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NIGHT EXTRA



Crooked politics and
twisted passions explode
into murder and a
terrifying frame-up!



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**WILLIAM P.
McGIVERN**
Author of
THE #7 FILE

PAYOFF

Newspaperman Sam Terrell walked across the floor of the night club and into the blonde's dressing room.

He had a few questions to ask her—about a murder.

"If I told you something you could use," she said, "what would I get out of it?"

"I think we might make a deal."

"How much?" she asked.

Before Terrell could answer, the door crashed open and two men walked in. One of them grabbed Terrell's arm. "We'll escort you to your car," he said.

Outside, in the darkened parking lot, one of the men held Terrell's hands behind him. The other drove a murderous punch into the reporter's stomach, then another . . . and another. . . .

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NIGHT EXTRA

WILLIAM P. McGIVERN



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NEW YORK**

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NIGHT EXTRA

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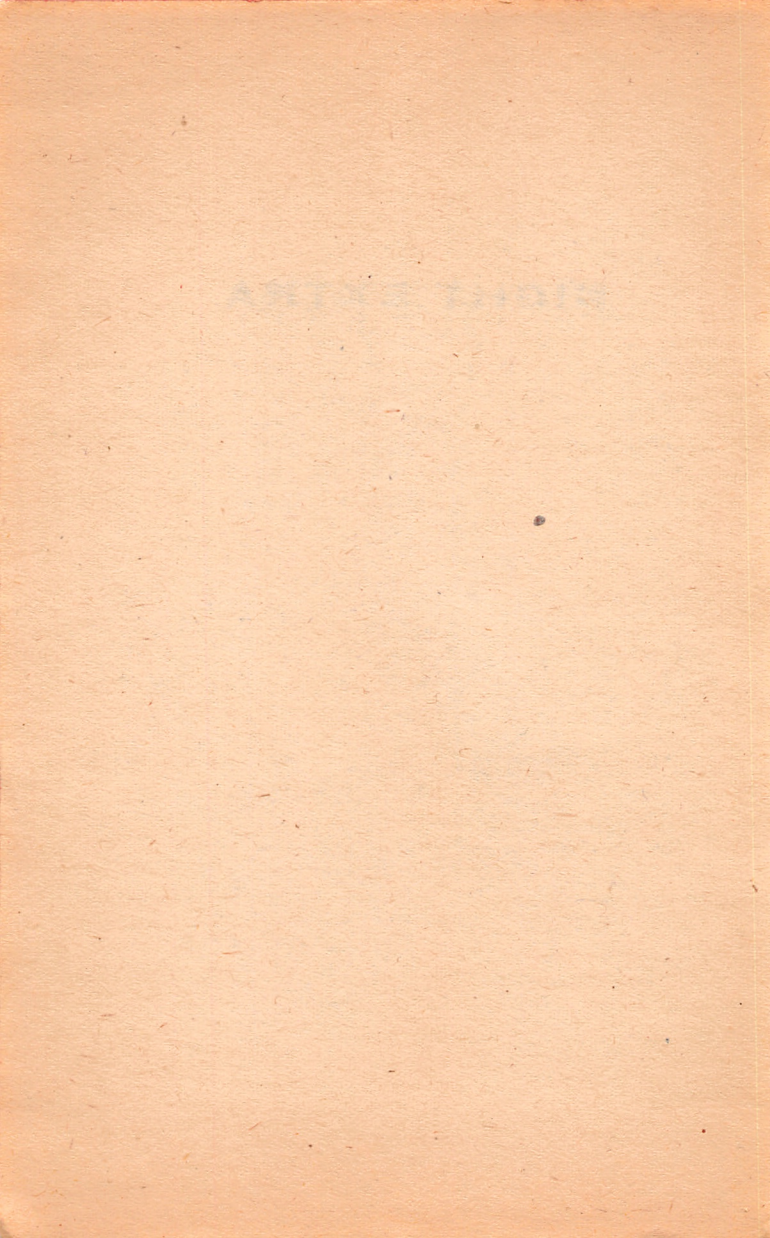
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NIGHT EXTRA



THE *Call-Bulletin's* first deadline was at nine o'clock in the morning and by eight fifty-five everyone in the long brightly lighted city room was working under the insistent pressure of time. Reporters and rewriters paused every now and then to check the clock above the city desk, pacing themselves by the steady sweep of the illuminated second hand.

Sam Terrell didn't look up from the typewriter when the phone rang; he finished the item for his column, then lifted the receiver.

The voice in his ear said, "I've got something for Terrell. Is he around?"

"This is Terrell."

"Answer your own phone, eh? Keeping the common touch?"

"Who's this?"

"It doesn't matter, Sam. What matters is I got something for you on Caldwell, our lily-white reform candidate." The tipster's voice was husky, and his inflection was heavily ironic. Terrell's interest picked up; with elections two weeks off, almost anything on Caldwell had a priority value.

The edition was only seconds away from deadline now; a bell rang warningly and rewriters began shouting for copy boys. The atmosphere of noisy confusion was deceptive; beneath that the work went on with routine skill and precision.

"Okay, let's have it," Terrell said, holding the receiver tightly against his ear.

Ollie Wheeler, whose desk was beside Terrell's, chose that moment to say, "Sam, a bank wouldn't lend this paper a nickel. It's nothing but organized hysteria. Look, we're on deadline and they've got a head-on collision with both cars travelling in the same direction. Neatest trick of the week, eh?"

Terrell covered his phone and stared at the old man. "For

God's sake, shut up!" he said. Terrell was tall and nervous, and when he was working he usually looked mad; now his cheeks were flushed and his eyes were sharp with irritation. "Can't you knock it off for a second?"

Ollie said, "Judah Priest, temperament yet," and turned angrily back to his newspaper.

Terrell said into the phone, "I'm sorry, but this connection is bad. Could I call you back?"

"I'm at a drugstore, so calling back wouldn't tell you much. Be content with the tip, Sam. Don't worry about me. Now: you know Eden Myles?"

Terrell did, slightly; she was a singer, the friend of a minor hoodlum named Frankie Chance. "I know the lady," he said.

"Lady?" The tipster made a clicking noise with his tongue. "Okay, have it your way. Well, she's been huddling with Richard Caldwell for the last month or so. Five or six times, all on the quiet. But somebody saw her easing into his hotel suite. Somebody always does. You run this down and you got a story."

Terrell reached for his cigarettes, feeling a pleasurable excitement growing in him. "Anybody else know about this?"

"Just you and me, sweetheart."

"I'd like to buy you a drink," Terrell said. "Thank you formally."

"Never mind. I'm off the sauce anyway. Good luck, Sam."

"Wait a minute," Terrell said, but the phone was dead. He jiggled the hook automatically, then put the receiver down. Rich Caldwell and Eden Myles—it was an incongruous combination. Caldwell was the high-minded idealist, called to politics by duty and conscience. And Eden Myles was a small-time tramp. Singer, hostess, model, all of it small time. Even Frankie Chance was small time.

"Ollie," Terrell said. "Ollie, what do you think of Rich Caldwell?"

"You have a moment for the peasants, eh?" Wheeler was hurt, Terrell saw; the old man was staring straight ahead, giving him the benefit of a hard, severe profile. Terrell wondered how to coax him into good humor. Wheeler was a souvenir of the paper's more vigorous days, a cynical old man who drank too much and was in debt to half the men in the

building. Mike Karsh, the *Call-Bulletin's* managing editor, kept him working out of a perverse and inconsistent sentimentality. Ollie took one or two stories a day, a local fire or a service club luncheon, and spent the rest of his time picking out examples of bad writing and sloppy reporting from the paper's news columns. Williams, the city editor, had shifted his desk into the comparative tranquility of Terrell's corner. This kept him out of everyone's hair but Terrell's.

"I'm sorry I popped off," Terrell said. "But my connection was bad."

"The column's the important thing," Ollie said. "Don't let such trifles as courtesy or good manners ever come first. Remember that. You're young but in time you'll be like everyone else on this rag—one of Mike Karsh's journalistic thugs, literary bully boys, ready for—"

"Say, that's good," Terrell said, with a perfectly straight face. "Literary bully boys!" He repeated the phrase in a soft, respectful voice. "Using typewriters instead of machine guns, you could say. How do you toss off gems like that, Ollie?"

"Go to hell, you sarcastic sonofabitch." Ollie grinned at him, a frail old man with gray hair and sharp aristocratic features. "What was the call that got you excited?"

"Someone trying to peddle a story on Caldwell. What do you think of him, Ollie? Seriously."

"Seriously? That's damn near impossible."

"What's funny about him?"

"He's a reformer. He's given up a highly profitable law practice to run for mayor of this benighted town. And he's got about as much political savvy as a sophisticated girl scout. The machine will eat him alive and not even spit back the bones. Is that funny enough?" Wheeler grinned but his eyes were melancholy. "Or do you want bladder comedians, yet?"

"Supposing he wins?"

"Don't be ridiculous."

"I've covered his rallies," Terrell said. "He draws a crowd."

"College kids. They can't vote. Seriously, Sam, it can't happen. Men like Ike Cellars, Mayor Ticknor—do you think they'll let this piece of cake fall into somebody else's fingers?"

"You're a cynic."

"I have a capacity to see what's under my nose. If that's being cynical, fine."

Terrell leaned back in his chair and lit a cigarette. Eden Myles and Rich Caldwell . . . The pressure had eased now that the first edition was in. Reporters and editors drifted down the long room toward the lavatory or water coolers. Only one or two typewriters pecked with a virtuous sound against the comparative silence. Copy boys went from desk to desk taking orders for coffee, bacon and egg sandwiches, cigarettes and aspirin. The tension would start building again in half an hour or so, as stories and pictures for the next edition, the Postscript, were phoned and wired into the city room. In the welcome silence Terrell smoked his cigarette in peace. From his corner he had a view of the rewrite section, the copy wheel, and Mike Karsh's huge, glass-walled office, which dominated both arms of the L-shaped city room. He was still thinking about Eden Myles and Rich Caldwell, and he knew he was after something good. He didn't bother to analyze or question his intuitions; he just accepted them as facts. They stemmed from his experience as a reporter, his awareness of the significant differences and alliances within the framework of men who ran the city. One set of shiftings and regroupings might leave him cold, another would alert him instantly. And he was alerted by the combination of Eden Myles and Rich Caldwell. Because Eden Myles had been Frankie Chance's girl friend. And because Frankie Chance worked for Ike Cellars . . .

Terrell walked down the room and took a chair at the city desk. Williams nodded to him and said, "How's the pundit business?"

"Haven't sold a pundit all week. Must be the seasonal lag." Three other men were seated at the long rectangular desk: Nelly, a youngster with brush-cut hair, Poole, Williams' top assistant editor, and Frank Tuckerman, a huge and gentle man who dispatched the paper's legmen and radio cars. Now he was hunched close to the police speaker at the end of the desk, his ear automatically selecting significant data from the welter of reports, orders, and code numbers that spluttered endlessly through the air. A fire in the Northeast was developing into something important; the battalion chief had called for an

ambulance, and the gas company was ordering out its emergency equipment to handle a leakage in the adjoining building. Williams caught the last order and glanced at Tuckerman. "Where is it?"

"Corner of Olney and the river," Tuckerman said. "A warehouse with a convent across the street. I've got two men on the way out there."

"What kind of a convent?"

"Sort of home away from home for wayward girls," Tuckerman said.

Poole looked at Terrell. "I read your piece on Caldwell's neighborhood rallies. You think the crowds are on the level? The college kids, the housewives, the quote little people unquote—are they sold on Caldwell, or do they go out just to lose themselves in the commotion and noise?"

"They look sensible to me," Terrell said.

"Nobody who stands listening to a politician is sensible," Nelly said.

"Don't qualify everything so much," Terrell said. He had always known Nelly was a jerk. "Have the courage to generalize." He turned to Tuckerman, who was idle for a moment. "Do you know Frankie Chance, Tuck?"

"Just not to speak to," Tuckerman said in his soft whispering voice. "He's a snotty little punk. Does odd jobs for Ike Cellars. Runs Ike's zipper when Ike is tired. But he's no clown."

"How about his girl, Eden Myles?"

"I heard they had a row, a month or so ago. She's been working in Ike's club, The Mansions. Still is, I guess. But she had a split with Frankie. She's a pretty cute dish, Sam. She was arrested a few years ago for driving her car along the sidewalk on Astor Place. We used a picture of her taking a swing at old Jim Corrigan down at the Twenty-Sixth District."

"How the hell do you remember all those details?" Poole said.

Tuckerman smiled faintly. "It's like breathing. Some nights I lie awake and I find names and addresses crowding into my mind—stories going back twenty years. Accidents, fires, shootings, and lots of little stuff. Jennie Edwards, age 9, 2123 East Seventy-Third Street, taken to St. Jerome's Hospital and

treated for dogbite. Hell, Jennie Edwards has kids of her own now. It's quite a legacy, isn't it? A handful of local news stories." The police speaker cracked and another alarm sounded for the warehouse fire. "That's three," Williams said, glancing up at the clock. He turned to Poole. "We'll want as much as we can get for the Postscript. Let's see how we can make room on page one. That fire is a big one."

"The foreign aid story can go inside," Poole said. "It's served its purpose."

"Sent the blood pressure up at the Merchants' Club at any rate. Okay . . ."

Terrell envied them in a way. They had definite hour-by-hour demands on their skills and energy. They caught the news on the run and packaged it competently for the public's effortless consumption. Terrell had worked with them for eight years, and then Mike Karsh had called him in to tell him he would take over Kehoe's column when the old man retired to his farm to raise chickens. Karsh had been at his desk, beautifully groomed as always, and giving the impression that he had a dozen more important things on his mind. Everyone who talked to him had the uneasy feeling he had been squeezed into a very tight schedule.

"It's a piece of blank paper on page-three," Karsh had said, glancing up at him with sudden intensity. "It's blank paper, mind you, about the size of your two hands. But multiply that space a half million times—our circulation as of this morning—and you've got a piece of paper big enough to sky-write on. Get me? You'll stand in a pulpit taller than any skyscraper in the city. I want you to do a good job. I think you will. You've learned this raunchy trade of ours pretty well."

"Most of it from you, Mike."

"That's right." Karsh had smiled up at him then, and Terrell had the feeling he was going to say something else. But Karsh changed his mind. Reaching for his phone he had said, "Well, that's all, Sam. Good luck."

"Thanks, Mike." There was a bond between them, but Terrell knew Karsh was far too fastidious to attempt to put it into words.

Now Terrell glanced over his shoulder toward Karsh's glass-walled office. He would have liked to get his opinion on the

tip he had just received, but Karsh was in conference with Max Ryerson, his sports editor, and a professional golfer who had signed to do a series for the *Call-Bulletin's* syndicate. Karsh was dominating both men, Terrell could see; he went on like this for sixteen hours a day, more like a battery of pure energy than a fallible human being.

Tuckerman sat down beside Terrell and dropped a huge arm over his shoulder. "When are you coming back to work for us?"

"And give up my freedom? I'm through for the day, and you'll be pulling that car for another seven hours."

"You work like a dog, and the column shows it."

"You mean that?"

"Sure, I mean it. It's good." Tuckerman glanced down at the silent police speaker, then lit a cigarette. "About Frankie Chance. He's strictly bush, but he's dangerous."

"I'm not doing a Mafia story."

"Listen, chum, this big shining toy is going up for grabs on election day. People will get stepped on in the general crush. Make sure you're on the sidelines."

"If I need a bodyguard, I'll yell."

"Good boy." Tuckerman winked comically at him, then lumbered back to his chair beside the police speaker.

Terrell picked up his hat and coat, left word at the switchboard that he was going out, and then cabbed across town to the Vanderbilt Hotel, where Caldwell had installed his campaign headquarters. There was something symbolic in this choice, Terrell thought. The Vanderbilt was uncompromisingly plain, innocent of chromium plate or neon signs, an old-fashioned place, true to an honest and straightforward tradition. The city itself had been that way too, decades ago, solid and sturdy, consistent with the characters of the sea captains and merchants who had built her into one of the nation's major ports. But the city and the old Vanderbilt had damn little in common at the moment, Terrell thought.

Caldwell's campaign headquarters were on the third floor, in an ornate ballroom with mirrored walls, gold columns and a gilt ceiling that was fantastically cluttered with carved cherubs and cupids. A dozen or so college girls sat at card tables distributing campaign leaflets, lapel buttons and auto-

mobile stickers to anyone who wanted them. They might have been stamped from a press, Terrell thought; cashmere sweaters, single strand of pearls, tweed skirt and loafers—and all burning with conviction and self-sacrifice. Mayor Ticknor had called them “Caldwell’s Virgins” and someone else had said, “Ward heelers or round heelers, take your choice.” However you took them, they were a potent force, Terrell knew, these dead-serious college girls.

Caldwell’s photograph was at both ends of the room, smiling self-consciously down on his busy volunteer workers. He was a handsome man, forty-five or forty-seven, with even features, a good jaw, and mild, intelligent eyes. There was nothing distinctive in this picture; except for a lock of hair that had got out of place, he looked a bit like a bank teller or the high-minded agent in a life insurance advertisement. In person he was more formidable, Terrell knew. Something simple and honest and stubborn went from the man to his audience. Terrell had seen and felt this happen. They should have tried for a better picture, he thought, something more informal and engaging. But Caldwell’s advisers were all dedicated amateurs. They went about their jobs bluntly and awkwardly. They scorned tricks. They were sold so completely on Caldwell that they didn’t bother selling him to the people.

One of the girls came over to him with a button for his lapel, but Terrell smiled and told her no thanks. He gave her his name and asked for Caldwell.

“Mr. Caldwell’s not here right now, but please don’t go away. I know Mr. Sarnac will want to see you. He handles the press for us.”

“Well, good for him,” Terrell said.

“Now don’t go away.” She hurried off, her pony-tail bobbing with excitement, and several of the girls looked Terrell over with what he rather hoped was a new interest.

In a few seconds a small man came through a door at the end of the room, and hurried toward Terrell. They shook hands, introduced themselves, and Sarnac asked him to come into his office. “We can relax out of this traffic,” he said, laughing a bit too quickly. “There’s always a mob up here. Remember that for your story. Good little touch, eh? It’s what you’d call color, I guess.”

Amateurs, Terrell thought, as he followed Sarnac into a cloakroom that had been put to use as an office. Filing cabinets and desks took up one wall and campaign pictures of Caldwell were piled high on a table under the windows. Rolls of election posters were stacked in a corner.

"What can I do for you, Mr. Terrell? Just sit down anywhere." Sarnac bustled about removing leaflets from a straight-backed chair and piling them on the floor. "Here, sit down, please. We don't have very formal appointments, I'm afraid. However, we're not complaining." He smiled rather wistfully at Terrell, an unimpressive little man with dark hair and a sallow complexion; in his gray sack suit and rimless glasses he could lose himself quickly and effortlessly in any crowded street in America.

"How do you fit into this set-up?" Terrell asked him.

Sarnac seemed somewhat flustered by the question. "Me? Why I'm Mr. Caldwell's press secretary. And I've worked on the campaign booklets, radio and TV announcements and so forth."

"Are you on a regular salary?"

"No, I'm on leave from Union College for this semester." Sarnac looked puzzled now. "But I thought you wanted to talk about Mr. Caldwell."

"Perhaps I was being irrelevant," Terrell said. There had been nothing accidental in his approach; he wanted Sarnac off balance. "Would you go back to college if Caldwell were elected? Or stick with him?" He took out his cigarettes and looked around for an ashtray.

"I'm not sure—I haven't really made up my mind yet. Here, use this, please," Sarnac said, pushing a saucer toward Terrell. "Ashtrays disappear in the most mysterious fashion around here."

"Thanks. Now tell me about Eden Myles," Terrell said. "I know she's been seeing Caldwell. But I'd like the rest of the story." He smiled at the stricken look on Sarnac's face. "There are no secrets in a political campaign. Not for long, at any rate."

Sarnac stood and removed his glasses. "I haven't the faintest notion what you're talking about. Not the faintest."

Terrell smoked his cigarette and let the silence stretch

tightly across the dusty little room. Sarnac replaced his glasses and sat down behind his desk. "You heard me! I don't know where you came across this absurd rumor, but I can assure you it's completely false."

"Now, please," Terrell said in a pained voice.

"I have no further comment. None at all."

"You deny categorically that Caldwell and Eden Myles have been—in conference?"

"I deny nothing. I make no comment at all."

"That's too bad." Terrell smiled and got to his feet.

"One moment. Would you mind telling me where you heard this story?"

"I would mind very much. However, since it's not true, what difference does it make?"

Sarnac came around his desk, frowning unhappily at Terrell. "We seem to have got off on the wrong foot. I didn't mean to antagonize you. But you simply can't use this preposterous rumor in your column."

"I don't think it's just a rumor," Terrell said. "And I think it will make a nice item. Incomplete, speculative, but interesting."

"You can't—"

"Listen to me, Sarnac. Every fifty dollar a week press agent knows what I'm going to tell you. You can't keep news out of newspapers. Good, bad, a break for one side, a knee in the groin to the other—it goes in. And all you can do is hope your client's name is spelled right."

Sarnac was visibly disturbed; his face was white and there were tiny blisters of perspiration on his upper lip. "This is a very serious matter," he said. "Could I talk to you off the record?"

"No," Terrell said. "I'm not a bartender or a cab driver. I don't listen to gossip for the fun of it. I'm a reporter. What I hear I use."

"You're very tough and shrewd, aren't you? A typical product of the *Call-Bulletin* and Mike Karsh."

"You can forget Mike Karsh," Terrell said. "And you can skip the high moral tone. You're trying to make a deal. You'll tell the truth but only if I don't use it. Isn't that your proposition?"

"I didn't mean it that way," Sarnac said wearily. "You don't seem to want to discuss this. You just want to fight about it."

"I'll tell you what," Terrell said, smiling slightly. "You convince me I'll get a better story by waiting a few days—then we'll stop fighting."

"Yes, I can do that," Sarnac said. "I'll give you everything, the background, the details. Then you'll see that the important story is still in the making. Sit down, please." Sarnac rubbed his hands together nervously. "I'm telling you this on my own responsibility. Mr. Caldwell is speaking in Borough Hall this morning, and I'm not sure I could get through to him. Also, I wouldn't care to discuss it on the phone." Sarnac cleared his throat and glanced at the door behind Terrell. Then he said, "Eden Myles called us six weeks ago. She had information concerning the incumbent administration, Mayor Ticknor and Ike Cellars—and she wanted us to have it. We arranged a meeting between her and Mr. Caldwell, in a suite at the Armbruster Hotel. Since then they have had five more conferences. Now, you can see—"

"Just one second. Has he been meeting her alone?"

Sarnac smiled. "We're naive and innocent people who shouldn't be allowed out after dark. This is Mayor Ticknor's idea, at any rate. However, we're not completely stupid. Every time Eden Myles has talked to Mr. Caldwell there have been witnesses present—men and women of unimpeachable reputation. Also, every conversation between them has been recorded on tape."

"One other thing. Does Eden want money for her information?"

"No. She seems to want revenge. I gather that she'd had a split with her—steady friend, a man by the name of Frankie Chance. He works for Ike Cellars. Eden wants to pay them off, it seems."

"And what sort of information is she producing? Anything good?"

"Not at first. And we weren't too hopeful. It seemed to us she imagined she knew a great deal simply because she had accompanied a variety of notorious characters to the track and to nightclubs. But then, under our questioning, her memory sharpened. She began to dredge up more significant informa-

tion. This dredging-up process has been going on for six weeks now, and the bucket is coming up with—I seem involved suddenly in metaphor—well, it's coming up thicker and thicker all the time."

"And what's it going to prove?" Terrell asked him. "That Ike Cellars runs the rackets in town, that Ticknor has been re-elected for years by fraudulent registration in the river wards? That there's graft in high places?"

"None of that strikes you as newsworthy?"

"It's fairly common knowledge," Terrell said. He got to his feet. "But we've made a deal. If this girl comes up with evidence, I'll be surprised. But I'll be glad to use it. And here's a bit of free advice. Watch out for booby traps."

"We can manage, thanks."

Terrell hesitated at the door. Something was puzzling him; this inept and rather pompous little man, the girls outside, the revival meeting atmosphere—it bothered him. He said bluntly to Sarnac, "What are you going to get out of this?"

"I want to live in a clean city," Sarnac said. "To put it negatively, I don't want to live under an Ike Cellars—Mayor Shaw Ticknor axis, with the moral deterioration they've brought to our community. I don't want my children to grow up as cynics, sneering at conventional virtues and tolerating the fact that honesty and hard work mean nothing at all in the management of our public affairs."

"You won't start any arguments with those ideas," Terrell said. "I imagine you're all for displaying the flag on the Fourth of July and keeping marijuana out of the public schools."

Sarnac didn't answer Terrell immediately. He studied him for a few seconds, a thoughtful little frown on his face. Finally he said, "Yes, I suppose I'm a figure of fun to you. But let me tell you something. I've been a professor of history for eighteen years, and I know a little of what happens to societies which come to regard decadence as just a good joke. I spent eighteen years explaining to generally uninterested young women what went wrong with Rome and Athens, how they lost the big things that made their societies not just beautiful but good. Well, I got tired of talking about the evil that flourished a couple of thousand years ago in Athens and Rome. We've got the same problems here, now. I didn't wake up until I

heard Caldwell giving chapter and verse on the thugs running this city. That night I applied for leave, and told my wife the trip to Europe we'd planned for a dozen years was off indefinitely." Sarnac took out cigarettes but his fingers were trembling so badly that he couldn't manage to strike a match. "I'm sorry for lecturing you," he said. "It's a bad habit of mine."

"Maybe so," Terrell said. He snapped his lighter and held the flame to Sarnac's cigarette. "Maybe not."

2

IN the hotel lobby Terrell looked up Eden Myles' address in the telephone directory: Apartment 9, Gray Gates Development. He went out into the cold, honey-colored sunlight, and waved to a cab.

The Gray Gates Development was new and elegant and expensive; ten minutes from center-city, its leaded windows and Tudor gables faced a shining loop of the Elmtree River and a range of low hills that rolled like big, soft animals along the horizon. The main building was set reverently in the middle of a dozen wooded acres, and looked more like an English country house than a functional beehive equipped with television sets, garbage disposal units, and a corps of smartly uniformed elevator operators and maintenance men. The wings of the main building bounded a common green lawn, laced with gravelled walks and beyond this was a swimming pool, tennis courts and sun decks. There was little you couldn't buy at Gray Gates, Terrell knew. Masseurs and masseuses, therapeutic baths and pine-scented steam rooms, a choice of intimate and excellent bars and lounges—and most importantly, Terrell thought as he entered the lobby, a warm and quilted sense of privacy. Gamblers kept apartments here for big poker games, and businessmen checked in occasionally for discreet drinking bouts. More was kept here than apartments, of course; girls with mink stoles and toy poodles were fauna native to Gray Gates.

Terrell rapped on Eden Myles' door and a girl's voice said, "Just a second, I'm almost decent."

"Don't fuss on my account." Terrell lit a cigarette and dropped the match in a sand-filled vase beside the elevator. A few seconds later the door was opened by a blond girl wearing brief white summer shorts and a man-styled yellow

shirt. She smiled up at him while she knotted it snugly about her waist.

