove, that maybe I should be taking a little more interest in things. I'm not usually so slow, but this time it took me quite a while to realize I was mixed up in a murder—and murder isn't a trivial thing. Especially with God-only-knew-what rumors about me making the rounds of the police departments of the land. I knew enough about police all over the world to know that if they

didn't get a better suspect than me in a hurry, they would certainly settle for what they had. And I was what they had.

For a few minutes I resented Henri. But I could never really stay displeased with him, dead or alive, for I would always keep remembering the time he helped me carry a prominent French woman, whose name you would recognize if I mentioned it, across the Spanish border one dark night. She had fallen flat on her face, worn out by carrying her own fat around for so long, I suppose, and refused to get up and walk again. Henri kicked her in her big behind and called her a pig (which she was), and then the two of us had picked her up. Stumbling through the night, we got her over the line.

"Dump the cow in the stream," he had suggested when we were safe, and we did.

"Good night, my young lieutenant," I had thanked him then, as I shook his hand, and I went back over the border to France. But I would never forget him, with his pint-sized body and his man-sized French oaths, doing a man-sized job for me. Whether I was suspected or not, it was my duty to find out who had killed Henri and see him settled away for the crime. It was the least I could do for my young lieutenant.

Someone knocked at the front door and I went to see who it was. This time it was a pleasant surprise.

A blonde female surprise with blue eyes and a red mouth that broke into a smile when I opened the door. She was wearing a pert little hat over short-cut hair and a red coat that looked good on her. But then almost anything would have looked good on this girl and in my imagination I quickly fitted her out in mink, bathing suits, and a Christian Dior original. I took the Dior original off and threw it away. The flat look wasn't becoming. There was a suitcase beside her.

"Hello," I said. "Can I help you?"



"I'm Judy Thames," this shapely girl said. "Are you my Uncle Donald Ivy?"

"Don't tell me that you're Martha's little girl?" I protested. "I can't believe it. You aren't old enough to be this old! What in the world are you doing away down here, and where's your mother, anyhow? Come in, come in and sit down. Let me take your bag." I followed her into the living room. "This is a wonderful surprise. Little Judy Thames, all grown up. What *are* you doing here, anyhow?"

She gave a short little laugh as she glanced around the living room. "You've never seen me before, have you?"

"No," I said. "You've been born and grown up while I was away. Martha sent me a picture of you when you were about six, I guess, but that's the last one I had."

Judy Thames took off her hat and shook her head and ran her fingers through her hair. "I bet I look a mess," she said. "That guy insisted on keeping the car window open and I'm blown to pieces." She looked good to me. "This is a nice place here, Uncle Donald. I've always liked it here."

I almost swelled with pride. "Give me your hat and coat, Judy, and I'll hang them up. Have you had lunch? Would you like some?" The whole room seemed more cheerful to me, now that this good-looking girl who said she was my niece was in it.

"Goodness," she said, "were you expecting me? Did Mother call you? The telephone's been out of order for three days; we had a bad storm. We decided not to wait, and I just came down because a friend of mine was driving this way. But we stopped and had lunch. Haven't you had your own lunch yet, Uncle Donald?" She glanced at her wrist watch. "It's almost two o'clock."

"I haven't heard from your mother," I said, "and I haven't had lunch, either. Come out to the kitchen with me, and I'll have some soup and you can have a cup of coffee or a bottle of beer while I'm eating. Then you can tell me all



about everything." I led the way into the kitchen. "I see you have a suitcase with you; where are you going?"

She sat on a kitchen stool, crossed her long legs, (and my heart went *thump!*) and fished a cigarette out of her hand-bag. "I'm not going anywhere," she said, as I struck a match and held it out. "I've come to visit you for a while, Uncle Don. That is, I'll stay *if* you'll have me." She smiled a little smile that made me feel kind of giddy all over.

"Donald Ivy," I said to myself, "the trouble with you is that you haven't been used to beautiful young females moving in and announcing that they are going to live with you. It hasn't happened for quite a while, old boy, so just calm down. This is your niece and you're her uncle, she says, and there is a close blood relationship between you. Drink some hot soup and you'll feel better."

"You are welcome in this house, my dear," I said in my best avuncular voice, "if you don't mind putting up with an old man's ways."

She told me just what I wanted to hear. "I don't think you're *very* old, Uncle Don. You're just about forty-two, Mother said; that's just about right, I think. Anyhow, when Mother and I found out you were home again, we wanted to come right down and see you. Then Mother couldn't get away and what with one thing after another we kept putting it off, until I finally told her I was coming, and here I am. There must be a zillion things I can do around here to help you get settled."

The house suited me fine the way it was, but I wasn't going to mention it and scare her away. "How is Martha?" I asked. "Still as pretty as ever?"

"Mother's just the same—just the same to me, I guess, though you may think she's changed."

"And what does she do?"

"She putters around the garden a lot except during the winter, and then she putters around inside. That big house keeps her busy."

"I hope she can come down here soon. I wish she had been able to come with you."

"I do too," Judy said, "but it's no use for me to ask her, I've decided. She always has some reason for staying home. My goodness, I can't remember the last time she left that house, it was so long ago. That's why I *finally* decided to come by myself. Do you mind?"

"Mind?" I echoed. "You never saw an old man as pleased as I am. Let's pour a couple cups of coffee and take them into the living room. It's more comfortable and I have millions of things to ask you. It will take me weeks."

We went into the living room and sat on the old Duncan Phyfe sofa that was one of the few family pieces Mother had kept. Martha had the rest, including the matching chairs.

"I'll have to call Mother this evening," Judy said. "The telephone should be fixed by then. She'll want to talk to you, too. I bet you won't even recognize her voice, will you?"

I confessed that probably I wouldn't and filled my pipe as she talked on. She told me about what she had done almost from the time she was born, and where she had gone to school, and what she intended to do later.

"But we don't really know anything about you, Uncle Don," she said finally, curling her legs under her. "You never wrote. Of course now and then we heard things about you and about how smart you were and how you even got decorated by the king and all that." She lit a cigarette and gave me a quick look. "Are you *really* the greatest counterfeiter in all the world, Uncle Don, like they said, and did they have to pardon you?"

I laughed. I felt good for the first time since I had been back in America. I was having fun, just sitting in my living room drinking coffee and talking to a pretty girl.

"It wasn't exactly the king who gave me the medal," I confessed. Her face dropped. "But," I hurriedly improvised, "of course the king had to approve it. He just couldn't



be there for the ceremony, but the duke was there." She smiled again. "And of course the king had to approve the pardon, too. That has to be done in every case, you know."

"But are you really the *greatest* counterfeiter in the world?" she asked again.

"Not any more," I confessed modestly. "There didn't seem to be much future in it, when every time someone got caught with as much as a queer shilling in his pocket they'd come around and see me, the police would. Never gave me a moment's rest, so I gave it up and left England."

"What did you ever do with the perfect plates for the ten-pound notes you made?"

"Oh, those," I smiled. "They *were* pretty good, at that. Fooled them all, they did. Probably still would. Whoops!" I exclaimed, and reached over quickly and brushed away the hot ash that had fallen from her cigarette onto the horse-hair sofa cover. "I hope it didn't burn a hole."

"Oh, I'm sorry," she said, and felt the still warm spot with the end of her finger. "Lucky me, it didn't." She snuggled back in the corner of the sofa. "But I'd have darned it tomorrow if it had. I'm handy around the house, you'll see that I am, and I'm going to do all sorts of things for you, Uncle Donald."

The shadows were getting longer outside, and the fingers of sunshine in the room had climbed about as high as they would that day. "Then we'd better get you tucked away," I said, "because it will soon be cocktail and dinner time."

I stood up and got the suitcase, and we went up the stairs. "The bathroom's in there," I pointed as we passed, "and here's where you can stay as long as you like and be as comfortable as if you were home." It wasn't a very big bedroom but, after all, it isn't a very big house, either. It was a nice room, with a back view on the pond, and lots of closet space under the eaves. I showed her where the towels and bedding was. "Make yourself at home and I'll be downstairs



when you come down. No hurry—but don't take too long, Judy. It's good to have you here."

Then I went downstairs and outside, while there was still some light, and got the rake and put it away. When I came back I could hear water running in the bathroom, so I went into the living room for a relaxed pipe until Judy came down. She certainly seemed able to take care of herself, although some of the things she did and said surprised me—like offering to darn a horsehair cover. I guessed I just wasn't used to American girls, and it was time I learned instead of acting like the old fud I was certainly going to become if I wasn't careful. I got up and walked over to the mirror and inspected myself for the first time in quite a while.

One thing I could say was that I had a good skin. Practically a young man's skin, and a nice straight nose, and my eyes were set correctly in my head, I was glad to see. The jaw was pretty square too, and my teeth were all my own. The only thing that worried me was my mustache, which was a little bushy and needed trimming badly.

"Ivy," I said to myself, "you're in pretty good shape, considering the life you've led. You just get that hedge off your lip and you'll look no more than thirty-two and life can be beautiful again. Yes sir, Donald, you old dog you, a shave and a beautiful blonde and a warm April day will make all the difference in the world. Talk to me not of hormones, lad, you're on your own again."

I heard Judy walking in her bedroom over my head, and I went around to the stairs and called. "You want an olive or an onion in your martini, Judy?"

"Just a little twist of lemon peel on top, Uncle Don," she called back. "I'll be down in a minute to help. Wait for baby."

*They've changed a little more than I realized, but I think it's a great thing for us older fellows.* I walked out to the kitchen and put the gin and vermouth and the glasses and

the pitcher on the table at the end of the sink. When I looked in the refrigerator for the lemon, I also found a jar of black caviar, so I made some spreads with that.

I was pouring the martinis into crystal glasses in the living room when Judy came down. My back was toward her when she came in, and I turned around with the two glasses in my hands and almost dropped them when I saw her.

You know, I'd always figured that men of my age had children, and nieces and nephews, who were in their early teens. And I had a pretty good idea as to how children in their teens were put together, you might say. And also, while I didn't know exactly how old Judy was, I knew she couldn't be more than twenty.

Twenty is plenty.

"Judy," I said, when I recovered enough to hand her a glass, "you are the prettiest girl these old eyes have ever beheld, standing there in that tight red dress which you fill out so well, with those shiny gold things swinging from your ears and those red toenails sticking out of your shoes. You may be a little bit overdressed for a simple evening in a country house with your old Uncle Donald, who looks like a bum, so I suggest we turn it into a small party to celebrate this family reunion. First of all, we will drink this first drink before it loses its chill, and then I will go upstairs and put on a clean shirt and fix myself up a little. Then we will whip up a fancy dinner while we are having another drink or two." I touched the rim of my glass to hers. "Here's to a long life and a merry one."

"For both of us," she added.

## CHAPTER IV

JUDY HAD FOUND the record player and was listening to a re-issue of Glenn Miller masterpieces when I walked into the living room. She glanced up and then—and I blush with



pride whenever I remember it—her mouth popped open and then popped shut, and she stood up with a great big smile spreading over her face.

"Uncle Donald," she squeaked. "You've shaved off that mustache. Oh, Uncle Donald, you're a real doll!"

I put my hand behind her shoulder. "Lady," I said, "shall we dance?" and we glided across the living room floor together and out into the front hall and even up and down a couple of steps, just to be fancy and devilish.

"Donald Ivy," she said, when the music was finished and I was making another pair of martinis, "where did you ever learn to dance like that and why did you wear that horrible big mustache and why are you still a bachelor when you're so young and good-looking and this drink will be my last I think two are enough."

"I never did like that mustache," I said. "It was just a bad habit so I said the hell with it and shaved it off. Didn't seem to be the right thing to have in the same house with a beautiful young girl, somehow or other."

"This beautiful young girl thinks we better get something to eat," she said. "Show me where it is and I'll fix it."

"Come to the kitchen," I said, "and I will let you sit on the stool and watch me whip up a tasty snack." I was beginning to feel a little bit giddy with my new-found urges.

I had forgotten all about Henri and the troubles of the morning.

I finally got a modest little meal fit for a king and queen (if I do say so myself) on the table, and I don't know when I enjoyed a dinner so much. There was a lot of idle chatter, and I told a lot of stories about my life and hard times in Europe and elsewhere, which seemed to interest Judy.

"Gee," she said, as we were finishing coffee in the living room, "I wish I could go to some of those places like London and Paris and Vienna someday. If I could just see some of the things you've seen, I'd be happy. I even wish I could



see some of the things you've made, like those plates for the ten-pound notes."

"What in the world would you do with them?" I asked.

"You could still make money with em, couldn't you?"

"Yes," I said, "I guess you could make all the ten-pound notes you wanted to, if you had the proper paper, and that shouldn't be too hard to get if you didn't have to be too exact. But what in the world would anyone want with ten . . ."

A guarded knocking at the front door interrupted me. "Now who could that be at this time of night?" I wondered. I stood up.

"I'll start clearing the dishes off the table," Judy said. She went into the kitchen as I opened the front door.

The man who stood there was about five and a half feet tall, and in the light that shone out from the hall he was sallow and dull-eyed.

"'Ello there, guv'nor," he said in the fake Cockney accent that he knew I despised. "Don't you recognize yer old prison myte, yer old pal Wusky?"

"What the hell do you want, you bum?"

"Now that's no wye to talk, Donald, and 'ere on this shiverin' doorstep's no plyce to talk, nyther. So why don't you mind yer manners, Donald, and arsk me in?" He wedged his way into the hall. "Did you get my little billy doo?" He took off his hat and coat and handed them to me, and I dropped them on the floor. "Mind your manners, Donald. This is no time to be unfriendly. You might remember that and offer me one of your seegars and a bit of your delicious wusky." He seated himself in a living room chair and tilted his big feet against the coffee table.

"Take your feet off the furniture!" I said and kicked him in the ankle. "And stop talking like a phony Britisher. You're in America now, where I happen to know you were born under dubious circumstances and completely out of what we

refer to as wedlock. I got your note. What do you want, you crummy bastard?"

"Now, Donald, that's not a nice way to talk." He rubbed his ankle. "And kicking an old pal isn't very nice either. In fact," and a beady look crept into his eyes, "I don't like it one little bit, and I think you'll be eating it before we say good night."

I kicked him in the ankle again. "You're a lousy spiv, Wusky, run out of England because not even the other spivs would have you, and that's about as low as you can get."

"Listen to one jailbird talkin' to another," he jeered. "Oh you're so goddam fine and dandy, in your shiny white shirt and your coat with the satin finish to it. But you know damned well why I'm here tonight, Donald."

"No, I don't know," I said. "Why the hell are you here, anyhow? And how did you get here?"

"Aha, now you're asking questions, Donald. You don't know all the answers after all, do you, Mister High-and-mighty? And I'm not going to tell you, either. But they do speak well of you in Tombury, Donald. Oh yes, you're quite the country squire around here. I guess you'd like to keep it that way, hey?"

"It makes little difference to me," I said. I heard the noise of water running in the kitchen sink.

"What's that?" Wusky demanded, jumping up. "Who's in the kitchen?"

"Sit down," I said, and pushed him heavily into the chair. "That's a relative of mine who is visiting here."

"So you've got a woman now? Well, well." He made an obscene gesture with his hand. "Well, so long as you have company in the house, Donald, I'll come right to the point. I want them plates and I'm either going to have them or I'm going to ruin you!"

"You want what?"

"I want them plates you made for the perfect ten-pound



notes, which you still have, according to what I hear. So go fetch them, or else."

I laughed in his face. "Or else what?"

"Or else I'll expose you, that's what I'll do! Oh, don't think I can't do it, Donald. I know people in the newspaper racket what would love to know about the Squire of Tombury, and that he served his stretch in Dartmoor, same as me. Only I don't go around putting on airs or wearing bow ties and fancy coats."

"Wusky," and I laughed until I almost choked, "when did you get out of Dartmoor?"

"In forty-three. And what's so bloody funny?"

"And then where did you go?"

"I got in the American Army."

"They were sure scraping the bottom of the barrel. Then what did you do?"

"I went to France shortly after the invasion."

"Then what did you do?"

"None of your damned business, Donald."

"Then I'll tell you. You got court-martialed for black-marketing in France, and you served three years for that. . ."

"Less time for good behavior," he threw in.

". . . and then you got back to England but in less than two weeks they had thrown you out. Is that right?"

"That's neither here nor there, bully boy," he growled. "Happens I know you've got them plates. And I want 'em. And just for your information, there's others after 'em too, but I just happen to have got here first."

"Wusky," I said, "you're away behind the times. If you came and asked me nicely for those plates I might give them to you. I don't need them. But you come around here and try to blackmail me and you're not going to get anything except a bloody nose."

"Pardon me, Uncle Donald," Judy said, opening the door and sticking her head into the room. "Where do I throw the garbage?"



"There's a can near the corner of the drive and the old road," I said. "But you don't know where it is, so don't you go out tonight. I'll do it."

She closed the door and Wusky gave me a big, ugly wink. "Quite a tasty piece you've got for yourself, Donald. Now I'll tell you what I'll do. You give me them plates and I'll leave nice and peaceful-like, and everything will be fine."

"And suppose I don't?"

"Well then, goddam your eyes, Donald, not only will you get your name in the newspapers as the prison rat you are, but I wouldn't be surprised if something nasty, like a bit of acid throwing, didn't happen to the pretty little bitch you've got in—"

That was as far as he got. I grabbed him by the front of his coat, yanked him to his feet, knocked two of his front teeth into his mouth, dragged him to the door and threw him out. Then I picked up his hat and coat and threw them after him. Then I went back to the kitchen to get a drink of water.

"Well," I said, looking around. "This is the cleanest this kitchen has been for a long time. You're a regular housekeeper, aren't you?"

"Who was that man?" she asked. "I didn't like his looks."

"Nor I his big mouth," I said. "His name is Andrews—Wusky Andrews they call him—and I just threw him out on his face."

"What did he want?"

"Well, to tell you the truth, he wanted those ten-pound plates that you were asking about. At first I thought he was fooling. Anyhow, he finally got a little nasty and, as I said, I threw him out." I raised the glass of water to my lips.

"Uncle Don," she exclaimed, "you've cut yourself! There's blood running down the back of your hand!"

She was right. There was a little cut across my knuckles, where they had connected with Wusky's teeth. I dabbed at

the cut with a handkerchief, but blood kept oozing out.

"You better put something on it," she said. "A cut like that can give you a nasty infection."

I went upstairs to the bathroom to give myself some first aid. It had been a wonderful evening until that silly and stupid Wusky had come rapping at the door, but he certainly ruined it. I was just pressing the corner of the Band-aid down firmly, and wishing Wusky Andrews no good, when I heard the frightful sound of tires skidding on the road, and a woman screaming somewhere outside.

I ran down the stairs, "Judy," I called, "Judy! Did you hear that? Judy, where are you?" She wasn't in the kitchen, and the old coat that I keep hanging on the wall near the back door was gone. *My God*, I thought, *she took that garbage out and got hit by a car!* I opened the door. "Judy! Judy! Where are you?"

She came running across the lawn, wearing my old coat over her dress. "There's been an accident!" she yelled. "A man's been hit by an automobile and killed! He was walking along the road and a car hit him and killed him!" She threw her hands over her eyes. "Oh, it was terrible!"

"Take it easy, kid," I said. "We'll go and see."

"I don't want to see," she sobbed. "It was too awful. I just want to go in the house. I was walking out to the garbage can and the car came along the road and hit this man and killed him."

The automobile had stopped by the roadside, and I could see people walking around, and a woman was still screaming. A man's voice yelled for her to shut up, for Christ's sake, and go telephone for a doctor. I saw Judy safely in the house, got my flashlight, and ran out the front door and across the lawn to Eddystone Road, right where the curve begins. Something was lying limp in the glare of the headlights and a man was bending over it. The woman was still yelling.

"What happened?" I asked.



"We hit him we hit him we hit him!" the woman yelled. "Shut up before I hit you!" the man shouted in her face. She shut up. "And get the hell in to that house and see if they will call a doctor!" Suddenly he noticed me. "Where did you come from?"

"I live in the house," I said. "What happened?"

"I swear to God, mister," he said, "I was driving along at about forty-fifty miles an hour and a man steps out of the trees and falls in front of the car and I hit him and there wasn't a thing I could do in all of God's world to keep from hitting him and I jammed on my brakes and I hit him and Jesus Christ mister what am I going to do now I think I've killed him." He swayed drunkenly.

I put the flashlight in his face and it was white. I slapped him across the face. "Sit down and stick your head between your legs and get some blood back in it."

"I ain't had a drink," he said.

"No, but you've had a shock. Now sit down. "I'll see how badly this fellow is hurt. Maybe you just knocked him out."

But when I stepped over to the inert figure sprawled on the highway, I knew, if only from the grotesque position, that the man was dead. His head was smashed, and there was no use even to feel for a pulse or any other sign of life.

And it was Wusky Andrews, of course.

## CHAPTER V

WUSKY HAD HAD IT. His head was bashed in and the car had hit him so hard it had knocked him out of his shoes. He would never talk about blackmail or acid-throwing again. I looked at the man who had been driving the car. He was sitting by the side of the road, holding his head in his



hands. The woman I took to be his wife was standing dully beside him.

"He's dead, ain't he?" she asked.

"I'm afraid he is," I said, "but we can't tell for sure. You stay here and I'll go in the house and send for a doctor. And don't touch anything or move anything until I get back." I ran back to the house and got the police on the telephone.

"This is Donald Ivy," I said to the voice that answered. "There's been an accident in front of my house. Car hit a man, and I'm sure it killed him. Just about five minutes ago. . . . No, he's lying alongside the road . . . That's right, the old Ivy place on Eddystone Road. . . . Yes, I called you this morning but that has nothing to do with this."

I ran upstairs and got some smelling salts from the bathroom and started down the stairs again. Then I remembered I hadn't seen Judy anywhere.

I called to her. "Judy! Judy! You better make some coffee and stand by. There's going to be a crowd of people around here and half of them will want to use the phone."

She answered from upstairs. "He was killed, wasn't he?"

"Yes," I said, "but there's nothing we can do about it now. I'm going out, but you better stay here."

I ran out to the road. The driver of the car that had hit Wusky was still sitting where I had left him. I gave him a couple of sniffs of the ammonia, enough to snap his head back, and then gave his wife a drag.

"I've called the police," I told the man. "Just take it easy and think before you speak and you'll be fine."

"I wasn't going fast," he said. "He just seemed to jump out of the shadows at me, like he was diving or something, and I—

"Relax," I said. "It was an accident."

Another car had stopped by this time. I walked over to the driver as he got out and asked him if he had a flashlight. He said he did.

"Park out of the way," I said, "and keep any cars from banging into us or there'll be more dead bodies lying around."

"Okay," he said. "What happened?"

"Accident," I said. "Car hit a guy walking along the road."

"Tough," he said, and started walking back down the road with his flashlight. I went back to where Wusky's body was lying keeping one eye on the road in the other direction. A man who was standing there asked me what had happened and I told him the same thing.

"Jesus!" he said, in a strained and high-pitched voice. "Really clobbered him, didn't it? Look at that head. Even knocked his shoes off."

A siren, followed by a flashing red light above two headlights, announced the arrival of the police. Kilgore and another cop got out.

"Hello, Ivy," Kilgore said. "You kill this guy, too?"

"You can go to hell," I growled. "There's the car that hit him and the driver is standing beside it. If you want anything from me, I'll probably be in the house."

"Hold it a minute, Ivy," he ordered. He bent over and took a quick look at Wusky. "He sure is dead. Did you see it happen, Ivy?"

"I was in the house and heard brakes squealing and then a women yelled, so I came out. When I got here the car was right where it is now and Wusky was right where he is now."

"Who did you say?"

"Wusky."

"And who the hell is Wusky?"

"Wusky is the guy who is lying there dead."

"By God, Donald," he said sarcastically, "I don't know what the hell we would do if we didn't have you to identify all the dead bodies we find lying around. And how did you say he got killed?"

"I said I was in the house."

"That's right, so you did. Well, Donald, you just hang around while I get things squared away, because then I

want to ask you how you manage to know so many dead bodies. *Stand back!*" he yelled at the crowd that was forming. "And get them cars off the road! You wanna have another accident!"

I walked back to the house and went out to the kitchen. Judy was there. She had changed her clothes. The party was over. She was drinking coffee and I poured myself a cup.

"You want some brandy in it?" I asked, reaching for the bottle.

"Please," she said. Her hand was shaking. I poured some brandy into her coffee and took a little more for myself.

"Come on into the living room," I said. "You'll feel better soon."

"It was awful," she said. "I was looking for the garbage can and that car came around the corner and I thought maybe I could find the can in the lights. And then I saw that man step out on the road and the car hit him."

"Did he just step in front of it?" I asked.

"He seemed to," she said. "What will they do to you when they find out he was here and that you hit him, Uncle Donald?"

"Give me a bad time, if I know anything about Kilgore," I said.

"Who's Kilgore?"

"He's the cop who's out there now." I filled my pipe and lit it, thinking. "How much chance did you have to see what happened?"

"Oh, only a second, just out of the corner of my eye."

"Then how did you know who it was?"

"Well, it was a little short guy, I could see *that*," she said. "I thought it was the man who was here. It was, wasn't it?"

"Yes," I said. "It was." We had some more coffee and sat and talked and smoked, but the sparkle was gone.

There was a knock at the door and I got up and opened



it. Kilgore was there, and so was Sullivan. "Mind if we have a word or two with you, Ivy?" the sergeant asked.

"Can't it wait till tomorrow?" I asked. "It's almost midnight."

"Rather make it tonight," he said, so I stepped back and they came in.

"Judy," I said, when we were in the living room, "this is Sergeant Sullivan of the state police, and this is Patrolman Kilgore, from Tombury. . . . My niece, Miss Thames."

"I didn't know you had company," Sullivan said.

"Miss Thames is my sister's daughter," I said. "She's visiting with me for a while."

"Where are you from, Miss Thames?" Sullivan asked.

"My mother and I live in Springfield," she said. "Why?"

"I just wondered," he said. "Donald, did you see that accident out there happen?"

"No," I told him. "I was upstairs when I heard it, and I came down and got my flashlight and ran out. It was all over then, so I came back in and called the Tombury police."

"Kilgore tells me you were able to identify the body."

"Kilgore is right, for once," I said. "It was a man named Andrews. Wusky Andrews is what we always called him."

"Who is *we*?"

"Everybody who knew him," I said.

"And where did you know him?"

"In England."

"Where in England?"

"Here and there."

"Yes, but just exactly where? Where did you see him last, for instance?" Sullivan asked.

"Right here."

"What do you mean, right here? Do you mean right here in this house?"

"That's exactly what I mean, Sergeant," I said. "He was here this evening. Sitting right in that same chair where you are. When he left he walked out on that road, I guess,

and got hit and killed. I can't say that I care much, either."

"What the hell did he want?" Kilgore exploded.

"Let me ask the questions first, please," Sullivan said, making notes in a notebook. "Just what the hell *did* he want, Ivy? That's a fair question, I think."