"You want Eden, I imagine. My name is Connie Blacker and I just checked in last night." She was beautifully tanned, and her hair was bleached lightly from the sun. She wore it short and it fitted her head like a jagged little cap. Without make-up her face had the deceptively innocent appeal of a very small boy's.

"And when will Eden be back?" Terrell asked her.

"I don't know. She left while I was still in bed." The girl hesitated, smiling doubtfully at him. "Should I ask you to come in?"

"Well, it would be a nice gesture."

"She didn't leave me any guest list. Are you friends?"

"Yes, but we've kept it quiet for the sake of the children." He smiled. "My name's Terrell, Sam Terrell. I work for a newspaper in town."

"You know, you look like a reporter. Most newspapermen I've met could pass for cops. But you've got a—I don't know—a kind of interesting, unhealthy look."

"I've always hoped someone would notice that," Terrell said, walking with her into the living room. The view from there was dramatic; through the big picture window he could see bleak maple trees, then stands of evergreen, and behind them the dark, rolling foothills. Gray Gates faced away from the city, turning its back to work and noise and dirt. The furniture in the long room blazed with color, yellow, magentas, smart tones of brown and green.

"Would you like coffee?" she asked him. "It's fresh."

"Thanks."

"Could we have it in the kitchen? Then I can go on with my ironing. I just got off the bus last night and everything I own needs my tender loving care."

"I like kitchens, as a matter of fact. It's where my family spent half its time. Ate there except Sundays, drank beer there on Saturday nights."

He followed her down a hallway to the kitchen, and took a seat at a counter that ran out flush from the range and broiler unit. Everything in sight was automatic, self-operating,

studded with rheostats, gauges and clocks. To his inexperienced eyes it looked very formidable.

"Ours wasn't much like this," he said. "We had a wood stove and a pump."

"Ah, a farm boy."

"That's right. Iowa. Corn farm."

She smiled at him. "Are you serious? I'm from Davenport."

"The big city, eh? Is that where you met Eden?"

"Uh-huh." She put a cup of coffee beside him on the counter, and bowls of cream and sugar. "I won a band audition in my first year at college, and that was good for a month's work at a local club. Eden was working there, too. She was wonderful to me, and told me to keep in touch. So I did. Eden kept insisting I should go back to college, but—" She moved to a narrow aluminum ironing board and picked up a blouse from a little pile of rolled-up garments. "Well, so here I am. Hanging onto Eden's apron strings. She thinks I might get a job at The Mansions."

"Singing?"

"Well, yes. I'm not awfully good, but I stay on key. And older men like me. That's important, I think."

"Yes, indeed," Terrell said, nodding soberly. She was busy with her ironing, and he realized that he had never seen a pair of more beautiful legs. Even in loafers they looked wonderful; slim and smooth and brown, with light muscles that played gracefully when she lifted her feet.

"Do you know Mr. Cellars?" she said.

"Ike Cellars? Just slightly."

She turned and looked at him. "Why do you say it like that?"

"My voice quivered with respect. That's all. Have you met him?"

"No, but Eden says she'll arrange it."

Terrell's intuitions began to work. "Have you met Frankie?" he asked casually.

"Frankie Chance? Just for a second last night. He came in for a drink—it must have been pretty late."

Terrell smiled faintly. Eden's break with Frankie obviously had been repaired. Or had there ever been a break?

Terrell glanced at his watch and got to his feet. "Thanks for the coffee, Connie, but I've got to get going. Tell Eden I stopped by, will you?"

"No message?"

"I'll give her a ring later."

It was then that they heard the clatter of high heels in the front foyer. Connie said, "Here she is. It's a good thing you waited."

"It's my lucky day," Terrell said.

The high heels came down the hallway and Eden Myles pushed open the swinging door to the kitchen. "Connie, were there any calls for—" She stopped, staring at Terrell.

"Hello, Eden," he said. "We were just having our coffee break. It's something the unions got for us."

"What do you want, Sam?" She glanced at Connie, suspicion sharpening her eyes. "What was he snooping around here for?"

Connie said, "He told me you were friends."

"That's very funny. Newspapermen are a notch below cops in my form book. Okay, what did you want?"

"Coffee," Terrell said. "Like a cup, Eden? It's wonderful."

"What do you want?" She didn't relax. She stood tall and angry, her flat model's figure framed effectively in the doorway. The contrast between the two girls was remarkable, Terrell thought. Eden was a striking brunette, with a face made for fashion magazines, drawn, gaunt and dramatic. She wore a black suit with a stand-up collar, and only one piece of jewelry, a heavy silver bracelet on her left wrist. Beside her Connie looked like an urchin—a clean urchin with beautifully shaped legs.

Terrell said casually, "What are you seeing Caldwell for, Eden? That's what I stopped to check on."

Eden took it very well; she stared at him for at least ten seconds in silence, and then she said, "Would you go now? I've got things to do."

"Won't talk, eh? No comment." Terrell lit a cigarette. "That's what Sarnac said at first. But he finally gave in. I'm not using the story until I get his okay, Eden. I just wanted background."

"Get out of herel!"

Terrell said, "Okay, Eden, if that's the way you want it." He studied her for a second or so, and then shook his head slowly. "I don't get it," he said. "You're a handsome woman, very elegant, very lovely."

"I didn't know you cared," she said drily.

"When Ike Cellars finds out that you've been indiscreet, you won't enjoy looking at yourself in mirrors any more. Has that occurred to you?"

"Get out, I said."

Terrell tossed her a little salute and walked down the hall into the living room. Connie ran after him and caught his arm before he reached the door. "Please don't go," she said. "She's frightened about something. She wants to talk to you, I know."

Terrell said, "Listen!" They could hear Eden's footsteps in the hallway. "Psychology," he said.

"You're a good bit of a heel."

"That's just a majority opinion."

Eden entered the living room looking weary and beaten; the proud tension was gone from her body, and all of her careful grooming couldn't conceal the fear in her face.

"I'm sorry," she said. "Can't we play the scene over with a little less volume?"

"Let's try," he said.

"I've been talking to Caldwell," she said. She sat down on a huge yellow ottoman and crossed her slender legs at the ankles. She turned her face away from Terrell. "I wanted to pay-off Frankie Chance because he—well, there's no point going into that. It was a stupid, bitchy thing to do—I know that. But after I got started it seemed the right thing to do. That sounds corny, doesn't it? But it happens to be true. Maybe you don't know Caldwell. He's an honest man, and he's big and gentle and straight." She shrugged and smiled. "More corn, I know. But that's it, Sam. I fell for the guy. In a funny way. I respect him and I want him to respect me. What will Ike Cellars do? I don't know. I can't say I'm not afraid. But I'm going ahead with it. He can't stop me, Sam."

"He may not be in a position to," Terrell said thoughtfully. "But tell me this, Eden: do you have anything specific and serious to tag him with? Names, dates, documents, witnesses—that's what you need. Gossip and guesses are manufactured

on street corners every hour on the hour. They don't hurt Cellars or Ticknor."

"I've got things that will hurt them."

"What?"

"It's for Caldwell. What he does with it is up to him."

Terrell was silent for a few seconds. Then he said, "Well, I wish you both luck. You deserve a medal, Eden. You may never get it, but you deserve it just the same."

"Sure, sure," she said.

Terrell smiled at Connie, "Could I buy you a cup of coffee sometime?"

"Watch for me round the automat," she said coldly.

"So long then, girls."

Terrell rode down to the lobby feeling depressed and irritable. Something was wrong. The whole business stank. Dramatic revelations inspired first by vengeance, then a growing sense of duty and virtue—Eden's act was a script-writer's dream, preposterously pat.

But who was being cast as the fall guy? That's what Terrell wanted to know.

Terrell cabbed back to the paper and ate lunch at his desk while he worked out the first draft of his next day's column. When he had it in shape he called Mike Karsh, whom he could see sitting in his office leafing through the latest edition. Karsh said hello, then turned and waved to him. "Come on in," he said. "I've got a minute."

"I need at least ten, Mike."

"What's up?"

"A story, a good one. I'd like your reaction to it."

"Look, Sam: let's have a quiet dinner tonight. Steak, beer, apple pie. We'll kick things around. All right?"

"Fine. Where?"

"Let's make it the Ridgeland, about eight. Okay?"

"See you then." Dinner at the Ridgeland wouldn't be a quiet affair, but if Karsh wanted to kid himself, Terrell didn't mind; he felt he understood Karsh's needs.

3

THE Ridgeland was a new hotel in center-city that catered to people with expensive tastes and important connections. Karsh lived here and Terrell wondered how he stood it, both financially and esthetically. The tariff was outrageously high, but Karsh enjoyed extravagance; he liked to feel that he was spending his money brilliantly and pointlessly. He saved nothing, sneered at market tips, and could drop twice Terrell's monthly check in one bet at the track.

The management of the Ridgeland treated him like solvent royalty. They had knocked together two suites to give him a four room apartment on the twentieth floor, and had installed a bar, kitchenette, a barbecue pit for the balcony, and practically wall-to-wall television. All of this seemed to amuse Karsh. He had only to glance around to reassure himself that he wasn't spending his money sensibly.

Esthetically, Karsh's tolerance for the Ridgeland and its clients bewildered Terrell. He was a mark for every shill, tipster and peddler who hung out in the place. Now, as Terrell paused in the entrance to the dining room, he saw that Karsh had already been attacked by supplicants—a syndicate salesman, a gambler and two press agents had joined him at his regular corner table. They weren't bad sorts, Terrell knew, just greedy—slavering for a bite at the still-fat carcass of Mike Karsh.

George, the headwaiter, led him across the dance floor, and Karsh grinned when he stopped beside the table. "Find a seat, Sam. Our quiet little dinner has turned into a convention." Karsh wore a dark gray suit of beautiful cut, a white linen shirt and a neatly figured blue silk tie. He looked very distinguished and slightly drunk; his thick gray hair and deeply tanned features were elegantly handsome, but his smile was lopsided and weary. The humor in his face was

touched with cynicism; his expression, though blurred with liquor, was that of a man who was truly puzzled by the whole idea of laughter.

Terrell sat down beside him, and George, the headwaiter, said, "You want to order yet, Mr. Karsh? Or do you intend to keep us in suspense?"

"Go water your whiskey," Karsh said. "I'll whistle when we're ready."

"Like a dog yet he whistles for me." The trademark of the Ridgeland and its clients was the reflexive wisecrack, the smiling and gratuitous insult. George shrugged elaborately and grinned at Karsh. "What's the matter? Ulcers?"

"It used to be singing waiters," Karsh said. "Now they talk. Run along and pad my account, George. I said I'll whistle."

George bowed crisply and went away smiling.

"He'll go on smiling for years," Terrell said. "Then he'll cut somebody's throat for asking for a glass of water."

"Sing me a song of social significance, eh? You know everybody, don't you?" Karsh said. "Myers, Carruthers—" He stared at the press agents and shook his head. "I don't know them. Probably spies travelling under a Martian passport."

A red-headed girl had sat down beside Terrell and Karsh nodded to her. "Sam, this is Bill. She was named Bill by her press agent, not her mother."

The red-head pouted cutely at Terrell. "Now don't put that in your column, Mr. Terrell."

"All right, I won't," Terrell said.

One of the press agents leaned over and touched his arm. "I won't box with you, Sam. We're building this girl up for Video Studios. Look, Karsh has said some cute things about her, as a matter of fact. They wouldn't look bad in print—and they're straight from the boss's mouth."

"I'll get Mike to tell me about her," Terrell said. "When we're alone."

Karsh smiled around the table. "Sam and I are working tonight. Would you all excuse us?"

"We could get another table," Terrell said. "No point in rushing them."

They stood quickly, smiled a good-bye at Karsh, and then moved off in a protective group toward the lobby, having

paid nothing for their drinks but a small bit of self-respect.

"A grand bunch," Karsh said, with a solemn shake of his head. "From my old regiment. They called me The Old Man. Follow me to hell and back." He watched them as they went up the steps to the lobby. "Goddamn tasteless creeps."

"Let's order dinner. You can take it out on George."

Karsh glanced at him. "You don't like the Wildean shafts we break, eh. Well, it passes for conversation. If we didn't insult each other we'd have to talk to each other. Let's have something to drink, and talk about your story. We can eat any time."

He was in character now, Terrell saw, a shrewd, intelligent man fascinated by his work. The other roles were forced on him out of boredom; the ruthless cynic, the patronizing seigneur, the bitter iconoclast, all of these were charades played for his own diversion.

Terrell told him what he had learned from Sarnac and Eden Myles, then waited for a reaction. After a moment Karsh said, "Something's incomplete. What's Eden Myles getting out of it? I don't buy the revenge angle and I certainly don't buy her tale of a suddenly burgeoning conscience. She's getting paid, is my guess."

"Sarnac says no."

"Let's double-check," Karsh said. "If she'll talk for money, we can raise the ante."

George came over yawning. "Come on, quit stalling."

The food at the Ridgeland was superb, but Karsh ordered vegetables and soft-boiled eggs. "Wine?" George said, winking broadly. "Real French wine?"

"I'll have scotch with the vegetables and a double scotch with the eggs," Karsh said. "Sam?"

"Steak."

"Ah, expense account tonight," George said. "How do you want it? With or without?"

"Without conversation," Terrell said, and regretted the remark instantly. Karsh laughed and raised his drink. "Very good. Knee in the groin that time."

George's smile slipped for just a second. "No straight men left anywhere," he said, snapping the big menu shut. "One steak coming right up, boss."

Terrell said to Karsh, "What do you think of Caldwell?"

"Did you meet him today?"

"No. I talked to Sarnac."

"Caldwell is an oddball," Karsh said wearily. "A civic reformer is a bit like a middle-aged widow with a grown family and adequate insurance. Kind of a zero. No sex life, no kids to shout at, no bills to worry about. The house in order. That's an intolerable situation for any human being, so they start minding other people's business. Take Caldwell for instance. Forty-eight, Ivy League school, prosperous law business. Plays squash rackets on Tuesdays at the Union Club, shoots golf in the middle eighties at Fairhill, which is a club the average guy couldn't get into with eighteen million bucks in his hand."

Terrell smiled. "You're a member, aren't you?"

"But I'm a classy guy. I tell dirty stories in the locker room in Latin. But going back to Caldwell. His life is all wrapped up in neat, well-ordered categories, and he's approaching the male menopause right on schedule. So what can he do? Drink? That would be my choice, but that takes imagination. Hobbies? That's the ticket. Caldwell picked cleanliness as a hobby. First he probably had his house and grounds manicured, fussed around coiling up the garden hoses and burning up the leaves. Then he looked around and to his delight saw a great big dirty city he could go to work on." Karsh dropped his cigarette into what was left of his drink. "He's set for life. Thousands of dirty alleys and stinking sewers and cruddy politicians to fumigate and burn. He's lucky, a kid in a candy store, a sadist running wild in a concentration camp."

"There's more to it than that," Terrell said.

"Possibly. Interest in the public weal, duty, right and wrong, morality—could be, Sam." Karsh shrugged lightly. "But I don't see it."

After dinner their interlude of privacy came to an end; the gambler returned to offer Karsh a bet on the St. Francis basketball game. The odds were wrong, Terrell knew, but Karsh took the bet for a figure that made his heart beat faster. The syndicate salesman and press agents came in on the second wave.

"Where's Bill?" Terrell asked, with no interest at all.

"Prettying up. Don't worry, she'll be along."

"I really wasn't worrying."

The syndicate salesman had moved so close to Karsh that he was practically in his lap. "Mike, I just want a quick reaction, just a bounce. Tim O'Mara—he does that swell men's column—well, he's been bitten by the bulls in Spain, and he's come up with a terrific idea. More Americans see bullfights every year, and O'Mara thinks they'd like to follow the fights when they come home. You know, gossip about the big matadors, a story on the big fights at Madrid and Pamplona, that sort of thing. He thinks there's enough interest and material to support a weekly feature. What do you think? I told Tim I'd get your opinion."

"A how-to column?" Karsh asked him with a straight face.

"No—more gossip and color."

"But I like the how-to angle," Terrell said. He could see that Karsh was masking his irritation behind a droll smile; Karsh hated blood sports.

"Yes, that's the pitch," Karsh said, nodding. "And we might run some companion pieces on bear baiting. And for the kids, a handicraft section—build your own thumb screw."

"A whipping post in every back yard," Terrell said.

"Tim didn't intend to dwell on the gore," the salesman said. Watching Karsh's face he smiled quickly and nervously. "I'll tell him to forget it."

"Tell him also that I'm thinking of throwing his big hairy column the hell out of the paper."

The salesman laughed shrilly. "That'll jolt him. I'll put it to him dead-pan."

"Just the way I put it to you."

The second of the press agents returned with the red-head named Bill, and the conversation swirled away like chips on a floodtide.

Terrell hated to leave. Karsh struck him at the moment as a blind Sampson or a senile Lear—a badgered wreck, surrounded by fools and sharpsters and drunks. The press agent was telling a wide-eyed Bill about the last scene of *Alice in Wonderland*. "It's probably the greatest piece of writing in the world," he said in a soft, belligerent voice. "Every man should read that once in his lifetime to a little girl—and not while

he's drunk, mind you. If it doesn't cut right through to his heart you can scratch him for a no-good sonofabitch. Talk about loyalty tests! I can tell about a guy by listening to him read the part that goes—" He took the girl's hand and stared at the ceiling. "Well, in so many words, she's lying there and a twig falls on her, a leaf, I guess, and she wakes up and starts talking to her mother—sister, rather."

"It's lovely," Bill said.

"Lewis Carroll on bullfights," Karsh said, waving for a round of drinks. "That's what I'd like to see in the goddamn paper."

Terrell stood and caught Karsh's eye. "I'm running along, Mike. Thanks for dinner."

"Don't mention it, boy." Karsh smiled up at him and patted his arm. "Keep pitching. You're on something good."

Terrell went outside feeling very sorry for Karsh. He seemed to make sense only at work. There he operated with brilliant precision, keeping every department of the paper under meticulous supervision. But the rest of his life was chaos. His marriage had ended in divorce several years ago and he had been bled white by his wife's lawyers. He had taken a mistress which had added to his problems without ameliorating his loneliness. He had never been close to his children—a son and daughter—and saw very little of them now; the girl had married and moved to the west coast, and the son was a smooth and expensive youngster who dropped in at the office occasionally to discuss his financial needs.

Terrell knew most of this by intimation; Karsh had never talked to him about his personal problems. But no wonder he was cynical, Terrell thought, as he cabbed back through the darkness to the office. He wished he could help Karsh in some way. But how? Tell him to relax, cut down on cigarettes? Terrell still had a copy boy's hero-worship for Karsh, and walking out on him tonight made him feel like a heel.

At ten-thirty the *Call-Bulletin's* lobby was dark, and Terrell had to rap on the heavy plate glass doors to raise a watchman. This was the slow, graveyard stretch; the next edition, the Night Extra, wouldn't go in until one o'clock in the morning. And it wasn't an important edition, just a re-write of the day's news and the front page brushed up with wire copy.

The skeleton crew was sitting at the long city desk with coffee before them and cigarettes burning away in the ash-trays at their elbows. The rest of the floor was dark; there was no one working in the sports or women's page sections, and the big lights above the clock drew a circle of brightness around the men at the city desk and police speaker.

Bill Mooney, an old city hall reporter, was in charge of this shift, and he nodded to Terrell and said, "Want some coffee, Sam? Prince here made it. It's what they hired him for, I guess."

Prince was a healthy looking young man with dark hair, excellent clothes and a degree in journalism from the University of Iowa. Mooney did not mind his good looks or good clothes, but he was in no hurry to forgive him for the degree in journalism. "I'll get you a cup, Mr. Terrell," Prince said.

"Never mind. I'll pass."

"It's good coffee," Prince said.

"Informed by college wit and sophistication," Mooney said.

Ollie Wheeler, Terrell saw, was sitting just outside the cone of light that fell on the city desk. He wore an overcoat, and had his feet propped up on a waste basket.

"Company man," Terrell said. "Can't get enough of the place."

"And how about you?"

"I've got work to do."

"You're lucky," Wheeler said, taking a pint bottle of whiskey from the inside pocket of his overcoat. "I got bored at home. Opulent indulgence is the father of satiety. My boarding house is too heady for steady consumption. So I came down to listen to police calls with Mooney. It's like the dissonant theme in a symphony, it makes the ear long for the tonic. An hour with Mooney and I'll be glad to get back to my room."

Terrell knew that Wheeler had to be jolted out of this mood. A word of sympathy would reduce him to tears. "Christ, you're like all the old hacks around here," he said. "Sneering at the corn in the paper, the first robin stories, and pictures of lost kids with a cop's hat on their curly heads. All tasteless and sloppy. You're going to quit and write bitter novels. But a day away from the shop and you're homesick."

"God, I've heard everything," Wheeler said, bringing his

feet down with a crash. "Of all the censorious and self-righteous bilge I've ever heard—that takes the cake, Sam."

Terrell took Wheeler's pint and poured a drink into an empty coffee container. "Don't mind if I do," he said. "You know, Ollie, you don't really like to drink. It's just something you've seen reporters in movies doing."

"While they tell the managing editor to tear up the front page," Wheeler said, grinning.

"They're always stopping the presses, replating page one—it's a wonder they ever get a paper out."

Mooney said to Prince, "Keep your eye on the radio for a while and don't let anything slip by. Fires are indicated by the ringing of a bell and a strong smell of wood smoke. I'm going to the john."

When he had disappeared into the shadows, Terrell said to Prince, "Quiet night?"

"Everything is quiet but him," Prince said, smiling ruefully after Mooney.

"That's part of the uniform," Terrell said. "Old reporters wear cynical masks to hide the fact that they're bastards at heart. Don't let it worry you."

The police speaker sounded. The announcer's flat voice directed the street sergeant from the Sixteenth District to an address on Manor Lane. A few seconds later he directed an ambulance to the same address.

Prince said, "But it's rugged being treated like a stuttering cretin around here."

Terrell held up his hand. "Just a second."

Wheeler got to his feet and walked over to the city desk, a little frown on his lean old face. He pushed his hat on his forehead and bent forward to put his ear beside the police speaker. "Did he say two-twenty-four Manor Lane?"

"I believe so," said Terrell.

In the silence that followed Prince said, "Mooney thinks it's indecent that I didn't start as a copy boy. He's got the idea that college. . . ."

"For God's sake keep quiet," Wheeler said. "They've sent an ambulance out to two-twenty-four Manor Lane. That's where Richard Caldwell lives."

"Go get Mooney," Terrell said to Prince. "Ollie, you better

give the Sixteenth a ring and see if they can tell us anything yet." He picked up a telephone directory, then remembered that the house on Manor Lane belonged to one of Caldwell's friends who was now in Europe. Caldwell lived in the suburbs and used the town house when late speeches or meetings kept him in the city. He stayed there with his chauffeur, an elderly man who had been with him for years.

"Ollie, what's the name of Caldwell's friend—the one who owns the house on Manor Lane?"

"Just a second," Ollie waved for silence; he was connected with the Sixteenth. "Sarge, this is Ollie Wheeler at the *Call-Bulletin*. Say, what's happening? We just heard you send an ambulance over to Rich Caldwell's house. Wait, hold on—just a hint, Sarge, for old time's sake. Christ, we've all got our jobs to do! Don't put me in the middle. Sure, I'll hang on." He covered the phone with his hand and looked up at Terrell. "Scared little bastard. But it sounds big, Sam. What did you want? Oh yeah. Sims is the name of the guy who owns the house on Manor Lane. J. Bellamy Sims."

"That's it." Terrell flipped through the directory, found the number and dialled it quickly. The ringing sounded in his ears like the far-away drone of a bee. Then the connection was made, and a voice said cautiously, "Hello?"

"Who's this?" Terrell said. "I want to talk with Rich Caldwell."

"You can't—" There was silence on the line. Then: "Who is this?"

"This is Sam Terrell. *Call-Bulletin*. Where's Caldwell?"

"Look, I can't talk to you. You got to see the detectives."

"Wait!" Terrell yelled the word. "Is this a cop?"

"This is Paddy Cogan from the Sixteenth."

"Don't hang up! Don't. Are you all alone there? Just give me a lead, Paddy. What is it?"

"I was coming down the Lane when I saw a guy run out of Caldwell's front door." Cogan's voice was low and tense. "I chased him and lost him. So I came back to Caldwell's. The door was open, lights on in the front room. 'He's—' Cogan drew a sharp breath. "The Captain's here, Sam. Better get over." The connection was broken.

Terrell put the phone down and glanced at Ollie Wheeler

who was still talking to the house sergeant at the Sixteenth. "Thanks, thanks a lot, Sarge," he said, getting to his feet. "Sure, sure. Thanks." He hung up and looked at Terrell. "Mooney had better call Karsh, and get some rewrite men and photographers on the way in. We'll really tear up the front page tonight. There's a dead girl over at Caldwell's. And Caldwell is dead drunk."

"Who's the girl? Eden Myles?"

"Head of the class, Sam. Eden Myles it is. Or was, Caldwell just strangled her."

MANOR LANE was one of the select addresses in the city; the homes were small, old and expensive, three-storied for the most part with splendid doorways decorated with antique brass knockers and numerals. The street ran for two blocks behind the Gothic solemnity of St. Chrysostom's, and terminated in a mews at the south side of Regent Square.

Terrell's driver whistled as they swung into the block. Two black and white squad cars and an ambulance were parked in the middle of the street and groups of people stood on the sidewalks watching the windows of Caldwell's house. The flashing red lights on the police cars transformed the faces of the spectators into vivid masks of tension and excitement.

Terrell paid off his cab and walked over to a patrolman standing beside the ambulance. He recognized him and said, "Hello, Jimmy. They take her out yet?"

"Hi, Sam. No, not yet. Captain Stanko just got here. With one of your boys. The lab men are still working. It's brutal, I guess."

Terrell walked up the stone steps of Caldwell's home, nodded to the patrolman on duty and went inside. He turned from the foyer into the living room, where he saw shirt-sleeved lab technicians taking photographs and measurements.

The *Call-Bulletin's* district reporter, a balding man named Nelson, was on the phone talking in a low urgent voice. Terrell nodded to him, then drifted into a quiet corner and stuck a cigarette in his mouth.

Eden Myles lay sprawled in the middle of the room, and Richard Caldwell sat slumped in a deep chair with his head bent forward at an awkward angle; he was breathing noisily and raggedly, and every now and then an inarticulate little moan sounded deep in his throat. Captain Stanko, in com-

mand of the Sixteenth, was shaking his shoulder with a big red hand, and a police surgeon was peering into his eyes. The room was a shambles. Lab men moved around upended chairs with efficient speed and a homicide detective named Evans was studying a tipped-over lamp with a vacant expression on his face. Caldwell's chauffeur stood at the far end of the room, a bulky man in pajamas and brown woolen robe. He seemed completely stunned; his eyes were fixed on Caldwell's limp figure and his expression was almost a parody of bewilderment. Standing a few feet from him was Paddy Cogan, the uniformed cop whom Terrell had spoken to from the *Call-Bulletin*. Cogan was a small man, stockily built, with kinky gray hair and a round, red face. His eyes were switching around the room, flicking from spot to spot as if seeking a place to rest.

"We can take her now," one of the lab men said to Captain Stanko, and Evans, the homicide detective, turned and looked thoughtfully at the body of the dead girl.

She hadn't died prettily, Terrell thought. The model, the singer, proud of her lean, elegant body and dramatic good looks—that was all over. He had seen this kind of violence for years; on the police beats he had covered cuttings and brawls, autopsies on bodies pulled from flaming automobiles, murders in good neighborhoods and bad, crimes of passion that ignored income groupings, color lines and actuarial tables. But he had never gotten used to it. He had never developed a tolerance for violence. It sickened him, and in some way made him ashamed of himself. Now he felt that shame and guilt as he stared at Eden Myles' dark, swollen face and pitifully distended eyes. She had fought hard; her dress was torn across the front revealing her starkly white shoulders and the swell of her small breasts. One of her slippers was off and a stocking had been pulled loose from its garter clip; it hung now like a nylon fetter about her slim, hard ankle.

"Take her out," Captain Stanko said.

The *Call-Bulletin's* reporter was winding up his story in a discreetly lowered voice. Talking to Ollie Wheeler, Terrell thought. Mooney wouldn't have had time to get anyone else. He glanced at his watch. Eleven-thirty. Karsh would be on his way by now, and a dozen rewriters, reporters and photogra-

phers. He turned a bit to listen to Nelson. "Yes, that's all I've got," Nelson was saying. "I can't talk to anybody yet. Caldwell looks drunk, and the girl is dead, that's for sure. She's messed up some. Lip cut, clothes torn, like she'd been worked over. What? Yes, Caldwell's got some scratches on his face. Look. I'll talk to Stanko when I can—yes, sure."

"Just a second," Terrell said sharply. "What about the man who ran out of here? Did you give him that?"

Nelson looked at him blankly. "First I heard about it. What do you mean? A prowler?"

"Prowler?" It was Captain Stanko speaking. He turned toward them, repeating the word in a cold, belligerent voice. He was a big man with a face like a block of dark wood, and his eyes were angry and suspicious as he stared from Nelson to Terrell. "Let me give you hot shots some advice. Don't start dreaming up angles. You'll get the story from my report. That will be the official version—the only version. You start inventing things and you'll get your cans in a sling."

Nelson put the phone he was holding back into its cradle. The gesture was expressive. "I'm not inventing anything, Captain. I'm waiting for your report."

Stanko glanced at Terrell. "That suit you? Or do you want us to rush things up for your special benefit?"

The room had become very quiet. Evans, the homicide detective, was studying Terrell appraisingly, and the lab men had turned from their work to the sound of anger in Stanko's voice. McIntyre, the *Call-Bulletin* photographer, casually shifted his camera into position to cover Terrell and the captain.

"I'm not inventing things," Terrell said. "A man was seen running out of this house tonight. After the girl was heard screaming. That's part of the story, Captain."

Stanko studied him for a few seconds with no expression at all on his face. Then he said, "Who saw him?"

"Your beat cop." Terrell glanced toward the patrolman. "Paddy, didn't you tell the captain what you told me on the phone?"

Coglan's face was brick red. One of his hands moved in a pointless little gesture. "What do you mean, Sam?"

The silence in the room suddenly became oppressive and

ominous; Terrell felt a little chill go through his body. Would they really try to get away with this? he wondered. Would they try anything so raw? "You know what I mean, Paddy," he said, watching the little man's shifting eyes. "You told me fifteen minutes ago that you saw a man run out of this house—after Eden Myles screamed. You chased him and lost him. But you got a good look at him. Are you changing your story now?"

Coglan's eyes slid past Terrell and focused on a spot just beside his shoulder. "I told you you'd better talk to the detectives. It's their job to pass on stories to you guys. I remember telling you that, Sam. I was pretty jolted, finding her dead. Maybe you misunderstood me or got it mixed up."

"Sure, you got it mixed up," Stanko said, in a hard, derisive voice. "You were trying to work ahead of us. That's how rumors get started and stories get twisted out of shape."

Terrell didn't take his eyes from Coglan's flushed and unhappy face. "Once more, Paddy; you didn't see a man run out of here?"

Stanko said, "He told you 'no' once."

Terrell hesitated, not sure of his next move. He knew Stanko by reputation, a cold, unemotional man with a blind and compulsive loyalty to the administration. What were his orders? To make certain that Caldwell was tagged with the girl's murder? To eliminate other suspects?

Terrell made up his mind. He said, "Captain, I'm using what Coglan told me. I don't know what he saw; but I know damn well what he told me he saw. And that's going into the paper."

"And your paper is heading for trouble," Stanko said. "Paddy's tried to set you straight. He may have been confused, or you may have misunderstood him."

"We'll print all of that, too," Terrell said, in a tone heavy with sarcasm. "He's been a cop for twenty years but the sight of a body sends him into a state of incoherent shock. Readers will find that intriguing."

"Sam," Coglan said plaintively, "there's no reason—"

"Shut up!" Stanko yelled at him. "Print what you want, snoop. Now get out of here."

"We'll print all the versions," Terrell said. "Coglan's first

account and Cogan's second account. Something for every edition. And when do we get the definitive official report? When the Mayor and Ike Cellars decide just how it should be shaded and tinted for public consumption?"

"Get out of here. Get out of here before I throw you out. You're a troublemaker, that's all. And, by God, I'd like to beat some manners and sense into you."

Terrell said, "I don't want trouble, Captain, I just want the truth. But those words mean the same thing tonight." He tossed him a little salute and walked out of the room.

From Caldwell's house Terrell went looking for a telephone. He found an all-night drugstore six blocks away, and called the paper. Wheeler was writing the first running story, and Terrell gave him everything he had learned from Cogan.

When he finished Wheeler said cheerfully, "Well, Caldwell's got a loophole now. It's not open-and-shut until they chase down the prowler. Meanwhile chaos reigns supreme here, Karsh is tearing into this big. Everybody but the janitor and the publisher's wife is out working on it. Where are you going now?"

"To the Sixteenth. I'll call you after he's slated."

"That's the stuff, son. Atmosphere, color. We relish all tawdry details."

There was an air of pressure and excitement in the old mid-town station house. The shift reporting for the midnight-to-eight trick was buzzing with the story. In a few hours the whole city would be buzzing, Terrell knew. He walked down the dusty, brightly lighted hallway to the House Sergeant's office. The new shift was on duty; Sergeant McManus, who had taken Cogan's first call, wasn't around. Probably in the locker room, the clerk said. Terrell found him there sitting in front of his locker.

Two young patrolmen stood near him changing out of their uniforms. "My wife doesn't want me to come home in the monkey suit," one of them said. "Even when it's after midnight. Sheer snobbery, I tell her. But it cuts no ice."

Terrell sat down on the wooden bench beside Sergeant

McManus, an erect, gray-haired man with surprisingly gentle blue eyes. "Big night, eh?" he said.

"Big is right. I can't figure it, Sam."

"I don't blame her," the second patrolman said, knotting his tie. "Who wants to be taken for a doorman or a zoo attendant?"

Sergeant McManus looked up at them and said irritably, "If you think the uniform is such a lousy thing, why did you bother taking the police exams? Did you think they'd deck you out in top hats and canes?"

"Good working conditions got me," the first patrolman said, winking at his companion. "That and the stimulating friendships I've formed among my buddy cops."

McManus said, "Spend as much time on the manual as you do dressing and undressing every day and you'll be Inspectors in ten years."

When the two men had gone, Terrell said, "How do you mean you can't figure it out, Mac?"

"I never figured Caldwell that way."

"How did you figure him?"

"To tell the truth, I was for the guy. I heard him talk and he made sense."

"What time did Cogan call in?"

"It's in the log, if you want the exact minute. About ten twenty-five, I think."

"Where was he then? At a box, or inside Caldwell's?"

"He was inside Caldwell's, I guess."

"Mac, did he say anything about seeing a man leaving Caldwell's?"

Sergeant McManus didn't answer for a moment. He sat staring down at the backs of his big, blue-veined hands. "You'll have to ask Captain Stanko," he said.

"Why, Mac?"

The sergeant turned then and looked at him steadily. "Because Stanko took the call. He was in my office from around ten o'clock on, fussing over some reports. When the outside phone rang he was sitting right beside it. He picked it up, talked to Cogan. When he finished he told me to flash radio and have them send an ambulance and a couple of our cars over to Caldwell's. He said Cogan had a dead one."

"Just that, eh? That there was somebody dead at Caldwell's?"

"That's all."

"Does Stanko hang around your office as a rule, Mac?"

McManus looked at Terrell for a few seconds in silence. Then he shook his head slowly. "He's got an office of his own, Sam."

"Thanks." Terrell got to his feet. "Say hello to Mrs. McManus for me. She feeling better these days?"

"Much better, thanks."

The station house filled slowly as the news spread by telephone and word of mouth through the city. Reporters and photographers, tipsters and hangers-on from the Hall, deputies and bailiffs from the Mayor's and Sheriff's offices—they crowded the hall and offices of the station, chattering tensely over the news. Speculation was the conversational legal tender; it would buy more speculation, and there was nothing else for sale.

Terrell spent an hour or so absorbing gossip and impressions, and then drifted into the roll call room which was dominated by a high wooden bench. This was where the preliminary hearing would be held; a magistrate was on his way to the Sixteenth now, and Caldwell had already been slated for murder and taken upstairs to the detectives' bureau for additional questioning. He was being treated with scrupulous care; one of his law partners was with him, and he had been allowed to talk to Sarnac.

Terrell sat down on a wooden seat that ran along the wall. The man beside him grinned and said, "You think he strangled her before or after?"

Terrell glanced at him, then lit a cigarette.

"The smart money is betting after," the man said. He was small and excited, hugging himself with thin arms.

"Whose smart money?" Terrell said. "Ike Cellars?"

The little man shrugged and rubbed his arms. "Well, it's just a gag, friend."

The atmosphere was carnival, Terrell realized, glancing around the smoky room. He noted the wise little grins, the rib-nudgings, the expressions of relief and excitement. There would be no more talk of waste and corruption. No more

threats of exposure. The reform candidate was in jail for attacking and murdering a girl. Well, it figured; what could you expect from these holy joes, these virtuous bastards? It was a good joke. Hypocrisy had been exposed; that was always funny.

Terrell saw Sarnac come in a few minutes later, moving like a man in a waking nightmare; his face was dazed, his eyes were red with tears. Terrell joined him, and Sarnac said desperately, "I can't think straight. Do you believe he did this? I—I can't think at all."

"Let's go outside."

"But do you believe it?"

"Let's get some air. We can talk then."

The night was cold, and wind buffeted the windows of dark, silent buildings. Terrell took Sarnac's arm and led him down the block, away from the noisy crowd gathered around the brightly-lit entrance of the station. He felt illogically angered by Sarnac's impotence; what good were tears? This was a time for guts. No wonder reformers usually looked silly, he thought. Pious fools. Expecting the flock to turn over new leaves and join them in song. The flock understood nothing but a knee in the groin.

"Everything we've worked for is smashed," Sarnac said.

"You've talked to Caldwell? What did he say?"

"Just to keep his wife away from him."

"Great. Anything else?"

"No—he doesn't seem to know what's happening."

"He'll find out," Terrell said. "I've talked to the lab men. Skin from Caldwell's face has been found under the girl's nails. Caldwell had been drinking. The girl is dead. That's the DA's case."

"Something must have snapped. It could happen to anyone, particularly to someone with his spirit and energy—but I can't believe it. I won't believe it."

"That's better," Terrell said. "Keep talking that way."

A hope began to burn in Sarnac's eyes. "Do you know anything that will help him?"

Terrell hesitated a second or so. Then he said, "The whole story may help. And I'm after the whole story. Now let's go

back and watch poor blind-folded justice at work. Hampered only slightly by the gun in her back."

Richard Caldwell was held for the Grand Jury without bail by a magistrate named Seaworth, who listened to Patrolman Coglan's testimony without taking his eyes from the prisoner's face. The magistrate was conscious of his moment in history, Terrell realized; he suffered the press photographers gladly, raising his head slightly to firm up his double chin, and frowning thoughtfully to indicate that he understood the solemnity of his decision. Actually he had no alternative; the bare facts made it mandatory for him to hold Caldwell for the Grand Jury.

The little patrolman, Coglan, stared at the floor as he gave his testimony, and the bright lights above the bar of justice gleamed on the bald spot at the back of his gray head. Everyone strained forward to listen. Coglan told of hearing a scream and going directly into Caldwell's home. The front door was ajar and he found Caldwell in a dazed condition with the dead girl lying on the floor. He did not mention seeing anyone else in or near the house.

It went faster then. The police surgeon testified that Caldwell had been drinking. A lab technician gave the findings of his section. Caldwell made no statement and his attorney waived cross-examination.

Magistrate Seaworth banged his gavel for silence and gave his verdict.

And that was the end of act one, Terrell thought, as he watched Caldwell being led by police toward the cell block. There was no expression on Caldwell's face; he stared straight ahead, seemingly oblivious to the murmuring crowd, but his eyes were like those of a man on a rack.

Someone shouted, "Get out of my way!" in a high, raging voice and began to fight through the crowd toward Caldwell. Magistrate Seaworth banged his gavel as a man shoved forward and swung a looping blow at Caldwell's face. The blow landed, cutting Caldwell's lip and then a patrolman caught the man from behind and locked his arms to his sides.

Terrell recognized him as flash bulbs began exploding on all sides of the room. Frankie Chance. Eden Myles' friend.

Chance was tall and slim with wavy black hair and deep, brown eyes that were soft as a child's. He was handsome enough, but there was a sulky pampered look about his mouth, as if he expected lavish payment for his smiles and good humor. He was a fiery hothead, Terrell knew, an emotional savage. And now there was nothing calculating or devious in his frenzy; he was struggling like a maniac against the big cop who was holding him and lashing futilely at Caldwell with his sharply pointed shoes.

"You killed her!" he screamed, and his soft, petulant mouth twisted as if he were under torture. "Because she wouldn't let you touch her, because you're not even half a man."

Magistrate Seaworth raised his gavel, but Captain Stanko caught his eye, and Seaworth cleared his throat and put the gavel gently down on the bench. Public relations, Terrell thought, as the flash bulbs continued to pop. Don't cut yet! It's good copy.

"You killed her," Chance was screaming. "You wanted her, you wanted to get your hands on her, to hurt her, to kill her—that's all you want from a woman. That's how you get your kicks." Chance was crying now, the tears flowing from his deep brown eyes and glistening on his smooth, youthful cheeks. "Well, you'll get your kicks when they strap you in the chair. . . ."

"Take that man out of here!" Seaworth shouted, bringing the gavel down with a crash. "This is a courtroom, not a—" He sputtered as he groped for words. "Not a place for demonstration. Take him out, officer. . . ."

Terrell eased himself through the crowd and reached the public phone in the hallway. He called Wheeler and gave him a few paragraphs of atmosphere, including Frankie Chance's attack on Caldwell. When he finished Wheeler said, "That's very juicy. Now here's a message for you. Karsh wants you to come in. There's been some confusion about that prowler Paddy Cogan did or did not see. The Superintendent called Karsh about it, and so did Stanko—they both said you'd gone off half-cocked. Also there've been certain implications that Cogan might have been a bit loaded tonight. Williams says he has a reputation as a rummy."

"So what happened?" Terrell said.

"Karsh killed the prowler angle just before we locked up," Wheeler said. "He wants to talk to you."

Terrell sighed and rubbed his forehead. "Well, there goes Caldwell's loophole," he said. "They've turned it into a noose." The disgust he felt was evident in his voice. "Tell Karsh I'm on my way," he said, and dropped the phone back into its hook.

5

THE city room was noisy with typewriters and ringing phones. A complete staff had been called in to cover the story; feature writers were poring over yellowing clips of Caldwell's background, studying his schools, military service, marriage and business activities for possible items. And copy boys were bringing up fresh loads of pictures and copy from the morgue, dossiers on anyone connected with either Caldwell or the murdered girl.

Williams was in direct charge of the story now, but Karsh stood behind his chair at the city desk, checking every picture and paragraph that was going into the next edition. Terrell dropped his coat and hat on his desk, and walked up the room, past the picture desk where two editors were working on captions, and around the copy wheel where headlines were being chopped to fit the stories funneled over from the city desk.

Karsh turned to look at the clock above his head, and saw Terrell. He waved and pointed to his own office. Terrell joined him there and Karsh closed the door behind them, cutting off the noise from the big city room. They were as isolated in his air-conditioned sanctuary as fish in an aquarium tank; outside the life of the paper swarmed silently past the glass-walled office, oddly unsubstantial and unreal.

Karsh sat down at his desk, twisted a cigarette into his holder, and then looked up at Terrell. He was smiling and one of his eyebrows was raised slightly; his expression was amused but ironical. He showed no effects from lack of sleep and a night of drinking; his skin was fresh and his eyes were clear and steady. "Well, it's a frame, eh?" he said. "Raw, clumsy and transparent. But effective. There's a lesson in that. Don't be subtle. Forget intricate maneuvers—if you want a man out

of the way hit him with a meat cleaver, and go on about your business. Sit down, Sam."

"What do we do now?"

"We're going to save Richard Caldwell's neck. This is about the biggest story I've ever been near—and I want it. I want it all. Now let's go back a bit. Tell me just what Cogan told you, his first version, that is."

Terrell gave Karsh a detailed account of what he had heard and seen so far, and then Karsh lit another cigarette and said, "Well, Stanko probably didn't consider the possibility that a reporter might call Caldwell's home direct—as you did. But he scared Cogan into switching his story. And that shouldn't have been too hard."

"I may be out of line, but why in God's name didn't you use my story?"

"Because I don't want to waste ammunition on jerks like Cogan and Stanko. I want to know who paid the killer—and I want the killer. That's the big story, boy. It may turn this sovereign state upside down and shake a thousand grafters loose from their snug little perches—and among those thousands we may find Ike Cellars, and our beloved, corn-fed Mayor." Karsh came around his desk, his eyes alive and intense; work seemed to burn all the waste and dross from his mind and body.

"Remember this. The difference between good editors and hacks is judgment. What the devil is a story? Two cars bump fenders, barking dog rouses family in burning home. News stories, sure. But they're pat and obvious. Any child could pick them out. But the big stories are like symphonies, they've got balance and mood and excitement to them, and a touch of mystery. You know what makes them significant? The astounding fact that drama has been created by sheer, blind coincidence. It's just as if a bunch of drunks began shouting and accidentally sang the last act of *Faust* without missing a word or a note. Now we've got the tail of a tremendous story. And we're going to pull the whole damn mess out into the light."

Terrell knew that Caldwell had a chance with the paper fighting for him. "We'll be on the side of the angels this time, Mike," he said.

"Don't kid yourself," Karsh said sharply. "I want the story for sensible, selfish reasons. I don't give a damn about public morality. In fact, if we let them hang Caldwell it might have a salutary effect on all the other civic busybodies who bore hell out of me."

"It won't wash, Mike. You're on the side of the lawn-watering Babbitts; whether you like it or not. It's damned embarrassing, I bet."

Karsh didn't look amused; he considered himself an unemotional realist, and he resented any tampering with this self portrait. "Your job is to find a killer," he said shortly. "So get with it. But keep me posted, and take it nice and slow." He brushed Terrell's arm with the back of his hand. "I don't really care if they hang Caldwell, but I'd hate to lose you. Let's get to work."

Terrell went downstairs and found a cab to drive him out to Gray Gates. He hoped to talk to Connie Blacker before anyone else did; she had suggested that Eden was frightened of something, and that was a lead he wanted to run down fast.

The lobby of Gray Gates was dimly-lighted at this hour, but the elevator operator was freshly shaved and immaculately turned out in a blue and gold uniform. The young man knew something was up; Terrell guessed that from the very passiveness of his expression. Probably the police and reporters had already been here.

He walked down the silent corridor and rapped lightly on her door. When she answered he knew that she had heard the news; he could sense the fear in her voice.

"It's Terrell," he said. "I want to talk to you."

She opened the door a bit, and the light from the hallway touched her wide eyes and pale face. "I—there's nothing I can tell you. Please believe me."

"I'm not a cop," he said. "You don't have to talk to me. But I wish you would."

"All right." She sounded weary and hopeless. "Come in."

There was a single lamp shining in the long living room, and the draperies were drawn across the wide picture window. She sat down on the edge of a chair and lit a cigarette. He could see that her fingers were shaking.

"When did you get the news?" he said quietly.

"A friend of Eden's—" She moistened her lips. "A friend of Eden's called me."

"Were the police here?"

"Yes, a detective. He said he needed to know who should be notified. I gave him her mother's address. A reporter and a photographer were here a little later. They wanted snapshots of Eden, pictures of me, pictures of the apartment."

"That wasn't very pleasant, I guess."

"I couldn't think about anything but her." She stood and began pacing restlessly, taking quick drags on the cigarette. "Eden knew so much, she worked so hard—and suddenly it's all over. Snuffed out. I can't stand any room in the apartment. Everything is full of her things. Dresses, shoes, cosmetics. There's a coffee cup on the kitchen sink with her lipstick on it. Her room smells of her cologne. The magazines she was reading are here on the coffee table." Connie put her fingers to her temples. "It's all alive, just as she left it. But she'll never come back."

Terrell said, "You told me the other day she was frightened. What did you mean by that?"

"I don't know—it was the way she acted." Connie sat down on the edge of the sofa and the light from the single lamp glinted on her short blond hair and shadowed her dark blue eyes. She wore pajamas and a blue robe, and looked very tired and very miserable. "I thought it was nerves at first. The telephone or a knock on the door made her jump. You saw her. She looked like she was being pulled to pieces."

"What was she afraid of?"

"I don't know. She didn't tell me. But it was connected with a job she was doing. Tonight a man came here to talk to her. She was frightened, I know. And she didn't want to go on. But he insisted."

"Who was the man?"

Connie looked up at him, and he saw fear growing in her eyes. "You're asking me to break the eleventh commandment," she said. "Keep thy mouth shut."

"What are you afraid of?"

"I don't want trouble."

Terrell hesitated a second, knowing he would be a fool to

trust her; she owed him nothing, and she had obviously been indoctrinated with the hoodlum idea that anyone who helped the police was an informer. But there was nothing else he could do. "Please listen to me now," he said. "Take this on faith if you can. The man who killed Eden is walking free. An innocent man has been charged with her murder. He'll die for it unless the truth comes out. So if you know anything, you can't keep quiet."

She looked down at her hands, and her manner was badgered and defensive. "Who says I know anything?"

"Who was the man who came here tonight? What did he want Eden to do? Why was she frightened? Can't you tell me?"

"You want the story, sure. That's your job. You'll get a raise and a pat on the back from your boss. Should I stick my neck out to make you look good?"

"Forget about me, for God's sake," Terrell sat down beside her and said, "An innocent man may die—that's why you've got to stick your neck out. But this isn't a tong war or some wholesale vendetta from the Capone era in Chicago. You'll be protected. If you trust me, I'll see to it. And I'll keep whatever you tell me in confidence. But if you don't trust me, go to the police. Or the governor."

The phone began to ring and she started nervously and guiltily; the sound seemed ominously insistent in the silent apartment. They looked at each other for a few seconds, but when she started to rise Terrell caught her wrist. "Answer my question first. Who was the man?"

Her flesh was cold to his touch, and he felt a tremor shake her body. He sighed and released her wrist. "Okay. Answer the phone."

She crossed the room quickly and raised the receiver to her lips.

Terrell lit a cigarette and watched her eyes; something changed in them as she stood listening with the phone tight against her ear. "Yes . . . yes," she said, and listened for a few more seconds. Then she said, "Yes, all right. I understand." She put the phone down slowly and stood motionless for a few seconds. Her face was very pale.

"Who was that?" Terrell said casually.

"A friend of mine."

"Well, where were we? Eden was frightened about a job she had to do."

She turned to her chair and lit a cigarette without meeting his eyes. "I was just guessing," she said. "Perhaps I was wrong."

"And how about the man who came here tonight?"

"I don't know anything about him."

"You saw him, didn't you?"

"No—I was in the bedroom."

"That's a pity. The last time I was here you told me Frankie Chance had been up to see Eden. You remember that?"

She shook her head quickly. "I'm not sure. I heard a voice, and I just assumed it was Frankie."

"You were in the bedroom again, eh? Didn't Eden let you out to meet her friends?"

"Stop hounding me. Stop it." She was gripping the edges of the chair with her hands.

"Who was that on the phone?"

"A friend, I told you."

Terrell sat down beside her and took one of her hands. "Ice cold," he said. "Your face is white and your lips are trembling. Cute friends you've got. What did he say? To shut up? To keep quiet?"

"Maybe," she said, pulling her hand free. "Why don't you go to the police yourself? They're paid to hunt killers. I'm paid to sing in a club."

"And I'll bet you're in for a raise pretty soon," Terrell said quietly.

She looked quickly at him, her expression guilty and defiant. "Don't bother needling me. I'm scared. Do you expect me to be ashamed of that? I'm weak and gutless and anything else you want to call me. I'm not hero material. I'm not a judo expert or some selfless saint who does what's right and damns the consequences." She paused, breathing rapidly, and stared down at her hands. "I'm keeping my job, and I'm keeping my health. And I'm minding my own business."

Terrell watched her for a few seconds, but she wouldn't turn and meet his eyes. "I might feel the same if I were in your shoes," he said finally. "I'm not sure of what I'd do. I

wasn't needling you. I'm just a reporter at work. If you change your mind, you can always get me through the paper. Will you remember that?"

"It's no use," she said.

"Remember Caldwell then," he said, getting to his feet. "He's facing the loss of his career, reputation, his family, everything—even his life. And he's no more guilty than you are. Remember him while you're singing college songs to bald-headed drunks in Ike Cellars' joint."

"Why don't you leave me alone?" She was very nearly in tears.

Terrell sighed and picked up his hat. "Okay, I'm going. But you can reach me at the paper if you need me."

6

IT was almost dawn before Terrell reached his apartment in center-city. He slept six hours, then shaved, and showered and dressed. As he went through his mail he drank a cup of black coffee, and smoked a cigarette that made him resolve to cut back to a pack a day—soon. After checking the mail, he wrote a note to the cleaning woman, asking her to put in coffee, eggs and a few other staples. Then he went to work.

At his corner desk he settled down with a carton of coffee to look through the final developments on the Caldwell story.

The late editions were beautiful examples of dramatic journalism. Pictures of Caldwell and Eden Myles stared out from beneath heavy black four-column headlines, and there were shots of Eden's gray-haired mother, and the town house on Manor Lane. Every angle of the story had been covered thoroughly and vividly; by professional standards the edition was a superb job, a Karsh special. There were sharp, pertinent stories on Caldwell's campaign, his legal career and social connections. Eden Myles had been profiled by the nightclub editor, who had tastefully referred to Frankie Chance as a local sportsman. On page three were more pictures: Frankie Chance attacking Caldwell at the hearing, a young and frightened-looking Connie Blacker in Eden's apartment, and a show-business print of Eden wearing a bathing suit that displayed her handsome body to the legal limits of propriety. It was a terrific story; it had everything. Sex, violence, prominent people, social gradings—everything but the truth, Terrell thought.

Caldwell's two sons were in a picture with their mother, a placidly beautiful woman in her late forties. Flanking them was a photograph of their handsome fieldstone home in suburban Morristown.