"I can't see that it has a damned thing to do with it," I said. "What Wusky was doing here has absolutely nothing to do with what happened to him out there."

"Well, we'll let that go for a while," Sullivan said. "Miss Thames, where were you when the accident happened?"

"I was in the kitchen," she said. "I didn't know anything until Uncle Donald came running downstairs and told me there'd been an accident and I should stay in the house while he went out."

She sounded so sincere that I almost believed her myself, although I knew she was lying and wondered why. Had she pushed Wusky to his death? It was obvious that Sullivan and Kilgore believed her story.

"And then Uncle Donald came back in and called somebody on the telephone," she continued, "and told me to make some coffee and he went out again. So I made the coffee and then Uncle Donald came in and we had some and then you came in. Would you like me to get *you* some coffee?" The way she smiled when she asked them, they would have accepted cyanide if it had been offered. They nodded their heads and she went out to the kitchen.

"Now about this Andrews," Sullivan asked me. "You said that you didn't care much if he got killed. Why not?"

"I didn't like the bastard," I said. "You might say I despised him."

"How'd you cut your hand?" he asked. Kilgore, who had been fidgeting ever since Judy went for coffee, got up and went out to the kitchen. "You didn't have that bandage this morning."

"I banged it against something," I said. "When I was throwing some stuff out this evening."



"Don't let it get infected," he said. "What did Andrews want?"

"Nothing that had anything to do with his getting hit by that car," I said. Judy came back, followed by Kilgore with the coffee and two more cups and saucers. She was pouring coffee when Sullivan turned to her.

"Did your uncle and the man who got killed have any kind of an argument this evening, Miss Thames?" he asked.

"Yes," she said eagerly, "and Uncle Donald hit him in the face and knocked him right out the front door!"

"The door was open," I added modestly.

"Thank you," Sullivan said, and closed his notebook. He lit a cigarette and smoked it while drinking his coffee. "Coffee tastes mighty good—thank you for offering it to us, Miss Thames. Don't suppose you know my old friend, Chief Zimmer, up there in Springfield, do you?" He didn't even look to see whether she nodded yes or no. (She nodded no.) "This is a nice place you have here, Ivy. How much room do you have upstairs?"

"Two bedrooms and a bath," I said. "What's that got to do with anything?"

"I'm just making conversation," he smiled. "Us cops don't always have to have a reason for the questions we ask."

"Then you're the first one of that type I've ever known," I said. "And I've met more than my share."

"Ah yes," he said, "but then they probably thought you'd done something. This time I can't figure that you've done anything—nothing wrong, that is. Well"—he stood up—"come on, Kilgore, we better let these good folks get to bed. By the way, Ivy, you don't happen to know where we might get another identification on that guy who got killed here tonight, do you? Fingerprint check or anything like that?"

"I presume you'll check all the likely places, like the F.B.I.," I said. "But you might also try Scotland Yard."

"Oh, he was in trouble there too, huh? I'm not surprised at all. What did he have on you, Ivy?"



"No more than you have," I said, trying to keep my temper. "Good-bye now, I'm sorry you can't stay longer." I opened the door.

"Oh, you'll be seeing a lot of us, Donald," Kilgore said. "We'll be back here in the morning to look over the scene of the accident again. And try not to have any more, will you? We're getting tired." He yawned at me as he stepped out.

"No tireder than I am—of you," I said. "Good night."

"By the way," Sullivan said, pausing. "Henri's last name was Grennet, just in case you wanted to know. We had an answer from Lisbon this afternoon. Those Spanish cops work pretty fast."

He was just trying to get me to ask him if he had had a reply from Scotland Yard, but I wasn't going to give him that much satisfaction.

"Lisbon's in Portugal," I said, and closed the door. Judy came out from the living room. "Well," I said, "I guess we can close the place up and go to bed. Sorry this all had to happen, honey, but it couldn't be helped. Why did you tell them you hadn't been outside the house anyhow?"

"Because you looked so tired, Uncle Donald," she said. "If I told them I'd been out and seen it happen they'd have stayed and stayed." She yawned. "And I'm tired, too. Was it such an awful thing to do, Uncle Donald?"

When she smiled the way she did then I'd have forgiven her anything in the world, whether I believed her or not. "And that Kilgore told me all about Henri," she added. "He thinks you did it, but I don't."

"I'm glad there's two of us who think that way," I said. "But I'm getting a little worried. Two bodies in one day is too much of a bad thing." I was thinking out loud. "Wusky said there were others after them, but he had got here first."

"After what?" she asked.

"Run along to bed, Judy," I said, "and don't worry your pretty little head about anything. And when you get ready

to get in bed, walk back and forth at the front window a couple of times with the light on, just so those cops out front can see that you're safe in your own room. I don't think they believe you're my niece, honey. By the way," I added, "if you aren't, let me know first, will you please?"

"Good night," she said.

## CHAPTER VI

IT WAS AFTER midnight when I got to bed. It had been a day for thinking about. First of all, of course, there was Henri, and I wondered where he had come from and what he had wanted from me. I'd never know. But I couldn't believe he had come to do me any harm, so I could only believe he had come to do me good. He was coming to help me—that would have been more like him.

Help me in what way, I wondered. Wusky had said there were others after my ten-pound-note plates, but I couldn't take him seriously. It didn't seem possible. Maybe Henri had learned that Wusky was coming to see me, and maybe Wusky had been prowling around my house the night before and killed Henri, but I doubted it. Wusky didn't have the guts.

And then there was Judy, who had acted so strangely after the accident. She had come into the living room once when Wusky and I were talking, but she knew he was a short guy even though he had been sitting down the only time she saw him. She was interested in those damned ten-pound plates too. Well, if she wanted them I'd give them to her.

Then I thought again that maybe she wasn't actually my niece Judy Thames at all. She'd done an awful lot of talking, but she hadn't said much when you came right down

to facts. And she hadn't phoned Martha, her mother, which she would naturally have done, it seemed to me. Maybe I should get up and call Martha, but it was a little late for that. Of course, if she wasn't Judy, but some little gold-digger or something, I didn't know exactly what I was going to do. . . .

The morning came bursting in my window with a blaze of sunshine, and I could smell coffee cooking, so I got up and dressed and went downstairs. Judy was there. "Hi," she said. "Sleep well?"

"Sure did," I said, pouring myself a cup of the hot coffee. "What's cooking for breakfast?"

"Bacon and eggs," she said. "That's all I could find for breakfast, but if there's anything else you want that we can make, let me know. I'm a pretty good cook."

"Fry me two eggs, with the hot fat spooned over them, and I'll be happy," I said.

When we had finished breakfast, and I was enjoying my first pipe over my last cup of coffee, I remembered the thoughts I had had the night before. "Where did you ever learn to cook?" I asked.

"Oh," she said, "I've been cooking ever since I was a little girl. Mother and I take turns cooking for each other. We practically live in that great big kitchen of ours, you know."

I didn't know, never having been in Martha's house, and I said so.

"That's right, you haven't," she said. "Well, it's a two-story brick house, with a living room and a dining room and the kitchen downstairs, and three bedrooms and a bath upstairs. Outside we have a garage, where we keep the Chevy, and in the back there's a . . ." She went on and described the house and its surroundings in great detail, so that I began to think any fears I might have had were away off the beam.



"Are you still going to school?" I asked when I could get a word in edgewise.

"Oh no," she said. "I graduated from Springfield High a year and a half ago, and then I went to Business School for half a year, and then I had a job as a stenographer in the mill. The Aspituck Woolen Mill. But the mill closed down right after Christmas, so I didn't have a job. And then I went to Boston and had a job there for a couple of months, but my boss got fresh and I quit and went home. And then I thought I'd come down here and work for you, Uncle Donald," she laughed, "and here I am. You aren't going to fire me, are you?"

"You can stay here as long as you like, Judy," I said. "But we forgot to call Martha yesterday, so we better do it today. Right now." This is the real test, I said to myself.

"Let me put these dishes in the sink and we'll do it right now," she said, jumping up. "Mother will be worried to death, wondering where I am. I'll be in the living room right away. I know the number."

She stacked the dishes together and hurried out. I got up and walked to the living room and knocked my pipe out against the mantle. At the same time somebody knocked on the door. At first I didn't hear it, but the knock was repeated, urgently.

There was a man standing on the front steps, a man about my size, wearing a tan gabardine topcoat and a soft felt hat. The expression on his face was polite, but nothing more.

"Donald Ivy?" he asked, and when I nodded he pulled a thin black leather folder out of his inside pocket, opened it, and introduced himself. "I'm Special Agent Roamer of the Federal Bureau of Investigation. May I come in for a few minutes?"

I glanced at the identification card in the folder, saw that his name was Samuel T. Roamer and that he was a

Special Agent of the F.B.I., just like he said. "What for?" I asked. "What have I done now?"

"This is a friendly visit," he said. "That is, I hope it will be." He had drifted through the front door and into the hall while he talked, and kind of had me surrounded before I knew what was happening.

"I guess you are in," I said. "What's on your mind?"

"Well," he began, when we were both seated in the living room and I had my pipe fired up, "my headquarters office asked me to check up on you."

"Go head and check," I said. "I've got nothing to hide."

He pulled a little notebook from his pocket. "Are you sure you're Donald Ivy? According to my notes, you have a bushy mustache, kind of a—"

"Retired British brigadier type," I said. "I shaved it off. Who told you I had one?"

"Police station in Tombury, this morning when I asked where you lived. Why did you get rid of it? Trying to change your appearance?"

"Certainly," I said. "I think I look much better without it, don't you?"

Just then Judy came into the room and I introduced them. Judy murmured something about cleaning up the bedrooms, and disappeared around the corner. We heard her go up the steps.

"Well, it's this way, Mr. Ivy," Roamer began at last. "In our outfit we like to keep track of things and get rid of trouble before it happens. Now it just so happens that you have a reputation for being a pretty good counterfeiter, and that's—"

"That's true," I said. "I used to be the best. But that was ten years ago. Since then—"

"All right," he said. "You used to be the best. But I haven't heard of anybody since then who is any better than you were. You were so good you even counterfeited your way right out of Dartmoor Prison and got decorated to boot. Now



we don't care about what you did in England. Over here we don't allow anyone to make queer money, and if they do we usually catch them pretty fast."

"You've got me wrong, Mr. Roamer," I said. "I have all the money I need and every bit of it in legitimate investments. You've got nothing on me and you aren't going to get anything, either. Honest Donald Ivy, that's me."

I still didn't get a smile out of him.

"Over here we don't even allow anyone to have any tools for making counterfeit money," he went on as though I hadn't said a word. "We especially don't allow them to have any plates or dies, for example."

"So?" I said, knowing what was coming.

"I understand you have a set of plates for making ten-pound English banknotes," he said. "If that's true, I'd like to have them. We think you might be able to cause us trouble with them if you keep them."

"Mr. Roamer," I said, getting to my feet, "unless you have a warrant to search my house, or some reason for arresting me—which you don't—I'm afraid I have to ask you to leave. I have a great deal of work to do this morning, and we have wasted too much time already."

Much to my surprise, he left. He was as polite as an English detective, and as cold as blue ice, and probably a lot tougher than he acted. His almost-mechanical manner had gotten under my skin and made me a little nervous.

I decided to work it off with the rake.

There weren't any bodies in the leaves this time and by lunch I had the yard raked all around the house, and even out to the road. Actually, I went out there to see where the accident had been. The skid marks were still there, and the chalk marks the police had drawn around the big brown stain showed where the body had been. Wusky's shoes were lying about ten feet away, evidently the police had overlooked them in the dark. I picked them up and took them back and put them in the kitchen.



I also looked for Judy's footprints, and sure enough there were some around the garbage can; and the garbage was in the can, too, proving she had been there. But I couldn't find her prints in the drive, because the surface was covered with gravel, nor could I find them anywhere near where Wusky had been hit. And she had come running up the front walk and into the front door. So it appeared that she must be telling the truth.

When I got the leaves gathered up it was time to eat, but there wasn't any food in the house. Judy and I got into the Triumph and drove into Tombury to the super-market. That girl knew good food, but it didn't surprise me. All the Ivys have been good eaters. Anyhow, the super-market just about convinced me she was the real McIvy. At least it was the last test I could think of.

We got home with a pair of lobsters for lunch, which I steamed in the Chinese fashion. As we finished, I said that we'd better call Martha right now, before some other interruption came along.

"Come on," she said, and ran into the living room ahead of me and picked up the phone. She gave the operator a Springfield number, and after a while a bright smile came over her face and she said, "Hello, Mother, this is Judy. How are you? . . . Oh, yes, I'm fine. I got here yesterday afternoon, but so much has happened since I got here that we just haven't had time to call you. . . . Yes, he's fine. He's standing right here and he wants to talk to you." She handed the phone to me.

"Hello, Martha," I said. "Long time no see or hear. How are you?" Her voice came back to me, young and clear, asking me how I was and what I thought of Judy and all that. I told her I thought Judy was the most wonderful girl in the world and promised to take good care of her, and Martha promised to come down as soon as she could, and I promised to come to see her as soon as I could. It was a typical long distance call.

"Judy, darling," I said, "I feel better, knowing you really are Judy Thames and not somebody who just moved in to take advantage of an old and infirm man, living alone with his dreams and stuff. Now let's go outside and soak up some of this fresh sunshine and warm spring air."

"Didn't you really believe I was me until you talked to mother?" she asked. "What would you do if I wasn't? You don't need to answer that question."

She ran upstairs to get a scarf to tie around her head, and we went for a long walk over the Ivy acres, all seventeen of them. By the time we got back to the house the sun was low in the west.

We were sitting around after dinner, talking about things, and Judy wondered what was happening in the Iverson murder trial, in Chicago, and I remembered I hadn't seen a newspaper for two days. I had completely forgotten it at noon when we had been shopping. I volunteered to dash in and get a paper and Judy said she would stay and do the dishes.

"A girl in a million," I thought as I drove along. "I wonder how long I can get her to stay here, and what nice things would be proper for me to do for her. She only has one suitcase, maybe it would be all right for me to take her to New York and buy her some clothes. I'll just call Martha again and find out."

I drove down to the railroad station and got my paper and then found a phone booth and told the operator that I wanted to talk to Mrs. Martha Thames in Springfield, and gave her the street address. Pretty soon, after a lot of palaver and depositing of small coins, I heard a strange voice on the other end of the line.

"Hello, Martha," I said, "hello, hello. This is Donald again. Martha, is that you?"

"This is Martha," the voice said. "Is that you, Donald? Donald, it's good to hear your voice again after all these years. Where are you?"



When we finally finished talking I stood up slowly, opened the door and walked slowly out to the Triumph, and drove slowly home. I wanted to get there in a hurry, and at the same time I didn't want to get home ever at all. I was all mixed up inside.

Judy, of course, was in Springfield with her mother.

## CHAPTER VII

THERE WAS NOBODY in the kitchen when I walked in at the back door, which was standing open. I closed it. Some of the dinner dishes were still in the sink. Every drawer was open and the contents of some of them had been scattered on the floor. The living room was in worse condition; not only were the drawers pulled out, but books had been thrown from shelves, upholstery ripped, and pictures taken off the walls.

Somebody had been through the place with the well-known fine tooth comb. And I knew who it was.

Upstairs was as bad as downstairs but, strangely enough, as far as I could judge, she had left all of her clothes and things behind. She—and I still thought of her as Judy—was nowhere around, of course.

She seemed to be the only thing that was gone, though. Even though everything I owned had been disturbed and dislocated, there didn't seem to be anything missing. I don't have so much that I can't tell, almost at a glance, whether or not the inventory is complete.

Maybe something of Judy's was gone. I couldn't be sure of that. The suitcase was still there, and the red dress, and the hat and coat she had been wearing when she arrived, and the scarf she had worn when we went walking the day before. I carefully inspected all her things, just to see if I could find a clue as to who she might have been.



Her handbag was on the bureau, but there were no identification cards or even driver's license anywhere in it. She had about fifty dollars in bills and some small change, and a compact and lipstick, and a cigarette lighter, and that was about all, except for a newspaper clipping. I unfolded that, saw that it was torn from the Sunday Magazine Section of a Boston newspaper, and then the headline caught my eye:

MASTER FORGER BACK HOME  
*Donald Ivy Living Life Of  
Country Squire In New England*

I glanced at the date. It had been published the Sunday before Wusky turned up at my house, and that had been on Wednesday. The article was not a syndicated feature, as far as I could see, which meant that it had only appeared in this one paper. Wusky, then, must have written his note to me as soon as he had read the story, then spent some time locating the house before coming to my door.

I hurried back to my own bedroom and looked for his note in the pocket of my jacket, where I had left it. It was still there, with the envelope with the smudged postmark, but as far as I could make out it had been mailed from Boston on Monday. If anyone was trying to trace Wusky's movements they would do well to start in Boston, I thought.

Then I read the rest of the story, and a lot of things became clearer to me.

MASTER FORGER BACK HOME  
*Donald Ivy Living Life Of  
Country Squire In New England*

By Perry Patterson

Donald Ivy, a name that once struck terror to Scotland Yard's ace operators, but which was eventually written on the list of Britain's war-time heroes, has re-

turned to the United States and is living on the old Ivy estate in Tombury, according to information which this reporter has received.

Few people in this country, except middle-age residents of Tombury, will remember Donald Ivy. As far as is known, he has never committed any crimes in America and he has no police record here.

Abroad, however, the story is a different one. Donald Ivy went to Europe in the middle 1930's to study art in Paris. He was then a young man with very little money and, as it turned out, very little talent as an artist. He was a copyist and a mechanic, and could turn out reproductions of the works of others while he lacked the ability to originate anything worth while. The paintings he did were worthless and, as Donald himself is reported to have said, "People didn't want Ivy on their walls."

In order to live, Ivy was forced to rely on his skill in copying. He also became a master engraver and in a short time he is said to have begun combining these two abilities and engraving plates that produced near-perfect copies of money. Although he lived and worked in Paris during most of this time, there is no evidence that he ever counterfeited any French money, but it is almost certain that he made monies of other nations. It is said that he took particular delight in supplying counterfeit marks free of charge to German refugees who had to bribe their way out of Hitler's Reich.

Although Ivy was never apprehended in France, his reputation increased to such an extent that he was forced to leave. . . . After a year or two of travel . . . he settled in London. When the war broke out in Europe he was in England, but when France fell he left England and returned to the continent. Somehow or other he got back to Paris and was soon masterminding a gang of Parisian counterfeiters, who turned out more prac-

tically undetectable counterfeit German marks. Ivy made the plates and supervised the printing.

Shortly thereafter Ivy prepared a set of plates for franc notes. The money was supposed to be used for bribes in connection with smuggling French refugees out of France. Eventually the Germans closed in on the money-making ring. Ivy was captured but escaped, bribing his way past German guards with money he had made himself. . . . Back in England he was arrested for counterfeiting five-pound notes, and sentenced to a term in England's famous Dartmoor prison.

So great were his talents, however, that the British Intelligence Service soon called on him for assistance in forging identification for British agents who were being parachuted into enemy-held territory. He was even commissioned to prepare a set of ten-pound-note plates, which would print the money used for paying off spies and foreign informers who demanded British pounds. These were so carefully made that, except for one tiny and deliberate flaw known only to Ivy and a few people in British Intelligence, it is still impossible to distinguish them from the genuine notes.

For his services, at the end of the war Ivy was given a full pardon and decorated by the British government. He was also allowed to keep his perfect plates in accordance with a private and undisclosed arrangement with the British authorities . . .

I've left a lot out of the article, which went on to follow me down through Lisbon and Tangier and back to Tom-bury. The author put a pretty factual story together, and I could see why everybody and his brother was trooping through my house trying to find my ten-pound plates. Well, I was bound that I was going to keep those plates because I was proud of them. And even though the house had been



thoroughly searched, I noticed that the plates were still where I had put them.

I went downstairs and picked up the telephone to call the police and tell them what had happened, but the phone was dead. It had been ripped from the wall.

I went out, locking the doors and windows behind me, and drove up Eddystone Road until I came to an Esso station that was still open. While the operator was filling the Triumph, I used his phone and called state police headquarters and talked to Sullivan. He said he'd be right over. I didn't tell him about Judy being a fake. I just told him she had disappeared and the house had been turned upside down and the phone pulled out.

He got to the house about ten minutes after I did, looked it over from top to bottom, and finally sat down in the living room with a cigarette in his hand.

"Ivy," he said, letting smoke trickle out of his nose, "let's stop trying to kid each other, huh? I'll admit the place is a mess and that dame is gone. I don't know what the hell your game is, but I'm going to find out right now. To begin with, you know damned well that blonde you had here the other day is no more your dear little niece than I am."

"Sullivan," I said, "I swear that when she first came here I thought she was what she said she was. It wasn't until later that I began to suspect. Today after lunch we called her mother, I thought, and I talked to her myself. I called Martha again tonight, from Tombury, and got the straight story. And I don't know who the hell she was. While she was here I treated her as though she was my niece."

"Okay," he said. "We'll proceed on that assumption, though I'm not giving you an inch, Ivy. You got a reputation for being smart and I guess you earned it." He reached in his pocket and pulled out a sheet of yellow paper, which he handed to me. "I'm going to keep checking until I find out who killed Henri Grennet," he said, "but you get to keep the house and lot. Read it."

I took the copy of a radiogram from him. NO RECORD DONALD IVY CONVICTIONS OR SENTENCES HERE HOPE YOU HAVE BETTER LUCK. It was signed INSP BRISK CID. I gave it back to Sullivan with a smile.

"Sergeant," I said, "did you by any chance see that story about me in last Sunday's Boston paper?"

"Sure," he said, "I saw it. I guess every cop in this part of the world saw it, even Kilgore. How did you think I knew to ask you the questions I did when I was here yesterday morning?"

"That's what I was wondering," I said. "Now I know. And I know why all hands and the ship's cook have been coming to see me, from blondes to the F.B.I. But how did you know that girl wasn't my niece?"

"I'd seen her somewhere before, but I couldn't remember where. But when she came into this room last night I had the idea I knew her. Funny thing, though, I thought I knew her from Springfield. I was stationed up there about seven years ago and knew a lot of people and their kids. So it might have been your niece, for all I knew. But then this morning I called up Chief Zimmer and asked him to get the straight dope for me, without disturbing anyone. He called me back and said Judy Thames was at home."

"Why didn't you call me up and tell me?" I asked.

"I figured to give you all the rope you wanted, and then I was going to help you hang yourself with it."

"You don't like me, do you?"

"I don't like any crooks," he said, "no matter what the hell kind of arrangements they manage to make with the British government. They don't make arrangements with me, that's a cinch!"

"So what are you going to do about Judy—the one who's missing from here?" I asked.

"Why should I do anything? Did she steal something before she left? Did she take your beautiful ten-pound plates, Ivy? Actually, I see no reason why I should stay up half



the night looking for her. Do you?" He looked at me, just daring me to think up a reason.

"No," I said, "I guess not. But do you know who she was? What's her name?"

"I don't know that, either," he said, "but it'll come to me one of these days. If you don't mind, Ivy, I think I'll go now. I've wasted enough time here. There's nothing for me to do." He started to get up.

"Wait a minute, Sullivan," I said. "You remember last night when Judy told you she was in the kitchen when Wusky Andrews got hit? Well, she was lying to you. She was outside the house, near the road, and she saw the whole damn thing."

He was interested now. I saw his eyes light up. "How do you know?" he asked.

"She told me so. She was going out to dump the garbage when it happened. I heard the brakes, like I told you, and at first I thought a car had hit *her*. I yelled and she wasn't in the house. I opened the front door and yelled for her again, and she came running in, saying there had been an accident. Later on she told me that a short man had been hit, even though the only time she ever saw him, as far as I know, is when he was sitting down."

"Why did she tell me she didn't know anything about it?" he said.

"Maybe she didn't like you," I said. "Maybe she couldn't stand much investigation. She told me that she figured you and Kilgore would stay all night if she told you, and she was sleepy and wanted to get to bed."

"Well, I'll be damned," he said. "This beats me. I thought we had a simple little accident, nobody at fault, really, and now we got a complication. What do you think, Ivy?"

"I'm no cop," I said. "You're the cop."

"Well," he said slowly, "to me it kind of figures this way. First of all," and he unfolded one finger from his fist, "a story about you comes out in Boston on Sunday. On Tuesday



a guy by the name of Henri Grennet comes by your house, looking for those ten-pound plates that the British government let you keep. That's number two." He unfolded another finger. "Did you kill him, Ivy?"

"Nuts to you," I said.

"Then," and he unfolded a third finger, paying no attention to me, "on Wednesday a dame, name unknown, moves in and that evening a guy named Wusky Andrews gets hit by a car and killed after trying to get the ten-pound plates away from you. He's the fourth thing." Sullivan unfolded another finger. "You don't think maybe somebody pushed him in front of that car, do you, Ivy?"

"Nuts to you again," I said. "Nuts with worms in 'em."

"And then tonight the dame, who was also interested in those beautiful ten-pound plates with only one teeny-weeny little flaw in them, starts taking the place apart while you are in town. I don't know exactly when you got home, but now she's gone." He extended his thumb, and then closed his hand into a fist again. "That's quite a handful, Ivy. If she turns up dead, too, it'll be quite a handful of murder, won't it?" He never raised his voice at all. "What did you do with the body, Donald?"

## CHAPTER VIII

"SULLIVAN," I SAID, "if I told you what you can do with your silly theories you'd be astounded. If you followed my suggestion you'd be embarrassed. Why don't you give up?"

"I just like to see how beautifully you keep your emotions under control," he laughed. "But all kidding aside, what did you do with the dame?"

"Dammit!" I exploded. "I didn't do anything with her

except leave her alone in this house for half an hour. You can check—”

“Take it easy, Donald,” Sullivan said, rising and starting for the door, “or you’ll lose your self-control and hate yourself in the morning for it. Good night now.” He held out his hand and for some reason or other I took it. His grip was firm and friendly. “You know, Donald,” he said, “sometimes I almost hope that somebody else killed all these people.”

“Thanks,” I said.

“But I don’t think there’s a chance of my dreams coming true,” he said, and left.

I watched him walk down the path to the driveway, and then I closed the door and started picking things up and putting them away, in a half-hearted fashion. I wasn’t happy. Not happy at all.

And I was sore at myself, too. I knew darned well I should have spotted Judy the first hour she was in the house. She had said she couldn’t remember the last time her mother had left home, but I knew her mother had been down for my mother’s funeral. Dr. Dann had told me so.

I knew that I’d better step back quick into the keen-witted character whose steel-trap mind had outwitted the police forces of seventeen nations—until the British caught me. If I didn’t, I was going to find myself sitting in a pokey somewhere, looking for a lawyer to get me out of a homicide rap. I was the best the cops had for Henri’s murder, and I had the feeling that they sometimes made out pretty well with just a little.