Karsh hadn't missed anything. Every element in the story had been welded into a powerful, dramatic unit.

Caldwell's version of what had happened seemed pathetically feeble. He admitted having had two martinis before dinner, and a brandy and soda afterwards. Then, around ten-thirty, Eden Myles had called and asked if she could see him. He had said yes, adding parenthetically that Eden Myles had been supplying his staff with information about gambling in the city. That would get a laugh, Terrell thought sadly. It was raw material for the local wits. Caldwell also admitted that he had had another brandy when Eden arrived at his home. She had seemed very nervous and asked for a drink, he said; he had taken one with her. There were no witnesses to what happened after that. Caldwell said he was struck from behind and had blacked out. When he regained consciousness Eden Myles was lying on the floor, and a patrolman was talking on the telephone. There was no evidence to support Caldwell's story; the bruise on his temple might have come from a blow, or from a fall, the police surgeon testified. There had been a fight; the girl's torn clothing indicated that. Caldwell could have tripped and struck his head against the corner of a table.

Terrell put the paper aside and began work on his column for the following day, typing out a piece he had put together a few weeks ago on a quiet Sunday afternoon. It was an essay on bird life in the cities, a change-of-pace piece nature buffs would admire, and his regular customers would have to tolerate. He usually kept six or eight columns on tap for emergencies and he had a hunch he would use up all of his present stock while he worked on the Caldwell story.

"How do you spell 'pigeon'?" he asked Wheeler a bit later.

"As in 'dead pigeon'? You thinking of Caldwell?"

"No, pigeon as in pigeon. This is a graceful, instructive piece on our town's bird life. In a Charles Lamb mood."

"Why not follow up on animal life? We've got rats, snakes, skunks, all trotting around on two legs—surprisingly like some of our better-known citizens."

"I get the fine satiric touch," Terrell said. He finished the piece, called a copy boy, then settled back in his chair and lit a cigarette. The long room was fairly quiet now; an edition was going in, and tension eased as the bell above the city desk began to ring. The forms were locked up, the presses would

be rolling shortly and nothing could stop them but a front page story—a sinking liner, a major train wreck, an assassination.

“And so another day’s toil is done,” Wheeler said, stretching his arms and yawning. “It makes a man feel good to realize that he has contributed practically nothing to practically nothing—my estimate of the worth of my efforts and the worth of the paper. Makes a man feel good—good where it counts.”

“And where’s that?” Terrell asked.

“A shrewd question.” Wheeler was in high spirits, a grin on his thin, old face. “The place that counts with me is just above the left elbow. That’s where it hurts if I break my Scout oath. Tell me, how do you like the way we handled the big story?”

“It ties Caldwell up like a Christmas goose,” Terrell said.

“Maybe he deserves it.”

Terrell looked at him. “You know something stinks.”

“Sure, sure. I wrote the story, remember.” Wheeler punched the space bar of his typewriter for emphasis. “Coglan saw a man run out of Caldwell’s home. But Coglan changed his mind. He’s a lush, he’s been on the sauce for years. Maybe he saw something, but it might have been a ten foot robin, or a gaggle of dwarfs beating out the Anvil Chorus on his head.” Wheeler shifted in his chair and frowned at Terrell. “I like that bird life column you were doing. It’s a smart idea. You should stick to stuff like that until after elections. You don’t owe anybody anything. Caldwell is police business, Sam.”

“You think he may be guilty?”

“A case can be made,” Wheeler said drily. “Pillar of society, a paragon of the dull virtues. Who knows what he wanted? A frolicsome babe, kicks that he’d only dreamed about in his little box of tradition and respectability? He tried for it, she told him off—” Wheeler punched the space bar again. “Something snapped. I’ve written that particular story fifty times over the years.”

“Why are you trying to tout me off doing my job?”

“Use your head, boy,” Wheeler said irritably. “If this is a frame—if, mind you—it’s been hammered together by people who could step on you like a bug if you crawled across their path.”

Terrell dropped his cigarette into an empty coffee carton. "I've got to cut down on these things," he said.

"That's right, worry about the eternal verities," Wheeler said in a disgusted voice. "Dandruff, too many cigarettes—don't waste time on trifles."

"That's the key to mental health," Terrell said, picking up his coat. "But don't worry, I'll take precautions. I'll wear my press card in my hat band from now on."

"It will make a nice target."

The next morning at nine-thirty Terrell rapped on the door of an old-fashioned frame house in a poor and dreary section of the city. Smoke from factories and the railroad yards hung over the streets, dulling the weak sunlight and filling the air with a sharp acrid stench. The area was being strangled to death by the pressure of industrial development; schools and playgrounds had been summarily shifted to make way for factories and warehouses. The river winding through this area had become a cesspool for waste products. A triumph of city planning, Terrell thought, looking along the depressing street.

The door was opened by a woman with graying hair and eyes that were large and anxious behind rimless glasses. "Yes?" she said, drying her hands on a pale blue apron. "Yes, what is it?"

"My name is Terrell, Mrs. Cogan, Sam Terrell. I'm a reporter with the *Call-Bulletin*."

"Sure, I know your column, Mr. Terrell. And Paddy has spoken of you, I believe."

"I'm sure he has. I've known him for years. Ever since I covered police on the west side. That's where I met him. At the old Nineteenth."

"You want to see him, I suppose, Mr. Terrell, but he's not here. He's taken a trip."

"Yes, I know," Terrell said. "I stopped at his district first and Sergeant McManus told me Paddy had decided to use up some of his leave time."

"He wants to take what he's got coming before he retires," Mrs. Cogan said. "You know his pension's coming up in a few weeks."

"That's smart," Terrell said, smiling at her. "No point in giving the time back to the city."

"That's what I said to him myself."

"But you can help me out just as well as Paddy," Terrell said. "That's why I came by. We're doing a round-up of the Caldwell story in next Sunday's edition, and I want to use a piece on Paddy—a picture, a little biographical stuff, that sort of thing."

"I could find a picture of himself." She pressed her lips together and shook her head quickly. "That poor girl, she looked so sweet. But come in, Mr. Terrell. You'll excuse me, but the house is in a state. I tell you there's bad blood there, Caldwell, I mean." Terrell took off his hat and followed her into the neat, plainly furnished living room that smelled faintly of floor polish. "I know they're supposed to be fine and fancy people, quality, as you'd say, but there's bad blood there all the same, it only needs looking for."

"You may have a point," Terrell said.

"Just sit yourself down, and don't mind how things look. I haven't given the front rooms a lick yet."

"When did Paddy leave, by the way?" Terrell asked casually.

"Yesterday morning, around eight, I think it was. Right after—" Mrs. Coglan pushed a stray hair from her forehead, and then straightened a pile of magazines on the coffee table. "He'd been planning the trip for a long time, you see. There was nothing sudden about it."

"Sure," Terrell said. He tried to sound only mildly interested. "Where did he go, by the way?"

"Some people might think it funny him leaving just after testifying against Mr. Caldwell."

"He won't be needed until the Grand Jury hearing. No reason for him to give up his trip. Where did he go?"

"Well, he's visiting some relatives out in Indiana. Two of his sisters live there." Mrs. Coglan rubbed her hands briskly on her apron. "Well, I'll get you some pictures to look at."

"Is there any way I could get in touch with Paddy?" Terrell asked her. "That is, if I need to check an item or a date with him?"

"Well, he's driving," Mrs. Coglan said, looking at a spot on

the wall. "He'll just meander along, taking his time. I don't see how you could, Mr. Terrell."

"It doesn't matter."

"I'll get the pictures now. You can take your pick."

When she went up the stairs Terrell stood and glanced around the room. His nerves assured him he was on the right track; his body was tight with tension. Paddy Cogan had been told to clear out. To stay away until after elections. His lie had destroyed Caldwell's only hope. And now he was gone, safely away from Caldwell's lawyers or suspicious newspapermen.

The room told him nothing; it was tidy and unrevealing. He hardly knew what he was expecting—a letter or postcard perhaps with a return address on it. He looked through the shelves beside the imitation fireplace, moving the dozen-odd books, but careful not to disturb the orderly rows of china figurines. An enlarged tinted photograph of Paddy Cogan as a young man hung above the mantle. His eyes stared with pointless defiance into the middle distance, soft and innocent in his round and vulnerable face.

Terrell sat down as he heard Mrs. Cogan descending the stairs. "Well, here we are now," she said. She was breathing with some difficulty. "Up and down, up and down, I swear those stairs will be the death of me." She carried a bulky cardboard box which Terrell helped her to place on the coffee table. "I've always kept everything," she said. "Newspaper clippings, transfer orders, letters from the pension and medical officers—you know how it is. You never know when they'll ask you for something they sent you five years ago. And here are the pictures. You should find something in that bunch."

"I'm sure I can." He sat on the sofa and began turning over snapshots of Paddy Cogan. Most of them were from local papers, probably turned over to Paddy by reporters. Paddy standing beside the mayor at a parade, Paddy at the scene of a four-car crash, Paddy holding a baby whose mother had been burned to death in a fire.

"He worked hard, if I do say so," Mrs. Cogan murmured, studying the photographs with a softened expression. "He never got on though in the bureau. He always had enemies, false friends who carried tales."

"That's a damn shame," Terrell said.

"You've known Paddy a good while, and you know he'll take a drink. He's never hidden that—take me or leave me, that's Paddy Cogan. He wouldn't put drink in a can of fruit juice, the way old Captain Maloney always did. Or pretend it was medicine. But it always worried me. As God is my judge, it was his only fault. He never, well—you know, had his hand out for favors, or anything like that. Just the drink."

"It's no crime to take a little nip now and then."

"I suppose not. But a man on a beat is different. Captain Stanko said—" Mrs. Cogan cleared her throat and pointed to a picture. "There's himself just after we were married. I used to see Paddy at seven o'clock Mass every morning with his mother and that's when I set my cap for him." She smiled at Terrell. "My own mother, God rest her soul, always said, 'Look for a boy who looks out for his mother.'"

"That's a good thought."

"I've always been afraid—" Mrs. Cogan twisted her apron with rough, red fingers. "I don't know why I'm talking this way. But each day that brought his pension nearer, I seemed to be more sure he'd get into some trouble. You know, that something would happen while he was off his beat having a nip. I'm running on like an old fool. Nothing can happen now, anyway. You take what you want, and I'll go on with my work. I shouldn't be bothering you with my chatter."

"Not at all. But could I use your phone? I have to check in to the desk."

"Just like a policeman," Mrs. Cogan said, shaking her head. "Always checking in. The phone is in the dining room, and you're welcome to it."

Terrell followed her into the dining room and she turned on the overhead lights. The phone was on the sideboard. "It used to be nice and bright in here," she said. "But since all the factories have come in you can't have a meal without lights." She lingered in the doorway, still twisting her hands in her apron.

Terrell dialed the Weather Bureau's information service, which gave a recorded weather report every fifteen seconds. There was a centerpiece of wax fruit on the sideboard, several spools of wool, and a darning egg. A picture of St. Francis of

Assisi hung facing Terrell. The rug was a bright green, and the highly polished top of the dining room table mirrored the overhead lights.

The announcer was speaking in Terrell's ear, giving details of wind and temperature. He nodded and said, "Okay, okay, I'll check that, too."

Mrs. Cogan said, "I'll just be in the kitchen, if you want me," and left the room.

He smiled at her, and went on talking into the phone. When he heard her footsteps fade away he turned quickly to a small table a few feet from the sideboard. There was a small stack of mail on a metal tray and with the receiver held between his jaw and shoulder, he went through it quickly; he flipped over utility bills, a birth announcement, promotion material from a national magazine, and then he came on it, an envelope postmarked the day before with the name "P. Cogan" written in the upper lefthand corner. The letter was addressed to Mrs. P. Cogan and the return address was the Riley Hotel, Beach City, New Jersey.

Terrell put the letters back on the tray, hung up the phone and strolled back into the living room. He made a selection of pictures, and was ready to leave when Mrs. Cogan came in to ask him if he would like a cup of coffee.

"Thanks, but no," said Terrell. "I've got to run."

"We'll be looking forward to your story. It will be kind of a nice ending for Paddy's days with the police force. It's really the most important case he was ever connected with."

"Yes. Well, thanks again."

Terrell didn't feel very cheerful as he walked down the steps to his car. The morning was gray and cold, and the sulphurous smoke from the freight yards burned his throat and eyes. Paddy Cogan, he thought taking his mother to seven o'clock Mass, sneaking off his beat for a nip on frosty nights. Somebody had to trip him but it was a lousy job.

Terrell smiled and waved to Mrs. Cogan, who stood in the doorway with her shoulders hunched against the cold wind. Then Terrell got in his car and started the motor. Beach City was a hundred miles away. He could make that in two hours.

THE Riley Hotel was a gloomy red-brick building four blocks from the ocean, facing an unrelieved stretch of penny arcades, garages, shooting galleries and cheap restaurants. In Beach City's well-publicized social stratifications, the Riley simply didn't exist; all values here, personal and material, were estimated from the waterline, and four blocks from the water took one into social Siberia. But there was a kind of despairing defiance in the Riley's chromium and gilt entrance, Terrell thought; it was incongruous, silly, but rather brave, like a fat woman's decision to wear a bikini and to hell with it.

The lobby was drafty and needed cleaning; the beery wind eddying from the lounge set little flurries of dusty tobacco and cigar bands skipping across the hard-wood floor. Terrell knew the Inspector of Detectives in Beach City, a man named Moran. He mentioned Moran's name to the elderly desk clerk, and then asked if he might look at the register.

"Why, of course," the desk clerk said. "The inspector was in just the other day, as a matter of fact. No trouble, just a misunderstanding. A girl passed out in the bar, and somebody slapped her to bring her around—and it frightened her. As I say, it was a misunderstanding." He smiled, displaying large, very white and false teeth. "There are people who judge a hotel by its location. It's a form of snobbery, don't you think?"

"You have a point," Terrell said, looking at the register. Paddy Cogan had checked in the day before, at ten in the morning.

"The man in 103—is he up there now?"

"Yes, nice, quiet fellow. Has his food sent up. Is anything wrong?"

"Nothing serious. But don't bother to announce me."

Terrell took the elevator to the third floor and walked down a wide gray hallway to Cogan's room. A breakfast tray was

beside the door, the napkin crumpled, the stub of a cigarette pressed into a mound of rubbery-looking scrambled eggs. Terrell studied the tray for a few seconds, then sighed and rapped lightly on the door.

Someone had been moving about inside the room, but now those small shuffling sounds faded into silence.

"Open up, Paddy," he said. "This is Sam Terrell. I want to talk to you."

The knob turned slowly, and the door swung back a few inches. Cogan stared up at him, his eyes shifting and his lips trying to work themselves into a smile. "Well, Sam boy," he said, laughing a bit. "You could knock me over with a feather. I needed a rest, and I ducked over here all by myself." He rubbed his mouth with the back of his hand. "That's all I wanted, some place where I could have a drink in private without scandalizing the neighbors." He smelled of whiskey, and he needed a shave.

"Can I come in?"

"Why sure, Sam." Cogan moved away from the door and Terrell walked inside and took off his hat. The room was meanly furnished; a faded carpet, thin as paper, a bureau with half the drawer knobs missing, beige curtains shadowed in streaks with dust. It was a still life of small losses, of meagre defeats; a bitterly appropriate place for Cogan to run to ground, Terrell thought.

"You want a drink, Sam?"

"No, thanks."

"Well, I'll have just a touch." Cogan moved over to the bureau where there was a half-full bottle of whiskey and a blue plastic tooth-brush glass, its sides faintly streaked with a pink dentifrice. He poured himself a long drink and then sat down on the edge of the bed. "You take the chair," he said. "I save it for guests." He wasn't wearing a shirt, and the skin of his shoulders was blotchy with freckles. He finished his drink in one swallow, and it reddened his cheeks and brought a film of moisture over his eyes. "Boy, that does it. I seem to need a drink today. Must be coming down with something." He smiled at Terrell. "Well, how come you're over this way?"

"You know why I'm here, Paddy. Me or somebody else—what difference does it make?"

"Yeah," Coglan said, in a gentle, whispering voice. "Yeah." He smiled again, blinking his eyes rapidly, and the liquor on his lower lip gleamed in the harsh light of the room. "Somebody had to come, I guess."

"Because you lied, and an innocent man may die for it." Terrell sat down and took out his cigarettes. "You can't live with a thing like that. There's not enough booze in the world to give you a night's sleep."

"They had too much on me," Coglan said. He nodded wearily at the empty glass in his hands. "Too many times playing around with this stuff instead of minding my work. They've got reports, suspended verdicts—stacks of them. They could toss me out in less time than it would take to fill in the forms. And Stanko said he would if I didn't—" Coglan sighed and looked into the bottom of his glass. "Unless I lied. Unless I said I didn't see the man who ran out of Caldwell's. He said it was hush-hush business—that I'd understand later and that sort of thing. I didn't believe him. But I pretended I did. Even to myself." Coglan wet his lips and walked over to the bureau. "Sure you won't have a nip?"

"No thanks, Paddy. You go ahead."

"So I lied to you, to everybody, including the judge," Coglan said, measuring out his drink slowly and carefully. "I finish my twenty-five years in two months. Then my pension comes through. I want it, Sam, not for me, but for my wife. We never had kids, you know, but with the pension we could go out to California where her youngest sister is living. They've got a big family, lots of young ones. And that's what my wife's been thinking about all these years. You know how women are. It changes them not to have babies. It hurts them. And she wanted to be near those youngsters." Coglan looked up at Terrell, his eyes pleading for understanding. "I owe a lot on the house still, and we've got doctor bills going back to when she had that heart trouble. Without the pension I'd be on the streets, Sam, a guy fifty-seven years old who'd been thrown off the force for drinking. Great recommendation for another job, eh? I was scared. Not of being slugged or shot. But of being out on my can, without a dime. Do you understand, Sam?"

"I think so," Terrell said.

"I was never a bad cop," Cogan said slowly. "I was just no good. There's a difference. I never shook people down at accidents, or went looking for married guys necking in cars with their girl friends. I just was a nothing. Pulling boxes, telling people to keep their dogs locked up, stopping fights between kids." Cogan turned the glass around in his hands, staring at the darkly shining liquor. "But I always thought I'd get a chance to prove myself. Going up a flight of stairs with a gun after a killer—that kind of thing. But the chance never did come along. You got to be lucky to prove you're any good. Did you ever think of that?"

"Sure," Terrell said. "But you're getting your chance. What happened the night Eden Myles was murdered?"

"I heard her scream," Cogan said in a weary, hopeless voice. "I had just turned the corner from Regent Square into Manor Lane. I started running. I was only two or three doors from Caldwell's house. Otherwise I wouldn't have heard her yell. It was cut off in a hurry, you see. Well, I went up to Caldwell's door. You don't bust in on an important man like that without some good reason, so I just sort of waited there, wondering whether I'd imagined the noise. Then the door was jerked open, and out came this big guy. I got a good look at him, Sam. He was surprised and he just stood there for a second. He was big, with thick black hair and a wide, tough face. A gorilla, Sam. Wearing a trenchcoat. No hat, so I could see a deep scar on his forehead. Then he pushed past me and ran across the street, angling toward those shadows from the wall around the church. You see how it was?"

"I see. So you lost him. Then you came back to Caldwell's?"

"That's right. The door was open. Caldwell was lying in a chair out cold, and she was dead on the floor. Her face was all swollen and blue. I called the district and Stanko answered the phone. He just told me to sit tight, and hung up." Cogan finished the drink and ran his tongue around his lips. "Then you called, and I gave you a line on what happened. When Stanko showed up he told me to forget all about the big man I saw running out of the house. So I lied. But sitting over here in this crummy joint I realized I couldn't stick it out."

Watching Cogan pour himself another drink, Terrell was touched by a deep, inarticulate pity; this sad little man had

been smashed by the morality that admired compromise more than any other virtue. *Put up with it, that's the way the world is, only suckers try to change it.* The seeds of destruction might have been with him from birth, but this particular city had provided lush soil for them to thrive on.

"So what do I do?" Coglan said.

"Good question," Terrell said drily. "You're on record with one story. Stanko will deny your second version. And you're going to be in the middle."

"Can't I do anything?"

"You can give me the true story, and we'll run it," Terrell said. "That will take the heat off Caldwell, and put it where it belongs. But the cops who take orders from the Hall will be gunning for you. They'll boot you off the force as a liar and a drunk. And they'll hound you off any other job you try to get in the city. And they'll stop your pension."

Coglan stared at his empty glass. "You put it pretty hard, Sam."

"We're telling each other the truth, that's all." Terrell glanced at his watch. "Does anybody know you're here?"

"Just my wife. Stanko said get out of town for ten days and stay quiet."

"Okay, you just sit tight. I'll call you tonight—around eight-thirty. I'll tell you where to go then. Everything will be arranged for you. We'll put what you've told me on tape, and then let it fly." Terrell hesitated, looking down at Cogan. He said, "Have you got your gun?"

"Sure, I don't travel without it."

"Good." Terrell stood and walked to the door. "Just one other thing. I can't promise it, but Mike Karsh might fix things so you don't miss that pension. He can spend the paper's money with real talent."

"I'll take my chances. I don't deserve anything for what I'm doing."

"Okay. I'll call you at eight-thirty."

"Sure, Sam." Cogan smiled and put out his hand. "I'll be waiting. I've got nowhere to go. . . ."

Terrell was back at the paper by five that afternoon. Karsh's office was empty, and Tuckerman told him he was at the track. Terrell went to his desk, and looked through his mail.

He called Karsh's apartment at six, but the maid said he wasn't in. Terrell ordered coffee and smoked a few cigarettes, trying to shake his mood of depression; the session with Cogan had left him feeling tired and bitter. At seven he called Karsh again, and this time the maid said, "Just a minute, please."

Karsh said, "Hello, Sam, what is it?"

"I've got something good."

"That's what the touts were saying all afternoon. It cost me six hundred bucks." Karsh sounded sharp and irritable. "What is it?"

"I found Paddy Cogan."

"Who said he was lost?"

"He got sent out of town in a hurry after testifying. But I found him. He's at the Riley in Beach City. And Mike, he's willing to talk for publication. The whole story. Who he saw leaving Caldwell's, who ordered him to lie about it."

"Oh, brother," Karsh said softly. "Get over here fast, Sam. We've got our story now. Get moving. . . ."

Terrell reached Karsh's suite around seven-thirty, and walked in on the disorderly beginnings of an impromptu party; Mayers, a bookmaker, was on the phone ordering food and liquor sent up, and two blondes sat cross-legged on the floor looking through record albums. A couple of county bailiffs stood at the bar free-loading with efficient relish, and Karsh's mistress, Jenny Patterson, was talking with Nat Clark, a fight manager. They had all been at the track together and their mood was animated and gay. Except Jenny's, Terrell noticed; she had been crying, and Nat Clark was patting her hand.

Karsh wasn't in sight. Terrell joined Jenny and Nat Clark and said, "Where's Mike?"

"In there with Gloria," Jenny said, staring with large, martyred eyes at the hallway and door that led to Karsh's bedroom. Gloria was Karsh's ex-wife, and she wouldn't have set foot in his apartment unless she had a grievance, Terrell knew; and her only grievances were financial. He glanced at his watch, twenty minutes to eight. Still plenty of time for his call to Cogan.

"She came bursting in here like a fishwife," Jenny said, dabbing at her eyes. "He took her in there because he hates scenes. She knows that."

"What's her trouble?" Terrell said.

"One of Mike's checks bounced," Nat Clark said, shrugging. "Those things happen. Mike wouldn't know an overdraft if it bit him in the ankle."

"She just wants to embarrass him," Jenny said. "She likes to make us all seem cheap and dirty."

"Now, now," Nat Clark said.

"It's true," Jenny said, in a breaking voice. "Mike and I want a life together—but she won't get married because it would cost her his alimony. I know her kind."

Jenny was attractive, dark and slender and well-groomed, but Terrell found her almost intolerable; she was everlastingly shifting from one emotional crisis to another, eternally suffering from fancied slights and injured feelings. And she was shrewd enough to make Karsh feel responsible for all of her troubles. She played like a virtuoso on his compassion, and his rather old-fashioned sense of guilt. It sickened Terrell. She wanted to be innocent again—this was what she plagued Karsh with, her nostalgic and wistful yearning for virtue. According to Jenny, Karsh had turned her into a creature of dreadful sophistication and wickedness. She could never go back to the sweet, simple person she was before she met him; the bridges were burned.

All of this kept Karsh uncomfortably off-balance. She had persuaded him to make a ridiculous charade of domesticity for her parents, and when they were in town he was dragooned into taking them to the zoo and the automat, and in general behaving as if he were acting out cozy scenes for magazine covers. This complicity was a confession of guilt, and Jenny made him repeat it each time her family attacked his flanks.

But Karsh put up with it. He obviously got something from her in return. She was the shadow of a woman, at least, and a certain involvement with the human situation. Was that enough? Terrell wondered. Or was it all he could get?

Mayers covered the phone with his hand and called, "All right now, lemme try to get this straight. Who wants steak? Don't shout. Just raise a pinkie like good little boys and girls.

One, two, three, four—that's what I figured." And into the phone: "Yeah, four steaks, all medium-well, and three chicken curries. And don't just dab on the chutney. Send up a bottle. What? Yeah, Mike Karsh, that's right."

Jenny was saying to Nat Clark, "Honest to God, I never knew what the word meant until I met Mike. I mean, I'd never heard it used in a sentence. I never knew people—well, like you, for instance."

"We're a desperate bunch," Nat Clark said, sighing.

Terrell excused himself and went into the guest bedroom which was generally used as a cloakroom during parties. He wanted to wash his hands; he felt grimy, not so much from five hours on the road as from five minutes with Jenny.

As Terrell entered the room a man named Diddy turned quickly toward him, a bright smile flashing on his small, shrewd face. "Hi, Sam, how's it going? Long time no see, keed."

Diddy had been in the act of putting an unopened bottle of whiskey into the pocket of a camel's hair overcoat. Terrell stared at him for a few seconds and Diddy wet his lips. "We may be going out later, Sam. Mike likes a drink when we're driving. So I thought I'd take one along for him."

"Where did he find such thoughtful friends?" Terrell said, shaking his head slowly. "You'd better take some money, too. He keeps that in his wallet. He might want to look at Lincoln's picture while he's driving around."

"Very funny," Diddy said gently. He straightened up, not smiling any more. "What's it to you, Sam? It's not your booze."

"Ownership interests you? I wouldn't have guessed that."

"Very funny indeed," Diddy said, but there were spots of color in his cheek. He walked out of the room carrying the bottle by the neck and muttering something under his breath. Terrell went into the bathroom and washed his hands. He was surprised by his appearance; his face was pale and his eyes were hard and bright with anger. Where did Mike find these slugs, he thought, wadding up a towel and flinging it aside.

When he left the bedroom he almost ran into Karsh and his ex-wife, Gloria, standing together at the front door. Karsh looked harassed and weary, but Gloria, a chic, tiny creature with fantastically drawn eyebrows, seemed in a good mood.

"Sam, love," she said, putting out a hand. "We simply never see each other any more. Why have you crept out of my heart?"

The hand was soft and deceptive, like the paw of a cat with the claws sheathed.

"You're looking fine, Gloria," he said.

"You put things so extravagantly. I suppose it's your Latin streak."

"Yes, it runs north to south just along my femur," Terrell said.

"You must show me someday," she said, squeezing his hand. She glanced at Karsh and made a little face at him. "Sorry I embarrassed all your lovely friends, Mike. Such an elegant crowd. Does the delicatessen send them up as a premium with food orders?"

Karsh said, "Gloria, will you please get the hell out of here?"

"You doll," she said, smiling pleasurably at the anger in his eyes. "Just take care of that little matter for me in the morning, will you? The deposit, remember? And about our darling's new car—I leave that to your generous judgment. I'm absolutely stony."

"Okay, okay, I'll think it over."

"Bye, bye, darlings." She walked jauntily toward the elevators, showing off her cute little body like a saucy child. Karsh closed the door and took Terrell's arm. "Let's go into my bedroom," he said. "The only reason I enjoy making dough is to keep that bitch at a distance. A paycheck to me is what a whip and a chair is to a lion tamer."

The party was accelerating rapidly, and it was a relief when Karsh closed the bedroom door behind them and shut off the badly synchronized cacophony of jazz, talk and laughter. Karsh sat down slowly in a leather chair before the fireplace. He still looked tired, but the irritation was gone from his face and eyes; work was performing the familiar alchemy on him, burning out everything but an excitement for the job at hand. "Let's have it all in order," he said, glancing up at Terrell.

Terrell told him what he had learned from Paddy Cogan, and when he finished Karsh looked at his watch. "Eight-fifteen," he murmured.

For a few seconds he was silent, frowning at the backs of his hands. Then he said, "Paddy Coglan is a ticking bomb, Sam. When he explodes the whole blazing city may be up in smoke. We'd better get him over here. Let's see, there's a train from Beach City around nine. Tell him to catch it. And tell him to keep out of the club car. I don't want him loaded. I'll have Tuckerman and a few of the boys from the press room meet him at the station, and I'll arrange a room for him here. You can spend tonight getting his story, and we'll cut loose tomorrow morning."

"How are you going to play it?"

"Straight, absolutely straight. There's something to remember. You don't have to hoke up an honest story." Karsh glanced up at Terrell, a cold enthusiasm lighting his features. "Power comes from appropriateness, Sam. We could trick this story up with circus stunts, but we'd cheapen it. Pictures of Coglan at a typewriter, hat on back of his head, telling all. That kind of corn. But we have a story that can stand on its own without props. Appropriateness comes from taste, and that's why you might make a good editor some day. You've got taste." Karsh stood and looked at his watch. "Get Coglan now. I'll try to promote us a couple of drinks."

The circuits to Beach City were loaded, the operator told Terrell, but she promised to call him back in a few minutes.

Karsh came back with two whiskeys and soda and gave one to Terrell. "They were pretty nice about it," he said drily. "I interrupted their dinner, but they didn't mind. They're a considerate bunch."

"Why don't you tie a can to them?" Terrell said. He realized from the expression on Karsh's face that he had made a mistake but he couldn't stop. "Then open the windows and let the cold air blow in for a while. They're slugs, Mike."

"And after they're gone, what's left? Me, sitting all alone with a drink in my hand. Maybe they're better than nothing, Sam."

"Get a dog," Terrell said. He hated having forced Karsh to make that admission. Sometimes it was a kindness not to point out the obvious. "A dog would like it here," he said, looking away from the tight little smile on Karsh's face. "Good hours, incentive pay."

"It's no place for a clean, young dog," Karsh said. "But I'll tell you what." He lit his cigarette and sat down on the arm of the leather chair. "I'm going to need an assistant in a year or two. A man to take over some of my chores. The publisher wants to quote protect me from my selfless devotion to the paper unquote. You keep on learning, and you'll be my boy."

Terrell found it difficult to realize that he was casually being offered one of the top newspaper jobs in the state. He said foolishly, "You mean that?"

Karsh smiled faintly. "Sure. A year on the news desk, some time in Washington maybe, and a little homework on where woodpulp comes from—that's all you need. You could take over the office next to mine, and at the risk of sounding sloppy, I'd be damn glad to have you there. You've got a little extra, Sam. I don't know the word for it, decency maybe. An autopsy wouldn't show it, but it's there."

The phone began to ring. "Many thanks," Terrell said. "That's an inadequate way of putting it, but it's what I mean. Many thanks."

"Get the phone," Karsh said.

The operator said, "I have your party now, just one moment." There was a click, and then a voice said, "The Riley Hotel, reservations."

"I'd like to talk to Patrick Cogan, please."

"Yes, sir." There was a silence, and then: "Who's calling, please?"

"Sam Terrell with the *Call-Bulletin*."

"Yes, just a moment."

Terrell heard a murmuring sound in the background, and then another voice came on the line. "Terrell? This is Tim Moran, Homicide. What did you want to see Cogan about?"

Terrell felt a chill go through him. "It's a personal matter, Tim. What's up?"

"Sorry to give it to you this way, but he shot himself about half an hour ago. Was he sick, or anything like that?"

Terrell covered the receiver and looked at Karsh. "Cogan's dead, suicide. I'd better get over there."

"See what they've got to say first."

Terrell uncovered the receiver and said, "I don't know if he was sick, Tim. Can you tell me what happened?"

"All right. He was found by a maid. Her name was Schmidt, Mary Schmidt, age 43, and she lives in Brownsville, 24 Mt. Airy Road."

"I don't need all that," Terrell said.

"All right. She found him at about eight o'clock. He shot himself with his own gun. In the left temple. The doc thinks he might have been dead a couple of hours though. Those shooting galleries across the street covered the shot."

"Did he leave any note?"

"We didn't find anything."

"Was he drunk?"

"I don't know. The doc will have all that in a little while. What did you want him for, Sam? You were over this morning, I know."

"I was doing a piece on him," Terrell said. "Profile of an average cop, that sort of thing. He had his moment of glory the other night on that Caldwell murder, and I was tying him into our Sunday run-down."

"Well, how did he seem when you talked to him? Depressed? Worried? Anything like that?"

"No, he seemed fine. Thanks, Tim." Terrell put the phone down slowly and looked at Karsh. "In the left temple, seven-thirty or earlier, no note. That's it, Mike."

"You should have got his story on paper. You should have taken a statement from him and had it witnessed and notarized." Karsh threw his cigarette into the fireplace, rose and began pacing the room. "Or you should have used a dictaphone."

"I'll remember next time," Terrell said.

"Okay, relax. I'm not riding you for kicks. But there was too much pressure on Coglan—from inside and out. You might have guessed this was going to happen."

"He didn't act like he was going to kill himself," Terrell said.

"Maybe he got drinking and thinking."

"Maybe," Terrell said. He smiled faintly at Karsh, but his eyes were bitter. "I fumbled this one, I guess. A little smarter work and he might be alive right now."

"You couldn't help that."

"Thanks."

Outside the party was blasting away merrily. The music was loud and one of the blondes was dancing in a slow, mesmerized fashion with the little man named Diddy. A waiter was collecting cigarette-littered dinner plates, and Mayers was pouring brandy into balloon-shaped snifters. The second blonde stood swaying in front of the record player, staring in frozen astonishment at a full glass of whiskey which someone had placed on the slowly spinning turntable. Terrell glanced back from the front door and saw Karsh walking slowly and wearily in to join the party.

THE next morning at nine-thirty Terrell walked into the crowded lobby of the Clayton Hotel, which was an informal gathering place for Ike Cellars and his top assistants. Cellars had no office, kept no fixed schedule; he came into the city each day from his home in the suburbs, and spent a few hours at the Clayton chatting with friends and receiving reports on gambling action in all sections of the city. He was also available to supplicants who passed the careful surveillance of his bodyguards. But he wouldn't commit himself to appointments; he didn't like to deal with anything so speculative as the future. People who needed to see him just hung around hoping that he might have a moment to spare. That was all they could do. Conferences with Cellars were never leisurely or redundant; he usually leafed through a paper or stared absently at the crowds around him, while the questions were put, the favors begged, the situation explained—then he said yes or no, and turned away. And it was understood there was no appeal from his verdict.

Cellars ran most of his business from the Clayton without reference to books or figures. But he knew to a penny the balances his auditors would bring to him at the end of each week.

Terrell didn't see him in the lobby, but he noticed a number of his men standing around, portly, substantial types for the most part, studying racing forms, or chatting with one another in an atmosphere of money, cigar smoke and very special and formidable kind of privilege. Terrell went into the barber shop and settled himself in Nick Baron's chair. Nick was a voluble and intelligent little man, and one of Terrell's best sources. He worked literally under the nose of Ike Cellars' men, but he had long ears and an unswerving loyalty to Sam Terrell. Every tip he heard went straight to Terrell's desk, installments

against a debt he could never adequately repay. For Terrell had helped to save Nick's daughter when the child was dying of a rare blood disease; through his column he had alerted blood-donor services throughout the country, and enough of the girl's blood type was found to keep her alive for months. And during that time the disease responded to a new combination of antibiotics, and the girl's life was saved. Nick Baron was emotional and garrulous; but when he had said, "I'll never forget this," he had been speaking the truth with simplicity and precision.

"How's it going, Mr. Terrell?" he said, putting a towel around his neck with an elegant little flourish. "You look like you could use a facial, a little tone-up, eh?"

"No, I'm just a bit hung. How about using that vibrator on my throbbing skull. That helps sometimes."

"Stop treating your stomach like a concrete mixer. That helps, too."

"Wire your scoop to the American Medical Bulletin," Terrell said. "But first iron out some of my bumps." Terrell had seen two of Cellars' men in the shop but he knew the sound of the vibrator would cover his conversation with Nick.

"Sure, sure," Nick said, coming around to his side. His face was thoughtful; he understood what Terrell wanted. They had used this arrangement in the past. "So what's new?" he said, slipping the band of the electric vibrator onto the back of his hand.

"Nothing much," Terrell said. "How's Angela?"

"Fine, just fine. She's making another novena for you. I told her you're a shoo-in, but that don't stop her." He switched on the vibrator and began massaging Terrell's forehead with his fingertips.

"I'm going to describe a man to you," Terrell said. "Tell me if he's been around."

"Sure, sure," Nick said, raising his voice slightly. "I bet him to win. Courage, that's what I got. Brains? Money? No, but lots of courage."

"He's big, black-haired, with a scarred forehead. Tough-looking, a gorilla. Have you seen him, Nick?"

"Well, I don't know."

Terrell saw the perspiration on Nick's upper lip and he

realized that the little barber was frightened. "That's okay, forget I asked."

"No—he was in here two days ago with Ike. That's all I know. Want me to ask around?"

"Absolutely not. Forget it."

"Whatever you say."

Terrell glanced at his watch. "That's enough. I've got to be going."

He paid Nick, tipped him a quarter and slipped into his topcoat. His heart was beating faster, and he could feel the excitement running through him; he had the story now. Proving it was another matter, but he had the blunt, ugly outline: Ike Cellars had hired a hoodlum to kill Eden Myles and thus frame Caldwell. That wasn't a hunch, or a clever inference, that was the truth. But what was truth? Something twelve men could agree on. Could he make a case against Cellars that a jury would believe?

Terrell was turning toward the street entrance, when a man's voice said, "Sam boy, just a second."

He looked around and saw that one of Cellars' men, Big Manny Knowles, was smiling at him from the doorway that led to the lobby. Big Manny was a sheepish giant, with small, near-sighted eyes, and an expression that usually registered something just short of bewilderment. He strolled toward Terrell, rocking from side to side like a buoy in a gale, and dropped a hand gently on his arm. "Ike wants to see you, Sam," he said. "Let's don't keep him waiting. You know how busy he is."

"I worry about it a lot," Terrell said. "For about six seconds on the first of each month I worry about Ike. Sometimes I have to rush it a little, but it's the feeling that counts."

Big Manny glanced uneasily toward the lobby. "Get it out, Sam," he said. "You know he don't like being kidded around with."

"Take your hand off my arm, for Christ's sake," Terrell said. "You think I'm one of your numbers writers?"

"There's no point yapping at me," Big Manny said. "I'm just doing what I'm told."

"All right, let's enter the presence. Do we go in backwards or on our hands and knees?"

"I wish you'd cut it out," Big Manny said. "You know how he feels about smart talk. Why not be polite? It don't cost a damn thing."

"Just a little self-respect," Terrell said.

"Why be so serious about everything? Everybody respects you, Sam."

"Let's go," Terrell said.

Cellars was standing at the cigar stand, leafing through a magazine, a healthy-looking man with dark brown skin and hair as lustrous and beautiful as old silver. He wore a light gray flannel suit, a luxurious, well-cut garment, and a camel's hair coat with slash pockets and hand-stitched lapels. On either side of him were big, purposeful-looking men in dark clothes. They studied Terrell carefully, then let their eyes slide off his face to check the crowds hurrying past Cellars.

"Good to see you, boy," Cellars said smiling, putting out a wide, soft hand. "You're a scarce character." The smile narrowed his black eyes to slits, but it didn't affect the cold, heavy turn of his lips. "I been trying to catch up with you for a couple of days."

"Did you try the office?"

Cellars turned his palms upward in a gesture of self-deprecation that was patently phoney. "I got no system. I just go around hoping I'll bump into people I want to see. Most of the time I do." He put a hand casually on Terrell's arm. "Here's what I wanted to see you about. We've got some really but terrific pictures from the circus. You know, our big day with the kids. You know, eh, Sam?"

"Yes, I know," Terrell said. Each year Cellars sponsored a well-publicized outing for a group of the city's orphans. They were fed lavishly, entertained at the circus, and photographed extensively with Cellars, Mayor Ticknor, and other civic dignitaries. Local papers covered the affair dutifully, but Cellars' press agent complained that the story was played down because of a prejudice against Cellars' gambling interests. Most editors agreed with him. Some even suggested that orphans were picked because they didn't have parents to protect them from Cellars' shoddy publicity stunts.

"This year was the greatest," Cellars said, chuckling in a deep, confident voice. "It would have put years on your life,

Sam, to watch those kids enjoying themselves. And the food they put away! I used up the best part of fifty turkeys, and that was just the start." Without turning his head he said, "Ben, let's have those pictures."

Ben Noble, his press agent, said, "Right off the griddle, Ike," and put a thick manila envelope into Cellars' outstretched hand. "Get a look, Sam." Cellars removed a dozen or so glossy prints. "I don't want to take up your time now. You can go through them later at the office. But how about that blond kid with the lion tamer? Ever see anything like that?"

"It's great," Terrell said. "Moving."

"I'll have my girl send you over all the material you need," Cellars said. "Names, ages, some cute little stories and gags that Noble came up with. She's got a regular file, Sam. Real clean stuff. The sort of thing decent people go for."

"People like my readers, is that what you mean?"

"Yeah, something like that."

Terrell smiled slightly. "I'll bet you've got enough material to fill my column for the next two weeks. Until after elections anyway."

"That's right," Cellars said, nodding slowly. "I hope you don't think I'm being heavy, Sam. But fill your space with something sweet. You'll find that's a good tip."

"Maybe I should take a vacation for a couple of weeks," Terrell said. "Would that be a good idea?"

"Good's a funny word," Cellars said, watching him carefully; his eyes were points of dark light between gray, narrowed lids. "I don't use good and bad. I use smart and dumb."

One of the big men beside him shifted restlessly. "I think he looks run-down, Ike. Maybe a vacation would be smart."

"Maybe," Cellars said.

"You two have a nice act," Terrell said. "Like an organ grinder and a monkey. Why don't you send him around the lobby with a cap and a tin cup, Ike?"

Cellars shoved the folder of pictures roughly into Terrell's stomach. "Don't be funny with me, snoop." The power of the man was suddenly naked in his face; Terrell could see the sadistic needs in his eyes, and in the turn of his cold, thick lips. "You take these pictures. And you look at them every day, and you remember what I been telling you."

Terrell's mouth was dry, and he knew that his forehead was damp with perspiration. But he let the pictures drop from his hands to the floor. "My space is booked for the next two weeks," he said. "I don't have a paragraph to spare."

Ike Cellars looked down at the prints that lay at his feet. The powdered face of a clown stared up at him, mocking sadness with a false nose and drawn-on spaniel's eyes. Cellars let out his breath slowly and carefully, as if he were releasing a volatile and dangerous substance that could conceivably explode in his face. "That's all I had to say, Sam. Beat it."

"It's a pleasure," Terrell said.

TERRELL stopped for coffee in a drugstore opposite the Clayton, and gave his nerves a chance to untighten; there had been nothing funny or casual in the encounter with Cellars. Ike was a powerful man with a short temper and a long memory. He wasted nothing, least of all threats. Terrell sat with the coffee until his fingers were steady, and then went out and hailed a cab. He had decided to see Sarnac again; Caldwell and the reform ticket must have something damaging to use against Cellars. Otherwise Ike wouldn't have made such an obvious and stupid play.

The atmosphere of Caldwell's campaign headquarters had changed drastically since his visit forty-eight hours ago. Then the mood had been one of missionary enthusiasm; Caldwell was astride the white horse of good government, and the forces of evil were fleeing in disorder before his shining lance. That was the feeling Terrell remembered, correcting a bit for his purple patch. But now the big room was almost empty, and the bunting and pictures seemed woefully incongruous against the dispirited silence. Two young girls looked up at him from a table, their expressions defensive and vulnerable. Terrell was touched by the guilt in their faces. Why should they feel guilty?

One of them went off to find Sarnac and the other made nervous comments about the weather. Terrell turned from her in relief when Sarnac looked out of his office and said, "Won't you come in, Mr. Terrell?"

Sarnac was pale and nervous; a muscle twitched in his left cheek and he looked as if he hadn't slept for days.

"You're in great shape," Terrell said. "Bright-eyed, radiating a calm confidence."

"Please sit down. It's a bit difficult to relax in my position. There's so much to be done, and at the same time there's

nothing to do. Nothing, nothing—" He clenched his fists. "Nothing that will help. Nothing at all."

"What have you been doing?"

Sarnac removed his glasses and pressed the tips of his fingers against his closed eyes. "We've hired a firm of private detectives. They're checking everything—Eden Myles' background and that patrolman—what's his name—Coglan, who shot himself. They're going over all the testimony for loopholes. The National Committee has offered us a blank check—they believe in Mr. Caldwell. Money, TV time, their best writers, best investigators, anything they've got. They're standing by splendidly."

"Well, to be as cynical as hell, he's their baby. They can't dump him. That would hurt the ticket from one end of the country to the other. Have you talked to Caldwell today?"

"Yes, early this morning. He still has no idea what happened. He believes he was struck down from behind. The police obviously don't agree."

"They've got their story all wrapped up," Terrell said. "Paddy Coglan is dead, but his evidence at the preliminary hearing is a matter of record and admissible in court. Caldwell doesn't have a prayer as things stand. As a loyal friend, all you can do is tidy up his affairs and comfort his widow."

"Does his helplessness give you any satisfaction?" Sarnac was angered and disturbed by Terrell's tone. "Are you pleased that the life of an innocent man is in jeopardy?"

"I want to make a deal with you," Terrell said. "But you've got nothing to bargain with. I want that understood. It will save hedging and double-talk. I think Caldwell was framed. I'm not going to tell you why I think so. But I'm going to try to prove it. I want what you've got on Ike Cellars. On the present administration, up to and including Mayor Ticknor."

"Now just a minute, please." Sarnac looked confused and excited. "I can't agree to those terms. I can't give you information without knowing what to expect in return. You've got to consider my position."

"That doesn't interest me at all. I want what you've got on Ike Cellars. I want the information that he's afraid of. I'm offering one thing in exchange for it—a chance to keep Cald-

well out of the electric chair. And not even a good chance. What do you say? I'm busy, Sarnac, and so are you. Let's don't waste each other's time."

"You think Caldwell was framed?" Sarnac said. His hands were shaking. "Is that a guess, Terrell?"

"I know he was framed," Terrell said quietly. "Understand? I know it. He could have hurt someone important so he was stopped dead in his tracks. Stepped on. Smashed. Now are you going to tell me who he was about to hurt? And how? Or are you going to sit tight and let the illustrious name of Caldwell turn into a number in a state pen? And that's if he's lucky enough to get a recommendation for mercy. Otherwise he'll die. Well, what is it?"

It was a long speech for Terrell, and a heated one; he felt that he must have sounded highly emotional. "Make up your mind," he said. "Frankly, I don't see what you've got to lose. We're after the same thing for different reasons. I want the story, you want Caldwell cleared. Why shouldn't we work together?"

"You want it all your way."

"That's right," Terrell said. "I want it my way."

Sarnac was silent for a few seconds, shaking his head as if he couldn't line up his thoughts properly. "I don't know," he said. "All right, all right." His voice rose sharply; Terrell had stood and turned to the door. "Sit down. But for the love of God and truth don't deceive us, Terrell. Don't offer us hope if none exists."

"I'm offering you a chance, which depends on what you tell me. So let's get with it."

"If Caldwell had been elected, Ike Cellars and Mayor Ticknor would have gone to jail for life. Along with dozens of smaller thieves in the administration." Sarnac's voice strengthened as he went on. "That's what they feared. That's why they've committed murder to keep him from office."

"That's a good, husky charge," Terrell said. "Now for details. How were you going to do all this?"

"I'll make it as clear as I can. First, let me ask you what you know about the Municipal Parking Authority."

"Not too much. A program to ease the city's traffic prob-

lems. I've read the stories on it. But it's fairly dull stuff. Like what the earth will use for fuel in a couple of million years. Important, but not pressing."

"Perhaps you're right. But you should have been more interested. Our Parking Authority is one of the neatest civic swindles you'll ever come across. And the public's indifference to it has cost the community—the public itself—millions of dollars."

"Okay, I'm shocked. How does it work? And how do you tie Cellars and Ticknor to it?"

"I'll try to explain." Sarnac stood and came around his desk, frowning thoughtfully and rubbing his finger alongside his nose. This was a classroom mannerism, Terrell guessed, for Sarnac's attitude changed as he assumed the role of teacher; he seemed at home in this capacity, and rather pleased to be operating again within a familiar framework.

"The Parking Authority was established by City Council at the request of Mayor Ticknor," Sarnac said, in a careful, precise voice. He paused, as if giving Terrell time to take notes, and then continued. "This was about four years ago, shortly after the present administration had been returned to office. Mayor Ticknor was supported by dozens of experts in traffic management and city planning. Their arguments were clear and logical. More cars are being licensed each month. Parking space is contracting steadily. Traffic problems can only worsen unless drastic and imaginative steps are taken. And so the Authority was created, with broad powers to pass laws, condemn property, build traffic arterials, and so forth. On paper all these proposals look fine."

"But they weren't put into effect?"

"That's putting it too simply. Let me give you an example from our files. Three years and six months ago it was announced that a parking drome would be built at Ninth and Morrison. This was just one unit in the overall plan, of course. But we'll take Ninth and Morrison to simplify things. That's a slum neighborhood, fairly close to the center-city shopping and business districts. A logical place to provide parking space, close to the main north-south boulevards, and well inte-

grated into the master circulation system. The architects approved the site, and got to work on plans. The Authority stepped in to confiscate the land. That was no problem. The population base was Negro or Puerto Rican and these people had no sentimental attachments to their cold-water flats and rat-infested backyards. The owners of the property were fairly compensated, and the displaced families moved elsewhere. The buildings were torn down, the ground cleared away, and it appeared that a certain amount of traffic relief was on the way."

Sarnac paused and sighed. "Well, that's step one. As you know, there is no parking drome at Ninth and Morrison. Here's what happened. The architects submitted a new recommendation. Ninth and Morrison wasn't the best spot after all. Twelfth and Fitzgibbons was much more logical, it seemed. This didn't dismay the Authority. Not a bit. They okayed the new recommendation, and scrapped the plans for Ninth and Morrison. They sold the land at cost—apparently losing nothing on the deal."

"But where's the swindle?" Terrell asked him.

"First, they write-off the legal expenses of acquiring title to the land. And secondly, they write-off the costs of clearing the ground, wrecking the buildings and so forth. These costs are absorbed in their operating expenses. Thus the land becomes a magnificent bargain. You see, there's a vast difference between land with homes and shops on it, and land that is physically and legally clear of all encumbrances. A private firm might spend years for instance merely trying to acquire title to the land—but the Authority can set a price and take possession."

"And Ike Cellars snapped up these bits of property?" Terrell said.

"Cellars, Ticknor and others, all operating under various disguises. They've gobbled up acre after acre of our most important center-city property—using the Authority as their price-fixer and enforcer. And here's another angle. The firms that did ninety-eight percent of this work were Acme Construction and Bell Wreckers—firms that no one knew anything about four years ago. They've blossomed overnight into two

of the biggest outfits in the state—solely on contracts they've received from the Parking Authority. The legitimate, or should I say established, companies have never had a chance on Authority jobs."

"Why didn't they gripe?"

"They have, but it's done them no good at all. Dan Bridewell, for instance, has fought them on every contract. He's been in business here forty-five years and his company has a proven record of efficiency and performance. But he's never gotten a dime's worth of work from the Authority."

"Can you prove all this?"

"If Caldwell is elected, yes. Our auditors could make out a criminal case in twenty-four hours. And that's why Caldwell was stopped."

"We're back where we started," Terrell said wearily. "In the area of common knowledge, rumor, gossip, what-have-you."

"Every word I've told you is true," Sarnac said.

"But you can't prove it—not in time," Terrell said. "Look: who owns those companies you mentioned? Acme Construction and Bell Wreckers?"

"Again, we don't know. But we'd know the day after Caldwell took over the Mayor's office."

"Okay, okay," Terrell said. "Where did you get this story? Eden Myles?"

"No. A clerk in the Property Tax Office came to us with the lead."

"Did you get anything significant from Eden Myles?"

Sarnac shook his head. "No, just a few rather small odds and ends. We hoped she would do better but—" He rubbed his forehead with the back of his hand. "But she didn't."

Terrell was silent for a few seconds. He said finally, "That's the most interesting thing you've told me."

"I don't understand." Sarnac seemed nervous and unsure of himself now, like a student being led out of his depths by an artful tutor.

Terrell got to his feet. "Well, it doesn't matter." It had occurred to him that Eden Myles had probably been framed, too; she hadn't been killed for informing, she had been killed

to incriminate Caldwell. It was a chilling and terrible thought—as ghastly as the whole concept of human sacrifice. But they couldn't have told her she was being readied for the slaughter. Her loyalty wouldn't stretch that far.

"What can we do?" Sarnac said, in a desperate rising voice. His poise had deserted him again; the moment of professorial confidence had vanished. "What can we do?"

"If I find out, I'll let you know," Terrell said. "That's a promise."

AFTER leaving Sarnac, Terrell phoned Gray Gates and asked for Connie Blacker, but learned that she had left Eden Myles' apartment the day before. She had given the Beverly Hotel as a forwarding address, but the desk clerk there told him she wasn't in.

"Do you know when she'll be back?"

"Is this by any chance—" The clerk's small laugh telegraphed the joke. "Is this by any chance Mr. Chance?"

"Yes, that's right," Terrell said. "Why? Is there a message?"

"She'll be in around two o'clock, Mr. Chance. She's at the city morgue now, I believe—she asked me for directions, you see."

"Thanks very much."