Now that I knew about Judy, I figured she’d come down from Boston looking for my ten-pound plates—and I began to wish I had never made the damn things. She had naturally heard Wusky trying to get them from me, and then, the way it looked, she had followed him out to the road and pushed him in front of the car that killed him.

But who had killed Henri? Me? No.



I got to thinking about the footprints that came from the back of the house around to where Henri had been killed. They were huge footprints and they kept growing bigger and changing color as I watched them, and then a voice said, "'You're next, Ivy,'" and I looked over my shoulder and a huge club was coming down on my head.

I woke up in the living room chair with a jump, my heart beating a mile a minute. I had been dreaming, and the sun was already slanting in the front windows, and I was stiff and sore and my problems were still unsolved. I felt like hell.

I changed into my outdoor clothes and got Wusky's shoes from the kitchen and went to the back yard, behind the woodpile, to take a look at the special footprints there. Wusky's shoes seemed to fit the prints perfectly.

"You should be on the cops, Donald," I said to myself. "Here in about five minutes you've solved a murder." I felt pretty good, and safer too, and went in the house to telephone the police and tell them about it.

The phone, of course, had been ripped out the night before, and was still useless. But I got the Triumph and drove to the Esso station and called Sullivan and told him. He said he'd be over in a half hour or so. "And I've got some news for you," he added.

"What now?" I asked.

"I remembered the real handle that goes with that so-called niece of yours," he said. "Her name is Billie Mataze and she comes from Springfield, all right. Got no real police record, but Chief Zimmer says they think she's been working a badger game. No visible means of support. She's a sharp operator, all right. You better count your buttons again to make sure she didn't take some when she left."

"Billie Mataze," I said. "I'll remember that the next time I see her."

I drove back home and noticed a black sedan parked on the old road, beside the drive. It had a police tag on it, and



looked like the car Kilgore had been driving, but I didn't see him anywhere. He was, I figured, probably checking something about the accident on Wednesday. But I thought maybe I ought to tell him about the shoes. I put the car in the garage and was walking back to the house when he came out the back door.

"What the hell are you doing in my house, Kilgore?" I asked.

"Using the phone—only somebody has ripped the damn thing off the connection."

"Don't you have a radio in that car of yours?" I said. "You got a hell of a crust, using my phone when I'm away. Go on up to the gas station, like I do." I suddenly remembered I'd forgotten to call the telephone company to come and fix my phone. It made me feel a little silly. "Anything I can do for you?"

"Yeah," he said. "When did you last see your niece, Judy?"

"Last night," I said. "Along about eight o'clock."

"Have you seen her since?"

"The last time I saw her was along about eight o'clock last night," I repeated slowly. "What's on your mind?"

"I want to show you something," he said, and he loosened his revolver in its holster and let his hand rest on the butt.

"Let's you and me walk down to the pond, Ivy. You walk ahead of me, hands where I can see 'em. And I'm not fooling!"

I could see he wasn't, so I did exactly what he told me and walked down to the edge of the pond. She was lying there, in the old brown marsh grass, her clothes disheveled and water-soaked, her face down in the water.

"What happened to her, Ivy?" Kilgore wanted to know.

"I don't know," I said. "How did you manage to find her here? How did you know she was gone?"

"State police asked us to keep an eye out for her, last night. I figured maybe she hadn't gone very far. What did *she* have on you, Ivy? Same thing as Henri, maybe?"

"What are you trying to say, Kilgore?"

"I'm not tryin', I'm saying it straight. You killed her, Ivy, same as you killed that Frenchman! I hope I'm in the room when you burn for it, too. I don't care about the Frenchie, but this girl—your own niece, and a cute kid at that. Make a move, Ivy, so I can shoot you, please."

"Look, Kilgore," I said, "if this is the same girl who was in my house yesterday, she isn't my niece."

"You won't get off any lighter for killing some dame you select for a roommate," he said. "It's murder just the same, Ivy."

"Her name," I continued slowly, "is Billie Mataze. She came from Springfield. She's got no police record but they have an eye on her. She came down here to swindle me."

"A goddamn shame she didn't swindle you out of your life," he growled. "What the hell did you drag her down here and throw her in the lake for, anyway?"

"This is the first time I've seen her since last night," I said. "I didn't kill her. I don't know who did."

"Turn around," he said in a weary voice. "Start walking back to the house. I don't believe a word you say, Ivy, and I don't think the judge will either. What a son of a bitch you are, shooting a pretty little girl like that!"

We walked up the hill and out the driveway to his car.

"All right," he said. "Turn around and stick your hands out in front of you, close together." I turned slowly, hands out, and found myself looking down the long black tunnel of a revolver. Kilgore clapped a pair of handcuffs over my wrists and squeezed them tight. He put the gun back in its holster. "Git in the car," he said. "And be careful. Damn careful."

The bum would have had me out of there and in the Tombury jail if Sergeant Sullivan hadn't driven in just then. He parked his car behind Kilgore's, got out and gave the two of us a quick look. "What the hell's going on here, anyhow?" he asked.



"I'm taking him in, sarge," Kilgore said. "I'm booking the bastard on suspicion of killing that cute little girl who was here yesterday, and who I just found dead down in the pond?"

"Is this true, Ivy?" Sullivan asked.

"Sure it's true," Kilgore said.

"The hell it is," I said. "Billie Mataze's down in the pond, all right, and she's certainly dead. But I had nothing to do with it. Ask *him* how he managed to find *her* so quick, he's as good a suspect as I am."

"I'll—" Kilgore threatened, raising his hand.

"Go ahead and say it," I sneered. "Go ahead and hit me, you country clown. I'll have the hide off your back."

"Shut up!" Sullivan ordered, stepping between Kilgore and me. "Take it easy, both of you. You, Kilgore, if you want my advice, beter be pretty darn sure you know what you're doing before you arrest this guy. Every one of these guys like Ivy can get a smart mouthpiece and, if you're wrong, *can* take the hide off your back. And as for you, Ivy, if I were in your position I'd keep my big mouth shut!"

I kept my big mouth shut, with an effort.

"Have you reported this, Kilgore?" he asked.

"No," Kilgore said. "My radio's out and so's Ivy's telephone. It's pulled loose from the wall."

"I know," Sullivan said, "I saw it last night. Did you frisk Ivy before you put the cuffs on him?"

"No," Kilgore said, "I didn't . . ."

"You didn't think about it," Sullivan finished for him. "One of these days you're going to forget to think and wind up with a pistol bullet in your head. Turn around, Ivy, and put your hands up against the side of the car." He ran his hands quickly over my body. "All right, you can relax now. If I were you, Kilgore, I'd unlock Donald. You want me to report? My radio's working okay. Shall I get Doc Dann?"

"Might as well," Kilgore growled. Sullivan got in his car and started talking into a mike. Kilgore took a key out



of his pocket and unlocked the handcuffs. "Damned state cops," he muttered. "Think they're big shots. I'll get you yet, Ivy."

Sullivan finished his call and joined us. "They'll be right out," he said. "Let's go back and take a look at what you found, Kilgore." Together we walked down to the pond. "Looks like a hole in her back, where that bloodstain is," Sullivan said. "Either stabbed or shot. In the heart, no matter which."

"Shot, I'd say," Kilgore said.

"Probably," Sullivan said. "What kind of a gun you got, Donald?"

"Smith and Wesson .38 Terrier," I said.

"Why a hideout gun?" Kilgore asked.

"Fire it recently?" Sullivan asked.

"Never fired it at all since I bought it last winter. Got a short-barreled one because it's easier to carry in my pocket when I'm looking for foxes in the woods."

"You couldn't hit a fox with one of those Terriers," Kilgore snorted. "The barrel's too damned short."

"I couldn't hit one with a longer barrel either," I said.

"That's Billie Mataze all right," Sullivan said. "Hate to see a pretty girl like that get it like this. You find any tracks coming down here, Kilgore? She certainly didn't walk."

"I didn't look for any," he said. "Soon as I found her I went up looking for Ivy so I could use his phone. Then he came along and I forgot to look for prints."

"You're a great cop," Sullivan said. "Now from where I stand I can see a pretty deep set of tracks coming down from the house to the pond, and a lighter set, same size, going back."

"Somebody carried her down, threw her in the pond, and walked back," I suggested.

"Elementary, my dear Watson," Sullivan allowed himself

a small smile as he turned to Kilgore. "Do you agree, Les-trade?"

"I don't know what you're talking about," Kilgore said. "You state cops give me a pain. Sure I can see that somebody carried her down and then walked back. What's to keep Ivy from doing it?"

"These feet are too big!" Sullivan said.

"Thanks," I said. "I hope that clears me for a while."

We started walking toward the house again, and when we got to the back door Sullivan opened it and stepped in.

"Come on along, Donald," he said. "I want to take a look at that gun of yours. Did anything happen to it last night?"

"No," I said. "I keep it in a drawer of the table in the front hall. The drawer was open but the gun was still there last night. I didn't touch it."

We walked through the dining room into the hall, and I opened the drawer. The snub-nosed revolver was there. Sullivan dropped a handkerchief over it, picked it up, smelled it carefully.

"Did you say it was never fired?" he asked. I nodded. "The hell you say," he muttered, and unlocked the chamber and swung it out. "There's an empty in here, Ivy, and I'd say this gun had been fired in the last twenty-fours. Just like I said last night, Donald, it's quite a handful of murder. Isn't it?"

## CHAPTER IX

"It's A MESS," I said. "Who do you think did it?"

"Who do I think did it?" Sergeant Sullivan repeated. "That's what I was just going to ask you. After all, this is your pistol, isn't it?"

"It looks like mine," I admitted. "I'd have to check the serial number to make sure. I've got it jotted down in a notebook upstairs. I'll go get it." I started up the stairs.

"Hold it, Ivy!" Kilgore ordered, sticking his own pistol in my side. "You don't go nowhere unless the sarge or me tells you it's okay, you understand? That right, sarge?"

Sullivan nodded. "I'll check the serial, don't worry. Look around, Kilgore, and see if you can find any holes in the wall where a bullet might have gone in."

"Look," I said, "you won't find my fingerprints on that trigger, you know that."

"Sure," Sullivan said. "I know it. Just like I know that you know that any fingerprints found on a ribbed trigger like this Terrier's got, or on the butt, are strictly accidental. Prints just don't stick."

"Here's a hole in the stairs," Kilgore said, pointing his finger at one of the risers. "Goes straight through."

"Go around to the cellar stairs and see where the bullet went," Sullivan said. "And when you find it, don't touch it. We'll let the experts do the handling." Kilgore clattered into the kitchen and down the cellar steps.

"Somebody was standing here by the table," I said. "He'd seen the gun. Judy—or Billie Mataze—came down the stairs, got here at the bottom, and the guy shot her and dropped the gun back in the drawer. Then he picked her up and hustled her out of the house."

"It figures that way," Sullivan said, "if you take it for granted that some guy was here in the house. But there's other ways to figure it, too. For instance—"

Kilgore came rushing into the hall. "I found it!" he announced. "Stuck right in the inside of the cellar door. Somebody must have shot right through Billie when she was standing here at the bottom of the stairs!"

"We'll make a cop of you yet," Sullivan said. "Now, Ivy, as I was saying, try figuring it this way. You are all alone, out here in the country away from everyone, with a beauti-



ful blonde that you know is not your niece any longer. What do you do? You figure she's fair game and start fooling around a little. One thing leads to another but she says no. You say yes. She says no. You get mad and start slapping her around, maybe. Somewhere in the fracas she gets shot. What's wrong with that solution?"

"Nothing," I said, "except that it's full of holes and also, of course, I didn't do it."

"The hell you didn't," Kilgore said. "You killed Billie Mataze when she wouldn't come across."

There was the sound of an automobile on the drive outside. Sullivan opened the front door.

"Who the hell's this?" he asked, as a man in a gabardine topcoat got out of the car.

"Federal man," Kilgore said. "Name's Sam Roamer. He's interested in Ivy, too. We've been working together. Hi, Sam, what do you know?"

"Hello, Kilgore," Roamer said. "What are you doing out here?"

"Checking up," Kilgore said. "Sam, I'd like you to meet Sergeant Sullivan, of our state cops. And this is Donald Ivy. Sam's an F.B.I. agent."

"Glad to meet you, Sergeant," Roamer shook the offered hand. "What's going on? If you're here on business I'll leave. I don't want to interfere in local affairs. I can always see Ivy later."

"You better see him now," Kilgore said. "Because later may be too late. I got a happy hunch we're taking Mr. Ivy away on a murder rap."

"Murder?" Roamer said. "You mean he killed that Frenchman last Tuesday night?"

"Wouldn't surprise me," Sullivan said. "No, we think he killed a girl by the name of Billie Mataze, who was living here with him. We just found her body down in the pond behind the house, lying in the water with a hole in it. This

Billie Mataze was here pretending to be Ivy's niece, only Ivy got wise, so we think he let her have it."

"That surprises me, Sergeant," Roamer said. He pulled out his little notebook, flipped through the pages. "We never heard that Ivy went in for murder. I guess you know he's got a record for counterfeiting, forging, altering checks and things like that. But I never heard of him shooting anyone before. Never even heard of him carrying a gun. You sure Ivy did it?"

"No," Sullivan admitted. "But we don't have anybody we like better."

"You're wrong on one thing," Kilgore said. "About Ivy never carrying a gun. He had one here in the house. A Smith and Wesson .38 Terrier. And I found a bullet hole and the bullet sticking in the cellar door."

"I'll be darned," Roamer said. He scribbled in his notebook. "You never can tell what quiet guys like Ivy are going to do next."

"Would you like to take a look inside?" Sullivan asked. "See where it happened. My gang ought to be here any minute, but if you'd like to take a quick look you might be able to help us."

Roamer was all business, once he was inside. First he looked at my pistol, without touching it, and said just about the same thing Sullivan had said about fingerprints on it.

"You find any blood anywhere?" he asked, looking carefully at the floor and walls. "You better have your lab crew go over the place with a microscope first, then scrape the wax off the floor and test that for blood too."

A couple of cars and an ambulance arrived then and for the next three or four hours the place was a madhouse. I guess they knew what they were doing but it was a tough time for me, and there was always a cop at my side.

Dr. Dann was there and he was the one thing that kept me from blowing my top. He supervised the removal of Billie Mataze's body from the pond, after it had been photo-



graphed from every angle except under water, and pronounced her officially dead. He was also able to see that she had been shot at close range. There were burn marks on her dress, around the hole that went in the front and out the back. But of all the people who were there—cops and photographers and reporters and curious people who just dropped in—he was the only one who had a good word for me. He listened patiently to Sullivan's ideas, and even to Kilgore's, and shook his head.

"Donald didn't do it," he said. "Donald's too smooth a talker to ever have to take a gun to a girl. Aren't you, Donald?"

"Thanks, Doc," I said.

"I don't doubt it at all," Sullivan said. "But there comes a time when even the smoothest operators make a wrong move. Listen, Ivy, why don't you tell the truth? You can get off easy, and save all of us here hell of a lot of work."

"Watch what you say, Donald," Dr. Dann cautioned.

"Look, Ivy," Sullivan said, "it must have happened this way, didn't it? You went to town and called up your sister. We've checked on that. She said her daughter was at home, so you knew the girl in your house was a phony. You went home and found the dame searching everywhere, because you always have a lot of cash on hand in the house. She was stealing you blind, and when you caught her she came at you with a heavy object, like a poker, and you shot her in self-defense. That's it, isn't it?"

"No," I said evenly, "that isn't it. I came home and she was gone. I called you. You came. Nothing else was missing. You left. This morning Kilgore finds the body—but how he happened to be down by the pond is something I'd like to hear him explain."

"I had a hunch," Kilgore said. "We cops use hunches a lot."

"I wondered what you used," I said. "Sergeant, I didn't do it and I think you know it. You've had two stories so far,



one that I was trying to rape the girl and the other that I killed her in self-defense. If you think you've got something on me, go ahead and arrest me. But I believe you have to have a reasonable amount of evidence, don't you?"

"Just let him arrest you," Dr. Dann said. "I'll have you sprung fifteen minutes after he gets into Tombury."

"You know damned well I don't have enough evidence to arrest anyone—yet," Sullivan said. "Now let's get this girl's body out of here, you guys."

He walked from the side of the pond up to the front of the house and sat on the front doorstep, lighting a cigarette. The ambulance roared away with all that was left of Billie Mataze and soon the crowd had disappeared. Only Sullivan, Kilgore, Dr. Dann, and I were left. I was with the doctor, but I could overhear the two cops.

"What became of that F.B.I. man, Roamer?" Sullivan asked.

"He shoved off," Kilgore said. "Right when the crowd started arriving. Said it wasn't a Federal case and he better keep out of it."

"I bet he could help me with this one," Sullivan said. "And I sure need help. You know where he's staying, Harry?"

"Yeah," Kilgore said. "At the Banks Hotel. He's trying to get Donald here for possessing counterfeiting tools and stuff, or catch him up on his income tax."

"How do you know so much about his business?" Sullivan asked.

"I was talking to him," Kilgore said. "We were kind of trading information about Donald. You know, Sergeant, you state cops aren't the only ones who can make big arrests. Some of the rest of us get in on the gravy now and then."

"You get an arrest in this case, Kilgore, and I'll carry you on my back to the top of the town hall and nail an American flag to you, or something else big and important. Might even buy you a drink. You get the bullet, Doc?"

"Gave it to Ralph. It's probably the right one. Donald,

you must have some ideas about this case. What do you think?"

"Doctor," I said, "I'm confused. Sometimes I think I have an idea but before I can grab it, it goes away. But the way I see it, it all started with that story about me in the Boston paper. Some guys saw it and decided to come and put the bite on me. Henri maybe learns about it and comes to warn me. Judy—or Billie—moves in, to do her stuff the easy way. Wusky tries a crude approach. Wusky's footprints lead to where Henri was found. Billie Mataze probably pushed Wusky in front of the car that killed him. Somebody killed Billie. I don't know who, but it all seems to come back to my doorstep. Could it be for the cash I usually have on me? Anyhow, it seems it's my fault that these three were killed."

"Don't feel that way, Don," Dr. Dann said.

"It won't keep me from sleeping, except for Henri," I said. "But I'd like to get to the bottom of it. And I think it begins somewhere in Boston. Sergeant," I turned and asked, "would it be all right for me to run up to Boston and scout around on my own and see what I could find?"

"It would like hell," Sullivan said. "The Boston cops are already working on it. You do like I told you and don't go any further than Tombury."

"All right," I said, "but I could get up there and back the same evening. Only take me about six hours."

"I've got cops driving past here every hour," Sullivan told me. "When your car is away, they let me know. If we can't find it in Tombury the word goes out to pick you up on sight. You couldn't get within fifty miles of Boston."

"Look, Ivy," Kilgore butted in. "How do you keep people from robbing you if you always carry a wad of dough and never carry a gun. Bash them over the head with sticks of firewood, like Henri?"

"Sonny boy," I said, "my money is in my left front pants pocket. I'm a little short of six feet tall and weigh 170



pounds, probably forty pounds less than you do. You have a gun, I don't. If you can get my wallet out of my pocket without shooting me, I'll give you one hundred dollars."

"Oh, what a big mouth!" he said, stepping over to where I stood. Dr. Dann and Sergeant Sullivan watched him intently, Sullivan with his hand on the butt of his revolver. "So anything goes, does it?" He threw a hard left at my jaw, a right at my head, and all he hit was air. "Stand still, goddammit!" he roared.

I kicked him lightly in the shin, just enough to hurt a little, and laughed at him. He crowded me toward the house and, as I expected, threw his big arms against me, wrapping me up in a bear hug.

"Now, you wise bastard," he shouted, "I'm just gonna slap your head until you either give me that money or go silly. One!"

He backed one hand off but it never landed. I stepped down hard on his instep, ducked under his arm, grabbed it as I went under, and had him flying over my shoulder before he knew what hit him. He stretched out flat on the lawn, blinking his eyes and trying to catch his breath.

"That's a pretty good trick," he said. He got to his feet and held out his hand. "You win, Ivy. I could use a hundred bucks but a broken back is too high a price. Let's call a truce, huh?"

I took his offered hand and threw him about twelve feet. "The offer is now withdrawn," I said, "and here's your own wallet. It dropped out of your pocket into my hand when you were hugging me."

Give the devil his due. There was a certain amount of respect in the way he acted after that.

"Where in the hell did you learn that, Ivy?" Sullivan asked.

"Friends taught me. That's the safest way to learn," I added. "You still think I'd have to shoot women or anybody else?"



"There's angles to this case," he said. "I'm going back to the office and study them."

"So long, Donald," Dr. Dann said. "I've got to be going, too. Work to do this afternoon. But why don't you come into town and see me this evening, say about eight o'clock. I've got some ideas about this case that might interest you."

"Sure," I said. "I'll be there."

I walked down the path to the driveway with him, saw him into his car and watched him drive away. As I turned to walk back to the house I saw something black in the driveway, and picked it up. It was Roamer's notebook.

## CHAPTER X

CERTAINLY I OPENED it and read it. It was just an ordinary loose-leaf memo book, the kind you can get almost anywhere. It had a lot of notes about me in it. To begin with, there was a pretty thorough description of me on the second page (the first page was blank), with my birthday, my height and weight, and the facts that my nose was straight, my complexion clear and fair, my race white, my eyes brown, my ears medium, and so on. I was pleased with the medium ears, but not happy about *no known occupation*. My fingerprint classification, in case you are interested, was 9 A 11 over 17 U 12. I couldn't complain.

Then there were a lot of notes copied from the stuff about me that had been in the Sunday paper. This took about four pages. *D.I. no gun—never carry—no shoots*, a note said, and I was glad of that, too. Then there was a thorough description of the house and the grounds from the outside, with a little hand-drawn map of the barn, the pond, and the way the roads and paths went. He had complete notes about his first visit to the house, and what I

had said and what he had said, and *D.I. niece with him. Judy Thames*. The last sentence said I had been uncooperative. That was true. I sure was.

There were others. *Grennet killed Tuesday outside kitchen. D.I.? . . . Andrews hit by automobile Wed.* A couple of pages, in the same neat handwriting, covered what had happened so far on Friday. *Smith & Wesson .38 Terrier in h. tab. draw. . . Billie Mataze—same g. as D.I. niece—dead in pond.* And so on. It was interesting to see how an F.B.I. man worked. I wondered if he had dropped the book on purpose, just to see what I would do with it.

Anyhow, the fact that stuck out big as my two medium-sized ears was that I was a first-class suspect in a murder and there didn't seem to be anything I could do about it. I was trapped. I couldn't even go to Boston to see if I could find out anything there though that was where Wusky had been when, according to the postmark on his letter, he wrote to me.

I looked at my watch and it was two o'clock and I was hungry, so I went in the house, put Roamer's notebook on my desk in the living room so I could give it to him the next time I saw him, and went out to the kitchen.

This time I didn't get very far with my cooking. Didn't even get started, to tell the truth. The knock at the front door came immediately, and I walked back through the living room and opened it. I got a surprise, all right.

A pleasant blonde surprise, with bright blue eyes and a red mouth that broke into a smile when I opened the door. She was wearing a pert little hat over short-cut hair, and a black coat. If you think I'm describing Billie Mataze, the way she looked when she came knocking on my door two days before, you are absolutely right. This girl was Billie Mataze, almost. A little younger, perhaps, and wearing a little less lipstick, and not quite as flashy. But just the same, there was a good deal of superficial resemblance. For



a moment I felt dizzy, and touched the door frame to steady myself.

There was a man standing beside this girl holding two suitcases, and there was a taxi in my driveway.

"Hello," I sort of gulped. "Can I help you?"

"I'm Judy Thames," the girl said. "Are you my Uncle Donald Ivy?"

"Pardon me," I said, trying to get some sort of human expression on my face. "Did you say you're Judy Thames, Martha's girl?"

"Yes," she said. "Why? Weren't you expecting me?"

"My telephone has been out of order," I stammered. "Are you really Judy Thames? I know I sound funny, but I've had a shock this morning. No, no," I said, as a frown came over her face, "you—you don't need to be alarmed. I'm all right. It's just that you're the second Judy—I mean—"

She laughed, a nice laugh that made me feel better. "I know about that one. You explained it all to Mother, remember, when you talked to her last night. I decided to come down and see what it was all about. I just pestered Mother practically all night long to let me come, and this morning I just walked out and caught the train and here I am. And if that girl who pretended to be me hasn't left, I'll have to throw her out myself, I guess."

"She left last night," I said. "That's why it really shook me to see you here now. She looked a lot like you, in a way. Come on in and make yourself at home. although the place is a mess." I paid the taxi driver and took the two suitcases, and he went back to his cab and drove away.

"Same old place," she said, looking around. "Except I see you have some new pictures and some new rugs. I always liked it here, Uncle Don. What did you do with the girl who said she was me?"

It sounded like one of Sullivan's double-barreled questions, and I thumped inside. "The police took care of her," I said truthfully. "She went away with them. As a matter of fact,



she left in such a hurry she left most of her stuff up in the guest room, and I haven't had a chance to put it away. But have you had any lunch?"

"No," she said. "And I'm hungry. Just give me a chance to hang up my hat and wash my face and I'll be with you."

She shuffled off her coat, which I managed to grab, and gave me her hat, and dashed upstairs. I put the coat and hat in the closet, beside the coat and hat that had been Billie Mataze's, and had the funniest feeling of my entire life. It was a sad feeling, and an old, old feeling, and the feeling that I was up against something I couldn't do anything about. All of a sudden everything I touched seemed to go bad and I was homesick for far-off places. I was a lonely, confused man. And I wanted to call my sister and check on this latest Judy before she went sour too.

Judy came clattering down the stairs. "Did you ever find out who that other girl was, Uncle Don?" she asked.

"Yes," I said. "Her name was Billie Mataze. She came from Springfield. Did you know her?"

"*Billie Mataze!*" she cried. "Not *Billie* Mataze? Sure I know her. She's a couple of years older than I am, I guess, but we went to school together, and she used to be around our house a lot before she went off to Boston with some man who didn't do right by her. At least that's what they say. I guess if she dyed her hair blonde she would look something like me."

"That's just it," I said. "I don't know exactly what to make of two blondes coming to my house, both claiming to be Judy Thames. The telephone is broken right now, and—"

"Oh, oh," she said, with a serious look on her face. "No wonder I haven't got the warmest welcome." She ran upstairs again and returned with her handbag, from which she pulled an assortment of cards and licenses. "Look, my driver's license, and my Country Club card, and my Social Security card—I'm really and truly Judy Thames, in person. And I'm hungry."

"Come out in the kitchen," I said, "and we'll whip up some chow. I hope you like to eat as well as the first Judy I had here. Can you cook?"

"Indeed I can," she said proudly.

"So could the first Judy," I said.

"Gee," she said. "You must have been surprised to see *me!*"

"I was," I said. "I still am. And soon we are going to drive to the nearest telephone and call your mother, whose number I know, and tell her you are here. And if you haven't run away from home, or stolen the family jewels, you will be as welcome as the flowers in May. Of course, if you have a dark past and are on the lam, you can still stay here. But I have to warn you, this place is the meeting house for all the cops in New England."