Terrell took a cab to the morgue at Thirteenth and State. It was one o'clock and the early winter sunlight fell like bars of gold across the city. A wind was rushing excitedly through the streets. Men leaned against it, gripping their hats, and girls caught at their skirts and laughed as cross-currents swirled about them at intersections.

Terrell smoked and paid little attention to the city scenes that flashed past him. He was trying to fit what Sarnac had told him into a clear picture. Caldwell had been framed. Start there. Because his election was a threat to Ike Cellars, the Mayor and sundry other thieves. Any cab driver or housewife in the city might have drawn the same inference. But the rest wasn't guesswork. Eden Myles had been murdered by a hired hoodlum to incriminate Caldwell. Except for Paddy Cogan there had been no slips. And now Paddy was dead. But proof, Terrell thought. Proof . . . a lever to start things rolling. They had nothing. And Sarnac talked wistfully of indictment by bookkeeper . . .

In the lobby of the morgue Terrell glanced into the general

offices, which were separated from the waiting rooms by a high, wooden counter. Clerks were busy at typewriters and filing cabinets, and two young men in beige cotton jackets stood behind the counters to assist the public in making out forms and affidavits. One of them was talking to Connie Blacker now, pointing to a line on the blank she was studying. She was nodding her blond head slowly. The clerk seemed eager to help, and it was obvious why, Terrell thought. She wore a simple black suit and a short tweed coat, but with her figure and legs she might as well have been wearing a bikini.

Terrell wondered if Frankie Chance had moved into her life. It figured; his girl was downstairs with the iceboxes and running water and he would need a replacement. Connie might just fit. She was young, lovely and manageable. Everything required for the job, including a strong stomach. He sighed, wondering why in hell he felt so bitter about it.

She would be busy for a while, he knew, completing the arrangements to send Eden's body home. He drifted down the wide corridor looking for someone to pass the time with. The inquest rooms were empty and the slanting sun gleamed on the blackboards used by medical experts in explaining their conclusions to the inquest juries. Terrell had covered a thousand postmortems and had seen every conceivable kind of damage that could be done to a human body by bullets, knives, brass knuckles and blackjacks. He hadn't been sorry to leave this beat. Downstairs were the iceboxes, the sliding trays on which the bodies were rolled out for identification, and the peculiar smell, neither pleasant nor unpleasant, but not of the living world, which drifted up through the corridors and offices, and was as much a part of the place as its joists and beams and bricks. Terrell had covered this beat for a year, before Karsh had sent him to the state capital for some political seasoning.

As Terrell turned back toward the general offices he ran into a cleaning woman he had known, a big and cheerful colored woman who had worked in the morgue for the past thirty years. He was pleased to see her. Martha was a kind and gentle person, Terrell knew, happily free from the macabre humor and affectations that were the usual trade-

marks of people who worked at the morgue. The bodies that were brought in from fires and accidents touched her deeply; she spoke of them with respect, and suffered for those who must come in later to make the identifications. They talked for a few minutes and then Martha said, "You coming back to work here, Mr. Terrell?"

"No, Martha. I'm waiting to talk to a person who's signing the forms on Eden Myles."

"Wasn't that a shame? That poor thing, so pretty and all. What do you suppose is the matter with that Mr. Caldwell? You think he went crazy or something? A man must be crazy to kill a girl so pretty and young. What good did it do him to have her dead?"

"I don't know, Martha."

"But why did he have to do it? She's so pretty. And expecting a little baby. That made it worse, if you ask me."

Terrell's expression didn't change. He lit a cigarette, and said, "It's a damn shame. But how did you know she was pregnant? That's supposed to be a secret."

"Oh, oh." Martha put a hand over her mouth. "I've done it again, Mr. Terrell."

"It's nothing serious."

"I heard one of the doctors talking the night she was brought in. I didn't know it was to be kept quiet. You won't say I told you, will you?"

"Of course not, Martha. So long now."

Terrell walked back down the corridor, covering ground with long strides. In the coroner's reception room, Terrell told the secretary he wanted to see Dr. Graham, who was the city's chief coroner. She smiled mechanically at him, spoke into an intercom telephone, and then nodded at the door behind her. "Go right in, Mr. Terrell."

Dr. Graham, a tall man with a long, thin nose, came around his desk and extended a big, but seemingly boneless hand. "We don't see you around much these days, Sam," he said. "Too busy being an important columnist, eh?" Dr. Graham's tone was calm and good-humored; he was a man past middle-age, competent in small affairs, a cousin of Mayor Ticknor's wife. He had no ambitions and no worries.

Terrell smiled. "It's a nuisance keeping the space filled every day. It's like an extra mouth to feed."

"What can we do for you?"

"I'd like to look at the report on Eden Myles."

"That's all been in the papers, Sam."

"I know, but I'm running down an angle. I'd like to see the report."

"I read the autopsy report to the press," Dr. Graham said, rather irritably. "You think I've left out something?"

"You left out the fact that she was pregnant," Terrell said. "I'm wondering if you left out anything else."

Dr. Graham fumbled through his pockets and finally brought out cigarettes. His face had become white and damp. "What kind of a bluff do you think you're running?"

"Now, now," Terrell said patiently. "I know she was pregnant, Doctor. I want to know how far gone she was."

"You're wrong, dead, flat wrong," Dr. Graham said.

"I apologize if I am. But I want to see the report."

"No, that's impossible." Dr. Graham rubbed his big limp hands together in a gesture that was meant to suggest decision and finality. "Don't jump to conclusions now. We don't pass out autopsy reports any more. It involves too much clerical help. Questions must be submitted in writing now. Then we answer them as fast as we can. But let me know what points you want checked and I'll put a girl on it right away. For auld lang syne."

"That document is a matter of public record," Terrell said. "I carry a press card that entitles me to examine it. Are you telling me different?"

"I'm simply explaining a new procedure here, Sam."

Terrell swore in disgust. Then he said, "I'm going over to the Hall and get a court order to pry that autopsy out of you. And I'll bring back a photographer with me. And the character on our front page with the rosy, embarrassed look won't be me, Doc."

"Are you trying to start trouble?"

"Do you think I just got out of the Flash Gordon school of journalism? If you're worried about the records, burn 'em. But don't try to sit on them. You'll get a hot foot in a most curious spot."

"Sam, wait a second."

"Why?"

Dr. Graham sighed heavily and sat down behind his desk. "I don't want trouble. I don't want to be in the middle. As God is my judge I've done nothing wrong. The girl's condition had no bearing on her death or Caldwell's guilt."

"She was pregnant then. How many months?"

Dr. Graham sighed again. "Almost three months."

"Why didn't you give it to the papers?"

"Captain Stanko said—" Dr. Graham took a handkerchief from his pocket and wiped the damp hollows under his eyes. "Well, he said there was no point in blackening the girl's name."

"The old softie," Terrell said. "Mother Stanko. Friend of the working whore. This girl has been travelling with hoodlums since she was twelve. She probably learned the difference between sodomy and rape at her mother's knee. But Stanko doesn't want her reputation besmirched. Come on, Doc, try again."

"The case is open and shut," Dr. Graham said in a hurried, pleading voice. "Why introduce something irrelevant? She met Caldwell just five weeks ago. But she's three months pregnant. That might cause gossip, speculation. She's a martyr now. Sweet kid, innocent victim, that sort of thing. Why not leave it that way? Why worry about messy details? Caldwell killed her—that's what counts."

Was that why they had covered it up, Terrell wondered. Possibly. It was a detail, but why not take care of it? That's the way they would reason.

"Well, maybe Stanko's got a point," he said. "Don't worry about me broadcasting any family secrets."

"We'll just forget it, then?" Dr. Graham said, smiling nervously at him.

"Sure. Why bother the public with details? So long and thanks, Doc."

In the tiled lobby Terrell looked into the reception room and saw that Connie Blacker was collecting her gloves and purse from the counter, smiling a thank you at the clerk. He didn't know how to use the information about Eden Myles; he couldn't fit it into the rest of his theory.

Connie pulled open the glass door of the reception room and Terrell walked toward her. "Hello there. All through in there?"

"Yes, I'm through." Only a slight tremor in her voice gave her away; otherwise she seemed completely poised and at ease. "I just had to sign some forms. It was no trouble."

"Dead people are never any trouble," Terrell said. "But let's not be bitter. Can I buy you some lunch?"

"No, I have a date."

"With Frankie Chance at two o'clock. I know. But couldn't you be a little late? I'd like to talk to you."

"I'm sorry. I don't have time."

She started past him but he caught her arm. "I still need your help," he said.

"Please let me go. We don't have anything to talk about. I told you that the other night."

"I thought maybe your conscience would be acting up by now."

"Let me go!" Her eyes were mutinous and angry. "Do you want me to start screaming?"

"I want you to start talking," he said. "Who was the man who came to Eden's apartment the night she was murdered? What job did he want her to do? Why was she afraid?"

"Let me go. I don't know anything."

"You're lying, Connie. You can save the life of an innocent man. You can put Eden's murderer in the death house where he belongs. But if you keep quiet nothing will happen."

"Nothing will happen to me," she said tensely.

"And how about Eden?" Terrell's voice sharpened with anger. "You've signed the forms and off she goes by fast freight. Is that the end of it? Have you gone downstairs to look at her? She's lying like a piece of frozen meat with a name tag tied to her ankle. Like something in a butcher shop. Only they kill animals a bit more humanely."

"Stop it, stop it." She turned away from him, tears starting in her eyes.

Terrell released her arm. "Okay I'll stop." In his heart he couldn't blame her; why should she risk her life to help him. She had obviously been warned to keep quiet. If she ignored that injunction there would be a reprisal; it might be swift

and merciful, or slow and vengeful. In either case it would be final.

"I'll drop you at your hotel," he said.

"No. I'm all right."

"It's on my way. Come on."

Terrell paid off the cab at her hotel, intending to walk the remaining two or three blocks to the *Call-Bulletin's* building.

"Thanks for the lift," she said.

"If you change your mind remember the name. Terrell. I'm with a local paper."

"I'm not changing my mind."

"Is he the reason?"

Terrell was looking over her shoulder. The revolving doors of the hotel were spinning, and the sun flashed on the turning glass panels. Frankie Chance had come out to the sidewalk a second or so before, and was looking down the street, a faint frown on his sulky handsome features. He was fastidiously groomed, and wore a light blue flannel suit, a shirt with long collar points and a gaudy but expensive-looking tie.

"Is he the reason?" Terrell said again.

"Good-bye." She turned away from him, but Frankie Chance had turned also, and was walking swiftly toward them, a tight, angry look on his face. "You're late," he said to Connie. "Two o'clock means two o'clock. Okay?"

"Yes, sure," she said.

"You been crying," he said. He still hadn't acknowledged Terrell's presence. "Is he bothering you?"

"My name is Terrell, Sam Terrell. Now we're formally introduced, Frankie. You can talk to me direct."

Chance turned and stared coldly at him. "What do you want with her, Sam?"

"Nothing in particular. I was covering a story at the morgue and bumped into her. I gave her a lift back here. You came along and here we are, chatting pleasantly in the fine fall sunlight."

"It's all funny, eh? The morgue part and everything."

"No, it's not funny," Terrell said. "I can guess how you feel."

"Guess? That's good." Chance stared down the street and Terrell saw the lines tightening at the corners of his mouth

and eyes. "To you she was a bum. I don't want you being sorry for her. She can do without your sympathy."

His emotion was genuine, Terrell felt; he wasn't a good enough actor to fake it.

Chance took Connie's arm and turned her toward the hotel. "Keep away from her," he said to Terrell. "Keep away from us. We're in different leagues."

"Well, maybe we'll meet in the Series," Terrell said. He watched them walk into the hotel, seeing the sun flash on Connie's slender beautiful ankles. Then he sighed and headed for the paper.

At his desk Terrell typed out an item for his column. He described Eden Myles' killer, the big man with the thick, black hair and scarred forehead, and suggested that the police were looking for him in connection with the Caldwell case. For several minutes he sat frowning and staring at what he had written. This was risky business. Karsh wasn't in or he would have asked his advice. As it was, this had to be his baby. He called a copy boy and gave him the item as an insert for his column; it would be squeezed in in time for the next edition, the two star, and be on the streets around four o'clock. And after that there would be an eruption in the Hall.

At his apartment Terrell made a mild drink, then showered and put on a fresh suit and a cheerful-looking bow tie that failed completely to match his spirits. He was expected for dinner in Crestmount, a suburb of the city, but he was reluctant to leave. For a while he stared out the window, humming to the soft music from the radio, and then he picked up the phone and called Connie's hotel.

When she answered he said, "This is Terrell again, but I'm not selling anything. Work's over, and I punched out. So could I talk to you just a second?"

"Yes—but why?"

She didn't sound so bad, he thought; hardly warm, but not exactly cold. "I'm going to dinner with friends tonight, and I wondered if you'd come with me. It might be a pleasant change for you. They live out in the country, completely sur-

rounded by air. And they're nice people. Would you like to give it a try? I can get you back early, if that's a problem."

"I don't know—I hadn't planned anything. Is it a dress-up affair?"

"Good lord, no. This is suburbia. Host in a chef's hat, hostess in pants. We'll eat outside and five will get you ten that someone says, 'This is the life' before the second Martinis are served."

"I'll need half an hour to get ready."

"Perfect!" He couldn't keep the surprise out of his voice. "Where shall I pick you up?"

"Right here at the hotel."

"Will that be tactful?"

She said quietly, "You'll strain yourself leaping at conclusions."

"Sorry. See you in half an hour."

She was waiting when he pulled up at the entrance, wearing a black dress with a stole and white gloves. He had called the Hamiltons to tell them he was bringing a date, and he realized that he was a bit eager to show her off. They didn't talk much on the drive to Crestmount, except to comment on the beauty of the autumn countryside. It was a restful interval; she sat watching the scenery and Terrell didn't find the silence a strain.

The Hamiltons made a great fuss over them. Bill Hamilton took Connie under his wing with a fine show of avuncular heartiness, the sort of roguish jolliness that married couples consider indicated when bachelor friends turn up with new girls. They had a drink inside and then Mona Hamilton took Connie upstairs to the powder room, and then everyone went outside to the backyard barbecue pit where Bill Hamilton was waiting with a fresh shakerful of Martinis. He said expansively, "Now you cliff-dwellers may be puzzled by a certain aroma in this vicinity. Let me put you at ease: what you are smelling now is fresh air. You probably haven't noticed any in the city, but it won't hurt you at all. Breathe as much as you want."

Another couple arrived in time for the second round of drinks. Their names were Tom and Elsie Brogan, and they

were young and attractive, casually chic in country clothes made not for the outdoors but for cocktail parties and brandy milk-punch breakfasts. Tom Brogan accepted a drink and stretched out gratefully in a wicker armchair. "This is the life," he said with a deep benign sigh.

Terrell caught Connie's eye and she smiled quickly before turning away to talk with Elsie Brogan.

Bill Hamilton broiled the steaks and Mona took charge of the drinks. Terrell found himself in a critical mood. He wished Bill would stop behaving like a master of ceremonies. Jokes, gestures, flourishes—he acted as if he were introducing the Rockettes instead of serving dinner. And Mona's stories about her daughter struck him as plain damn silliness. Little Mona didn't want grown-ups to tell *her* stories. Oh no! She told *them* stories. And such imaginative inventions! Mona was going to take them down on the wire recorder some night. They were so charming. No tension in them at all. Just free-form happiness.

The Brogans had children, too. Elsie Brogan indicated that she was a serious but liberal mother by suggesting that her five-year-old son might need a psychiatrist if his adjustment to kindergarten continued unsatisfactory.

Tom Brogan began a long story about a lady analyst but decided not to finish it; the punch line wouldn't do in the present company, he said, smiling, and obviously pleased with himself and his erotic secrets. Nothing would make him change his mind. "My masculine intuition tells me to stop," he said, grinning broadly.

After dinner they went inside and Bill Hamilton touched a match to the logs stacked in the fireplace. Over brandies the talk switched to politics.

"It looks like Caldwell's a dead duck, eh, Sam?" Bill Hamilton said.

"He'll need a miracle," Terrell said.

"He won't get it, you watch," Tom Brogan said. "It will be Ticknor again, and Ike Cellars and the rest of that miserable crowd. And the people couldn't care less. They're stupid for one thing, and they don't give a damn for another."

"I'll grant that for the sake of argument," Terrell said. "But

how about you people who aren't stupid. You don't give a damn either. It seems to me that's considerably worse."

"I don't get you, Sam," Bill Hamilton said. "We care about what happens, of course." His mood was serious now. "But except in a sort of philosophical way, the city isn't my responsibility. I got sick of it, and I moved out. The schools are crummy, the streets are filthy, and it's no place for kids. So I decided, as just one little guy, to take my family somewhere else. So what do I owe the city?"

"You make your money from it," Terrell said. "It affects the whole state you live in. So you owe it a certain attention, at least."

Mona Hamilton said defensively, "We sound un-liberal and un-progressive, I know. But I couldn't stand living in the city another day. I want to be with my own kind of people. People who care about the same things I do."

"Everyone does," Tom Brogan said. "Don't apologize for how you feel. Hell, people in slums probably have the same ideas. If you had regular garbage collections they'd start moaning about the good old days when the trash collected for weeks in the gutters."

"Well, that's one way of looking at it," Terrell said drily. "But here's another: people with money and education received those advantages from the community. But they won't put those to work except in areas that pay off in favorable zoning laws, and a pleasant life for themselves and their immediate family. They don't accept the fact that what they've got has a string to it—a string tied to something called responsibility."

Mona Hamilton looked unhappy. "I feel that sometimes. I feel we're so lucky we should do something about it. But what can one person do?"

"Nothing at all," Tom Brogan said, settling himself deeper in his chair. "So let's have a nightcap and forget about politics."

Terrell had been watching Connie during part of the discussion, and he was gratified by the worried little frown that settled on her forehead. He decided to accept Brogan's offer to change the subject. "You've got a point," he said pleasantly, "but we'll have to skip the nightcap, I'm afraid."

I promised Connie I'd get her home before the milkman."

There were protests from Bill and Mona, and finally urgings to come out again when they could really make a night of it. Terrell drove back toward the city in silence. At the winding approach to the bridge he slowed the car and coasted off the road onto a grassy bluff that overlooked the river, and the dark light-flecked mass of the city. He cut the motor, then turned and smiled at her set profile. "Wrong," he said. "I've got nothing like that on my mind."

"Then why did you stop?"

"I thought we'd have a last cigarette, talk over the evening. How did you like my friends?"

"They seemed very nice."

"A bit fat-headed maybe? Just as though wrapped up in their own blissful little lives?"

She glanced at him, and said, "I thought you weren't trying to sell anything tonight."

"I'm not—I'm just ripping our hosts apart. It's an old suburban custom. You break their bread and drink their wine and then tell everyone what bastards they are."

"No, that's not it. You want me to agree that they're selfish and narrow, don't you? Then to prove I'm different I'll offer to help you. Isn't that what you're hoping?"

"Now who's leaping to conclusions?"

"I saw it in your face tonight," she said, in a sharper voice. "You looked so damned smug—the pure and noble young man surrounded by tiresome dead-beats. That's the way you acted. But what's wrong with your friends? What have they got to be ashamed of?"

"Why don't you ask them?" Terrell said.

"It's no business of mine. They're living the way they want, paying taxes, obeying the laws. What do you expect them to do? Join your vigilantes? Or start pulling down slums with their bare hands?"

"Now wait a minute," Terrell said.

"I'll tell you something," she said angrily. "They live the way I'd like to someday. Taking care of their children, with no doctor bills or grocery bills hanging over their heads, in a clean, comfortable house. You think they're fools because they make sense."

Terrell sighed. After a moment, he said, "Do you think it's admirable to evade a clear responsibility?"

"It's not their responsibility."

"I'm not talking about them now. I'm talking about you. A man may hang unless you help him. That's a pretty high price to pay for a split-level home in the country."

"Do you know why I came with you tonight?" she asked him in a low voice.

"I couldn't even guess."

"They told me to. They said be nice to you and find out what I could. Does that tell you what side I'm on?"

"They? Frankie Chance, you mean?"

"That's right."

"Well, this is interesting," Terrell said. His voice was casual, but his stomach had suddenly gone cold and tight. "Frankie doesn't do much on his own, you know. Cellars gives him a little leeway in choosing his ties and cigarettes, but that's about all. So it's Cellars who wants you to be nice to me. That's practically a mandate."

"I'd like to go home now," she said.

"Why sure. But what about Ike's instructions?"

"Don't be a fool!"

Terrell turned and pulled her to him roughly, clamping her elbows to her sides with one arm. She struggled fiercely against him, but with his free hand he forced her chin up until he could look directly into her eyes. "Ike likes obedience," he said. "He told you to be nice, remember?"

"Let me go!" she whispered in a tight, straining voice.

He put his lips down hard on hers, and held them there until her resistance broke and she went limp in his arms.

"How nice did he tell you to be?" he said bitterly. "The works?"

"You bastard," she said, crying.

"Come off it," he said. He released her and switched on the ignition. "Tell Ike I'm not interested."

"Take me home. Please."

"Okay." Terrell swung the car back onto the highway with angry speed. He felt sorry for her, and pointlessly sorry for himself. Sorry for the whole damned mess.

KARSH was waiting at Terrell's desk the next morning, looking fresh and handsome in a Chesterfield overcoat with a white silk muffler knotted about his throat. His face was pink from the crisp, morning air, and his eyes were sharp with curiosity. When Terrell came in he glanced up at him with an odd little smile. "Why didn't you tell me you were going to toss a grenade? I might have put my fingers in my ears."

"You heard repercussions?"

"Yes, Jack Duggan, our distinguished superintendent of cops, called me about it. I told him you'd talk to him this morning. What are you going to tell him?"

"Well, what's your suggestion? Can't reveal the source, and so forth, or admit I used a piece of gossip."

"The second idea is smarter," Karsh said. "Now listen to me." He glanced about the busy room, then looked back at Terrell. "Play it safe. You know about that gorilla who was seen leaving Caldwell's. You're the only one who does. If that gets around you'll become a lousy insurance risk." He patted Terrell's shoulder, in a clumsy and awkward gesture. "You're the staff for my declining years. Remember that, and don't be a damn fool."

"Sure, don't worry." Terrell was touched by Karsh's concern. Without his customary cynicism, Karsh seemed defenseless and vulnerable. He likes me, Terrell thought, and that embarrassed him. It's that simple. He can't put it into words.

"Don't let them trick you into popping off what you know," Karsh said. His voice was again sharp with authority; he seemed aware of his moment of exposure. "Tell 'em you printed some talk, without bothering to check it. *Mea culpa*, and so forth."

Superintendent Duggan's secretary, a uniformed patrolman, told Terrell to wait, and went into Duggan's office. He re-

turned almost immediately and said, "Go right in. The Superintendent is waiting for you." The patrolman spoke with a lack of inflection that was meant to be ominous, Terrell guessed.

Jack Duggan was seated at his desk, a large, solidly built man with bold, direct eyes. He wore a uniform with golden epaulettes, and despite his bulk presented a figure of military severity. Everything about him was clean and neat; his black hair was cut short and the patina of starch on his collar and cuffs gleamed under the bright overhead lights.

Usually his approach was straight and forceful, but now, Terrell saw, he wasn't quite sure of how to proceed. "Sit down, Sam," he said. "This item of yours—" He fingered a clipping on his desk. "It's a strange business. You describe a man in detail, and say we're looking for him in connection with the Caldwell case. Did you make that up? Or what?"

"I gather then the item isn't accurate," Terrell said.

"We aren't looking for anybody," Duggan said. "Let's don't be cute with each other. The Mayor raised hell with this. I know you're a good newspaperman. You don't print gossip or guesses. So it figures that someone gave you the item—someone you trusted. We want to know who it was."

"You and the Mayor, that is."

"That's it. Don't bother reading anything into his interest. He's within his rights. Your item indicates we don't have a complete case against Caldwell. Or that there might be something unexplained and mysterious about it. Neither conclusion is justifiable. But people will leap to one or the other. You knew that when you ran the story. Now I don't think you're a trouble-maker, Sam. But the person who peddled this story to you is—a vicious, deliberate trouble-maker. And we want to know who it was. For your good as well as ours. Because he gave you a wrong steer, a dangerous steer."

"The tip came in anonymously," Terrell said.

"I wouldn't advise you to stick to that," Duggan said. "This time we aren't interested in anything cute or cryptic. We want the truth."

"So do I," Terrell said. "Supposing we trade."

"What do you mean by that remark?"

Terrell hesitated, frowning slightly. He wasn't sure of Dug-

gan. He had known him a dozen years, and had seen him move up from a lieutenant of detectives to the top police job in the city. Duggan was personally honest, Terrell was sure; he took no graft, he ran the department efficiently and intelligently. But Terrell also knew that Duggan was a victim of something that might be called moral inertia. The disease was very prevalent in the city; its symptoms were a tolerance of evil, and a self-hypnosis that protected the victims from seeing or hearing anything that might disturb their conscience. Duggan was a willing neurotic in a sense; he was honest to a point and beyond that he was neutral.

"All right," Terrell said, still unsure of how far to trust him. "Let's start with Paddy Cogan. Why did he kill himself?"

"He might have been sick, drunk, worried—a thousand reasons."

"Cogan saw a man run out of Caldwell's the night Eden Myles was murdered. He told me that on the phone. But he denied the story after talking to Captain Stanko."

Duggan studied Terrell with a puzzled frown. "Stanko told me Cogan had got mixed up," he said at last. "I guess you know Paddy was a boozier."

"Then Cogan went over to Beach City and shot himself," Terrell said. "Wasn't that a happy coincidence for the prosecution?"

"You're not talking about facts," Duggan said angrily. "You're putting guesses together into a theory."

"Why didn't the coroner release the fact that Eden Myles was pregnant?"

"What's that?"

"You weren't told either, I'll bet." Terrell smiled without humor and got to his feet. "There are two police departments in town. One is out in the open for all the citizens to see. The cop on the beat, the squad chauffeuring girls home through the streets, patrolmen on duty in the stadium for big games. The other department operates in the dark. It doesn't answer questions. Its files get lost. It accounts to nobody. And that's the one you're suggesting I cooperate with. Why in hell should I?"

"Let's not blow our tops," Duggan said, making a placating gesture with his hands. "So the girl was pregnant. There was

probably a good reason for holding that back. But you reporters start screaming about freedom of the press unless we broadcast every lead and clue we come across. How can we go into court if the defense has every detail of our case?" Duggan's voice strengthened in support of his argument. "We play things close to our vests for good reasons. But unless we call your city desk every hour on the hour we're accused of running a gestapo."

"We don't seem to be making much progress," Terrell said.

Duggan suddenly slammed a fist on his desk. "We'll make progress or you'll regret it, Sam. Who gave you that item you printed yesterday?"

Terrell hesitated. For an instant he was tempted; if he told Duggan he had got the description from the lips of Paddy Cogan, Duggan would be on a spot—he'd have to make a token effort to find the man, or continue to insist that Cogan was an unreliable witness. If he took the latter course it might cause the public to suspect the quality of Cogan's testimony against Caldwell. The Hall couldn't have it both ways; they couldn't reject Cogan for the defense and then accept him for the prosecution.

"I'm waiting," Duggan said. "Who gave you the story?"