"Let's eat first," she said. "Talk later." A real keen type girl with a lot of common sense.

So we ate. Then, even before taking her gear upstairs, I drove to the Esso station and telephoned Martha. It was true. She hadn't been able to keep Judy from coming and finally gave her consent to a visit of a week or so. I gathered that Judy was pretty independent. Martha said she would drive down and she and Judy would go home together, and I promised to go back with them if I could.

"What do you mean, if you can?" she asked. "What's keeping you at home all alone this time of year?"

"Well," I said, "we've had a little trouble down here. There was a man killed last Tuesday."

"You mean that little Frenchman they found in your side yard, Donald? You didn't kill him, did you? Then what are you worried about?"

I muttered something about courts and hearings.

"Nonsense," she said. "They'll find out who did it before then. You better solve it yourself if you're that worried. Or let Judy do it, she's smart. What happened to that other girl who said she was Judy, anyhow?"



I told her the other girl had been taken away by the police, and she said that was good, and then she talked to Judy, and then we all said good-bye and hung up. I called the telephone company and asked them to send a man to fix my own phone and they said they would. Then Judy and I drove back to the house.

"I guess you're going to stay here for about two weeks," I said. "And I'm very glad to hear it. Then we're all going up to your house, unless I'm in jail, which I hope I'm not."

"Why in the world would they put you in jail," she asked. "You haven't done anything, have you?"

"It's a long story, Judy," I said, "and I'm going to tell you all about it, but not right now. First of all, we're going to get you squared away. Then we will relax and I will tell you the whole story about your Uncle Donald and his troubles. So come on."

We got all of Billie Mataze's things and put them in her suitcase, and stowed it in one of the closets under the eaves. Then we made up the bed with clean linen, and dusted the upstairs a little, and by that time it was four o'clock. So I took a shower and changed my clothes and while I was dressing Judy got herself fixed up and we went downstairs and sat in the living room.

"Now tell me all these awful things you've been hinting at, Uncle Donald," she said, lighting a cigarette. "And if it will make you feel better to confess killing that Frenchman, go right ahead and confess to little old me."

"Where did you find out about him?" I asked. "And your mother knew about it too."

"We read the papers," she said. "Just about the same as everybody else. It was in the Springfield paper last night."

"Was there anything else?"

"What do you mean?"

"Wait until your mother reads the paper tonight, or tomorrow," I said. "Listen, Judy, that girl Billie Mataze got



shot and killed right there in that front hall last night, when I was talking to Martha on the phone!"

She gulped, and some of the color left her cheeks. "You mean the girl who was pretending to be *me*?"

"That's what I said. I went into Tombury last night to call Martha, because I didn't believe she really was my niece. I didn't want to call from here. When I came home she was gone, the place was all turned inside out, and this morning the police found her body down by the pond. Then they found a bullet hole out there in the stairs. And somebody had fired my pistol."

"Who do they think did it?"

"They think I did it. There was also a man who got killed by an automobile right out there on the road the night before last. He came here first to threaten me. The cops think maybe I pushed him in front of the car that hit him. And they also think maybe I killed Henri, the Frenchman. Do you still want to stay with your Uncle Don?"

"You certainly need someone to look after you," she said. "I doubt that you could pay anybody to stay, so I guess I have to. What are you going to do next?"

"Well," I said, "I had a little bit of a plan in the back of my mind, which entailed breaking the law in a minor sort of way. You sort of complicate things, being here, because I can't leave you alone in the house if I go away."

"I should say you can't," she said, "so I'll go along. When do we leave?"

"There might be trouble, you never can tell."

"If you could tell, it wouldn't be fun," she laughed. "Tell me about the plan. I haven't had a real adventure for years."

"We'll see about it," I promised. "I have to go to Tombury this evening to talk to old Dr. Dann, and we'll see what he says. But now let me tell you all I know about these people getting killed. Martha said you could solve it for me. I hope so. I'm licked."

Point by point, I reviewed everything that had happened.

Midway in the recital a man from the telephone company knocked on the door and came in and fixed the phone connection. He was disposed to chat about things, but I got him out as soon as I could. Then I went back to telling the story to Judy. When I finally finished, my throat was dry and it was time for the evening drinks and dinner.

We had turned up nothing new.

We finished the dishes before seven-thirty and got to Dr. Dann's house at about ten minutes to eight. He was home, sitting in his old living room with a highball in his hand, and was glad to see Judy again.

"Saw her at your mother's funeral, Donald," he said. "This is the same one, all right. Whenever you have young girls dropping in, Donald, you better call me and play safe. Can I get you a drink?"

Judy said no, and I said I'd take a short one. "You better change your mind, Judy," he said. "You'll need something to keep you warm tonight if you're going with Donald."

"Where's he going?" she asked.

"I've got it all figured out," he said. "That little sports car stays right here in front of my house and if anyone asks me if you are here, I'll say you're under my care and can't be seen. As soon as you finish your drink, Donald, the two of you go out to my garage in the back and take that Cadillac of mine and beat it up to Boston. Do whatever you've had on your mind, Donald, and get back here early tomorrow. Nobody will ever know. That's settled now. And here's a drink for you, Judy, you need it. The doctor says so."

I had figured he was going to help me get to Boston, but I didn't want to take Judy because I didn't know exactly where I was going. I'd probably have to be in and out of some pretty ratty places.

"Do you know your way around Boston?" Judy finally asked.

"No," I said, "but I can park the car and use taxis."



"I've worked in Boston," she said. "You need a guide and I'm it. Let's get going."

"May I use your phone first, Doctor?" I asked. "I want to find out who Billie Mataze called when I thought she was calling Martha." When he nodded I called the telephone company and got the number from their records, and the Information ran it down for me in a couple of minutes. "Do you know a Mrs. Orell—Mrs. Louise B. Orell, who lives at 374 Oak Street in Springfield?"

"No," she said. "Do you want me to find out?"

"Don't have time now," I said. "Let's go."

"Here's the key," Dr. Dann said. "It's full of gas, enough to take you to Boston and back easy. There's a medical bag on the back seat and medical plates, so you probably won't get stopped unless you go too damn fast. Be careful, I like that automobile a lot. Good hunting."

I thanked the fine old man as much as I could in the few seconds I had, and Judy and I went down the back stairway and took the Cadillac out of the garage. Five minutes later we were out of Tombury and on the road to Boston. And I didn't have any idea what I was going to do when I got there. In fact, I only knew the name of one person in Boston.

## CHAPTER XI

FROM TOMBURY to about Brookline takes an hour and a half without breaking any speed limits, now that Route 9 is in good shape. The big black Cadillac rolled right along and once we had crossed the Massachusetts line and weren't directly under Sergeant Sullivan's jurisdiction, I breathed a little easier. Even so, I figured the real tough part of the trip would be the ride back. Judy and I might get away



with being at Dr. Dann's for the early part of the evening, but no suspicion at four in the morning was almost too much to hope for.

"What do you have in mind?" Judy asked. "You're frowning, so I assume you must be thinking. What are we going to do when we get to Boston?"

"I thought I'd call that guy, Perry Patterson, who wrote the article about me," I said. "Maybe he can give me a lead. He must have talked to a lot of people to find out that much about me. Then I'll go where he says—if he says."

"And if he doesn't say?"

"Then I'll head for a tough section of town and just start walking around and talking to strangers. You'd be surprised how much you can learn that way—especially if you've been a member of the fraternity in good standing. And a pocket full of ten-dollar bills helps."

"Well," she said, "let's keep on Route 9 into Boylston Street, and then we'll go on down Essex Street to the Essex Hotel or the South Station. We can probably park near the station and that will be a good place to telephone from. We can also get taxis there to take us over to South Boston if we have to go to a tough section."

"That's tough, is it?" I asked.

"About as tough as we have in Boston," she said. "I hope you don't get your head knocked off, that's all. I can see the headlines now—*Young Girl Found In Stolen Car With Headless Uncle!* Great idea, isn't it?"

I laughed. "Watch and see what happens. Dollars to doughnuts that somebody recognizes me and the first thing you know a strange man in a dark hat with the brim pulled down over his eyes makes me a proposition. This will lead to conversation and I will find out all I want to know."

"You're the internationally known counterfeiter," she said. "I'm just a country girl, myself. I'll watch and see, like you say. Just what do you expect to find out?"

"I know that at least one person, Wusky Andrews, was

in Boston before he came to my place," I said. "Wusky also said that there were other people trying to get the ten-pound plates—which he must have learned in Boston. All of which proves, *quo ipso quid*, that the other people must have been in Boston, too."

"Go on, my dear Holmes," she said, leaning back with her eyes half closed as the big black car rolled through the night. "Tell me more. What does *quo ipso quid* mean, for example?"

"Old Latin expression," I said, "which means 'who among you has a quid.' A quid, of course, is a pound or sometimes just any kind of money. What are you laughing about, child? Don't you believe your Uncle Donald?"

"*Who among you has a quid!*" she laughed. "I presume, then, that the other people in Boston didn't have any money and therefore they all came looking for yours?"

"Now you're catching on, Judy," I said. "Wusky and some of his friends decided to get my ten-pound plates, or black-mail me, or separate me from my bank balance in some other way. Wusky is dead. Henri must have found out what the score was, but he's dead too. Same thing with Billie Mataze, if we take it for granted that she was in Boston last week end."

"So what do we do in Boston tonight?" she asked.

"We're going to find somebody who can tell us how many people, and who they are, were sitting around last Sunday discussing your friend and mine—Donald Ivy—and how to pry some money out of him," I said. "We will probably find that they got in an argument and each went his own way. Then they started running into each other in my side yard and, as Sergeant Sullivan puts it, a whole handful of murder resulted. When we find out who they were, we subtract those that are dead from those that are alive. The answer is the answer."

"Or," she said slowly, "who among you has the money?"



I see what you mean. *Have* they taken anything? The ten-pound plates?"

"Nothing yet." The traffic was getting heavier, and buildings more numerous along our route. "Where are we now?" I asked.

"We're coming into Boston," she said. "Just keep straight ahead, I won't let you get lost." We kept on and eventually, after a few turns, drove up to the South Boston Station where I backed into a parking place.

"There," I said, "that makes it easier for us to get out in a hurry. Now come along with me and I will show you some tricks that you'll never learn in polite society." I locked the car. "There's only one key and I'd better keep it. If we get separated we can meet again in the station, so let's go look the joint over and see where to meet." We walked through the station. "I'll meet you right there by that ticket window on the end," I said. "If I can. Don't wait more than two hours, and don't spend all your time in one spot. A good-looking dame like you stands out like a sore thumb in this place. Buy a ticket on a train that leaves about two hours after you get here. Do you have any money?"

"Some," she said, looking in her purse. "Maybe twenty-five dollars. But I don't want you to get away, Uncle Don."

"Neither do I," I said, "but we must Be Prepared. Here's some extra cash and if I lose you, get back to Tombury as soon as you can. Dr. Dann will look out for you. Now let's go over to the hotel." I gave her a handful of bills and we walked out.

The Essex Hotel is practically across the street from the station, and we went in and located the various exits and then I parked Judy in the lobby while I went to a phone booth. There was a Patterson, P., in the directory but nobody answered the call. I then dialed the newspaper, and after a great deal of effort got past the operator to a tired voice that told me that Perry wasn't there.

"He ain' here."



"Do you know where I could find him?" I asked. "This is fairly important."

"Watcha name?" the voice asked. "He might come in an' I'll tellim ya called."

"This is pretty hot," I said. "I can't wait. If you have any idea where he is, I wish you'd tell me."

"He might be at Eddie's, or the Green Button, or wunna those places," the voice said. "Thass my bess guess. Good-bye."

The click of the phone was final enough for me. I went out to the lobby and got Judy and we walked out on the street.

"Look," I told her. "From now on you are an old man's plaything—and I am the old man. I'll tell anyone who asks that you are my wife, but they can see that you don't have a wedding ring and it's plain that you are only my wife for one night, or as long as my money holds out. So act like a high-class tramp, honey, and we'll see what kind of trouble we can collect."

"Okay, Don," she said. "Wait until I put on a little more red paint." She thickened her lower lip with her lipstick. "Darned if I don't look as sexy as a queen bee. What now, sugar?"

"Taxi!" I called, and a cab pulled up to the curb. "Hey Mac," I said to the driver, "this town is dead on its feet. My wife and I'd like a little action, y'see? So where can we go, huh, and get some real action?" Out of the corner of my eye I saw Judy give the driver a big wink.

"Action," he said. "You from Boston?"

"Maine," I said. "Great place, Maine." I leaned over and gave the driver a confidential whisper. "I'm really from Winnipeg, Canada, but I told the lady I'm from Maine." I stepped back a little and put my arm around Judy. "You know a place called the Green Button?"

"Tame," he said. "But I can show you real action in a joint near there."

"Follow this map," I said, leaning forward and giving him a ten-dollar bill. "And as for you, sweetheart, give us a great big kiss, huh?" and I slid back into Judy's corner where the driver couldn't see me in his rear-view mirror.

"Kissin' and all that comes later," she laughed. "Right now I want champagne. I've got to catch up with you, baby!"

The taxi took us across a bridge, and then through a maze of narrow streets and dark, closed commercial buildings. Finally we came into a street where there was more light, and stopped before a door under a green awning and a small sign that said *Shirley's*.

"I guess this is as good a place as any for you and your wife, mister," the driver said. "How about it, missus?"

"Oh, this is fine," Judy said.

I opened the door under the awning and Judy and I started down a flight of stairs. "Hold on to everything that's valuable," I whispered to Judy. "This smells to me like one of the gates to hell itself."

"How'm I doin', daddy?" she laughed.

There was another door at the bottom of the stairs, and the muted sound of hot music was coming through. Just as I reached for the knob the door was opened from the inside by a huge negro, impeccable in white tie and tails. He looked us over quickly. "Yes sir?" he asked gently.

The lights were so low I could hardly see beyond him, except for a hat-check booth that was at one side of a short hall. There was smoke in the air, and the music was loud.

"The lady and I would like some champagne, the best in the house!"

"Yes sir," he repeated, pocketing the bill I slipped into his hand. "I think we can find a table for you."

I helped Judy out of her coat and handed it to the check girl with my hat. The headwaiter, or whatever he was, had retreated down the short hall and was talking to a woman, nearly as large as he was, who had stepped through another side doorway. Judy and I walked toward them.



"Good evening," she said, pleasantly, "this is your first time here, isn't it?" She was probably fifty years old, but she was either well-preserved or perfectly padded under her black evening gown. Her pearls were real, and so were her diamonds. Behind her smile she looked like the kind who would eat her young. "So glad to have you. Hope you enjoy yourself." The sidewise look she gave Judy said "sophomore."

The big negro led us to a booth beside the dance floor. We sat on a low leather sofa behind a small table, practically sinking into luxury. But somebody had been sitting there not long before us. The sofa was still warm. There were similar booths on each side of ours. As my eyes got used to the light I could see tables in the central part of the big room and more booths along the wall on the other side. The place was crowded. A waiter came up and stood in front of us.

"Champagne," I said loudly. "The best damned champagne you got. *French* champagne. Toot sweet. And don't let the bottles get dry, understand?"

"You're kind of uncouth," Judy whispered, after he had left with the order. "This isn't exactly the sort of a visit with dear old Uncle Donald that I expected."

"Everything's working out fine," I said. "I just hope you can drink champagne all night without getting too tight."

"I never tried," she admitted. "You better keep an eye on me. But what's happened?"

"Shh," I cautioned, as the waiter came up with a bottle in an ice bucket. He unwrapped the napkin around the bottle and then popped the cork. He filled the two hollow-stemmed glasses and withdrew.

"Here's to us, and a long and happy time of it," I toasted, and Judy and I clinked glasses together. It wasn't bad champagne, and I started acting like a big spender from Winnipeg pretending he was from Maine, out on the town with a Boston pickup.

The music started up again, real cool. "Well, darling,"



Judy said, emptying her second glass of champagne, "do you think you could take your hand off my knee and your nose out of my ear long enough to dance? Or do you dance?"

"Baby," I said, rising, "I'm about to show you how we dance in Maine." She made a sour little face. "Come on, this is my night to hoot and holler!"

She got a surprise, because I can cut up a dance floor just about as well as I can cut designs in a flat piece of copper. The music was pretty fast, but we kept right on top of it and pretty soon had most of the dance floor to ourselves, and I was swinging her out and bringing her back, and then gathering her up in one arm and spinning in the blue spot they put on us. There was a nice round of applause from the audience as that number came to a end.

"Why," asked Judy, "didn't you tell me you could dance like that? Where did you ever learn?"

"Long time ago," I said. "Now listen carefully. That taxi driver phoned here as soon as we started down the steps. That big dame in the black dress was waiting for us. Somebody got chased out of our booth to make room for us and they're watching everything we do, trying to figure our gimmick. Pretty soon somebody will move into the next booth and when they do, be extra careful. I'm going to dance the champagne out of you as fast as you can pour it in, but play the floozie part all the time. If I give you the sign, get in a fight with me and walk out."

The next number was a rumba, which isn't planned to permit conversation. I was breathing pretty hard at the end of that one, and my face was damp. But while I was dancing I noticed a girl sitting at a table with two men, and she was obviously watching Judy and me with more than ordinary interest.

When the music ended Judy and I walked back to our booth. The champagne glasses were freshly filled.

"Whooo," Judy whistled, as she sipped the bubbly stuff.

"What dancing! What an evening! What a guy! How do you know the taxi driver called here?"

"I can just smell these things." I saw that the girl who had been watching us so intently was on her way to the ladies' room. "Get up and go out to the powder room," I said. "Right now."

"But," she protested, "I don't have—"

"Get up and go. Somebody's awfully interested in you. And if anybody out there asks who I am, tell them that I *say* my name is Donald Ivy. Tell them I'm an old fool with lots of money, or anything you please. But don't forget we're investigating a murder, kid."

"I'm going," she said. "You be sure to be here when I get back." She reached over and kissed me on the forehead. Just part of the act.

I watched her go through the door, and then I became aware that the couple in the booth to my right were leaving. Two men, big, well dressed, dead-panned, and armed with cigars moved in and took their place. No waiter came to take their order, and they didn't seem to have much to say to each other either.

## CHAPTER XII

IN ABOUT SIX or seven minutes Judy came back, her eyes wide as saucers. I stood up, swayed a little. "Welcome home, sweetheart," I said, a little too loudly. "Feel better now? Let's dance." Then, in a lower voice, "Keep chattering at me and whatever you have to say, say it along with the chatter. The local chapter of bird watchers has moved in."

We swung into a fast waltz. Judy put her head back and laughed, and sang a chorus of the piece that was being



played. Then she sang on, "Bet you don't know what that girl said to me in the ladies' room, trala, trala, trala."

"Bum de dum de dum," I sang. "She said 'Hello, Billie Mataze.'"

"I darned near jumped right out of my skin, dum de dum de da da, then she asked me how I made out, and whether I got the do re me fa so la ti do."

"And what did you tell her when she said that, wonderful, wonderful Judy?"

"I told her I'd done better than that, and brought you to Boston with me."

"One two three and around we go. She's gone back to her table now and talking to the others. I bet we get some action soon, the music's almost ended."

We came to a fancy finish on the last note, gave the crowd a big smile, and hurried back to the booth for more champagne. Now I noticed that one of the girl's companions had walked out toward the check room.

"Baby," I said in a voice that was meant to be overheard by anybody who was trying to overhear, "I sure am glad I found you. Have some more of this delicious champagne, baby, before I drink it all myself. Ol' Donald is in a good frame of mind, he ain't gonna say good night tonight to you, baby."

Something pinched me sharply in the arm, but there was nothing except a silly look on Judy's face. I pinched her right back. She pushed her head against my shoulder and whispered, "I'll pinch you black and blue, you ol' goat, if you don't stop leering like that." Then she raised her voice. "Where'd you ever get a name like that—Donald Ivy? That's a silly name. I bet it isn't your real name. You just made it up."

"It's my real true name that they gave me when I was born, baby, and that's the truth," I said. The waiter refilled the glasses. "So let's drink to all the Ivys, all kinds of Ivys. Long may they climb!" I draped my arm across her shoulder



and saw somebody in the next booth get up and walk away.

"I think you're more the creep type," Judy said. "Let's dance before the vice squad comes and takes you away." We danced.

Both of the men who had taken the booth beside us were gone, I noticed. And all of a sudden, although the music was as loud and brassy as ever, I sensed a certain stillness and a little tingle of excitement ran up my spine. Action was about to begin.

"Keep your fingers crossed," I told Judy as we went back. "We're going to learn something soon."

The waiter came up to the table. "More champagne," I ordered. "Keep it coming, I've got a hollow leg."

"Shirley wants to buy you a drink," he said.

"Good for good ol' Shirley," I said. "Thank her very much. We accept. Where is it?"

"In her place. She said I was to tell you to come on in."

"Tell Shirley to come on out. Want to meet good ol' Shirley."

"Shirley said for you and the lady to come with me." There was no mistaking the tone of his voice.

"Okay with me," I said. "Come on, baby, let's go have a drink with good ol' Shirley."

I took Judy by the hand and we followed the waiter through the door in the hall and then up a flight of steps to a large room on the floor above. It was a very attractive layout, windowless, indirectly lighted, and furnished with leather-covered, overstuffed furniture. The big woman in the black dress and the two men who had been in the booth next to Judy and me were standing together in the center of the room as we came in.

"Sit down," one of the men said. Judy sat down on a sofa, leaving room for me. Her face had lost a little of its color.

"What are you drinking?" the other man asked.

"Champagne," I said.

"Bring up some champagne," the first man said to the waiter, "and a bottle of Scotch and some more ice." The waiter left. "I said to sit down."

"I'm waiting for the lady to be seated first," I said. "The waiter told me Shirley was asking us up for a drink. Which one of us is Shirley?"

"I'm Shirley," the big woman said. "Sit down. Don't wait for me. I'm on my feet most of the time. You'll wear your legs out waiting for me to sit."

"Well," I said. "It's an old habit of mine to keep on my feet while so many others are standing up. I don't like to feel surrounded when I'm with strangers."

"Oh for Chrise sweet sake," the first man said, dropping in a deep chair, "let's all of us sit down and stop talking so goddam much about it!"

At that all of us did sit down and the waiter came in, filled all the glasses, put the bottles where they would be handy, and left.

"Thank you all very much," I said, raising my glass. "This is very nice of you indeed, Miss Shirley."

"Nice to have you here," she said. "That's Dutch and this is Tony and I'm Shirley, but just who in the hell are you, and what's your racket, mister fancy dancer?"

It sounded pleasant and friendly, but it wasn't. It was as hard and cold as blue ice. "I've got no racket," I told her pleasantly. "I'm just in town for a good time, and I sure have been having one. I—"

"Cut it!" the man she had called Dutch barked. "Who the hell are you?"

"I'm Donald Ivy," I said gently. "Do you have to be interviewed and give a pedigree to get into this place?"

"Do you want me to make him talk, Shirl?" the man called Tony asked.

"Just a second," Shirley said. "Maybe he is Donald Ivy. Look, mister, I run a pretty square place here. Sure, we're always ready to take your money and if you're just a plain

sucker in from Winnipeg we may even take it a little faster than you expected. But you come in here with a girl who looks like someone we know, only she isn't. Now the last time we saw that other girl, *she* was talking about a Donald Ivy. If you're the same guy, maybe you'd answer a few questions for us?"

"And who are these people?" I asked, nodding toward Tony and Dutch. "Where do they come in, except to twist my wrist?"

"They work for me," she said. "Tony there was kind of on the make for a girl named Billie Mataze, who was selling cigarettes here a week ago."

"I got bad news for him," I said slowly. "Billie Mataze got shot and killed last night."

The big man jumped up, his face black. "Goddam, don't you tell me that! Who killed her? You tell me or I'll kill you now!"

"Easy, friend," I said. "If I knew I'd tell you. One of the reason's I'm here is to find out who killed her. She was a nice kid."

"You goddamn right she was a nice kid! I was gonna marry her. Who killed her, huh? Where did it happen?"

I didn't see any good reason for telling him it happened in my front hall. "Near my place in Tombury."

"You know what she was doing in Tombury?" Shirley asked.

"Yes," I said. "She had read a newspaper story about me and she came down to get the plates for the ten-pound notes. She said she was my niece. I let her in the house. Later I went to town to get a paper. I came home and she was gone. Next morning they found her lying in a pond, dead."

"Who's this dame with you? She looks almost like Billie, only younger. Probably too young to be drinking in a night club. I'm liable to lose my license."



"Only if you sell it," I said. "Not if you give it to guests in your own home. This girl is my niece."

"You tell a good story," Shirley said. "What can you do to prove you're Donald Ivy?"

"I don't know," I said. "I've got a driver's license with me, and some other cards. What do you know about this Donald Ivy that you have in mind?"

"Only that he's an operator, like the rest of us here. If you're the real Ivy don't worry, you're with friends."

"Ask me some questions," I said. "Or if you know anybody who knows me, get them to come in and look at me."

"That's the trouble," she said. "Everybody who knew you seems to have left town. Andy and Frenchy."

"Who were they?"

"Andy was a janitor I had here. Frenchy was a bus boy. When that story about Donald Ivy came out they were excited as all hell, and then all of a sudden they didn't show up for work any more."

"Andy," I said. "Was his name Andrews?"

"Yes."

"And Frenchy—was his name Henri Grønnet?"

"Yes," she repeated. "Did you know them? Where are they now?"

"Dead," I said slowly. "Someone killed Henri with a piece of firwood. Andrews was hit by a car and killed."

"I'll be damned," she said. "All three of them dead. Did they get the money or whatever the hell it was they were looking for?"

"No," I said. "They didn't."

"Well," she said, "don't worry. If they didn't the next ones will."

"Yeah," I said. "That's the way I figure it too. How the hell many are there going to be? That's what I came up here to find out. You got any idea?"

"It's been nice having you and your friend here, Ivy," Shirley stood up and started for the door. "Come again, any

time. As far as you're concerned, it's all on the house when you drop in."

"Hold it just a minute," I protested. "The way I see it, there was a little meeting somewhere around here, maybe right in this room. Somebody decided to pay me a visit in Tombury. Andy found out about it and decided to come too. So did Billie Mataze. The guy you call Frenchy found out and came to warn me. But who else decided to come? You know, don't you?"

"I don't know anything," she said. "Why don't you go on home? Leave it to the cops to figure out who killed those bums."

"Billie wasn't a bum!" Tony said.

"The cops just about have me fenced in for killing Frenchy and Billie. I've got to get some kind of a line on this business quick, or I'm in the market for a sharp mouthpiece."

"Tell him, Shirl," Tony said.

"Shut up!" she snapped. "What do we know about this fancy dancer? Sorry, Ivy, but I guess we can't help you. Good night." She kind of nodded, and Dutch and Tony stood up. Judy and I stood up too.