Terrell decided not to tell him. But before he could answer, the door opened and Mayor Shaw Ticknor sauntered into the room. Ticknor was grinning widely and scratching the inside of his leg. The grin disappeared when he saw Terrell, but he continued to scratch his leg. "Well, you're the culprit I've been looking for. I hope for your sake you don't mind the taste of crow. Jack, did you put our position to Sam?"

"We were just discussing it," Duggan said.

"There's nothing to discuss," Ticknor said easily. "Not a damn thing." He strolled across the room toward Terrell, smiling again, a tall angular man with shaggy, iron gray hair and big features that looked as if they had been hacked roughly from coarse red rock. The Mayor was letter perfect in his favorite role—the canny backwoodsman at large in the city. The voters seemed to be amused by his calculated oafishness, for they had returned him to office four times running. But his well-publicized flamboyance was no index to the man, Terrell knew. Ticknor was coarse, that much was accurate;

he loved whiskey and dirty stories, all-night poker games and sadistic practical jokes. He was a fumbling but compulsive lecher and had been in trouble with one woman after another all of his years in office. But he was no lovable old cut-up; he was a thief on a large scale; a bully with a shrewd knowledge of the mechanics of power, and the ruthless enemy of anyone who stood in his path.

"Now let's get squared away," Ticknor said, still smiling at Terrell. "I guess Duggan's made our point by now—long-winded as he is. Somebody peddled you a bum story. The least you can do is print a retraction. Just a line or two. I don't go for volume when I'm breast-beating myself. And then tell me where you got the story from."

"That's all, eh?"

"I hope you're not being sarcastic," Ticknor said, and he wasn't smiling any more. "You heard what I want done. What's your answer?"

"I don't have much choice," Terrell said. "If the police aren't looking for anyone, then I'm obviously wrong."

"That's half of it. Now who gave you the tip?"

"It was phoned in," Terrell said. "Anonymously."

"You wouldn't print a story you got that way. Now you listen to me: you play cute and I'll issue a statement that you're an irresponsible liar whose column shouldn't be in any respectable newspaper."

"And that would wound me all to hell," Terrell said drily.

"Maybe Mike Karsh would back you up," Ticknor said, beginning to shout. "He's contrary enough to. But there are papers downstate who take your column, and they'll do what I tell 'em to. Don't you forget that."

"Let's don't lose our heads now," Duggan said.

"You speak when you're spoken to," Ticknor said. "I put that monkey suit on your back and I'll take it off when I please. Sam, you're heading for trouble. I've been mayor of this city for twelve years, and I'm not letting you throw mud at my work and my reputation. There's nothing wrong here—but you're trying to stir up dirt. Well, you'll find that doesn't pay off here. Not in my city."

Terrell glanced at his watch. "That all you have to say?"

"Now listen to me," Ticknor said slowly. He had brought

his temper under control. "I want to know where you got that phony story about a man with a scarred forehead and so forth. I'm going to get it, Sam. Or you'll wish you'd never crossed me."

"Why not lock me up? Beat it out of me?" Terrell's own temper was getting short. "There was a man—but he doesn't exist in your files and reports any more. He's been dematerialized. But I know about him."

"And you're going to tell me where you heard that lie," Ticknor said.

"There's an aroma about this case the citizens may notice one of these days," Terrell said. "You should order gas masks to be worn until after elections. That might save the day."

As Terrell turned to the door Mayor Ticknor began to curse him quietly and deliberately, using the string of obscenities as he would a whip, trying to make every stroke cut to the bone. Terrell waited with his hand on the knob, looking thoughtfully at the temper working in Ticknor's face. The tirade was lengthy and definitive, but when the Mayor finished Terrell said casually, "I'm double parked so you'll have to excuse me. I don't want to get in real trouble." He glanced for a second at Duggan who was staring at the backs of his hands, an expression of shame and anger on his face. Then he opened the door and walked out.

WHEN Terrell returned to the paper it was almost ten o'clock; the second edition was nearing its deadline and tension was building through the long room. Everyone was conscious of the big clock above the city desk. Karsh waved to him from his office, and Terrell crossed the floor and joined him in that sound-proofed command post.

"Don't tell me," Karsh said. "His Honor just hung up." He shook his head. "Corn-fed ass."

"They're worried sick," Terrell said. "Even Duggan. I've never seen them this way before, Mike."

"More bad news is on the way." There was a gleam of devil's humor in Karsh's eyes. "Paddy Cogan's wife came in a while ago. She's waiting upstairs to tell you her story. It's a beaut, a fat, cream-fed beaut. Come on."

Mrs. Cogan was waiting for them in an empty office on the ninth floor. She stood awkwardly when they entered and began plucking at the skirt of her rusty black dress. Terrell could see that she had been weeping; behind the rimless glasses her eyes were red and swollen. She smiled weakly at him and her expression was confused and supplicating. "I didn't know where else to come, as I was explaining to this gentleman." She put a wadded handkerchief to her nose. "You knew Paddy was in trouble, didn't you, Mr. Terrell? When you came to the house the other day, you knew it."

"Yes, I knew it," Terrell said. "I'm sorry about what happened."

"Thank you. It's all over with him now, all over with the poor man."

Karsh said, "Please sit down, Mrs. Cogan, and tell Sam what you've just been telling me."

"They asked me to come in yesterday, to the Hall," Mrs. Cogan said. She was in control of herself now; the importance

of her role seemed to steady her nerves. "They were full of polite talk and sympathy, but they got around to the pension soon enough."

"Who was 'they'?" Terrell asked her.

"Lieutenant Clark and Sergeant Millerton."

"You know them?" Karsh said, glancing at Terrell.

"Chief Clerk's office. Records, medical exams, insurance, paper work. Go on, Mrs. Coglan."

"Well, they hemmed and hawed, but finally they came out with it. I could have the pension if I said that Paddy was of unsound mind for the past while. They said it would make the difference. Taking his own life might disqualify him, they said. But if it could be proven he had been upset, crazy so to speak, for some little time, then they thought it would be all right."

"She told them she'd think it over," Karsh said.

"Why do they want to say the poor man was insane? Isn't it enough he's dead?" She clenched her work-worn hands and her lips began to tremble. "Why must they ruin his name? Make him a figure of ridicule?"

"Your husband saw something the night Eden Myles was murdered," Terrell said. "Or someone. That version may be brought forward yet. But it can be discounted if you testified he had been acting oddly. Lunatics aren't very good witnesses."

"How long did they give you?" Karsh asked her.

"Until tomorrow morning."

"If you don't hear from me before then, stall them," Karsh said. "You can be down with the flu, if necessary. We're working on a story that yours is part of. Terrell is putting it together. We won't cut loose until we get everything. Okay?"

She said yes and smiled uncertainly.

Terrell took her to the door. "Paddy would like what you're doing," he said.

"Yes, he was a good man, a good man. Thank you, Mr. Terrell."

When she had gone Terrell returned to the office and struck the top of a desk with the flat of his hand. "Where the hell does it end? Is the whole city administration a pack of thieves? Is it worthwhile trying to do anything about it?"

Karsh watched him with a little smile. "It's the story of the blind men and the elephant, Sam. You're too close to one side of the news. Sit in my job for a while, and you'll see a different picture. I hesitate to lower my cynical mask, but there's lots of good around. The charities, the service clubs, city planning commissions run by top people for no dough at all—and hundreds of decent citizens working to make the town a better place to live in. Remember all that. It's not a cess-pool—it's a pond with patches of scum on the top. Stay mad. That's a fine healthy reaction. But don't limit yourself to a police reporter's viewpoint."

"Okay, I'll think some tall, beautiful thoughts."

Karsh patted his shoulder. "Meanwhile, continue to discomfit our friends in the Hall."

Terrell spent the rest of the morning studying clippings on the Municipal Parking Authority. It was a tedious business; he read pro and con reports on the original proposal, made his way through a dozen speeches that damned the scheme in its entirety, and a dozen more that praised it to the heavens. He familiarized himself with the chronological growth of the Act, from the time it was first proposed by Mayor Ticknor until it was enacted into law by the City Council. He even read the Act itself, straining his eyes over the small print, and then he looked at a file of photographs that covered several of the areas selected as sites for the new parking dromes and traffic arterials.

Finally he collected the pages of notes he had made, and went upstairs to the financial section, which was one of the long arms of the city room, between Karsh's office and the Sunday departments. The financial editor, Bill Moss, was speaking on the phone, but he smiled and waved Terrell to the chair beside his desk. Terrell stretched his legs gratefully and lit a cigarette. He was stiff from the long session in the library, and his eyes felt the strain of having read dozens of pages of small print. Around him was an orderly clatter of ticker tapes, teletypes and typewriters, seemingly in communication with one another by a code of metallic snaps and grunts. Terrell was always rather impressed by the financial section. There was a mysterious, scholarly tone here—bookcases bulging with business directories, and rows of charts and graphs

which, although meaningless to the lay eye, staffers seemed to comprehend with an almost insolent speed.

Bill Moss hung up his phone and smiled at Terrell. "Want a tip on the market? Buy low, sell high." Moss was a handsome man with graying hair and dark, alert eyes. "What can I do for you, Sam?"

"I'll remember that—buy low, sell high. Bill, our Municipal Parking Authority has begun to fascinate me. Mind if I ask you a few questions?"

"Go right ahead."

"Well, I've just read through the Act. Isn't it a pretty loose set-up?"

"I would say so, yes. That isn't too unusual, mind you. Local committees always try to make their bond issues attractive, and so you generally find these overly generous concessions—in interest rates, borrowing provisions, and so forth. But it comes to this: if the group that passed the law is serious and responsible, these irregularities won't amount to much. That is, there'll be a built-in policing agency to guard against any funny business. But a rubber-stamp legislative body dominated by men of larcenous instincts—that's trouble."

Terrell smiled faintly. "Here's another point I'm curious about. Most of the Parking Authority contracts went to two firms—Acme Construction and Bell Wreckers. I'd like some dope on those outfits. Who owns them, how much they've earned, what kind of financial structure they've got—everything you can turn up."

Moss made a note of the firm names, and said, "I'll put somebody on it. I assume you're in a hurry?"

"Sorry, but I am. I'll have lunch and drop back. Okay?"

"I'll try to have the information for you then."

Terrell returned to his desk and picked up his coat. As he was turning away his phone rang. He lifted the receiver and a voice said crisply, "Mr. Terrell? One moment please. Superintendent Duggan."

Terrell smiled slightly. "Jack Duggan, the wild colonial boy?"

"Sam?" Duggan's voice was low and insistent. "Sam, I'm sorry about what happened this morning. It was rotten."

"Sure," Terrell said. "Did you tell the Mayor that?"

"There wouldn't be any point to it."

"I guess not. What's on your mind?"

"You can help me, I think. If you'll tell me what you've learned, I'll give you my promise it will be used efficiently and honestly."

"No good," Terrell said. "Anything else troubling you?"

"Perhaps I deserve this," Duggan said. "But maybe you're making a big mistake. I've done an honest job. A sergeant can work without worries, but I've always got to squeeze through a dozen conflicting pressures. I've made compromises, sure, and used a little tolerance for human weaknesses, but that isn't criminal activity, Sam." Duggan's voice was rising angrily. "Is that what you're accusing me of?"

"Tolerance and compromise," Terrell said. "It's funny, but cops seldom use those words until they're pulled up in front of a Grand Jury. That's when you hear their views on human nature, and their philosophy about merciful tolerance toward sinners." He dropped the phone back into its cradle as Duggan began roaring angrily at him. He liked Duggan and almost trusted him; but you couldn't fully trust a man who was walking about in a self-induced trance.

Terrell went down to the drugstore in the lobby of the building and ate a hamburger and drank three cups of black coffee. At two o'clock he was back at Bill Moss' desk.

"Here's your information," Moss said, tapping a neat stack of folders with his pencil. "I can probably give you a synopsis faster than you can dig it out for yourself. To start with, and I imagine this is one thing you wanted to know, both companies are legitimate. Adequately financed, excellent earning rates, appropriate stocks of heavy equipment, competent men at the management level. They don't seem to be in any trouble. Taxes, loans, labor relations—all in good shape. But there is something queer about them. For one thing, I'm not satisfied by their statements of ownership. I'll explain that in a minute. And secondly, they've been too lucky. They've grown too fast. Starting from scratch, they've mushroomed into huge organizations, with all of their work coming from the Authority. Considering their assets when they started, that's a highly irregular sort of thing. Bell Wreckers, for instance, had no office space or heavy equipment when it was

given the job of clearing a square block of city property. Very unusual, you'll agree."

"How about their ownership? You said something was odd there."

"Well, they list four or five men as owners. I know a couple of them, and well—" Moss shrugged lightly. "It's not evidence, mind you, but in business you get so you can spot the light-weights. These men, in my opinion, don't have the substance, the brains and backing, to have pulled these companies into shape."

"They're figureheads, you'd say."

"That would be my guess—acting for owners who want to conceal their connections with these companies."

"How do I find the real owners then?"

"That's a tough one. The arrangements may be oral and you can't very well examine or analyze an oral contract."

"Well, thanks a lot. To sum up: they're legitimate companies, but they wouldn't be in existence if the Parking Authority hadn't thrown business at them. Is that about it?"

Moss nodded. "That's it. Let me know what else you find out. I'm always interested in larceny."

"Me too," Terrell said. "Particularly grand larceny."

At his own desk, Terrell sat for a while smoking and mulling over what he had learned from Moss. Obviously his next step was to try to find out who owned Bell Wreckers and Acme Construction. This was a funnel through which the Parking Authority had poured streams of taxpayers' money. Finally he picked up his phone and dialed the downtown office of Dan Bridewell's firm. As he was relayed from a switchboard operator to Bridewell's secretary, he assembled from his mental filing system the essential data on the old man. One of the state's largest contractors, Bridewell had started as a bricklayer and worked his way up to the presidency of the company.

He was a living Alger story; a hard-fisted old man who had begun life in the slums of Belfast, and was now one of the most important men in his adopted community. He had sent four sons to college, and a daughter to Europe to study music at world famous conservatories. He gave impressive sums to local charities, and his name was on the letterheads of a

dozen prominent institutions in the city. He had come a long way, but he had fought for every foot of it, Terrell knew. He was a rugged old man, who asked no quarter, and gave none; he had made enemies on his way to power, but he was fond of saying he wouldn't give a damn for a man without enemies.

"Yes? Who's this?" It was Bridewell's voice, high, sharp and irritable. "Terrell? With the paper?"

"That's right, Mr. Bridewell. Sam Terrell. I'm doing a piece on the Parking Authority, and I've come across a point or two I'd like to check with you."

"I'll save you some time, Terrell. The Parking Authority won't give me a contract—they prefer dealing with fly-by-nights. I use the wrong kind of bath soap, or I don't vote right. I've said all this a dozen times, and it's all on the record."

"I want to ask you about Bell Wreckers and Acme Construction—the firms who do the Authority jobs."

"Well, they're not my outfits, so all I know is what I read in the papers. They get the jobs, we don't."

"Do you know the men who own these companies?"

"You'd better go down to the Hall and ask that question, son. They must know. But they never told me. I've got work to do now. Good-bye." The receiver clicked in Terrell's ear.

Terrell smiled and put his phone back in place. For another fifteen minutes he sat at his desk, staring out at the activity and tension that radiated from the city desk and the copy wheel. There was only one way to get the information he wanted; he had to make a deal. In time he might smoke it out by patient, dogged leg work. But there wasn't that time. He had to gamble now. He was the only person Paddy Cogan had told the full truth to. That should be something to bargain with. He picked up the phone and called Superintendent Duggan's office. When he got through to Duggan, he said, "This is Terrell. I've got something you might be able to use and I need some help. Can we make a trade?"

Duggan hesitated a few seconds; Terrell could hear his soft, heavy breathing. Then he said, "What do you want?"

"Supposing you meet me at the north annex to the Hall?" Terrell said. "We can talk it over."

"In about five minutes?"

"Fine."

Terrell collected his notes on the Authority and put them into his pocket. Then he put on his hat and coat and went to meet Duggan.

The Superintendent was waiting for him at the north annex, his face ruddy but rather anxious under the gold-embossed peak of his cap. They fell into step and walked toward Seventeenth Street, moving at a leisurely pace through the crowded mall.

"Do we trade even?" Terrell said. "I help you, then you help me?"

"Let's try it."

Terrell put a cigarette in his mouth, hesitating; Karsh's words had come back to him: "*You know about that gorilla . . . if that gets around you'll become a lousy insurance risk.*" Could he trust Duggan? That was the gamble. He said, "I talked to Paddy Cogan over in Beach City."

Duggan stared at him. "The day he shot himself?"

"That's right. He described the man he saw running out of Caldwell's house. That's the description I used in my column. The man I described was in town huddling with Ike Cellars a few days before he murdered Eden Myles."

They walked along in silence for a block or so, and Terrell saw that the frown on Duggan's face was growing deeper by the second. "Okay, Sam," he said at last. "That puts it up to me, doesn't it? I either act like a cop or an ostrich now."

"What's it going to be?"

"I don't know—I don't know." Duggan's voice was weary and dispirited. "I'll tell you something. Fighting for what's right has got to be a habit with me. You know what I mean? You can't stop and check all the angles before you start swinging. You do or you don't—that's all. Maybe I've been checking the angles too long."

"You're going to find out at least," Terrell said. "Now it's my turn. Who owns Bell Wreckers and Acme Construction Company?"

"That should be on record some place."

"The owners of the records are dummies," Terrell said. "I want to know who they're fronting for."

"I can put some pressure on," Duggan said. "Some of them

probably have records going back to the Volstead Act. I'll get the information."

"I need it by tonight. Can I call you at home?"

"That soon, eh? Well, I'll do my best. Around eight?"

"Eight o'clock it is. So long now."

They had completed a circuit of the Hall and were back to the north annex. Duggan smiled at him, and turned into the main corridor that led toward the elevators. Terrell watched him as he shouldered his way through the hurrying crowds, a big military figure, a picture of power and precision. And what was he thinking? Terrell wondered. How to weasel out of this challenge? Whether to take his information to Ticknor and Cellars, and close his eyes to what would happen after that?

Terrell was wryly amused at his academic attitude—because there was nothing academic about his position. If Duggan let him down, he wouldn't have a prayer.

Terrell had another angle to check; the Parking Authority's architect, one Everett Bry. He tried Bry's office, but was told by a secretary that Mr. Bry was only available mornings.

"Where could I reach him?"

"At his home in Shoreham, if it's urgent. But Mr. Bry prefers to meet clients in the office. He's rather firm about that, actually."

"Fortunately I'm not a client," Terrell said. "Thanks very much."

Terrell hung up and walked over to the lot where he parked his car. He was beginning to realize the precariousness of his position. A little knowledge is a dangerous thing . . . that described it. He knew just enough to be a nuisance and that was very dangerous.

EVERETT BRY lived in Shoreham, an area distinguished by imported sports cars, outdoor barbecue pits and modern homes equipped for the most part with hi-fi sets, picture windows and elaborate playrooms. The neighborhood was pleasant and gracious. Willows grew in limp luxuriance along the streets, and the air was very clean and smelled sweetly of lawns and flowers.

Bry, who answered the door himself, was brown and healthy-looking, with mild, untroubled eyes, and a receding hairline. He wore gray flannel slacks and a tweed jacket with leather patches on the elbows.

Terrell introduced himself, and Bry smiled and said, "Please come in. We've had what passed for a family crisis. The nurse had a tumble on the back steps and is laid up with a bad ankle. Come along, please, and we'll escape into my study. Like the horseshoe nail—with the nurse down, my wife had to take a child into town for a dancing lesson, and the maid is engaged feeding another child and keeping compresses hot for the nurse's ankle. All of this explains why I'm answering the door instead of fruitfully loafing in my study. Now what would you like to drink? Is it too early for a martini?"

"I'd rather have a whiskey and water, if that's possible."

"You know, I was afraid you were going to ask for tea, and shatter my romantic notion of the hard-drinking reporter. Just plain water?"

"Yes, fine," Terrell said.

Bry mixed drinks at a small bar that was inset in a wall of good-looking books. The room had everything, Terrell thought, a bit wistfully. Record player, a case of old revolvers, hunting prints, deep comfortable chairs, and a relaxing color scheme of grays and browns and blacks. The large window behind

Bry's desk opened on a flagstone terrace, and beyond that there was a view of the wide lawn and a border of tall fir trees.

"Now what did you want to see me about?" Bry said, putting a squat crystal glass at Terrell's elbow.

Terrell asked several preliminary questions. Then he said, "Who decides where a new parking dome will go?"

"That's usually hammered out in a series of conferences with myself, members of the Authority, the Mayor and so forth. A dozen committees study the problem from all angles to start with. Your drink okay?"

"Just fine."

"Well, legal tangles, the area's vehicular density, the type of traffic we're faced with handling—all that is examined. Then the decision is made by the Chairman of the Authority with his staff—considering further, I should add, my suggestions, and the reports of builders and contractors who may do the work. It's a committee decision really. And we try to make our final choice the best compromise between—how should I put this now?—well, the best blend of the ideal and the practical, let's say."

"That sounds very thorough," Terrell said. "How does it happen then that the Authority makes so many mistakes?"

"I beg your pardon?" Bry looked puzzled, as if he hadn't understood Terrell's question.

"There have been quite a few instances where you've confiscated land, torn down buildings, levelled ground—" Terrell smiled at Bry's earnest and thoughtful expression. "And then you change your mind and start somewhere else."

"Unfortunately, architectural planning isn't an exact science, Mr. Terrell. Sometimes the factors we've projected change suddenly—a major shipper might switch over to rail, for instance, and take hundreds of heavy trucks out of a given area. Predicting a city's traffic problems is trickier than it seems."

"Yes, I suppose it is," Terrell said. "But that's rather tough on the taxpayer, isn't it?"

"I sympathize with them," Bry said. He still looked pleasant, but his smile was cautious now. "I'm one of that cheerless group myself, let me remind you."

"Yes, of course. Now when you realize that a change of

location might be desirable—you tell the Authority, is that right?"

"That's correct."

"You say, in effect, this one's a bust, let's try somewhere else."

"I can assure you we don't go about this job in a spirit of comedy."

"Well, how do you tell them they've made an expensive mistake?"

Bry put his pipe aside and took a quick pull on his drink. "There's no set formula. I just outline the reasons for making a change, and suggest an alternative site for the committee's study."

"Which committee is that?"

"Pardon me, I meant chairman. He and his staff then make the decision."

"Mayor Ticknor is the chairman of the Parking Authority, I believe?"

"Yes, that's right."

"If a change is made, it's made on your say-so, right?"

"Well, that's a flattering way to put it. Let me freshen that drink."

"No, thanks. How many changes have been made?"

"I don't know right off—I could have my secretary send you the information tomorrow."

"Would you like to guess?"

Bry picked up his pipe again and began filling it. "Let me see—eight, nine perhaps. Something like that."

Terrell was silent for a few seconds, watching Bry fiddle with his pipe. He had trouble lighting it, and finally put it down again with a little sigh of exasperation.

"What happens to a piece of clear property when you decide to move on elsewhere?"

"That's not my province." Bry seemed relieved at the turn of the conversation. "The Authority handles that."

"You don't know who buys it? Or what's paid for it?"

"No, I must say I don't."

"Are you curious? Even a little bit?"

"I'm curious about the line of your questions." Bry stood

up abruptly. "I've had enough of your intimations and hints. Speak plainly, if you can."

"All right," Terrell said. "There's a peculiar aroma about the Parking Authority. You may be the best architect since Christopher Wren, but you're also a cog in what looks like the greatest swindle since Teapot Dome."

"That's enough," Bry said in a stiff, angry voice. "I won't stand for being called a liar and a thief in my own home."

"Do you think it would sound better in court?"

Bry's face was pale with anger. "That's a grossly irresponsible charge, Mr. Terrell."

"Perhaps it is," Terrell picked up his hat, and draped his coat over his arm. "I don't have the right to make judgments on you or your work. And I apologize for that. But it's within my province to ask the questions I have. You and I are on the same side, I hope. And if that's true, some of my questions should make you reassess your relationship with the Authority with a very critical eye. Don't you agree?"

"We're always open to suggestions for improvement," Bry said. "We welcome public interest. It's one of our concerns, as a matter of fact, that the public *doesn't* give a damn—that we can't rouse them to a healthy pitch of interest in what we're doing."

"Well, they may be having a good long look at the Authority pretty soon. Take it easy now, and thanks for the drink."

"Don't mention it."

Bry followed him to the door and watched Terrell go down the gravelled walk. Terrell waved at him as he started his car, and Bry's hand fluttered limply up from his side. He looked oddly disturbed, a tall, pale and somehow incongruous figure against the placid beauty of his elegant home.

Terrell didn't bother returning to his desk. He went to his apartment, made himself a mild drink, and then called the paper and asked for the real estate editor, an Englishman named Kidner.

When Kidner answered Terrell he told him he wanted a rough estimate on a home in Shoreham.

"How large a plot?"

"Two or three acres."

"Forget it, old chap. Tell the bride you can't stand the country life. You can't stand the expense in any case. Those little spots cost from forty up, and that's just the start of it. Taxes are bloody high, and you'd need a staff—no, it's not for us, old boy."

"It's pretty lush then?"

"Indeed it is. Seriously now, I don't think the houses are worth it. But if one lives out there, one isn't shopping for bargains, is one?"

"One isn't," Terrell said. "Thanks very much."

"Not at all."

Terrell finished his drink and looked out over the city, trying to figure out Everett Bry. Was he a naive dreamer, lending his professional support unknowingly to the Authority's swindle? Or was he in on the take? The house in Shoreham indicated the latter.

Terrell made himself a bacon and egg sandwich and drank a glass of milk. Then he put the coffee on and while it percolated, he showered and shaved, then sat down in a robe to wait for eight o'clock. It was seven forty-five; in fifteen minutes he could call Duggan. To pass the time he put on a stack of Irish records, drank a cup of coffee, and smoked several cigarettes.

At eight sharp he dialled Duggan's home. The phone rang twice, then Duggan answered it. "Who's this?"

"Terrell. Well?"

"I've got what you wanted," Duggan said. "And I've got a load of trouble for myself. I picked up two of those dummy owners, and put them through the wringer. Ticknor heard about it and blew his stack. When Council meets tomorrow I'll be suspended. A nice pay-off, isn't it?"

"Well, you're a cop, not an ostrich," Terrell said. "You wanted to know, didn't you?"

"So I know. I'm a cop—a busted ex-cop. That's great, isn't it?"

"Who owns those companies?"

"It jolted me. I've been on the inside for years and I wouldn't have guessed it. Ike Cellars is a half-owner and that figures. But the other half-owner is old Dan Bridewell. Can you figure that?"

"Are you sure? Dead sure?"

"Christ, give me credit for being able to handle a routine investigation," Duggan said wearily.

"Sorry. For what it's worth, you've got friends in our shop. You may look pretty good in our story."

"Thirty-five years in the business and our Huckleberry Capone of a mayor can break me for doing ten minutes of honest work. It's nice, isn't it?"

"Very. But don't quit. Make them fire you."

"I've already done that."

Terrell hung up and began to dress. Bridewell—that was a sleeper. The posturing puritan, the do-gooder, the angry denouncer of mobs and grafters—in thick with Ike Cellars. It was enough to make an honest man sick, Terrell thought. No wonder Karsh was cynical.