"Goddam!" Tony shouted. "That was *my* Billie that got killed. I'll tell him! Listen, mister, it was on Sunday night. Two guys talking about you downstairs. Same table you had. I was sitting next to them, and the one said—"

"I told you to shut up!" the big woman said.

Tony growled something in Italian that I understood and hoped Judy didn't. Shirley nodded to Dutch, who snaked his hand around to his hip pocket. "Don't you tell me to shut up, Shirl," Tony growled. "Listen, mister, the one guy said he knew where he could use them plates, and the other guy said why didn't they go and get them. Billie heard them. The one guy was called—"

Dutch hit him with a sap and he went down like a sausage. I hit Dutch behind the ear with the heel of my hand, and



that made two sausages on the floor. Shirley had pulled a gun from somewhere and was pointing it at me.

"You've gone far enough," she said. "Take your satchel and blow, will you, before somebody starts some trouble. Now get out!"

I looked for Judy and darn near dropped over in a faint. She was sneaking up behind Shirley, a fine wild look on her face; and all of a sudden she leaped at the big woman, grabbed her by the gun-holding arm, and bit it.

Shirley screamed, dropped the gun, and there didn't seem to be anything else I could do except tap *her* behind the ear with the heel of my hand. Otherwise she'd have had the whole joint down on our heads. She folded rather gently, right down on the floor.

And Judy went down on the floor too, out like a light. "Hey kid," I said, slapping her cheek. "Hit the deck. We better get out of here. What's wrong with you, anyhow?"

She opened one eye, let out a long whistle, and went back to sleep with a silly smile on her face. I took a quick look at the champagne bottle and it was empty.

The only thing wrong with Judy was that she was full.

We probably had about four or five minutes, if someone didn't come in. I locked the door to the dance-floor section, scribbled my name and phone number on a piece of paper and put it in Tony's pocket, picked up Judy and threw her over my shoulder and tried the other door. It was unlocked, and opened easily. I hurried down the dark steps to another door, stepped out into a dark alley, and hurried along with my inert niece to the street. The entrance to Shirley's was on my right. There wasn't a taxi in sight. It was two o'clock in the morning.

I slid Judy down to her feet; holding her with one of her arms around me locked under one of mine, and my other arm around her. "Pull yourself together, kid, we gotta go," I said, but she didn't hear me. I hurried down the street, around the first corner and on to the next. Lucky for us



there wasn't a soul loose in that part of Boston at that time in the morning.

But the picture changed at the next corner. Halfway down the block there was a group of people coming our way. I ducked into a lighted doorway, found myself in a ratty little restaurant and saloon. We made no impression there. The place was full of characters, most of them plastered, all of them hidden in smoke screens. According to the paper matches, this was the Green Button.

### CHAPTER XIII

A WAITER CAME up to me as I was propping Judy behind a table in a corner of the room. "Two black coffee," I said. "The little girl has been took."

"Two black," he said, and went away. He didn't seem to find the situation unusual. But I did. Here I was, in a South Boston dive, and the only person I knew who could guide me out of town had one of the world's finest skinfuls of champagne.

The waiter came back. "Two black," he announced. "Anything else?"

"Thanks," I said. "Give me the check, please. As soon as I can get her to drink it we'll be leaving. And say, is Perry Patterson still here?"

"One buck," he said. I gave him five and told him to keep the change. "I'll see if Pat's still here." He went away, dead-panned, apparently insulated from the world in which he moved.

"Come on, Judy," I said, holding the cup to her lips. "Drink this coffee, kid. We got to be moving in a hurry, soon as you can walk. Drink it."

"Whoo-oo," she giggled, "I'm all rubbery, Uncl' Donnie.

But oooh, what a wunnerful evenin'!" She lifted her head, opened her eyes. "We did have a wunnerful time, didn't we?"

"Yes, we did, Judy, but you be a good girl and drink this coffee now."

"I *am* a good girl, an' don't you ever forget it," she murmured, taking the coffee away from me and starting to drink it. "Hot. Good ol' hot coffee. Girl's best friend is her coffee, Donal'." She finished the cup. "I'll take a li'l nap now, I'm vurry sleepy."

"You have to have another cup of coffee first," I said quickly. "Here, drink this."

"Gettin' awful goddam tired of coffee," she drawled, but she took the second cup and started on it. "Oh, what I said, Donal'. I *swore*. I mus' be drunk."

"I'm Perry Patterson," a voice behind me said. "You looking for me?"

I turned around and saw an unlikable little man, beady-eyed, a cigarette dangling from a corner of his mouth, and a pasty complexion that looked like it had been developed in a cave. His fingernails were dirty and uncut, his suit seedy, and his shirt needed immediate attention from a laundry. In addition, he didn't smell good, even in the Green Button.

"Sit down," I said. "That was a pretty good story you wrote about me. I'm Donald Ivy."

"You got nothin' against me," he said. "I didn't do anything that—"

"I'm not mad at you, Patterson. Sit down a minute, will you?"

"I don't have time right now," he said. "Why don't we get together tomorrow for lunch?"

I grabbed him by a limp forearm and bent him into a chair beside me. "What's the matter with you, anyhow? I'm not going to bite you. I just wanted to tell you that was a pretty good story, but it sure has made things tough for me."

"I write them as I see them," he said sullenly. "What's the matter with the girl?"

"Drunk. I picked her up in a saloon and was going to make a night of it, but it looks like I'll have to wait." Judy seemed to be sleeping. There was a little more color in her face than there had been ten minutes before. That was good. "You know her?"

"Never saw her before."

"She remind you of anyone you might know?"

"No."

"I wish I knew what to do with her," I said. "I don't like to leave her out on the street."

"Best place for that kind," he said. "Where'd you find her?"

"Hell, I don't know. I've been in a million places to-night."

"Didn't know you were in Boston," he said. "How long you staying?"

"Couple of days. You know a big guy named Tony at Shirley's?"

"No," he said. "Why?"

"Guess you heard that some people were killed near my house in Tombury," I told him. "This guy Tony was going to tell me something about them, but he had to leave before he could finish. I thought maybe a guy like you, who gets around, could help me."

"I don't see how I could," he said. "I don't get around very much. Where are you staying in Boston?"

"The Statler," I said. "But I can't take the girl there. This Tony was going to tell me about two people who were planning to snitch my ten-pound plates. You wouldn't know anything about that, would you?"

"Why the hell should I?" he asked.

"Well, you're the guy who started it all by writing the story. I just thought maybe somebody had asked you for more details."



"No. Nobody at all. But I could ask some questions, if you wanted me to. Then I could see you tomorrow."

"That would be fine," I said. "Tony said there were two people in on it, but hell, at least three have been killed so far. None of them figure to be the two he was talking about. If I just had a description of them it would help me. Jesus, Patterson, right now the cops down my way think I killed them!"

"They do?" he grunted. "I'll see what I can do for you, Ivy. Maybe I can get to this guy Tony, at Shirley's. I'll start phoning now." He started to get up.

"Hold it a minute," I said. "Where'll I meet you?" I didn't let go of his wrist.

"Anywhere you say."

"In the coffee shop of the Statler," I said. "About noon. If I can't make it I'll call you at the paper or your place, I've got the numbers."

"Okay," he said, trying to shake his wrist loose. "Let me go now, Ivy, if you want me to get started."

"I'm going to take this babe out and ride her around in a taxi, and get some fresh air in her," said.

"I'll go and call a cab for you," he suggested. "I'll have one here in a minute." He pulled away and started back through the smoke, toward the other end of the room.

As soon as his back was turned I pulled Judy to her feet and started out the door. Maybe he was going to call a cab. Maybe he wasn't. I didn't wait to find out. I spotted a taxi halfway down the block, made it.

"Essex," I told the driver. We got there with no trouble, and I took Judy, who was walking a little better now, in the front door and out another and right across to where I had parked Dr. Dann's big Cadillac. In a matter of seconds I had her tucked in the front seat, had the engine running, and was heading home. It was almost three o'clock.

The street I had come in on was one-way, so I dropped over one block to a parallel street and started along it. I

was lucky. Soon I spotted a sign that said that Route 9 was straight ahead. I drove on carefully and legally until I was clear of Boston and its suburbs, and then let it out a little. The night was clear and moonlit. There was little traffic going into Boston at that time Saturday morning, and it was a wonderful way to travel.

"Where are we?" Judy asked all of a sudden. "Nearly home?"

"Hello," I said, surprised. "Glad to have you back with us, chum."

"I've been asleep, I guess," she yawned. "How did we get here? We're on the road back to Tombury, aren't we?"

"We are indeed," I said. "And you have been asleep. Just to satisfy my ever-loving curiosity, Judy, along about when do you remember going to sleep?"

"Why," she said, "the waiter said that Shirley wanted to buy us a drink and . . ." Out of the corner of my eye I saw her mouth pop open and her hand jump up to cover it. "That's all I remember, Uncle Don! What happened? How *did* we get here?"

"You don't remember biting Shirley in the arm?"

"Biting Shirley? Oh no! Did I *really*?"

"You sure did."

There was a long silence. "Why did I bite Shirley?"

"Because she pulled a gun on me."

Long pause. "Why did she pull a gun on you, Uncle Don?"

"Because," I said, "I hit Dutch behind the ear and sent him off to dreamland."

"Just one more question," she said. "Why did you hit Dutch behind the ear and send him off to dreamland?"

"Because he hit Tony with a blackjack and sent *him* off to dreamland first."

We drove along in silence for about ten minutes. Then she asked me, in a quiet little-girl kind of voice, "And what did Shirley do after I bit her?"

"I hit her behind the ear and sent her off to dreamland too."

"Gee," she said, moving over and resting her head on my shoulder. "You're a regular little old Mister Sandman, aren't you?" And then she went to sleep again. I certainly was the life of the slumber party that night. She didn't wake up again until I drove into Dr. Dann's garage and shook her.

"Wake up, kid," I said. "The coach is about to turn into a pumpkin again. We're practically home."

"I'm awake," she sighed. "Where's my coat?"

"Back in the checkroom at Shirley's," I said. "With my hat. We left in kind of a hurry, by the back way."

"Darn it," she said, as we tiptoed in the unlocked back door. "Why did I have to miss all the fun?"

Dr. Dann, dozing in the big easy chair in his living room, woke up as we came in. "Hello," he yawned. "How did it go? Find out anything?"

"Got some leads," I said. "Nothing definite, but now I can begin to eliminate. I still have the same idea I had before, and it's beginning to firm up just because I can throw out a lot of stuff I *didn't* learn tonight."

"Sounds properly vague to me," he said, then added, "I got a phone call asking if you were here. I said you were. Man didn't give his name."

"Probably Sullivan," I guessed.

"No," he said. "It wasn't Sullivan. Wasn't any of the Tom-bury cops, either. Don't know who it was."

"Well," I said. "Thanks an awful lot for the car. That's a sweet automobile. We better go home and hit the hay. I need some sleep and tomorrow, as they say in the old country, is another day."

"Take it easy, Donald." He got up and started with us toward the front door. "One of these days I want you to tell me what hapened. Good night now. See you in dreamland." I guess he never knew why Judy started giggling all of a sudden.



We drove home in the Triumph, put it in the garage, and went in the house. The place looked just about the same as we went in the back door.

"Go on upstairs and go to bed, kid," I said. "Don't drink much water when you wake up or you'll get tight all over again. Champagne does that. Now get some sleep. I'll be up in a minute. Good night now."

"Good night, Uncle Don," she said sleepily. "Thanks for everything." She yawned prettily, walked through the dining room, and I heard her go upstairs.

I went into the living room and as soon as I turned on the light I knew once again somebody had been there while we'd been away. Just enough things were out of place to show me that the room had been searched. A quick look through the rest of the downstairs rooms and in the cellar showed me that a pretty thorough job had been done too, but still there was nothing missing. I was getting a little bit tired of that kind of stuff.

And, although everything wasn't clear in my mind yet, I was getting a little worried. If I had come close to the killers in Boston, there was a chance either Judy or I might be in some danger personally. Any man who had killed two people—or three—wasn't going to balk at killing a few more if he found himself cornered. The question was, how close had we come? What had Tony been about to say? Why had Perry Patterson tried to brush me off in such a rush?

I got a spool of fine black thread and went out to the barn and stretched it across the entrance. Then I came in the house, locked the doors and downstairs windows carefully, and put little hunks of dirt where they would be shoved aside if anyone opened the doors. And then I went to bed. It had been a long, hard, and unhappy day. I kind of missed Billie Mataze, even though I had Judy. Billie had been a little more my own type, and a little less my own kith and kin. We could have had quite a time together if she hadn't

gotten herself killed. But she had, and all the cops needed was just one or two more little things pointing in my direction. All I needed was the final answer. I didn't know where I was going to get it, either.

## CHAPTER XIV

SATURDAY MORNING came in my window with a burst of warm and delightful sunshine, but I didn't pay a bit of attention to it until about ten o'clock. After I've been up all night I find I can take sunshine or leave it strictly alone. When I got downstairs I looked outside and saw no bodies or cops. The hunks of mud hadn't been moved, so I picked them up and threw them in the trash. When the coffee was done I took a cup upstairs and rapped on Judy's door.

"Coffee," I said. "Good for what ails you, if anything does."

"Good morning," she called cheerily. "Just a minute. Come on in now, Uncle Don." She was sitting up in bed, her blonde hair tousled, her eyes bright, her mouth starting a big smile. She was as cute as a bug's ear. "What time is it?"

"A little after ten. Just about coffee time. Here you are."

"What time did I get to bed, anyhow?" She wondered. I told her. "Gee," she said, "this coffee is real George. Just what I need. Did I *really* bite Shirley?"

"You really did," I laughed. "If you want something better to chew on, though, I'll be making fried eggs and smoked country sausage downstairs."

"I'll be down," she said. "Just as soon as I can get dressed. Go away now, Uncle Don, and give a girl some privacy." I started toward the door. "You're as really George as this coffee, Uncle Don," she said. "Or do all the girls tell you that?"

I floated downstairs. Spring was busting out all over, and my strength was as the strength of ten because my heart was pure, as Tennyson put it. I whistled at my cooking, and turned on the broiler in the oven to toast a few English muffins.

A car drove in the driveway, and I looked out to see Kilgore and somebody else in the front seat. Kilgore got out and started to walk up the path to the front door. He was in civilian clothes. I turned the burner under the sausages down to low and walked to the front door.

"Hello, you cloud no bigger than man's hand," I greeted him. "What ill wind blows you here?"

He gave me a big smile. He was wearing dungaree trousers, old sneakers, a red woolen shirt, and a battered leather jacket. "Hi, Don," he said. "Don't look so damned suspicious. I've been thinking things over and decided you ain't the man. It must have been two other guys, ha ha."

"Then please go away," I said, "and look for them."

"Don't be like that, Don. I came to ask you if you'd like to go sailing with Terry and me. Some fresh air and sunshine will do you good. Come on, you need some fun."

"I bet I need this kind of fun like I need a broken back," I said. "Who's Terry?"

"Terry Jardine," he said. "A friend of mine. She's out in the car now. Get some sneakers or something and some old clothes and come on."

"Oh," I said. "So we got girls with us too. What are we today, anyhow, in disguise?"

"This is my day off. I'm off until noon tomorrow. So come on. I mean it."

"Look, Kilgore," I said, "you'll pardon me if every time I turn over a stone I look for a beetle under it. That's the way I've kept healthy so long. What kind of a boat do you have, and where would we be sailing it?"

"Just a little old sloop, down on Lake Mapcho. It's a lot of fun."



"I'm cooking breakfast," I said. "Come on in and have some coffee while I think it over." The only way to find out what the bum wanted was to go with him. "How many will the boat hold?"

"Half a dozen easy. Hey, Terry," he turned around and called. "Come on in and have some coffee while Don's getting ready."

I don't know what there is about my house, but the best-looking girls certainly do beat a path to its door. Terry Jardine was about five feet eight in her flat shoes, and every inch of her that I could see was all right. I resolved to go sailing as soon as I possibly could, whether Kilgore was planning to drown me over the side or not. She had jet black hair, and big dark eyes, and a cute nose above a big full laughing mouth—just where most noses are, as I have noticed before. As she came swinging up the walk she looked like an ideal hiking companion—good for walking with or on or all over.

"Hello, there," I smiled, as Kilgore introduced us. "I understand we're going sailing? Guess this is my lucky day after all."

"Oh, good," she said, showing her white teeth. "We hoped you'd go. Harry said you needed a day out, he thought, and I thought so too."

"There's just one little thing," I said, as we went inside and closed the front door. "And here she is now. Hello, Judy. Judy, this is Terry Jardine and Harry Kilgore. This is my real niece, Judy Thames. She just got here yesterday. Judy, Terry and Harry want us to go sailing. Want to go?"

"Oh, fun!" she said. "Hello, Terry. Hello, Harry. Sure I want to go. When?"

"Just as soon as we have some breakfast," I said. "You go put on some slacks or something, and I think I have some kind of a coat you can wear. I'll have breakfast ready when you come down again. We'll all be in the kitchen."

Terry and Kilgore and I crowded into the kitchen.

"This your real honest-to-God niece?" Kilgore asked. "You sure she hasn't come to do you some kind of dirt?"

"This is the real one," I said. "I've checked and double-checked this time. Isn't she a cute kid?"

They agreed she was, and when Judy came down we moved into the dining room where we could all sit, and hurried through breakfast. I did most of the talking, making sure to tell Judy that Kilgore was a cop, before she said anything about going to Boston. Kilgore said it was okay to go out of the Tombury area, he had already checked with Sullivan. I got into some rubber-soled shoes while the two girls washed the dishes, locked the doors, and we were away.

I was the last one out of the house, and I stood for a moment admiring the way Terry Jardine walked down the path. It was fun watching her. She had a real forward behind.

We drove down to Lake Mapho in Kilgore's car, getting acquainted with each other in a friendly sort of way. Kilgore, of course, had read some book on psychology and was trying to use it on me so he could make the big pinch, but I've read books too. Terry, it turned out, was a switchboard operator and part-time desk clerk at the Banks Hotel in Tombury. Within a short time, with reservations, the four of us were getting along like old buddies from 'way back, laughing and chattering at each other.

Kilgore's little old sloop turned out to be a real beauty, and you could easily see that he had spent a lot of time and work on it. He had had it in the water for two weeks, he told me, as we broke the sails out of the locker and started rigging them.

"What did you find out from Boston?" he asked.

"Only what I read in the papers," I said. "When are you and Sullivan going to let me go up there and solve your case for you?"

"I thought maybe you'd gone up there last night, until



I found your car in front of Dr. Dann's. What did he tell you about his autopsy on Billie Mataze?"

"We talked about French artists," I said. "Next question?"

"All right," he said. "Have you ever done any sailing before?"

"Not much. Used to go out on the Mediterranean, before the war, but not very much. Mostly as a passenger."

"Well, you'll have to work on this voyage," he said. "Takes two to run this hooker properly, but the effort won't kill you, I guess. What do you think of her?"

"Mighty sweet," I said. "How long have you been going together?"

"Huh?" he asked. "I bought her about a year and a half ago, but the sails were new last summer."

"Sorry, old boy," I said. "I thought you were talking about Terry. It is a swell boat, though."

"Oh, Terry," he said. "I met her last summer too. She lives near here, and we found ourselves on some sailing parties together. She came to work in Tombury last October. We've been going kind of steady ever since."

"That must be a great life for her," I said. "What are you going to do about it?"

"I'm trying to get her to marry me," he admitted. "But she says she isn't ready yet. Says she doesn't want to settle down in Tombury until she has a chance to see what life's like somewhere else. I keep telling her she's getting close to thirty and . . ." The two girls came out of the tiny cabin, where they had been stowing the lunch away, and interrupted the fascinating story of Terry's life and romance.

"Avast there, and heave away or something," Judy sang out. "When do we sight land? You lubbers going to fiddle with those ropes and things all day? What can I do?"

"Sit down and look pretty," Kilgore said, ladies' man at heart that he was. "Cast off that bow line, Terry. Don, heave around on that jib halyard and get it up, will you?"

He flipped the stern line loose and the wind against the



jib pushed up away from the dock until we were clear enough so that he and I could hoist the mainsail. Then he took charge at the tiller and adjusted things until we were zipping along at a fine rate.

"Yo ho ho," I said. "Oh, for a life on the bounding main."

I walked forward and sat down with my back to the mast, with my face in the sun, feeling nice and warm and relaxed. Kilgore was busy teaching Judy all about sailing. Terry was smoking a cigarette. Pretty soon she dropped it over the side and came up and sat down beside me.

"Hi," she smiled. "Having fun?"

"This is good," I told her. "This is just what I needed, only I didn't know it. Maybe when all this fuss and bother is over I'll charter a boat and go down to Barbados or the Grenadines for a month, if I can find anyone to go with me."

She stretched lazily out on the deck, the sun in her face and her hands clasped behind her head. "Where's Barbados?"

"Down in the Caribbean, way out to the East. The sun almost always shines, but it's never too hot or too cold, and all you do it swim and loaf and drink rum punches and dance in the moonlight every night."

"The moon doesn't shines every night!" she said, teasing me.

"In Barbados it does. Always a full moon through the palm trees or rising over the white sandy beaches. And you just sit there and look at it, and listen to the Calypso singers away off in the distance, and take your shoes off and push the sand around with your toes, and wonder why you ever worked or worried or did anything else."

"And how are you going to get there?"

"Oh, I'll take my time about it. I'll fly down to Miami, to charter the kind of a ship I want, and then run her down to Andros and through the Old Bahama Channel to Cuba to buy some Anejo rum, and then on to Haiti and the Virgin Islands and St. Kitts and St. Lucia, and finally to Barbados. We'd take about a month getting there, stopping a couple

of days whenever we felt like it, lying on beaches and visiting native markets and buying fancy baskets and getting tanned. Then we'd stay at Barbados, swimming and lying in the sun all day and dancing under that moon every night."

"Sounds wonderful," she sighed, her eyes closed. "When were you there, Don?"

"I've never been there," I said. "That's why I want to go." My hand crawled over and rested against her elbow, and I shut my eyes too and just listened to the water lapping against the side.

"Chow down!" Kilgore yelled from the stern sheets, and we went aft and ate like four people who had never eaten before. After lunch I took the tiller while Kilgore sunned himself, and I told Judy and Terry a lot of stories about my life and hard times in Europe and Tangier. If I made myself sound like a modern Robin Hood and the most glamorous he-creature since the decline of the Roman Empire, is that a crime? Every man has to look out for himself, that's what I always say.

It was almost five o'clock before we were back at the dock, tied up, and the sails stowed away. As we got in Kilgore's car to drive home I announced my wonderful new idea.

"Harry," I said, "if you and Terry don't have anything better to do, why can't I take us all out to some classy joint for dinner and dancing. Is there any place around here where they have good food and a good band?"

"There's the White Pheasant," Terry said. "But that's pretty expen—"

"My party," I said. "You sure you don't have anything planned, you two?"

"We were thinking about a movie," Kilgore began.

"We can always go to a movie, Harry," Terry said. "I've never been to the White Pheasant. Let's go."

"Well, all right," he said. "What time?"

"Can you pick us up about eight?" I suggested. "That'll



give us all time to change our clothes. What do you have to wear at this place, anyhow, white tie?"

"I hope not," Judy said. "I didn't bring anything that formal."

"No," Terry said. "Coat and tie is all you have to wear there in April. They don't start putting on the dog until the summer people start moving up. Then they want evening clothes and hundred-dollar bills."

We drove up to my house and Judy and I got out. "See you at about eight, kids," I said. "See you in Barbados, Terry."

"Barbados?" Kilgore asked. "What's that?"

"Old Spanish expression," I explained. "Means dressed up and ready for a big party." We waved good-bye and started toward the house.

"Oh, brother!" Judy said, when we were out of earshot. "Oh, uncle! 'Barbados means dressed up and ready for a big party!' Are you trying to do what I think you're trying to do, Uncle Don? Don't answer that question. You've got that poor girl starry-eyed already, you wolf. What were you telling her up there in the front of that boat, with your handsome profile flying in the breeze, anyhow?"

"Now, Judy," I said. "Please show a little more respect for my age."

"For your urge, you mean."

"Don't interrupt. Now listen to me. I've got a plan—"

"I could see that. Does it involve going all the way to Barbados? Most girls would be happy to go to Miami Beach."

"We start at Miami Beach. *Will you* stop interrupting, or do you want me to send you home to your mother? My plan is to get that Jardine girl to help us, can you understand that? Anyone could see that Kilgore is using her to try to get information out of me. He knows he can't catch me or trip me up on anything, so he deliberately brought her along to see what she could do. It's as plain as the red nose on your face."



"I'm listening," she said.

"So I want to give her all the rope I can. Then I'll find out what she knows and what he knows that I don't know. Furthermore, she works in that hotel, you know, and maybe she could help us by listening in on Roamer's phone calls, or looking at his mail, or something like that."

"Roamer's the F.B.I. man, isn't he?"

"Yes, I told you about him. He dropped his notebook out in the yard yesterday."

"And your plan is to give Terry enough rope so she'll hang herself, and Harry too, is that it?"

"That's it," I said. "I'll work on her this evening and see what I can do."

"Ko mo nu ku appi walla," she said. "And ava goodum in ba ba do."

"What does that mean?" I asked.

"Two old Polynesian proverbs," she said. "The first means nice work if you can get it. The second means have a good time in Barbados. I, personally, am going to take a shower and maybe I'll leave you some hot water and maybe I won't." She ran up the stairs, turned back at the top. "And I think you're probably the man to do it, too."

## CHAPTER XV

WELL, I GOT MYSELF showered and dressed and came downstairs and called up the White Pheasant and asked for a nice table for four.

"Yes, sir," the voice at the other end of the line said. "What's the name, please?"

"Donald Ivy."

"Yes, Mr. Ivy," the voice said. Then I heard some other

voices and finally the first voice came on again and asked me to please repeat my name.

"Donald Ivy," I said firmly.

"I'm sorry, Mr. Ivy," the voice said. "But we're all booked up tonight."

"Thank you," I said, and I hung up. Obviously they didn't want Donald Ivy and his party of four. I judged it must be a high-class place. I walked across the living room and sat down with my pipe. Upstairs Judy was still moving around. I got up and picked Roamer's notebook from the desk, and glanced through it. There wasn't anything in it I hadn't seen.

Then I began to wonder whether Tony had tried to call me from Boston. I checked with the operator to see if there had been any long distance calls. There hadn't been. So I called the White Pheasant again and asked for a nice table for four.

"Yes, sir," the voice at the other end of the line said. "What's the name, please?"

"Colonel Avery," I said.

"Yes, Colonel," the voice said. "Any particular place?"

"Handy to the dance floor," I said. "But along the side. I don't want other people bumping into me."

"Certainly, Colonel, I understand. About what time will you be here, please?"

"Sometime between eight and nine."

"Thank you, sir. We'll have a nice table for you."

"I'd like flowers on the table, too, and two corsages for the ladies. Tiny white orchids will do."

"Certainly, Colonel, we'll be glad to take care of it for you."

Damned snobs. I went upstairs and rummaged around until I found the lapel ribbon that the British government permitted me to wear, and put it on. If they wanted titles and stuff, I'd give it to them. And it might impress that Terry Jardine, too.

Of course, I had a shorter range plan than that. It wasn't at all clear in my mind but it did involve prying her away from Kilgore, to begin with. I'd have to pretty much play it by ear and improvise as I went along, but win, lose, or draw, it would be fun. And I was about ready for fun. Murder does not amuse me.

After a while Judy came down, looking like a dream in a dark red sheer wool suit, with gold hoops at her ears and a gold clip on her left shoulder, and soon a car drove in the driveway. It was Kilgore and Terry, and we went out to meet them and drove to the White Pheasant.

It was quite a place. Big old stone house that had been added onto to form a big dining room and dance floor with a view of a small lake with the hills in the distance. Somebody had poured a lot of money into it. We parked and walked in the front door and I checked the Borsalino homburg I keep for impressing headwaiters and hotel switchboard operators.

The switchboard operator was wearing what she kept for impressing men, I could see that. Black and tight and low cut and yum yum yum—but in good taste. She looked like a million dollars, and I wished I had another million to give her, just to see what she could do with it. Even Kilgore looked good, in well-fitting dark brown slacks and a conservative jacket and tie. I had expected padded shoulders and loud checks, but he had been properly influenced by Brooks Brothers. I took heart when I noticed a button missing from his jacket sleeve, however, and went forward with light step to the headwaiter and asked for Coloney Avery's table.

"Yes, sir," he said, bowing from the waist and almost bumping me with his head. "Right this way, Colonel." He led us to the best table in the dining room—and I noticed the dining room was pretty full.

Waiters materialized to pull out chairs. The headwaiter produced two cellophane-wrapped white boxes and, when



I nodded, opened them and presented the corsages to Judy and Terry. We were really putting on the dog at the White Pheasant that evening, and the girls loved it. Even Kilgore's mouth dropped open.

"Everything all right, Colonel?" the headwaiter asked. I assured him everything was fine. "Will you want a cocktail before you order your dinner, sir?" I told him we would. He summoned a waiter and bowed away.

I figured that everytime he said "sir" or "colonel" it was costing me about fifty dollars. I could hardly wait to break the news to him that I was Donald Ivy. We all ordered drinks—a stinger for Judy—and as soon as the waiter withdrew, three heads bent toward me, all at once.

"What's this Colonel Avery stuff?" three voices said, all at once. "Where did these flowers come from?" the two girls asked. "Do you own a piece of this place?" Kilgore wondered.

"One at a time," I laughed, and explained why I was using a phony name. "As for the flowers, they're the prettiest flowers I know, for the two prettiest girls in the world." Judy leaned over and kissed me. "No, I don't own a piece, but it never hurts to act like you did. This has been a good day. Let's make it a wonderful evening!"

"Hooray," Judy said.

"Thank you, Don," Terry said, her big eyes sparkling. "I never had such lovely flowers before in all my life."

"I know where they grow wild, in the moonlight," I said softly, "and we can pick them and weave them in your hair."

Then the music started, and I went dancing with Judy. It was a lazy tune, good for starting an evening. "People told me there were men like you," Judy whispered in my ear, "but I never believed them. Now I find one and he's my uncle. How tough can life get, anyhow?"

"I'll be glad to give lessons," I said. "Just send your nominees around."

"Can you teach them all to say that they know where white

orchids grow wild in the moonlight? Love that line, Uncle Don. Do you think it'll make Terry grow wild in the moonlight too?"

Being a gentleman, I didn't answer the silly girl's question. "Concentrate on that cop," I said. "Remember, this is a job we have to do tonight. A big job. An important job. My whole future may depend on what we can find out from Harry and Terry, no kidding."

"Your future just passed," she sighed. "Dancing with that cop. You'll hate me for saying this, but he isn't a bad dancer either, boss. The drinks are on the table, let's go and lap them up." The music stopped and we walked off the floor.

"That's a real crazy band," I said, raising my martini when we were all seated at the table again. "And here's to a real crazy evening. How're you doing, Harry?"

"Real good," he smiled, friendly as a puppy. "Gee, this is sure swell of you, Don."

"Just a condemned man having his last fling," I sighed. "Let's have another round of drinks." I motioned for the waiter, who was standing off to one side counting his probable tips, told him to bring more of the same for everybody and a menu too.

Dinner was a great success, and between courses we danced, and I found that dancing with Terry was a wonderful thing.

"I love these flowers so, Don," she whispered, her cheek against mine. "Where did you ever learn about things like that?"

"You sure are in Barbados tonight, aren't you?" I said.

"Don," she giggled, "I thought I'd split when you said that to poor Harry." We danced silently for a few minutes. "You know what I did when I got back to the hotel? I looked up Barbados in a travel book, and that's one of the most glamorous places in the whole world, it said."

"Sure," I said. "That's why we're going there. You don't



think I'd take a beautiful girl like you to a dump, do you?"

"Silly," she said. The orchestra swung into a faster tempo just in time to keep me and the conversation under control.

The girls went to powder their noses after dessert, leaving Kilgore and me alone at the table. I moved over and sat beside him. "What do you know about the murder business, Harry?" I asked. "Do they really have a case against me?"

"I don't know, Don," he said. "You know the answer to that one better than I do. Personally, I don't think you did it, but if it ain't you I don't know who it is."

"What do you mean, *personally*? Who else thinks I did it?"

"Why," he said, "Sullivan does, and Sam Roamer does, only he can't touch you, and my chief and most of the rest of the Tombury cops do. Doc Dann's on your side, though."

"You and the doctor must have a hell of a time, being out of step with all the rest of the Tombury cops. You know darn well you think I did it and you'd give your arm to prove it. You dreamed up the party this morning to see if you could dig a few clues out of me."

"How am I making out?" he laughed. "Don't worry, Don. As soon as I find out anything, I'll tell you."

"The suspense is awful," I said. "When will I know?"

"I notice how the suspense seems to be breaking your back," he said. "You've been worried sick all day. Maybe there'll be a hearing the first part of the week."

"That's a mighty swell girl friend you've got." I changed the subject. "I'm glad you came around this morning and twisted my arm to make me go sailing. She's a darned good dancer, too."

"Yeah," he said, "but she doesn't have any imagination. I guess she'll change after we get married. I keep trying to get her to read some books and stuff."

"You really going to marry her?" I asked.

"I don't know who else she could get," he said, absently. "Sullivan call you since yesterday morning?"



"No. Why?"

"He was looking for you last night, but I told him your car was parked in front of Dr. Dann's. I don't know what he wanted. You stayed kind of late, didn't you?"

"Yes," I said. "We had a lot of old times and family stuff to talk about."

"That niece of yours is a pretty sharp number, isn't she?"

"Sure is," I admitted. "You have to get up pretty early in the morning to get ahead of her. Here they come." It seemed pretty obvious that he didn't have any ideas about our Boston trip. In fact, sometimes it seemed to me that he didn't have *any* ideas. I had them to spare, but not for him.

The evening went on until after midnight, and never lost its fine touch. We danced a lot, and drank some champagne, until finally it was time for us all to go. Even I was a little sleepy. I called for the check and it was a beaut, but worth every penny. I figured it was an investment that would pay dividends for some time, especially after my last dance with Terry, when she sang the words to *Begin the Beguine* in my ear softly.

I made all the waiters happy, and as the headwaiter escorted us to the door, hoping that we would come again and telling us how happy they all were to have us there, I asked him if there was a guest book that we would sign.

"Certainly, Colonel," he said. "Right over here."

I went over and signed *Donald Ivy* in a big, bold hand. The look on his face as I waved good-bye from the front door would have been worth the price of admission alone.

Kilgore and Terry drove us home, with Judy sleepy on the back seat beside me, and we said good-bye at the driveway and walked into the house. Everything was in order, for a change. No intruders had used the house for a treasure hunt.

The loud and insistent ringing of the telephone a little after nine the next morning roused me from a deep sleep, and I thumped down the stairs in my slippers to answer it.

"Hello, Ivy," a familiar voice said. "Did I wake you up?"

"Yeah," I muttered. "What do you want, Sullivan? Don't you cops ever sleep?"

"Look who's talking," he jeered. "How late were you up last night yourself, anyhow? You didn't leave the White Pheasant until damn near one o'clock."

"How do you know?" I asked.

"The manager called us up and wanted someone to come over in a hurry. Was sure he'd been swindled, somehow or other. Seems a guy had come in calling himself Colonel Avery, spent a couple of hundred dollars, and left signing himself Donald Ivy. They figured the money was no good."

"What did you tell them?"

"Told them I'd buy it for half the face value with my own money if they didn't want it. But what I called you about was to tell you I'm on my way over to your place. Be there in about half an hour. Don't go anywhere."

*Well, it was a nice Saturday, anyhow,* I said to myself. I walked upstairs and yelled at Judy to get up, company was coming.

## CHAPTER XVI

"WHO'S COMING?" Judy asked me ten minutes later, as the coffee bubbled on the stove and the lamb kidneys sautéed gently in the skillet. "Shall I fix a grapefruit?"

"A state cop by the name of Sergeant Sullivan," I said. "Please. Get one of those pink ones on the side, there." I was catching on to her method of conversation. "You haven't met him, but he's pretty sharp. I don't know what he wants, but he thinks I killed those people, I'm afraid. Must be pretty important if he's coming over here on Sunday morning."

"Do you want me to stay around or shall I scram?"

"You stay right by my side, kid. When they start beating me with those rubber hoses, scream. If they start to take me away in chains, get down on your hands and knees and sob that you'll starve without me."

"Suppose they really do take you away, Uncle Don? What should I do?"

"Call up Dr. Dann and tell him to get me a lawyer. I'll give you some money and the keys to the car. Do you know how to drive?"

"Sure," she said. "I've been driving ever since I was sixteen."

"How about a foreign car?" I asked. "The gear shift's different."

"I never tried one," she said. "Is there much difference?"

"One hundred per cent," I said. "Hurry up and eat your breakfast and I'll take you out and let you run it up and down the driveway."

We finished out coffee and I got the car key and we started out to the barn. Then I suddenly remembered the thread I had put across the entrance on Saturday morning. It was broken. The two pieces were hanging slack.

"Look out!" I said. "Get back, Judy!"

"What's the matter?"

"I don't know," I said, "but somebody has been in here since we parked this car yesterday. I put a black thread across the entrance and now it's broken."

"Maybe it was a dog or something," she guessed.

"I put it about waist high for a man. Goddamn, I don't like all this snooping around!" A black automobile drove in and stopped and Sullivan got out. "Hey," I called, "come down here a minute."

He came walking down the driveway, in civilian clothes. For some reason or other they made him look a lot younger than he did in uniform. I introduced him to Judy. "This," I said, "is the real Miss Judy Thames."



"I think you got a better deal this time," he smiled. "That is, if you're in the market for nieces. Are you from Springfield, Miss Thames?" She nodded. "Do you know my old friend Chief Zimmer up there?"

"No," she said. "But I bet that if you call him you'll find out that I'm just exactly who Uncle Don says I am."

"Touché," he laughed.

"Are you a brave man, Sullivan?" I asked.

"I don't know," he said, "Why? That's a funny question." He saw that I wasn't smiling. "What's up, Ivy?"

"That's what I want to know," I said. "Come and look at this. You stay back, Judy. See those two pieces of thread? I put one piece across there on Saturday morning. I haven't been out here since. Neither has Judy. Nobody has touched the car that I know of. Sixty-four dollar question. Who broke the string?"

"Why'd you put it there in the first place?"

"Because when we got back from Dr. Dann's on Friday night I found that somebody had searched the house again. No, they didn't get the ten-pound plates. So I've been putting tell-tales on doors and threads up like this so I can tell when someone's been snooping."

"So someone came in your barn, yesterday. A guy walking along the road maybe. What's wrong with that?"

"Look at me, Sullivan," I said. "Look at me. In pretty good shape for the life I've led, don't you think? I've kept that way because I get hunches, and I've got one now."

"Quit your kidding, Ivy," he said. "What's bothering you?"

"That barn's booby trapped! There've been three people killed around here and somehow or other I'm slated to be next." Sullivan looked unconvinced. "You don't believe me, do you?"

"No," he said. "I don't. You'll have to think up a better story than that to get off the hook, Ivy." He walked into the barn, around the car, and out. "Now let's get down to business, Ivy. You want to talk out here or in the house?"

"Here's the ignition key to that car," I said, holding it out to him. "Get in and start it up, you're so damned brave."

"That's no strain," he said. "Give it here." He took the key and got in the driver's seat. Then he looked over his shoulder at me. "How do you open the hood on this buggy?"

"That's an idea," I said. I walked into the garage and opened the hood. Nothing happened. "Hand me the flashlight, there in the glove compartment, while I take a look at the innards." He got the flashlight and came walking around to join me.

We didn't find much. Just four sticks of dynamite bound together with adhesive tape and wired into the ignition system. It wouldn't have done much more than blow up the car, barn, and half the house, probably.

"Jesus Christ!" Sullivan swore. "You might have killed me, Ivy, giving me that key. Suppose I had turned the damned ignition on?"

"It would have killed me, too," I said. "But I got to hand it to you. You're braver than I am!"

"No," he said. "It might have been wired to go off when the hood was opened. You're braver than I am, Ivy. Anyhow, let's get about half a mile from here until I can get an expert to come over and take it away."

"Nuts," I said. "These things are simple. We used them in the Resistance. Watch." I slipped a handkerchief over the dynamite sticks so I wouldn't spoil any fingerprints, and yanked the connecting wires loose from where they had been twisted to the car's regular wiring. "Here you are. Where do you want it? Hey, where are you?"

He had backed away. "You sure that goddamned thing's safe?"

"Sure," I said. "This is an old model T. Just as safe as a pile of bricks so long as you don't run an electric current in one wire and out the other. I'll throw it in the back of your car. You'll want to examine it." He looked a little



thoughtful but didn't say anything. "Now what can I do for you?"

"Give me a chance to catch my breath," he said. "Then let's go in the house and sit down. I want to talk to you. The hearing's going to be tomorrow afternoon at two-thirty. You have to be there. I'll come and get you." We walked back to the house together, into the living room. Judy brought in the coffee.

"What'll this hearing be like?" I asked.

"Just a presentation of evidence. First we prove that a crime has been committed. Dr. Dann tells how he thinks they were murdered. Us cops tell what we saw. We show pictures and things like that. If we think we know who did it, we say so, and tell why."

"Will they ask me to testify?"

"I imagine they will. After all, you found one corpse. The other had kind of been your house guest. And for a couple of other reasons."

"What kind of other reasons?"

"Well, Ivy," he thoughtfully lit a cigarette. "For example, Billie Mataze was killed by a bullet fired from your pistol."

"Can you prove it?" I asked.

"Sure we can. I can show you the marks on the one we dug out of the cellar door and the marks on a bullet we test-fired and even you'll admit they're the same."

Judy had been sitting quietly all this time. Now she asked, "What's he accused of killing, Sergeant? The cellar door?"

"You've got a point there," Sullivan admitted, looking at her with a certain amount of new interest.

"I'd think," she continued, "that you'd compare the bullet that killed Billie Mataze with a test bullet, wouldn't you? How do you know the bullet in the cellar door killed her?"

"Hooray," I said. "Hear, hear!"

"We've got ways of knowing, Miss Thames," Sullivan said. "Have you ever seen a police laboratory?"

"No," she said. "And I'd love to."



"I'll take you over to ours some time," he assured her. "I guess Dr. Dann told you about Andrews, didn't he?"

"No," I said. "What about Wusky?"

"It was getting hit by a car that killed him, all right. He may have seen Billie Mataze and was running away from her, we can't tell for sure. Both the guy and his wife said he just seemed to run out in front of them. I guess you're clear on that. But they're going to ask you what you did with his shoes."

"What do you mean? They're out in the kitchen right now."

"If they're really Andrews' shoes. Do you remember, Ivy, that you phoned me just before Kilgore found Mataze down by the pond? You wanted to tell me that Andrews' shoes seemed to fit the prints behind the house, the ones that led up to the spot where Henri Grennet was killed."

"That's right," I said. "But then in all the excitement that morning I never gave you the damned shoes, did I?"

"No," he said. "You didn't. And you'll probably be surprised to learn that the plaster impressions of the footprints behind your house are the same as the ones that probably carried Billie Mataze down to the pond!"

"But," I said, "that couldn't be possible! Billie Mataze died after Wusky Andrews! And anyhow, he wasn't strong enough to carry a girl that size down to the pond."

"No. But somebody else could have been wearing his shoes."

"You do think that Wusky killed Henri Grennet, don't you?"

"No," Sullivan said slowly. "I really don't."

"Why not?" Judy asked.

"Because if you look at Andrews' feet and then at the footprints he's supposed to have made, you'd soon get the idea he was wearing shoes that didn't fit him. In fact, those footprints were made by shoes two sizes larger than Andrews would normally wear!"

"Let me go get those shoes," I said. I brought them in

from the kitchen. "These are about two sizes too big for me, too. Are you sure they're too big for Wusky? I saw them lying out there on the road the night he was killed, and they were still there that morning, so I brought them in. Why didn't you cops collect them that night?"

"Somebody slipped," he confessed. "Are you sure these are the ones that were out there, and not a pair of too-big shoes that you just keep around for laughs?" He looked at the bottoms. "These are the ones that made the prints, all right. See that cut on the inside edge of the right sole? I'll take them with me."

"It looks to me, Mr. Sullivan," Judy began slowly, "that a lot of circumstantial—is that the right word—evidence points toward Uncle Don here. You're trying to say that he was wearing those too-big shoes when he went out at night, aren't you?" There were sparks in her eyes.

"I wouldn't say exactly that, Miss Thames."

"Well, just what exactly would you say, Mr. Sullivan? Under oath, that is?"

"I'd state the facts. Just the plain, unvarnished facts."

"Stop talking like you were a TV character, Mr. Sullivan, please. You and I both know Uncle Don didn't have anything to do with any of these killings, except to own the bait that brought all those people here. Don't we?"

"Well," he said, "I wouldn't testify under oath that he did kill them. On the other hand, I can't testify that he didn't. Look, Ivy," and he turned to me, "why don't you admit that they were trying to break in, or were in and burglarizing your house, and you let them have it? It's a perfectly good plea. Justifiable homicide!"

"Question number one," I said. "Why did I carry Billie Mataze's body down to the pond, wearing Wusky Andrews' too-big shoes, after committing justifiable homicide? To keep ants out of the house, maybe?"

"I don't know," he said. "Why did you put a bomb in your own car this morning? Why did you pretend to search



your own house. And why do I get into these things first every time?"

"He didn't put that thing in his car, either!" Judy cried. "What *are* you trying to say, Mr. Sullivan? I used to have some respect for state cops, but not now!"

"Sorry you feel that way, miss." He stood up, holding the shoes in one hand. "I guess I'll go now. Today *was* my day off, but I'll have to take these shoes and that dynamite over to the lab. I'm sorry I can't bring you any good news, Ivy, but that's the way this job goes. Glad to have met you, Miss Thames. If you want to come to the hearing tomorrow I'll be glad to take you along with your uncle. It's public."

"Thanks for practically nothing," she said. "When are you going to the laboratory with those things?"

"Why," he looked at his watch, "after I've had a little lunch, I guess."

"I accept your invitation to visit the police laboratory, Mr. Sullivan," she smiled sweetly. "You remember asking me, don't you? I want to see what goes on there, and that Uncle Don is getting a square deal. Can you pick me up in about an hour?"

"Well, yes," he sort of gulped. "I guess I can. Yes, I'll be here. Do you want to come too, Ivy?"

"No thanks," I said. "I think I'll just sit here at home and smoke my pipe and think. Maybe I'll be able to remember somebody who'd be of a mind to put a bomb in my automobile."

"Well," he said. "I'll be back in about an hour." He went out the front door and we heard him drive away.

"You shouldn't be so tough on that poor guy, Judy," I told her. "He's got a job to do. He doesn't know any more about who killed all these people than any of us. He just says those things to see what I'll do. I think you hurt his feelings."

"I don't care," she said. "I wasn't going to let him say that



you'd put a bomb in your own car. What a crust! What's his first name, anyhow?"

"John, I think. The big question is, who did put that bomb in the car? If I knew that, I'd have the answer. Where are you going?"

"Upstairs to change my clothes," she said. "You don't think I'd go to a police laboratory looking like this, do you?" There wasn't anything wrong with the way she was dressed.

The telephone rang and I went and answered it. A strange voice answered and asked if Sergeant Sullivan was there. I said he had just left but I expected him back soon, and the voice asked me to ask him to call his barracks. Then I went out to the kitchen and got a bottle of Tuborg beer. I drank it and then I went and got another, and all the time I could hear Judy moving around overhead. Then I heard her start down the steps and she went through the dining room into the kitchen. "Hey," I called from the living room, "what are you doing? There's beer in the refrigerator."

"I'm getting my flowers," she said, and then she came into the living room, all dressed up.

"Don't you think," I suggested, "that white orchids may be just a little bit too much for a police laboratory in the middle of the afternoon? After all, it isn't as if you were going to the morgue to identify a member of the family, or something formal like that. Laboratories are just simple little affairs, more like a picnic than tea."

"I'll go the way I am," she said. "I'm a style-setter. And anyhow, I'm sure you're not going to weave these little white orchids into my hair in the moonlight, so I might as well expose them somewhere else." And she gave me a big wink.

I looked at my watch. "You've just got time to memorize the chorus of an old English folk song," I said. "It goes: 'Oh no John, no John, no John, no John, no!'"

## CHAPTER XVII

SERGEANT SULLIVAN drove in the lane and got out of his car and came up the walk to the front door. I was waiting on the porch, soaking up a little sunshine to improve the color I'd picked up the day before.

"Phone call came for you, Sergeant," I said. "From your barracks. They want you to call them back as soon as you can. Use my phone. You know where it is, don't you?"

"Yes," he said. "Thanks." He went in the house and I heard him say a long "My-y-y-y," with a lot of surprise and pleasure in it, so I judged he had seen Judy. He was a man who could do pretty well with a two-letter word, too. Then I heard him dial the operator, but I couldn't get the conversation that went on after that. I didn't much care, either, unless they were talking about me.

They were. In a couple of minutes Judy and Sullivan came out together. "Have a good time," I said. "Don't answer any questions that may tend to incriminate or degrade you, kid. When will you be back?"

"I don't know," Judy said. "Sometime this afternoon."

Sullivan said casually, taking a piece of paper from his pocket. "You don't by any chance know a guy by the name of Antonio Gardelli, do you?"

"Who?" I asked. "I never heard of him."

"He lived in Boston," Sullivan went on. "Tony Gardelli."

Judy was standing behind Sullivan, and a quick frown passed over her face. "Gee," I said. "I don't know a soul in Boston. Should I know him?"

"He got found dead in an alley in South Boston yesterday day," Sullivan said. "There was a piece of paper with your name and telephone number on it in his pocket."

"I'll be damned," I said. "I told you someone was out to get me. Now they're trying to frame me in Boston. Except for the fact that I was out with a cop practically all day yesterday, they might have done me some damage. I can practically swear, too, that neither Judy or Kilgore killed him. Who was he?"

"Small-time hood. South Boston tough guy." He glanced at the paper in his hand. "Good friend of Billie Mataze."

"It ties in," I said. "Get the guy who killed Tony what's-his-name and you've got the guy who killed Billie and Henri. I guess that takes me off the hook."

"Yeah," he said, an innocent expression on his face. "I guess it does." We both knew he didn't think anything of the kind. "Well, we'll be seeing you."

He smiled, took Judy's arm, and they walked to his car and drove away. Bless that girl. If Sullivan hadn't been in such a sweat to show her his laboratory I was quite sure he'd have taken me away instead. All he had to do was get together with the Boston cops over the handwriting on the note in Tony's pocket, and they had me. Easier than that, all they had to do was trace Tony back to Shirley's on Friday night and they had me. I didn't think the rest of the crowd in Shirley's office would forget me so soon. Their heads probably still ached.

So now I had a whole afternoon alone, with nothing to do except figure. I stuffed some fresh tobacco into my pipe and sat in the sun and tried to think clearly. I knew just exactly one thing that the police didn't know, and that was the fact that I hadn't killed anyone.

It was a damned poor piece of information. Nobody was going to buy it. I couldn't even give it away.

But whoever the killer was, he was getting scared. Killing Tony and trying to kill me with a bomb showed that much. It must have been the visit to Boston that scared him, otherwise he wouldn't have tried to kill me. Now he had stopped my source of information in Boston, but how could he be



sure Tony hadn't used that telephone number? He couldn't. I was alive. I was a menace. I was danger.

I was scared.

The sun was warm, but I suddenly shivered and went into the house. There was no safety for me outside.

I was hungry, and made myself a sandwich, but it tasted like straw. I got out Billie Mataze's things and went through them again with a fine-tooth comb, and found absolutely nothing.

The telephone rang and I went downstairs to answer it. It was Martha, calling from Springfield, and she was mad. "I just read in the paper that that Mataze girl, who used to live up here, was shot and killed in your house, Donald Ivy. Where's Judy? I want to talk to her and tell her to come home right away!"

"She isn't here, Martha," I said soothingly.

"Well where is she? I want to talk to her. And as for you, Donald, what do you mean telling me the police took that other girl away? Why didn't you tell me she was dead?"

"I was afraid you'd make Judy turn around and go home."

"That's just what I'm going to do right now. Where is she?"

"She went out for the afternoon," I said.

"Where did she go? Who'd she go with? She doesn't know anyone down there."

"Now take it easy, Martha. Calm down. She's perfectly well and happy and safe. She went away with a police . . ."

There was a short, choked gasp. "That's what you told me about the other girl, the one that was killed, Donald! Oh Donald, there's nothing wrong with her . . . ?"

"She has a perfectly normal girl-type date with this policeman, Martha. He wants to show her his laboratory, just like other men want to show their etchings, I suppose. I'd say she's just as safe as any girl can be who has an afternoon date with a cop."

Still filled with doubt, Martha finally hung up. I was just refilling my pipe when the telephone rang again.

I didn't recognize the high-pitched voice that asked if I was Donald Ivy, but I admitted that I was.

"This is Patrolman Smedley, of the Tombury Police Department," the voice said. "Could you come in here right away?"

"What for?" I asked.

"We picked up a guy a little while ago who was asking where you lived," Smedley said. "He had a gun on him. He won't give his name. Maybe you know who he is. The lieutenant wants you to come in and look at him."

"I'll be right in," I said. Here was a break. Anybody who was looking for me with a gun was probably a person who wanted to shut me up for good. He was the guy I was looking for too. He was the guy who could answer a lot of my questions. I started hoping Judy and Sullivan wouldn't come back before I had solved the handful of murders. I went out to the Triumph, looked under the hood again just for insurance, and then stepped on the starter with my fingers crossed.

Nothing blew up. I drove into Tombury as fast as I could and parked in front of the police station. My heart was beating eagerly as I ran up the steps. There was a tired-looking cop behind a desk, and I asked him where Smedley was.

"Who?" he said in a dull voice.

"Patrolman Smedley," I repeated. "He called me about ten minutes ago to come in and see if I could identify a guy you had picked up."

"Smedley? Smedley? Never heard of him, mister. Ain't no Smedleys on this police force. You sure he said he was from Tombury?"

"Yes," I said. "He did." My heart was slowly sinking.

"Sure you didn't get it wrong? We got a Smith and a Shakzowski, but no Smedleys. What did he want you for?"

I explained about the man who had been picked up with



a gun, and that the lieutenant thought maybe I could identify him. He called and asked for a lieutenant, talked a few minutes, and hung up.

"We ain't picked up nobody with a gun yet today," he said. "Somebody must be pulling your leg, Mac."

"Yeah," I said. "Some clown."

I walked out and back to my car. Some clown who got tired of waiting for me to take the Triumph out and blow myself up. He was getting nervous and itchy. I wondered if he was watching me from somewhere even then.

Instead of getting in the car I walked back half a block to the Banks Hotel, telling myself I needed a drink. I needed a drink like I needed a barrel of sick smelts. I knew darn well that I was scared of being alone, and in the hotel there would be other people. Probably Terry Jardine.

She was, too. She was behind the registration counter, putting letters in pigeonholes. She had her back toward the lobby as I walked up.

"Pardon me, miss," I said, "but could I buy you a drink as soon as you get off work tonight?"

She turned around slowly, discouraging my proposal with her shoulders, but the I-smell-insects expression on her face turned into a sudden smile when she saw who it was.

"Hi, Don," she laughed. "For a moment I thought you were a salesman stuck in Tombury on Sunday. What's new with you?" She was still wearing the white orchids.

"I'm lonely," I admitted. "Judy ran away with a cop and left me to rattle around in the house by myself. Then I came to town to get a Sunday paper but instead I found you. You had your lunch yet?"

"Silly," she said. "It's almost four o'clock."

"Cocktail time," I suggested. "How about a drink?"

"There's no moon," she said. "Besides, I can't leave right now." Her eyes sparkled. "Look, Don, these beautiful little flowers are still as fresh as they were last night. Everybody asks me where I got them and I just smile. Honestly, Don,



I can't get away right now. There's nobody to take over the phone."

"Let's hire somebody!" I turned around toward the lobby. "Calling a telephone operator! Calling a telephone operator! Is there a telephone operator in the—?"

She reached across the counter and grabbed my arm. "Don! Do you want to get me fired, or something, you, you . . ." She started laughing and couldn't finish.

"Sure," I said. "Then you can come and have a drink with me, or we can go out to my house and look at my French paintings, or charter an airplane and fly to Miami."

"Not yet," she said. "I've only had one date with you, after all."

"Let's have another," I said. "My mind's made up."

"Aren't you ever serious, Donald Ivy?" she asked.

I knew the answer to that one. "Never more than I am now, Terry. When do you call it a day and get away from this place, anyhow? I'll meet you."

"I live here," she said. "The room and board are part of my pay. Room 418. All the way up and at the back. No men in the room at any time, Miss Jardine. I get off at eight tonight."

"Where'll I meet you?"

"Call me when you come in and I'll come down. There's a house phone. What did you have in mind to do after that?"

"The same thing all red-blooded, normal American boys have in back of their heads when they take young and lovely girls out on warm spring nights," I said. "Would you like to eat first?"

"I'd like to eat period," she said.

"Good," I told her. "I'll go home and start fixing up a wonderful dinner for two. If Judy and her cop come, I'll send them off to a hamburger stand."

"I don't know whether that's the best idea or not," she

said. "Maybe a girl would be safer with you if a couple of cops were around."

"Don't bring that tame one of yours," I protested. "Anyhow, there's only enough food in the house for two." I leaned across the counter and kissed her quickly. "Better luck next time, and more time, too," I said and left the hotel while my luck, she was still running pretty good.

The telephone was ringing when I got in the house, and I hurried to answer it. It was Judy, telling me that she wouldn't be home for supper.

"I didn't think you would," I laughed. "How was the police laboratory? Romantic?"

"You might say it has its moments," she said. "It's a good place to begin, anyhow."

"You're off to a flying start, it sounds to me. Where are you going for supper?"

"We're going to John's mother's house." There was a faint note of triumph in her voice.

"Not bad for the first afternoon out," I said. "Speaking of mothers, yours wants you to catch the next train home. You better call her."

"Oh, no," she said. "I can't do it. Why—why, I have to stay and take care of the house for you. Don't I?"

"You can tell her that if you want to," I said. "Personally, I think it would be better if you told her you have to stay for the hearing tomorrow. What time do you expect to get home tonight, anyhow?"

"I don't know. Why?"

"Well, I've just arranged to have company myself. We might make an agreement that you don't come home before eleven, if that's all right with you."

"It won't be before that," she said. "Who is it? None of my business, I suppose. Well, we'll blow the horn before we come in the house. Good-bye, Uncle Goat."

I went out to the kitchen, whistling a few bars of *Star-*



dust to myself, and started preparations for an evening for two.

It was about quarter of eight when I finished bathing and dressing and drove into Tombury and parked in front of the hotel. Terry was still behind the counter, looking distressed.

"Don," she said. "That guy who is supposed to relieve me just called and said he'd be late. I'm sorry, but I just *can't* get away until he comes."

"The devil," I said. "How soon will he be here?"

"I don't know," she said. "I haven't had a chance to change my clothes or anything. Darn him, anyhow!"

"Go get yourself fixed up," I said. "Even though you look good enough to eat the way you are. Tell me what has to be done here and I'll do it. The hotel won't fall apart. What do I have to do?" I ducked under the end of the counter and came in and put my hand on her arm.

"Don, I'd get fired!"

"Who cares? You aren't going to work here forever, are you? Now what do I have to do besides not robbing the till?"

"Well," she said, the sparks coming back into her eyes and a big smile spreading over her face. "It would serve them right. Do you know how to work a switchboard?"

"No. But I learn fast."

"When it rings," she explained, "it's either an outside or an inside call. For one you answer, 'Banks Hotel, good evening.' For the other you just say, 'Desk.'" Then she showed me what to do with buzzers and wires and plugs. "If anyone comes in to register, have him sign one of these cards and give him a room. Here's a list of vacant rooms and prices. There's a list of people already here and their room numbers beside the phone. Keep a record of all incoming and outgoing calls. I'll be back in ten minutes. You're a darling." She ducked under the counter and ran to the elevator.



## CHAPTER XVIII

THE SWITCHBOARD BUZZED and it was an outside call and I said, "Banks Hotel, good evening," and a voice wanted to talk to Mr. Frey and Mr. Frey was in Room 208 and I plugged the voice into 208 and rang the bell and Mr. Frey answered. There wasn't any more to the job than that. I looked at the clock and then made a note on a form that 208 had had an outside call at 7:58 P.M. I noticed that 312 had been called at 7:32 P.M. At 6:44 there had been a call to 204 but he hadn't been in, and the message left was *call Dottie*.

I love to stick my nose in other people's business, and I'm an eavesdropper in addition, and there was a whole list of personal phone calls for a week in front of me. There had been a call to 418 on Saturday morning at 8:12. Probably Kilgore calling Terry, I thought jealously. Who was he to call *my* girl anyhow? Somebody had also called her on Friday evening. Kilgore, it seemed to me, was running things into the ground.

I looked on the list of those present to see if there was anyone else in the hotel I knew, and came on Roamer's name. Samuel T. Roamer. Room 305. Message for Mr. Roamer on Saturday morning. *Call your Boston office*. Mr. Roamer had called Boston about half an hour later. Talked for seven minutes. His next call had been at 3:30 P.M. the next day, Sunday.

He wasn't as interesting at George Parsons, Room 410. Mr. Parsons had a phone call at 9:14 A.M., but he hadn't been in and so the message read *call Sugar*. At 9:52 he called Sugar, and then he probably went out, because at 10:07 he got a call from Gloria, and at 10:23 he had one from Avis,

and ten minutes later one from Bobbie. While I was admiring Mr. Parsons' popularity another outside call came, and a soft Southern voice asked for Mr. Jahj Passuns, please. Mr. George didn't answer his phone—probably worn out—so at the caller's request I made a note that Gloria had called again, and would he *please* call her as soon as he got in. I was putting the note in his key box when Terry came back, shined and polished and sparkling and wearing a charcoal brown suit with a red man-cut shirt, red shoes, and red discs in her ears.

"I'd like to have a room, please," she said, trying to keep a serious expression on her face.

"Yes, ma'm," I answered. "Do you prefer an eastern or western exposure?"

"What's the difference?"

"From one you can watch the moon come up, from the other you watch the moon go down."

"Do you really have rooms like that?"

"Yes, ma'm," I assured her. "But not here. However, I'll be glad to take you where there are rooms like that. For example, I have a little place out in the country that I think you might like. If you just let me put your bag in the car, I'll—"

"Donald Ivy," she laughed, "sometimes I think you're almost serious." She went around to the end of the counter and ducked under. "Now get out of here and wait for me over there in the lobby. Did anything happen while I was away?"

"Gloria called George. I don't know that I approve of you living on the same floor with George. You better move out. If you just let me put your bag in my car, I'll—"

"Get out of here, Don. People are looking at us."

I ducked under the counter and walked over and sat down.

The guy who was supposed to take over behind the counter came in about five minutes, and after they'd checked the cash in the register she came out and we drove to my house.



"This is a nice little place," she said. "Which way is east and which way is west?"

"West is out the side windows here in the living room. East is from the dining room, or upstairs in my room."

"I guess I'll miss that moon tonight," she said. "I'm not going to stay up long enough to watch it set."

I started my Hugo Winterhalter album of *Music by Starlight*, and lit the candle on the old Chinese sideboard and the kindling under the charcoal in the grill. It was so romantic you could darn near cut it with a fork. Terry relaxed on the comfortable love seat and sighed.

"I do like it here. This is better than old 418, with no men in the room at any time. Maybe I will stay, after all."

"I now intend to ply you with liquor, which will dull your inhibitions and make you amenable to reason. What would you like?"

"Oh, anything."

"The last girl who said that woke up on a boat bound for South America, where she became a rich gaucho's plaything and learned to do the mambo," I warned her. "However, I shall mix you a gimlet. Wait here."

"What's a gimlet?" she asked.

"A concoction famous for its vitamin and mineral content."

I got a silver bowl full of ice and gin and sweetened lime juice and solid-stem champagne glasses.

"Now watch closely," I said, putting two or three pieces of ice into each glass, and pouring the gin and the lime juice on top, and adding a little water. "That's a gimlet. Give it a chance to cool, and swish it around a little, and then drink it slowly. All your cares will vanish."

"I'll bet this gets me new ones, though," she sighed, almost timidly. "But I don't care. I always knew I'd be a sucker for candlelight and soft music and some guy like you." She looked at me and the stars were in her eyes for sure.

"You're a darling," I told her softly, raising my glass. "And here's to us, for a long, long time."



"That is a good drink," she said, after a while. "Don't go too serious for me tonight, Don darling. I couldn't stand it tomorrow if, if anything . . . you know what I mean."

"I know what you mean," I said, and I took the music off and put on some Chopin mazurkas. "How's that? Have another gimlet?"

"Just one more, Don."

Her hand fell across mine. I had a hell of a time making gimlets with my left hand, but I did it. You learn something new every day. As a matter of fact I was a little mixed up myself, but I blamed it on the candles too. I'm just an old softy and I knew it, and if I wasn't careful I was going to get caught, and I didn't know whether I cared or not.

The second gimlet was just as good as the first, and the clear turtle soup was delicious, and the steak was perfect. Even the cherries jubilee cooperated with me and blazed up splendidly.

It was a long time later, after the coffee cups had been taken away and the brandy was gone from the crystal glasses and the first of the candles had burned itself out that she took her mouth away from mine and whispered that she had to go home, she thought. It was after midnight, and still no sign of Judy. I didn't argue. We drove slowly back to Tombury and the hotel, and I promised to call her right after the hearing and tell her what happened.

"No matter what," she said.

"No matter what, Terry."

"Good-night, Don. You're a sweet guy." And she was gone into the lobby.

I drove home as fast as I safely could, my thinking a jumble. Sullivan's car was parked in the drive. I drove around it, cutting ruts in the lawn, and put the Triumph in the garage. I went inside and there they were, drinking coffee.

"Hi, kids," I said. "Have a good time? Can I get you a drink or something?"

"You look like you'd just smuggled something into the country," Judy said. "I had a wonderful time. You ought to meet John's mother, Uncle Don. She's a marvelous person. And cook! I don't want anything, thanks. How about you, John?"

"I've got everything I want," he said. That cop turned a neat phrase. My admiration for him increased a little. Then I saw Judy's suitcase on the floor near the living room door.

"You going somewhere?" I asked. "Not back to Springfield at this time of night, I hope?"

"No," she said. "But the only way I could get Mother to let me stay down here for a single minute was for John to promise her that I'd have police protection. She insisted on it, Uncle Don. So I'm going over and spend the night with his mother, and he'll be there too. Then tomorrow, after the hearing, he's going to drive me home."

"Who's going to protect me, if it's that dangerous here?" I wanted to know. "How about me coming over to your mother's too, sarge?"

"I can get a cop to come and stay with you if you really think you need one," he said.

"Nuts," I said. "You didn't by any chance bring my gun back from the laboratory, did you?"

"I can't do that, Ivy. You know that. Think you need one?"

"I think I need a company of Marines, at least. However, go away and leave me to my fate. Ivy the lone wolf will defend his castle with claw and fang, as usual." The telephone rang and I answered it. It was another call for Sergeant Sullivan.

"For you," I said. "Why don't you just move your mother over here and let me go to her house? People seem to think you live here."

He laughed, a genuine he-man laugh, and Judy looked at him admiringly as he walked across the room and picked up the phone. I heard him give a few non-committal yesses, and



then he said something about "a mile south on Eddystone Road," and then he hung up.

"Dammit," he said. "A car went off the road about a mile south of here and I have to run down and get a report on it. I'll be back in about an hour. Think you'll be safe, honey?"

I judged he wasn't asking me the question, and so did Judy. "I think so, John," she smiled. "Uncle Don is a pretty good protector. But hurry back, please."

"I'll blow the horn three times when I come in the lane," he said. "Just so you'll know who it is. You'll be all right."

When the door had closed behind him I turned to Judy. "Well, *honey*," I said. "If I had my glasses on and could see better I'd swear you had stars in your eyes."

"I hope so," she said seriously. "He's a real sweet guy."

"No doubt," I agreed. "From your point of view. My question is, what kind of a guy does he think I am?"

"That pistol of yours did kill Billie Mataze," she said. "They can prove it. They draw a line from the hole in the stairs and where the bullet was found, and it would go right through where her chest would have been if she was standing where they think she was."

"I don't doubt it," I said. "Who pulled the trigger?"

"Well," she said, "he doesn't *want* to think that you did, he told me that. He *hopes* you didn't do it, especially since . . ." Tears glistened in the corners of her eyes. "Oh Uncle Don, everything's so damned mixed up!"

"That's all right, kid," I said. "Don't worry. I've got a hunch something's going to break soon. And *you* know I didn't kill Billie Mataze or anybody else. Now don't let that cop come back here and find that you've been crying or he'll arrest me. Want a handkerchief?" I held mine out.

"No," she said, taking it and dabbing at her eyes. "I just want to be happy. Why don't things work out the way they should, anyhow?"

"They damned seldom do, Judy. You have to learn to



ride with them. That's known as growing up. When am I going to see you again?"

"At the hearing tomorrow—or I guess it's today, isn't it? I'll be there, and after it's over we'll all celebrate."

"Call me in the morning, after you get up, will you?"

"Sure, Uncle Don. What's the number here?"

"I'll write it down for you," I said, and got a piece of paper and jotted the number on it. There was the noise of a car coming in the drive. I looked at my watch. "He got back fast," I said. "He's only been gone ten minutes."

The car door slammed. "Hey," I said. "No horn! Maybe it isn't Sullivan! Here's the car keys, kid. Get out in the kitchen and keep quiet, but listen. If this is what I've been expecting, get on the phone as soon after—get on the phone or get in the car and get in touch with Dr. Dann and the police as fast as you can! Now scram!"

She was in the kitchen as a heavy knock came on the front door. I turned off the inside hall light and turned the porch light on, and opened the door a crack.

"Open up, Ivy," Roamer said. "I'm coming in. And put your hands out where I can see them all the time. This is business." His right hand was under the left side of his coat, waist high.

"What the hell do you want at this hour of the morning?" I demanded. "You got no call to muscle in on me like this."

"Shut up," he said, shouldering his way into the hall. "Get in the living room!" I backed away from him. There was a mean look in his eyes. "Face the wall, with your arms up!" I faced the wall and he searched me quickly. "Turn around, but keep away from me, Ivy!"

"Who the hell do you think you are, Roamer, coming in here and pushing me around? You got no right in the whole goddamned world to come in here. Let's see your warrant."

"What were you doing in Boston on Friday night?" he barked at me.

"What makes you think I was in Boston?"

"Don't give me that stuff, Ivy! I know you were in Boston. Don't get me confused with your local cops, Ivy, who got sawdust for brains. We don't work that way. You were in Boston, in Shirley's and the Green Button, to be specific?"

"So what?"

"So you crossed a state line, Ivy. That makes it a Federal rap. You may be smart enough to beat the laws in England, Ivy, but you can't do it in the good old U.S.A."

"Can it," I said. "You'll be singing *God Bless America* in a minute. What crime did I commit besides crossing a state line?"

He laughed real dirty. "Fleeing jurisdiction in this state, for one."

"But I must have fled right back."

"Assault with battery in Shirley's, to say nothing of not paying the check."

"Sounds like the electric chair for me, if you can make it stick," I said. "Go on. You didn't come out in the middle of the night for this."

"All right. How'd you like another murder rap, Ivy? I'm arresting you for the murder of Antonio Gardelli on Saturday morning. Put out your hands with the wrists together."

"Go to hell," I said.

He snaked a heavy snub-nosed revolver out of a holster under the left side of his coat. "Don't fool with me, Ivy. Stick out your hands!" He pulled a pair of handcuffs out of his left hip pocket.

For a moment I thought of taking the gun away from him, and then I decided it wouldn't work. He was too ready. The bracelets dropped over my wrists and locked.

"Out the front door, Ivy. Slow and easy. You try to run and you'll find out what a .357 magnum slug feels like." I opened the front door and walked out, heard him slam the door behind him. I started slowly down the path toward the drive. "Say good-bye to the old homestead, Ivy," Roamer



said behind me. "Because you aren't ever coming back, not after killing Gardelli."

It was a warm evening, but suddenly I felt as though a cold and evil wind had blown across the back of my spine. I shivered. I hadn't killed Gardelli, but they did have the goods on me for the little things Roamer had listed. With my reputation I was through for a couple of years.

We passed the side of the house, and I longed to turn back and look at it, but I kept on. Then I heard a soft *thunk* like someone batting a softball, and then there was the noise of a body falling. I stopped. All I could hear was a frog peeping down by the pond. I started to turn around, slowly.

## CHAPTER XIX

THERE, IN THE LIGHT from the porch, stood Judy, a piece of firewood in her hand. There, on the grass, lay Roamer. He looked dead.

"Dreamland," Judy giggled. I dropped down on my knees beside Roamer, felt his heart. It was still beating.

"Congratulations," I said. "You have just beaned an F.B.I. man. I hope they put us in adjoining cells, so we can talk to each other over the long, empty years."

"I didn't know," she said. "He was taking you away and I just didn't know what to do. What can he do now?"

"Get these handcuffs off me first," I said. "Look in his pockets for a key."

She found it in his trouser pocket, freed me. I took my handkerchief and wiped the handcuffs clean, then put them back in his hip pocket.

"Now put that hunk of wood back where you found it

while I drag him inside. Then come on in. We don't have much time before Sullivan gets here."

I dragged Roamer's limp body back to the porch where I rubbed the bleeding swelling on the back of his head against the edge of the top step. Then I dragged him into the house and spread him out on the living room floor, with a towel under his head to protect the rug. I went back to the yard to get the gun he had dropped, picked it up with my handkerchief and put it in the holster. After that I got on the phone and called Dr. Dann and told him there had been an accident and a man had a serious bump on his head and we needed him. He said he would be right out. There was nothing to do but wait.

Judy was shaking like a leaf, and I gave her some brandy to drink. "Pull yourself together, kid. Remember, he won't know what happened. You were upstairs all the time, when they ask you. I'll say he came, slapped the handcuffs on me, and started to take me away. He must have slipped on the front porch and hit his head. I heard him fall. I called for you. You came down and found him lying at the bottom of the porch steps and I was feeling his heart. You got the key and unlocked me, and we dragged him in. Then we called the doctor. Can you remember that?"

"Yes," she said. "I didn't do the right thing, did I? I'm sorry."

"Don't worry about it now. Just keep your part of the story straight. Nobody'll ever know you hit him, except me, and I'm not about to tell."

"You're a great guy, Don," she said. "Maybe the greatest guy I ever heard of. They can't prove you killed Tony what's-his-name, can they?"

"Not when I produce a surprise witness that the F.B.I. doesn't seem to know about. That's you, Judy Thames. Nobody but Dr. Dann and us seems to know that you were the girl with me. Remember, this guy Roamer has never seen you. They can't do much about that assault and battery



charge, either, when you testify that Shirley pulled a gun first. You're my insurance policy, baby."

"Don't call me *baby*," she said. "I'm growing up too fast. Should we be doing anything for him?" she glanced at Roamer lying motionless on the floor.

"The hell with him," I said. "He's going to live." There was a noise outside. "This is Dr. Dann, I hope. Get back in the kitchen, just in case it isn't. If you hear me mention his name, come on out. I think he's safe enough." She scurried back to the kitchen.

The expected knock came at the door and I opened it carefully again. "Hello, Dr. Dann!" I said, loud enough for Judy to hear. "Come in."

He took one look into the living room. "What happened, Donald?"

"You know who that is?" I asked.

He went into the living room, taking his stethoscope from his pocket. Judy was standing there and he nodded to her, then bent over Roamer and listened to his chest. He tried the F.B.I. man for a few reflexes, looked at the bump on his head, and stood up.

"He'll live. Have a headache for a couple of days. Who is he, Donald? How did it happen?"

"His name is Roamer. Samuel T. Roamer. He's an F.B.I. agent. He came here to arrest me, and as we were going out the front walk to his car he slipped on the porch, I guess, and fell and hit himself on the back of his head. He was behind me when it happened."

"Did he fall, or was he pushed, Donald? I saw you throw Kilgore over your shoulder, remember?"

"I didn't lay a hand on him. He had the cuffs on me. Judy was upstairs at the time but she had to help me get the darned things unlocked."

"Where are the handcuffs now?" the doctor asked.

"I put them back in his hip pocket," I said.

"Not very smart, Donald," he said. "You probably wiped

your fingerprints off them, too. Better take them out and put them on the table in the hall, don't you think?"

"Yes," I said sheepishly. "You caught me on that one, Doctor."

"Well," he said, "I was called in here as the family physician, not as the medical examiner. But I can see why you got caught in England."

"I'm sorry," I said.

"No harm done," he smiled. "No harm done. Often thought I would have made a better con man than a medic myself. Now, have you told the police yet?"

"Not yet. I wanted to make sure he was going to live. Then I was going to call the cops. If he died I was going to bury him in the back yard and take the next plane to Nepal, or somewhere."

"Well, he's going to live. Better call them. Call the state cops."

"We ought to have one here in a couple of minutes," I said, looking at my watch. "We're expecting Sullivan. He was here but got called out on a job."

"You sure have busy evenings, you two. What's he coming for?"

"Ask Judy," I said. "He seems to think she needs police protection. At least that's the story the two of them told me. He's taking her to his mother's house, believe it or not."

He looked at Judy. "I believe it," he said. "That's a fine man, Miss Thames. You keep an eye on him." He was interrupted by three blasts of an automobile horn outside.

"There he is now!" Judy said, her face lighting up. She ran to the door and opened it. "Come in John," she called. "Hurry up!"

I heard him running up the path. "What's the matter?" he asked. "What's happened?" He came into the living room. "What the hell happened to him?"

I explained about Roamer, and how he had fallen and



hit his head. Sullivan eyed me skeptically. "What was he taking you away for?" he asked.

"For killing Tony Gardelli, according to him," I said.

"What made him think you killed Gardelli? Were you in Boston that night?"

"He seemed to think so," I said, truthfully enough.

"It better not be true," Sullivan growled. "If it is, I'll take you in myself, damn it. What made him think you were in Boston?"

"Ask him," I said. "He just came to the door, told me I was under arrest for killing Gardelli in Boston on Saturday morning, put the cuffs on me, and marched me out."

"Where was he taking you?"

"He didn't say."

"I don't like it," Sullivan said. "How soon before this guy comes to, Doc? Are you going to take him to the hospital?"

"I should take him in for X-rays," Dr. Dann said. "But he ought to open his eyes in a couple of minutes. His heart action is pretty good. We can wait a while, and then I'll drive him to the hospital in my car. He'll be all right."

"I hope so," Sullivan said. "If he isn't we'll have ten million G-men around here."

"How about some coffee?" I suggested.

"Oh, shut up," Sullivan said. So we all sat around, silent and glum and filling the room with smoke. Pretty soon, thank God, Roamer moved and gave a feeble little groan.

"He's coming around now. Since we don't have any coffee," Dr. Dann said pointedly, "I think he could probably use a little whiskey, or brandy if you have it, Donald."

Whiskey was all right for Roamer. I went into the kitchen and poured out a jigger and brought it back. Roamer was trying to sit up and Dr. Dann was holding his head. He took the whiskey and held it to Roamer's lips and told him to drink it. Roamer did, sputtered, coughed, and opened his eyes.

"Jeepers, my head!" he moaned. "What happened to me?" He looked around the room, saw Judy for the first time, frowned. "You're the girl that was in Boston!" he cried. "You're the girl that looks like Billie Matazel!"

Sullivan looked shocked. Judy just sat there, saying nothing. Roamer tried to get to his feet, but Dr. Dann held him down. Roamer reached for his gun, but Dann held his hand.

"Let me go!" Roamer said, very deliberately. "Let me up. I've got a job to do here! Who are all of you, anyhow. What's going on here?" He looked at Sullivan. "I know you. You're a state cop. Give me a hand, will you?"

"Take it easy," Sullivan said. "You're going to be all right. You had a nasty fall."

"I'm all right now. Just let me up. Come on Ivy, I'm taking you in. You come too," he barked at Judy. She jumped, poor kid.

"Take it easy, Roamer," Sullivan repeated. "It just happens I'm interested in this case, remember? These two people are my prisoners now, so calm down. They go if I say so, and not before. Get that through your head." Judy gave him a look that must have made him glow inside. "Just what's your story?"

"Let me up," Roamer said. He struggled to his feet, held his head between his hands for a while, and then sat down on a chair. "I'll give you the story."

"There's a night club in South Boston, he said, "that is known as Shirley's. It's a clip joint with class, for South Boston, and a hangout for a lot of shady characters. You'll find the guys who receive stuff smuggled in from Canada, and from runners up from the south, by the fishermen who come in to unload fish at the Pier. You'll find the big shots behind the South Boston warehouses. You'll find the gamblers. You'll find people who have no business being in the United States at all.

"The Bureau keeps an eye on the place. Tony Gardelli



was our eye there. He had an old reputation as a second-rate pug and he was there as one of Shirley's bouncers and strong arm men. Now he's dead. Ivy got wise and killed him.

"Now just a week ago a bum who is a free-lance writer, when he's sober enough to write, had a story published about Ivy. Perry Patterson is the guy's name. When he has money he hangs out around Shirley's. When he's broke he hangs out in the Green Button, which is a dive down the street. In the Green Button, about a month ago, Patterson got talking to another bum named Andrews. Wusky Andrews. Andrews worked as a janitor at Shirley's, and when he couldn't steal booze there he bought it at the Green Button, unless he could get someone to buy it for him. He got Patterson to buy it for him in return for the story about Ivy, which Patterson wrote and sold.

"There was another person at Shirley's who also knew Ivy. His name was Henri Grennet, and he was in this country without a passport. He worked as a bus boy. Andrews checked some of his story stuff with Grennet, and promised to cut Grennet in on the cut he expected to get from Patterson.

"There was still a third person who hung out at Shirley's whenever she could get somebody to take her in and buy her a drink. She was Billie Mataze. She slept with people she liked, and she liked most of the regular crowd at Shirley's. But that wasn't all. Mataze was also a stool pigeon. Tony Gardelli knew her by reputation, and she used to pass information to him which he said he passed on to the right people, and then paid her for it. She didn't care who she stooled on. Both ends against the middle, that was her motto—as long as there was money in it.

"Well, Andrews got drunk last Sunday, after Patterson had given him some money, and he got talking to some of the help around Shirley's that he was going to make a killing. He was going to shake Ivy down, good and proper.

Let Patterson make a few measly bucks writing about Ivy, if that was all he wanted. He, Andrews, was going to hold Ivy up for the plates for the ten-pound notes. He didn't make any secret of it. Grennet heard him say it. A bartender heard him say it and told Billie Mataze. Mataze passed it on to Tony. Tony passed it into the office.

"I had to come to Tombury," Roamer went on, "on some tax cases and was told to look in on Ivy and see what he was up to. Get the plates and take them out of circulation. I finally got out here last Thursday, after reading that Grennet and Andrews had both been killed here. My office was beginning to take a real interest in Ivy by then. Grennet and Andrews and Mataze had all disappeared from Shirley's by this time, and we wondered what they were up to.

"I was surprised to find Billie Mataze right here in this room. I didn't know her, of course, and she didn't know me, but I had seen her picture. It didn't take much brains to figure out what had been going on. Ivy refused to give me the plates, and I needed a warrant to search the house for them. But it was obvious he wasn't going to give those plates to anyone without a struggle.

"In fact, when you look at it, he came out on top of every struggle that anyone put up for those plates. There's been an awful lot of blood spilt for them. The first one of the gang from Shirley's to get here was Grennet. He probably didn't even get in the house. Ivy killed him. Then Andrews came. He got in. Ivy knocked his front teeth out and threw him out into the yard bodily. Then Andrews walked in front of a car, unless Ivy or Mataze pushed him in front of it, and got killed.

"Next, Billie Mataze was looking around the house when Ivy was out, on Thursday evening. Ivy came home and caught her at it and shot her with a pistol he kept out in that hall table. Then he pretended that he had come home and found the house empty. But what he didn't know was that Billie had called an old friend of hers, a Mrs. Orell



who runs a boarding house in Springfield and, with a pre-arranged code, had said that she was in danger. This Mrs. Orell used to run a string of call girls in Springfield, and Billie worked for her for a while until she went into the badger game. She used to cut Mrs. Orell in when Mrs. Orell gave her a good steer on some sucker who could be clipped.

"It didn't take much thought on Ivy's part to trace his influx of visitors, all of whom he had killed, back to Boston. Somehow or other he got up there, with this dame here, on Friday night. Also somehow or other he got to Shirley's, where one of the girls who hangs out there spotted this blonde who looks a little like Billie Mataze and thought it was Billie. The one dame tells the other, in the can, that she is with Donald Ivy. This news gets to Shirley quick. Tony and another strong-arm man of Shirley's, named Dutch, sit down next to Ivy and his girl and find out he really is Donald Ivy.

"They decide to get Ivy up to the office and figure out what his angle in Boston is. Tony plays up like he was sweet on Billie Mataze and says he will help Ivy find out who killed her. Ivy gives Tony his name and phone number on a piece of paper. Then—and for a while this was our weak link—we think that Ivy slipped Tony's wallet out of his coat pocket. We know he could do tricks like that, because he did the same thing to Kilgore on Friday morning, when he was giving him a judo lesson on the front lawn, right here.

"But anyhow, this girl of Ivy's gets drunk and bites Shirley, and that starts a fight and Ivy pulls his judo on them and knocks the whole damned gang, all three of them, cold as dead mackerels. That's why I kept a gun on him every minute here tonight. Ivy and the girl beat it. The girl is passed out. Ivy drags her around to the Green Button and sobers her up with coffee, and there he meets Perry Patterson. Ivy tries to get a line on Tony from Perry. Perry goes to call a cop and Ivy lights out. A taxi took him to the

Essex and he and the girl went in one door and out another and vanished.

"At eight-thirty that morning Tony was found dead. His wallet was missing. The story hits the papers and Patterson turns up at our office to tell us about Ivy. We already had some of the story from Shirley and Dutch.

"I got a call from my office on Saturday morning, while I was out for breakfast. I came back and they told me to scout around and see what I could find. Ivy was away all day Saturday. I let myself in with my lock gun and went through the house thoroughly. Up in the drawer in Ivy's bedroom I found this." He pulled a thin leather wallet out of his pocket and held it up. The gold initials on the front were A.G.

## CHAPTER XX

"A.G." ROAMER SAID, "stands for Antonio Gardelli. This is Tony's wallet." He reached inside the wallet, pulled out half a dozen cards. "All these are Tony's, too. This clinches the case for me. I'm arresting Ivy and taking him with me, right now!"

"Sit down, son," Dr. Dann said. "You aren't in any shape to arrest anybody. You've got a serious concussion. I'm a doctor and I wouldn't let you drive a car."

"Sorry, Doc, but I've got a job to do," Roamer said. "Come on, Ivy. Up on your feet!"

"Take it easy," Sullivan said in a flat, authoritative tone that hit the walls and hung there. "I say who drives in this state, Roamer, and you don't until the doctor checks you out. Maybe you've got Ivy, and maybe you don't. He won't get away. Sit down. I want to ask a couple of questions."



He looked at Judy, then at me. "Ivy, did you and Judy go to Boston, like he says?"

"This guy's a liar by the clock, Sergeant," I said. "He never—"

"Shut up!" he barked at me. "Judy, were you and your uncle in Boston on Friday night?"

Miserable was the word for Judy, sitting there with her fingers twisting together, looking at me to see whether she should lie or tell the truth. There wasn't anything for me to do except bail her out.

"Don't pick on the girl," I said. "Yes, we were in Boston on Friday night and Saturday morning. We left South Boston at about three in the morning and drove back here. I deny having anything to do with Gardelli's death, or with the deaths of any of—"

"One question at a time, Ivy!" Sullivan snapped. "You'll get all the time to talk that you want." He turned to Roamer. "Just one little thing. Why did Ivy take that wallet out of Gardelli's pocket? That doesn't sound like him."

"To find out who Gardelli was, of course. Ivy wanted to find out what he was up against. Lucky for me that Tony didn't have his Bureau identification on him, or Ivy would probably have come gunning for me on Saturday morning in the hotel, before I knew how hot he was."

"How did Gardelli get killed?" Sullivan asked.

"Broken neck. Typical Ivy job, just like he could have broken Kilgore's neck out here on Friday morning."

"Yeah," Sullivan said. "I guess so. Who do you think put the bomb in Ivy's automobile?"

"*Bomb* in Ivy's automobile?"

"Yeah. He and I found a bomb in his automobile on Sunday morning. If we hadn't found it, it would have killed Ivy and the girl here when he stepped on the starter. What would you think about that?"

"All I know is what you tell me," Roamer said. "But any guy who was in Resistance work during the war would

know how to make a bomb. Who detached it, you or Ivy?"

"Ivy."

"Bet you ten dollars it wasn't hooked up. Another ten says Ivy put it in the car himself, as a blind."

"I'll take those bets!" I said. "Listen to me for a minute, Sergeant, will you please? I didn't do it and you know I didn't do it, or you'd have arrested me last week. You still don't know who did it. *But I do!*"

That kind of stopped all of them. Even Roamer looked surprised. Judy looked hopeful. Dr. Dann sat up a little straighter. Sullivan never moved.

"But I'd like to ask one or two questions first," I began. "For example, Mr. Roamer, where did you learn that I knocked Wusky Andrews' teeth out? Or that I had Kilgore's wallet in my hand after our little demonstration the other morning?"

"Kilgore told me," he said. "No great secret about that. He's been filling me in on a lot of the early angles of this case."

"He sure has," I said. "For a guy who acted so anxious to make the big pinch himself, he's been giving a lot away. Maybe we ought to think about Kilgore for a minute."

"Don't be silly, Ivy," Sullivan said. "Kilgore didn't have anything to do with this case except get his name in the papers as being on hand after every murder had happened. You could make out the same kind of a case against Dr. Dann if you wanted to."

"That's true," I said. "He sure was in a big hurry to get me and Judy off to Boston in his car, the night my own car was wired for a bomb. But I know he didn't have anything to do with it."

"I think that's enough, Ivy," Roamer said. "Doctor, there's nothing wrong with me now. And Ivy doesn't seem to have anything to say that's worth listening to. I guess we better go. Come on, Ivy."

"Just one little thing," Sullivan said. "I take it for granted



you'll ask for an indictment on the Gardelli murder charge. You've got the wallet and the evidence that Ivy was in Boston, and I don't. However, I think I can get an indictment here on the Mataze murder. Will you agree to taking him on the Gardelli charge only, and if he beats that we'll try him here on the Mataze charge?"

"I think we can fix that up with no strain," Roamer said. "Come on, Ivy. You and the girl. I don't have all night."

"I don't think you need to take Miss Thames," Sullivan said evenly. "What's the charge against her?"

"She was with him in Boston. Accomplice in a murder rap's no joke," Roamer said.

"She stays here or they both stay here," Sullivan said. "Make up your mind."

"You promise to deliver her if I need her as a witness, or if I can get her indicted in Boston?" Roamer asked.

"Yes," Sullivan said.

"I won't argue," Roamer said. "Come on, Ivy. Stick out your wrists." He reached toward his hip pocket for his hand-cuffs, and then realized they weren't there. "What became of my cuffs?"

"They're out in the hall," I said. "Where I left them when I took them off. Do you want me to get them for you?"

"I'll get them," Sullivan said.

"Donald," Dr. Dann looked at me, trouble plain in his eyes, "don't you have anything to say for yourself?"

"He could hear the cry of bats," I said.

"What are you talking about now?" Roamer asked impatiently.

"I said that he could hear the cry of bats."

"Who could hear the cry of what bats?"

"There is a poet by the name of T.S. Eliot," I began. "He wrote a play called 'The Cocktail Party.' In the opening scene of the first act a wonderful character named Julia is

telling a story about the feeble-minded third brother of a certain family."

"Do you feel all right, Donald?" Dr. Dann asked.

"He's playing nuts," Roamer growled. "That's what he is. You don't have a prayer of copping an insanity plea, Ivy!"

"Julia says that the third brother could hear the cry of bats. Somebody asks her, 'How do you know he could hear the cry of bats?' and Julia answers, 'Because he said so, and I believed him.'"

"What the hell does that have to do with this handful of murder?" Sullivan asked. "If you've got anything to say, go ahead and say it, will you?"

"We've been a bunch of Julias, all of us," I said. "I'll come back to this later. First of all, you'll remember that Wusky Andrews was killed when he ran in front of a car. *Why* did he run? Who was chasing him? I was the first person there after the accident. The next person was a stranger who drove up in a car. I told him to watch traffic. The next person after that was a man I didn't get a good look at. He didn't come in any car that I saw. He was just there. He was the man who swapped the shoes."

"This is double talk," Roamer said. "Hand me those cuffs please, Sergeant, will you?"

"But before I explain about the shoes," I said, "maybe I better tell you something about the ten-pound notes. Ten-pound notes ceased to be legal tender in Britain on the first of May, 1945. I thought that everybody in the world knew that—except Wusky Andrews and Perry Patterson and people who learned about my plates by reading last Sunday's paper."

"Why didn't you mention this before, Ivy?" Sullivan asked.

"Because then the person who killed Henri Grennet wouldn't have come back, time and again, for plates that he knew to be worthless. Those plates were the only bait I had. I'm sorry so many people were killed because of them,



because Perry Patterson said they were valuable and the Julias believed him. But I know who did it, now. I was the biggest Julia of them all."

"My head aches," Roamer said. "You can go on with this lecture tomorrow, Ivy, after I get you locked up."

"May I see Gardelli's wallet a minute?" I asked him. "Or at least the cards in it, please?"

"You can see them in court," he said. "Let's go!"

"You came in here on Thursday morning and said you were a Special Agent of the Federal Bureau of Investigation," I said. "And I believed you. May I see your identification card again, please, right now?"

"You may not!" he said, backing away a little and moving his right hand toward the pistol under his coat. "You're under arrest, remember that, Ivy!"

"I'd like to see the identification," Sullivan said. "I've been kind of a Julia myself." He took a step forward.

"Get the hell back, all of you!" Roamer yelled, whipping out his revolver. "Back against the wall, with your faces to it. Hurry up, goddammit, I don't have all night! Girl, you come with me for insurance!"

"Why don't you give up, Roamer?" I asked. "I've got you cold, ever since I found out that you called me at three-thirty this afternoon with the phony message that took me to the police station. Judy, stand right where you are!"

"Goddam your eyes, Ivy!" Roamer leveled the pistol at my head. I could look right down the barrel. "I was going to shoot you when we got down the road, but I guess you get it now." His finger tightened, white-knuckled, on the trigger.

Sullivan yelled for me to get out of the way. Judy screamed. I stepped forward as the hammer of the big black revolver fell and rose and fell again as fast as Roamer could pull the trigger, and knocked his hand to one side. At the same time I clipped him across the throat, which left him gasping for breath and helpless.

Sullivan slapped the handcuffs on him. "By God, Ivy," he said to me. "That was the bravest thing I ever saw a man do, walking into that gun. What was wrong with his bullets?"

"I think the bullets were just as good as gold," I said, taking them out of my pocket and looking at them. "Fortunately, I unloaded his gun after Judy had knocked him cold with a piece of firewood."

"Could I have some of your brandy, please?" Dr. Dann asked. "And I think the little lady has fainted."

Poor Judy, she had silently crumpled to the floor while the rest of us were concentrating on Roamer. But Sullivan had her stretched out on the sofa in a second, and a few whiffs of Dr. Dann's smelling salts opened her eyes and brought the color back to her cheeks.

"I thought he was going to kill you, Uncle Don," she said. "What happened?"

"Your damned Uncle Don staged the whole thing!" Sullivan said, but his voice had a laugh in it. "Every damned thing since he got Roamer's gun away from him." He looked at Roamer, lying on the floor, still trying to get his breath, his hands manacled. Then he took out his own handcuffs and put them on Roamer's ankles. "Lie there for a while, bum," he said. "And as for you, Miss Judy Thames, is it true what I heard Don say, that you knocked Roamer out with a piece of firewood?"

"You can admit it, Judy," I said. "And take all the credit you can while you're still young."

I saw that Sullivan was just about to credit her with a kiss, so I went over to where Roamer was lying and got the "Antonio Gardelli" wallet out of his pocket. The cards included a hunting license, two salesmen's cards, a card from a discount house, and an old commutation ticket. None of them had Tony's name on it.

"All right," Sullivan said, after he had finished kissing Judy and had also called his mother to tell her they would be very late. "I'd like to wind this thing all up in one telling,



right now. If there's anyone who is too sleepy to stay up and listen to Donald's story, I suppose he could go upstairs and go to bed. That doesn't apply to you, Roamer."

Roamer made an obscene suggestion.

"One more crack like that and I'll gag you by putting my big foot right in your big mouth," Sullivan said cheerfully. "Kicking your teeth in while I do it." Judy gave him an appreciative look, which he didn't miss. "Now, Donald, let's hear it all. I know darn well you have more to back up your story than it took to get Roamer to overplay his hand. We might even need a little more in court than that 'hear the cry of bats' routine. You want to give out with it?"

"Certainly," I said. "Otherwise I would go to bed, like you suggested, because I am one sleepy person. I suppose you'd like to have me unfold the whole sordid tale in chronological order."

"Why don't you just tell it in as few words as possible?" he suggested.

"I will," I promised, "but before I begin would any of you like to see the famous ten-pound plates, which nobody has found yet, and which are still where they have been all along?"

"Oh, yes," Judy said. "I would."

"Just wait until I finish the story then," I said.

## CHAPTER XXI

"I GUESS THE background part of the story, the way Roamer told it," I said, "is pretty close to the truth. I don't know if Tony Gardelli was an F.B.I. man or not. It doesn't make much difference, although I'll bet he wasn't.

"But four people came whooping down here from Boston, that's a cinch. Henri Grennet, I'll always believe, came to

warn me. Wusky Andrews and Billie Mataze came to rob me. Sam Roamer also came to rob me, and I think he got here first.

"Over there on my desk is a little notebook that Roamer dropped when he was here on Friday morning. It's all about me, and one of the interesting things is the description of the house and grounds. This description comes before the notes about his first visit to see me, on Thursday. In other words, he was here before I ever saw him. I think he was here in time to kill Henri. We can easily find out when he checked into the Banks Hotel. I should have done it myself.

"Let's assume for a minute that he made the footprints leading to Henri's body. That would have been Tuesday night. On Wednesday night Wusky Andrews gets hit by a car and killed. He was hit so hard that he was knocked out of his shoes. I was the first person there and I saw it. I ran back here to the house and reported the accident. Then I went out to the road and another man was bending over Wusky's body. That man spoke in a strained, high-pitched voice.

"That same voice called me at half past three this afternoon, and sent me off on a fool's errand to the Tombury Police Station. Later I just happened to be looking at the phone calls Roamer made from his hotel room. He called me at exactly three-thirty this afternoon.

"Roamer was out there when Wusky Andrews ran into a car and got killed, but I didn't see his car anywhere. I believe Wusky was running from Roamer. I also believe that Roamer switched shoes, leaving the ones that made the prints and taking Wusky's shoes away.

"I took those shoes and put them in the kitchen, for the police to pick up. Roamer comes to the house in the meantime, tells me he is an F.B.I. man, that he's against counterfeiting, and asks me to surrender the ten-pound plates. A pretty good scheme but I didn't give them up.

"I should have spotted him right then and there. If my



brain had been clicking, I'd have wondered why the F.B.I. was taking over the Secret Service's job of catching counterfeiters. But he told me he was and, like Julia, I believed him. And I had never seen an F.B.I. identification card before, so the one he showed me meant nothing.

"Roamer knew that Billie Mataze was in the house. She came in the room when he was there. Maybe he had also seen her out by the garbage can the night before. Maybe she tried to shake him down or threaten him. Anyhow, he came out that very night and killed her. Shot her with my gun. Then he found the shoes in the kitchen, put them on, carried Billy down to the pond and threw her in, and came back. He searched the house but didn't find anything. He was back the next morning, though, to see what was going on. Kilgore introduced him to Sullivan as a G-man, and John believed him too.

"Roamer pulled out his little notebook and said he was surprised, because he had never heard of me shooting anyone before. How the hell did he know that Mataze had been shot? Nobody had told him. He hadn't seen the body that morning.

"Judy and I went to Boston, and there I met Perry Patterson. As soon as I told him who I was and that Tony was going to help me find two men, he was in a great hurry to get away and telephone someone. I had to hold him by his arm to get a word in edgewise. Roamer got a call from Boston on Saturday morning. He called back. Check and see who he called, and that will be the person who killed Gardelli. Probably Patterson. Or maybe Roamer managed to get to Boston to kill Gardelli himself. I don't know and don't much care.

"Roamer didn't know how much Tony had told me, however. So he had to get rid of me. He put a bomb in my car, but I didn't use the car and he got so nervous waiting that he called me up, in that phony voice, and got me to get

in the car and drive to town. When I lived through that one he came out here tonight to kill me for sure.

"Lucky for me he didn't know Judy was in the house. She was in the kitchen. When Roamer and I went out the front door, she went out the back and let him have it with the firewood. He's surely a fake, he surely had a motive, he surely knew the other people who were killed around here, and he surely acted strangely here tonight.

"I think you can fit him into every single thing connected with the murders of Grennet, Andrews, and Mataze, and of Gardelli too."

"I'll buy that," Sullivan said. "If the Boston cops do too, you're free as a bird, Don. I'll give them a call right away. May I use your phone?"

"Sure," I said. He went to the back of the room and started calling.

"Gee, Uncle Don," Judy said, "it all seems so simple now that you explain it. When did you know?"

"When I wrote the telephone number down for you, just before Roamer came in." I pulled the slip of paper with the number on it from my pocket. "It wasn't until I saw it written down again that I remembered it was the same number Roamer had called this afternoon. After that everything fell into place."

Sullivan came back. "I think everything's being taken care of. Some of our men are on their way to the hotel to check Roamer's room and things like that. The hearing will be held this afternoon, and we'll all have to be there, including Roamer. Same place, same time, same cast, different ending than we had expected. Don," he said, holding out his hand, "I'm sorry I ever suspected you. How about—"

I took the big hand. "Skip it, John," I said. "I got no quarrel with professionals. We were both kind of foggy in spots, but there wasn't any great harm done. Drop in for a drink any evening when you have time and I'll tell you about my life and hard times in Europe."



"I still want to see those ten-pound plates before I die," Dr. Dann spoke up. "And I'm getting to be a fairly old man."

"There they are," I said. "On the mantle. Rolled up with the engraving on the inside, welded on the seam, stuck in a base and they become a simple pair of candlesticks. Feel down inside with your finger and you can feel the engraving. But you could never straighten them out and use them again—even if ten-pound notes were still in use."

It was after four o'clock when everyone got away. Judy went with Sullivan, after some other cops had come to take Roamer to the jail. I was all alone again, jiggling six revolver bullets in my hand and smoking my pipe. Then I picked up the telephone and called the Banks Hotel, and asked for room 418.

"Hi, sleepyhead," I said. "Pretend I'm there in bed with you and listen to the story I have to tell. That—"

"What do you want me to do, Don? Pretend or listen? I can't do both at the same time."

The hearing had been over for two weeks. Roamer had been indicted for murder. Judy had gone back home, Sullivan driving. Ivy had followed at a discreet distance, a mobile chaperon. I had a nice visit with Martha, but now I was back in the old house on Eddystone Road.

I dimly heard the car drive in the lane as I lay half awake and half asleep in my bed. I hoped that I didn't hear it and that it would go away. The heavy knocking at the front door killed that hope in a hurry. I rolled out, pulled on a robe, and went downstairs. It was about nine o'clock.

Kilgore was at the door. "Gee," he said, "did I wake you up?"

"No," I said. "I never sleep. Night and day, Ivy is alert and on the job. I'm just yawning and rubbing my eyes and wearing pajamas and a robe to make you *think* I was sleeping. Any more silly questions, Kilgore?"

"Aw, don't act like that, Don. I just dropped in to ask you a favor, sort of."

"Listen," I said. "I've done you a favor. I was all set to hang a rap on you, buster, but then my soft heart got the best of me. Come out here in the kitchen."

We walked out through the living room. "You going someplace, Don?" he asked, picking up a travel folder from the table.

"I'm going to Havana," I said. "Put it back." We walked into the kitchen and I reached into a drawer and picked up a small object and showed it to him. "You know what this is, Kilgore?"

"A button," he said.

"Yeah. A button from the sleeve of your sport jacket. The one you were wearing that night at the White Pheasant. Also the one you were wearing the night before when you searched this house without authority. Who the hell do you think you are, anyhow?" I flipped the button at him and walked back to the front door. "I haven't told anybody about this, Kilgore. That's the favor I'm doing you. Good-bye now."

His face was an embarrassed red. "Thanks, Mr. Ivy," he said. "I'm sorry for anything I ever said or thought about you."

"Skip it," I said. He started down the walk, but then turned back before I closed the front door completely.

"You haven't seen Terry anywhere, have you?" he asked. "She's quit her job at the hotel and checked out and she didn't go home. I've been wondering where she got to."

"You shouldn't ever let a girl like that out of your sight, son," I said.

"I guess you're right," he said, and started down the path again. I watched him get into his car and back out of the drive before I closed the door. Then I turned and looked up the stairway.

"Hey, Terry," I called. "How'd you like to have breakfast in bed again? I'll bring it up in about ten minutes."



*Everywhere you go, whether in New York, San Francisco, or Provo, Utah, people are saying good things about*

## **ACE DOUBLE NOVELS**

"The best bargains on the newsstands." . . . Two full-length novels for a price that nobody else can beat. Among the latest leaders in our mystery and detective books are:

- D-147 PROWL COP** by Gregory Jones  
He had a wandering wife!  
and **MY PRIVATE HANGMAN** by Norman Herries  
It was either the gallows—or the goon.
- D-149 A RUN FOR THE MONEY** by Dale Clark  
Woman in a killer's deep freeze.  
and **THE THIN EDGE OF MANIA** by Mark Macklin  
X Marks the Bride.
- D-157 NEVER SAY NO TO A KILLER** by Jonathan Gant  
A room with a view—of the morgue!  
and **STAB IN THE DARK** by Louis Trimble  
Was he wolf, lion—or lamb?
- D-177 THE GIRL IN THE COP'S POCKET**  
by Robert Turner  
Was she headed for a headline or a headstone?  
and **VIOLENCE IS GOLDEN** by C. H. Thames  
Undersea target for sudden death!

**35¢ per number**

If your newsdealer is sold out, order from Ace Books (Sales Dept.), 23 West 47th St., New York 36, N. Y. Enclose 5¢ additional per double-book to cover mailing costs.

*Order by book number*