As he was about to leave the phone rang, and he scooped it up irritably and said, "Hello? Terrell."

"You told me to remember the name," she said.

He recognized Connie Blacker's voice. "I'm glad you did. What can I do for you?"

"I want to see you. I've . . . well, changed my mind."

"Where are you?"

"I'm at the club, The Mansions. Could you come over and have a drink with me?"

She didn't sound right, he thought. Scared maybe. Or worried. "I've got a date to keep first," he said, looking at his watch. "How about nine or nine-thirty?"

"That's perfect. It's between my numbers. Please don't let me down."

Terrell looked at the phone and raised an eyebrow. She sounded very odd indeed. "Don't worry," he said. "I'll be there."

DAN BRIDEWELL lived on the South Side, in a large plain house that seemed as sturdy and uncompromising as the reputation of an honest man. It was smart camouflage, Terrell thought, as he went up the wooden steps and rang the bell. No frills or ostentation for Dan Bridewell. No martinis and gracious living in the suburbs. Just the essentials, stripped bare: money and power. Terrell was beginning to feel angry; until now his attitude had been detached and professional, like a surgeon laying open a cancerous tissue. It had been a job to Terrell, an exacting job requiring all of his skill and experience. Now he felt it was something more than that.

An elderly woman in a black uniform opened the door. Terrell told her he wanted to see Bridewell, but she frowned slightly and said, "Well, I don't know. He's going to St. Louis tonight and he leaves for the airport pretty soon."

"I won't take more than a minute or two. My name is Terrell. I'm with the *Call-Bulletin*."

"I'll tell him. Would you wait in the parlor?"

"Sure." Terrell removed his hat and stepped into the hallway. There was a hatrack, an umbrella stand, and the curve of stairs leading to the second floor, all of it looking solid and old-fashioned and comfortable. "Was this trip a rather sudden idea?" he said.

"Mr. Bridewell has a lot of demands on him," the woman said. "He comes and goes where he's needed." She spoke as if she were discussing the parish priest.

"Yes, of course," Terrell said gravely.

The parlor was long and gloomy, with thick, red rugs and dark, massive furniture. Terrell lit a cigarette and sat on the wide wooden arm of a chair. The room was depressing; it smelled clean and unused, but the lavender wallpaper and mauve drapes were dispiriting backdrops for the ornately

framed family photographs and the heavy sofas and chairs. Brass andirons gleamed in the dim light, and a dark, curved mirror hung above the fireplace.

A footstep sounded and Terrell stood as the door opened and Dan Bridewell came into the room. "Well, young man, you'll have to make this fast," Bridewell said. "I'm catching a plane to St. Louis in just about an hour."

"I'll try my best," Terrell said.

"What was it you wanted?" Bridewell was studying him with alert, careful eyes. He was short and stocky, with thinning gray hair, and a small paunch that tightened the gold watch chain across the front of his vest. There was strength in his square, hard face, a mixture of boldness and cunning; he looked like a man who could fight in a dozen different styles if necessary, but who wouldn't fight at all unless he was fairly certain of the outcome.

"I'm running down a rumor," Terrell said. "It concerns you, Mr. Bridewell, and that's why I'm here."

"Well, let's hear it. I'm used to rumors. I've been accused of everything but the sacking of Rome in the past forty years. So shoot."

"The story is that you and Ike Cellars are in partnership," Terrell said.

Bridewell laughed. "That's a new one. What are we supposed to be doing? Running a horse room?"

"Running the Acme Construction Company and Bell Wreckers," Terrell said.

Bridewell was jarred, Terrell saw, and surprise twisted his hard, cautious face. But he recovered himself almost immediately. "I told you I was in a hurry," he said, pulling out his watch. "Is that all you've got to tell me?"

"You have no other comment?"

"I have no comment at all—now or any other time." Bridewell was studying his watch. "You've heard some malicious lies, or else you're just trying to stir up a story. Why should I dignify that with a statement?"

"That's all you've got to say?"

"I'll add that it's a dirty, vicious lie, if that will make you happy." Color surged up in the old man's face and his voice

rose angrily. "I don't know who's responsible, but it's a foul and stupid attack."

"Do you know Ike Cellars?"

"I've seen him around. If you call that knowing a man then I know him." Bridewell was breathing rapidly. "I'm used to slander, Terrell. But I don't take it laying down. You print this rumor and it's going to cost your paper plenty."

"The figureheads of the companies are talking," Terrell said. "To the police. They've identified you and Ike Cellars as the real owners. Two companies made money out of the Parking Authority—the two owned by you and Ike Cellars. Would you sue us for printing that, Mr. Bridewell?"

Bridewell said, "Who sent you here?" He put aside his bluster as easily as he would a topcoat. Now he was watching Terrell with shrewd, cold eyes. "Caldwell's people?"

"No. This is just a way station," Terrell said. "I'm after a story. Who killed Eden Myles? Who framed Caldwell and why? Looking for those answers has brought me this far."

"Caldwell framed? Haven't you read the police report?"

"I don't believe it. Do you?"

"Why shouldn't I? Is there anything sacred about Rich Caldwell? Is he so much better than the rest of us?"

"He didn't kill Eden Myles."

"I believe the police, young man." Bridewell took a step toward Terrell and shook a fist in his face. "Why should I believe Caldwell? Tell me that, you smart young snoop. He's a trouble-maker—a blue-stockinged, meddlesome prude who doesn't have the sense to mind his own business. The great reformer!" Bridewell's tone became savage and mincing. "Isn't that enough to make you puke? Where was he when we built this city? Eh? When the canals were dug through to the estuary, when the riverbed was moved past Dempster Street, and when the whole center-city was torn apart to make way for new streets and office buildings? We did that without his help, or the help of the puling snobs who lived on the fat of the land in the big houses in the suburbs. The city is a stinking mess they wouldn't dirty their shoes in. But we built it to what it is—me, Charlie Brickell, the Schmidt brothers, yes and Ike Cellars and Mayor Ticknor. Our companies and banks and guts did the job. And so he comes along now after his years

in snobby schools and his years traipsing around France and Europe, and he holds his nose and tells us we did a lousy job and that he's going to clean everything up and send us all to jail. Well, who's in jail, Mr. Snoop? Us or Rich Caldwell?"

"Who deserves to be there?" Terrell said.

The old man stared at Terrell for a few seconds, then he said, "I accept the police verdict," in a cold, impersonal voice.

"You're afraid not to."

"I'm afraid of nothing. This is my home, my city and I'll fight for it. The men who made this city may have taken short cuts. Graft, corruption—I don't deny it. But I'll fight back to keep them from being victimized by a pack of holier-than-thou reformers. Their achievements are greater than their faults. You'll learn that someday. You don't grow big following little men."

"You believe that bilge, I think," Terrell said. "Well try to make it stand up to the dirty facts. Eden Myles was killed by a hoodlum imported by Ike Cellars. Your partner, Ike Cellars, framed Caldwell. Your partner committed murder just as surely as if he squeezed the life from the girl's body with his own hands."

"The police report convicts Caldwell," the old man said, striking the arm of a chair.

"Why didn't you fight it out in the courts?" Terrell said. "Let Caldwell win the election, let him make his charges against you, haul you into court—" Terrell stared without pity at the old man's pale face. "Ike didn't want it that way, did he? He wanted direct liquidation. He wanted to frame Caldwell for murder. Get him out of the way forever. Didn't he?"

The old man seemed to be holding himself together with a definite physical effort. "Get out," he said in a shaking voice. "I've heard enough of your slanders. Get out."

"All right, Mr. Bridewell."

"I'm going to St. Louis to visit my daughter. I won't be back in the city for three months. I don't care what happens—" Bridewell was trembling helplessly now. "I don't care what happens to anybody."

"Men like you always surprise me," Terrell said. "You built the city, sure. But where's the pride in your work? You let hoodlums run it for you, let it go to hell. Slums, bad schools,

inadequate parks—why doesn't that irritate you? Why don't you do something about it?"

"You get out!" Bridewell yelled at him. "Don't tell me what to do. Don't come around threatening me, you hear."

Terrell shook his head slowly. "You don't just go to jail for murder, Mr. Bridewell. You go to hell."

Bridewell didn't answer; he tried to speak but no words passed his dry lips. And Terrell saw from the frightened look in his eyes that he had finally shaken him. "Good night," he said.

From Bridewell's home, Terrell drove to The Mansions, Ike Cellars' big and brilliant nightclub in center-city. The head-waiter, Miguel, greeted him cordially and sent a message back to Connie Blacker with a bus boy.

"Drink?" Miguel said. "A touch of our old, old scotch? My compliments?"

"No, thanks. Another time, Miguel."

"As you wish."

A few early diners sat about the large, graceful room, eating the best food in the city, and listening to a girl on the bandstand who was playing soft, excellent piano. The bartenders stood with arms folded, grave, clean-shaven, white-jacketed, their eyes occasionally checking the tools of their craft, the lemon peel and orange slices, the fat cherries and pale yellow cocktail onions, the racks of glasses and mixers, and the sinkful of ice cubes and shavings. The atmosphere was quiet and expectant; from hatcheck girl to master of ceremonies, they were ready for the evening's trade.

The bus boy returned and told him Miss Blacker was waiting in her dressing room. Terrell nodded a so-long to Miguel and crossed the floor to the corridor that led to the entertainers' quarters. She was waiting for him at the door of her room, and in the soft light her eyes seemed very dark.

"I'm glad you could make it," she said.

"You sounded pretty urgent."

"Come in, please. It's cluttered, but there's a spare chair and an extra ashtray."

"Men have lived and died with a lot less," Terrell said. She

was nervous as hell about something, he realized. Shaking in her boots.

The room was functional, and not much else; the walls were painted gray, and there was a vanity, a clothes rack, and a few straight-backed chairs.

"How's your job coming along?" he asked her.

"Pretty well. I'm about one notch above a cigarette girl. I do a chorus with the band in the closing number—and I have a little stooge routine with the MC." She smiled rather quickly. "Please sit down."

"You'll get along," he said. "Places like this always need icing." That was putting it clinically, he thought. She was more than just icing. More like something from the top of a Christmas tree. Like a doll. She wore a ribbon in her short, yellow hair, and her skin was like a young girl's, flawless and clean without make-up. Her costume gave her figure an assist it didn't really need; a white blouse, triangular shorts and full-length mesh hose—with her tiny waist and long, beautiful legs, the effect was stunning. But Terrell had an illogical feeling that she didn't belong in Ike Cellars' elaborately camouflaged clip joint. She was decorative certainly, but she was more than that. She belonged in a home that smelled of clean babies and a pot roast for Sunday dinner, with maybe a log fire and martinis thrown in. But he could be wrong.

"What did you want to see me about?"

She glanced at the door. "If I told you something you could use—what would I get out of it?"

"The usual tawdry things," he said wearily. "Peace of mind, self-respect, an easy conscience. It's a good trade."

She sat down slowly, watching him now. "Nothing else?"

"You mean something clean and idealistic—like cash?"

She crossed her legs and moved her foot about in a quick circle. "That's it," she said. The light above the dressing table played with rhinestones on her small black velvet pumps. She glanced toward the door again, and Terrell saw her hands were gripping the edges of the chair.

"I think we might make a deal," he said.

"How much would you give me?"

"Connie, I'm with a big, rich paper. But we didn't get big

and rich paying for tips in advance. I'll need an idea of what you've got."

She leaned toward him suddenly. "Get out of here," she said, in a breathless, desperate voice. "Get out fast."

Terrell stood quickly, but the door was already opening and he realized that he was too late. Frankie Chance came into the room, his deceptively gentle brown eyes alight with anger and excitement. Behind him was one of Ike Cellars' bodyguards, a tall, wide man named Briggs.

"I told you not to bother her," Frankie said.

"She wasn't complaining," Terrell said.

Frankie glanced at her. "Soft-hearted, doesn't want to finger you, that's all. But I know the story. You had a few drinks, Sam, and you began to get ideas."

"This is pretty stupid—even for you," Terrell said.

"Two things Ike won't stand for are drunks and guys who molest his girls."

"Judas Priest," Terrell said. "Ike Cellars, defender of last year's virgins. It's your move, Frankie."

Briggs put a huge hand on Terrell's arm. "We'll just escort you to your car."

"Thanks for nothing," Terrell said. He tried to pull his arm free but Briggs' hand was as firm as a concrete cast. He looked at Connie then, but she turned away from him and sat down on the chair in front of the dressing table. "Nice going," he said.

Briggs led him through the doorway, and glanced at Frankie Chance. "Back way?"

"Sure," Frankie said, taking Terrell's free arm. "It doesn't look good dragging drunks across the dance floor."

They took Terrell through the kitchen and out to the parking lot in the rear which was used for overflow business. Now it was empty and quite dark. An attendant came out of the shadows and flipped his cigarette aside. He seemed to know what was expected of him.

Briggs pushed Terrell against a brick wall, and the attendant and Chance held his arms.

"Sam, you've been a nuisance," Frankie said.

"Get it over with," Terrell said.

"Well, you tough sonofabitch," Frankie said, laughing softly.

Briggs rubbed his hands with a gesture of a man about to go to work. He opened a flask then and splashed whiskey over Terrell's face and shirt front. "Shame to waste it," he muttered. Then he hit Terrell in the stomach with his free hand, bringing the punch up with a kind of lazy power. Frankie and the attendant tightened their grips as Terrell pitched forward, gagging against the pain spreading from his loins to his throat. Briggs hit him a dozen times, methodically and thoughtfully, and then paused and took a pull at the flask he held in his left hand.

Terrell couldn't fight the pain any longer. He began to moan and when the sound came from him Briggs slapped him back and forth across the mouth with a hand as big and hard as a ping-pong paddle. "That should do it," he said when Terrell was quiet once more.

"Take him home," Frankie said to the parking lot attendant. "We don't want him cluttering up the alley."

TERRELL lay on the sofa in his apartment, breathing with infinite care against a frightening pain that moved up and down his body with the rise and fall of his chest. He stared at the dark ceiling, too spent to make himself a drink or get out of his clothes.

The clock in the Insurance Building struck eleven and then twelve, but it wasn't until after one that Terrell stood and limped unsteadily into the bathroom. He needed water desperately; his throat was raw and dry, and the air in the room was like the gust from a blast furnace.

The first glass of water didn't stay down, but that made him feel better. He sipped more, and was able to control the shudders that had been shaking his body. His face wasn't too badly marked up; there were flecks of black blood on his lips and his skin had the white, poreless look of ivory. But his body had taken a beating, although he was fairly certain that nothing important had been ruptured or broken. He cleaned himself up and went into the kitchen. Fortunately there was cold coffee in the pot and he filled a glass three-quarters full and topped it with whiskey. With the drink and a cigarette he limped back to the couch, completely exhausted, his heart beating protestingly in his ears.

His thoughts had been scattered by the beating and he couldn't collect them into logical groupings. He didn't know what to do. Call Karsh. That was imperative. But the phone seemed miles away, and he knew Karsh would be in bed or drunk by now. Probably both.

Terrell wasn't aware of dozing off, but suddenly a chill went through him and he sat up shaking his head and staring about the dimly-lit room. The illuminated hands of his wrist watch stood at two-thirty. He had been asleep an hour or more. What had waked him?

Then it came again, a soft tap on the door. Terrell got stiffly to his feet, pressing one hand against the pain in his side. There were no weapons in the house, and he could barely raise his arm; he was in no shape for a return bout with Ike Cellars' apes. But why would they come here? If they planned to eliminate him they wouldn't do it in installments.

He crossed the room, and stood beside the door with his back to the wall. "Who's that?" he said.

"It's me—Connie."

"What do you want?"

"I want to see you." Her voice was low and pleading.

Terrell said, "This dialogue seems reminiscent. Thanks but no thanks."

"Please listen to me."

Terrell hesitated. Then he said, "Are you alone?"

"Yes, I swear it."

He put the burglar chain on, and opened the door a few inches. She was alone, looking young and pale and frightened in the softly-lit corridor.

"What do you want?"

"Do you need anything? Can I do anything for you?"

"I'm just fine," Terrell said. "What makes you think I'd need more help?"

"I was worried—can't I come in for just a minute, please? I want to explain."

"I'll bet your story's cute," Terrell said. But he was interested. He unhooked the burglar chain. "Come on in." When she slipped past him he closed the door and bolted it and then limped back to the sofa.

"You're hurt," she said. She came up behind him and touched his arm. "Can I get you anything?"

"You've helped enough. Any more help from you and I'll need a complete set of new parts."

"I'm terribly sorry. They made me call you."

"I'm sorry too," he said, turning and looking at her.

When she saw his face she drew a sharp breath. "They hurt you. You—you'd better sit down. You look sick."

"Stop fussing," he said foolishly.

"Well, you stop acting like an idiot." She turned him toward the sofa. He tried to pull away from her but the strength was

flowing out of him in giddy waves. "Cut it out," he said. He was on his back then and she was adjusting a pillow under his head.

"They made me do it," she said. "They made me do it. Can't you believe that?"

"Sure, that's how concentration camps got built. People were made to do it."

"They said they just wanted to talk to you. Frankie said you wouldn't see him. So he told me to call you and arrange a date. I—I shouldn't have done it. I wouldn't have if I'd known they were going to hurt you."

"Hurt me? Where did you get that idea? I won a ribbon for boxing in third grade." He felt the weight of his eyelids and knew he was entangled in a waking dream; the activity of the last few days was churning before his eyes. The faces of Sarnac and Caldwell and Cogan flashed in his mind, etched against splintering black and white backgrounds. Other faces followed with bewildering speed; Superintendent Duggan, Ike Cellars, Bridewell, Karsh.

"Would you like coffee?" she asked him.

"I don't need anything. All right, coffee then." He knew she wouldn't be able to find things, so he decided to get up and help. But instead he went to sleep. He didn't wake until she shook his shoulders gently and said, "Here's your coffee, Sam."

He had been asleep half an hour, and the rest had revived him considerably. The apartment smelled pleasantly of coffee and cigarette smoke, and Connie was sitting in a chair beside the sofa. A tray was on the floor beside him.

"Do you feel any better?" she asked him.

"I'm all right, I guess." He sipped the coffee and looked around for a cigarette.

"Here," she said, offering him a pack.

He took one, accepted a light from hers, and nodded his thanks. She had pushed the sleeves of her dress up and knotted a large bathtowel around her waist. Under this improvised apron she wore a gray wool dress that buttoned up the front from the hem to the belt line. The buttons were brown and shiny and glinted when she crossed her legs.

"You should get to bed," she said. "I've put out your pajamas and turned back the covers."

"That's fine."

"Are you hungry? I could make you an omelette."

"You sound like the Welcome Wagon people," he said. "I'd like a drink, that's all."

"I'll fix it. Water? Ice?"

"Just a little water."

While she was in the kitchen Terrell stood and limped into his bedroom. The bed was turned down neatly and his pajamas and robe were folded over the back of a chair. He slipped out of his suitcoat and let it drop to the floor, but the shirt was another matter; he could barely raise his hands to his collar, and the buttons felt like pinheads under his clumsy fingers.

She came in a little later with his drink. He was standing with his hands at his sides. "Give me a lift with this shirt, please," he said.

"Yes, of course." She seemed eager to help out, he thought with a touch of irritation. Like a teen-ager collecting scrap for a charity drive—damp with the goodness of it all.

She put the drink down and took off his tie and unbuttoned his shirt. She said something in a little whisper when she saw the bruises along his ribs. Her lips began to tremble. "They might have killed you," she said.

"A small price for a good story," he said. "That was our class motto. Martyrs in the cause of fearless reporting—a fine, clean way to go, don't you think?"

"Lie down and stop it. Should I call a doctor or something?"

"No, I don't think so. Nothing's broken. It will wear away in a day or so."

"Why are you putting yourself on a spot? Isn't there someone who could help you?"

"Sure," he said, "you for one. But you said no."

"It wouldn't do any good. You can't change things."

"Maybe, maybe not. But I can change into my pajamas, if you'll excuse me."

"Yes, certainly."

Terrell got under the covers a few minutes later and let his body sink gratefully into the soft warmth of the bed. A knock sounded gently on the door, and he said, "Come in."

She had her coat over her arm. "I'm going now," she said. "Is there anything else I could get for you?"

"I don't think so."

She came to the side of the bed and looked down at him with a grave little frown. "I made fresh coffee. All you have to do is turn up the burner when you want it."

"Okay, thanks." They looked at each other for a few seconds in silence. She was very pale and her short yellow hair shadowed her eyes. The shiny brown buttons on her skirt glinted as she shifted her weight.

"I hope you feel better tomorrow."

"I think I will."

"I'd better go."

"So long, Connie. And thanks again."

But she stood watching him and made no move to leave. Finally she sat on the edge of the bed and looked down at the tips of her brown pumps. "I'm running out of small talk," she said. "I thought—don't you want me to stay?"

"Just like that?" he said.

"Sure—just like that." She spoke almost flippantly, but a tide of color was moving up in her pale cheeks.

"You know, this sort of thing was always happening to my platoon sergeant," Terrell said. He rose on one elbow and picked up his drink. "Every time he got leave he'd check into a hotel and be ready for the sack when there was this knock. It was a girl, see? She'd noticed him in the lobby. Well, what could he do. She wouldn't take 'no' for an answer. The next morning she'd tell him she had never known what love was before. This happened to him every time he promoted a three-day pass."

"Please shut up," she said.

"But nobody ever believed him. Now I suppose no one will ever believe me."

She started to rise but he caught her arm. "All right, it's not funny," he said. "Why do you want to stay? A tender breast for the wounded warrior? Something like that?"

"I don't know. I didn't figure it out." She looked at him and the light from the bedlamp glinted on the tears in her eyes. "You made me feel cheap and useless, that's all. I wanted to

do something for you, something I could do—" She shook her head quickly. "It doesn't make sense. I'm sorry."

"It was a very decent impulse." He was oddly touched and grateful, and that made him feel awkward. "Would you like a cigarette? Something to drink?"

She shook her head again, "No, I've got to go."

"At the risk of sounding ridiculously statistical, this is the first time anything like this ever happened to me."

"That's probably your fault," she said. "You've kept people away with gags and—I don't know—bitterness. I feel it, anyway."

He felt unaccountably responsible for her sadness. "I'm sorry," he said. "I apologize for the gags. You've made a handsome gesture." Terrell put his drink down and took one of her hands. He didn't want to hurt her any more than he had already, but he couldn't find the words to express his feelings. "Couldn't we forget the bitterness?" he said.

"Can you do that?"

He touched her cheek and then the smoothness of her throat. When she turned and smiled uncertainly at him, Terrell felt very lucky and just a bit humble. "We'll try," he said. . . .

The ringing phone woke him much later. He got up on his elbow and switched on the bedside lamp. The room was dark but lines of soft, gray dawn framed the drawn blinds. He lifted the phone and the operator said, "Mr. Terrell?"

"That's right."

"One moment. Beach City is calling."

Terrell swung his legs over the side of the bed and lit a cigarette. Then he looked over his shoulder and saw that she was watching him with a sleepy little smile. "Sorry," he said.

"And I was having such an elegant dream."

"Close your eyes and pick up where you left off. It's still early."

"I'm all right."

"All right, eh? That's putting it coolly."

"I'm fine then. Wonderful." She snuggled into the pillow, her face small and pale in the frame of her tousled blond hair. Terrell touched her cheek gently with the back of his hand. "You look very nice."

"I feel very nice."

The receiver clicked in Terrell's ear, and a voice he knew said, "Sam? Sam Terrell? This is Tim Moran, Beach City Homicide. Sorry about the time."

"Never mind. What's up?"

"That little cop who shot himself over here, you remember? Coglan? Well, I don't think he did. I don't want to say more now, but if you come over here I'll give you the story."

"There's no traffic. I can make it in two hours."

"Fine. I called you because I just got a brush-off from your police department. They want that suicide tag to stick."

"Who'd you talk to?"

"A cop named Stanko. He's captain of detectives in Coglan's district."

"That figures. I'll see you in two hours, Tim. And thanks."

Terrell put the receiver down and said, "I've got to shave and get rolling. You try to get back to sleep."

"You must go?"

"Yes, it's important."

She sat up smiling and pressed her cheek against his arm. "I wanted to help you," she said. "And it was the other way around."

"It was much more than that," he said. "I'll tell you about it when I get back. In loving detail."

Terrell showered and shaved in under three minutes, but spent that much time repairing nicks on his chin. When he left the bathroom he smelled coffee and heard the click of high heels in the kitchen. He shook his head and began dressing. But he couldn't help smiling. The experience with her had left him bemused; he felt very happy, and at the same time he felt like a damn fool.

"There wasn't time for an omelette," she said, when he came into the kitchen. "I fried two straight up. Is that all right?"

"Just fine." She was wearing his robe belted tightly about her waist, and one of his bow ties as a hair ribbon. Terrell felt oddly shy with her. He wanted to kiss her, but for some reason he felt the gesture would be wrong. There was a moment of constraint between them as he sat down at the table.

"The coffee smells just wonderful," he said.

She put a cup before him and a plate which she had warmed in the oven. "When will you be back?" she said.

"Early this afternoon, cocktail hour at the latest. Will you have cocktails with me?"

"Yes, I'd like to." She sat down and said simply, "I want to help you. I want to tell you what happened that night at Eden's."

Terrell said, "You're not afraid any more?"

"It isn't that. I'm still scared."

"But you want to join the crusade?"

"I just want to be on your side, that's all." She seemed puzzled by him. "That's why people join crusades."

He was silent a moment, watching her. Then he said, "Does anybody know you came here last night?"

"I don't think so. Why?"

"Listen to me: if I let you help, will you promise me not to stick your nose out of this apartment? And to keep that door locked until I get back? And promise not to let anyone in, up to and including the Angel Gabriel?"

"Yes, I promise." She was smiling and the awkwardness between them was suddenly gone. He cared about her, and that made what had already happened much more important. "You're on the team," he said, patting her hand.

"Ike Cellars came to the apartment that night," she said. "He wanted Eden to do a job for him."

"And that job was?"

"To help frame Mr. Caldwell."

"Are you sure of this?"

"I was in the bedroom. I heard it."

Terrell looked down at her firm little hand. "That delicate pinkie is going to knock this city for a loop. Now tell me everything from the start. Just as you heard it. I'll pour the coffee."

IT was nine o'clock when Terrell pulled into the parking area reserved for police and press at the Beach City courthouse. The day was brilliant with sun, but the wind off the ocean cut through him like a knife as he went up the broad stone steps to the marble lobby. He had already relayed Connie's story to Karsh, and the presses were ready to run. He needed Tim Moran's story, but he had everything else; the why and how of the frame around Caldwell, the Parking Authority mess, everything. And it was Connie's eye-witness account that tied it all together.

Terrell went up to Moran's office on the second floor and found the detective at his desk with a littered ashtray beside him and a rank of empty coffee cartons at his elbow. Moran was in his shirtsleeves, his tie loose, his collar open, and he looked gray with exhaustion. But his eyes were narrow and sharp with a hunter's excitement.

"Well, you made pretty good time," he said. He stretched his arms above his head, then slumped back comfortably in the chair. "Tired as hell. Sit down, Sam. I'll tell you what I've got. Then I think you can tell me something. Is that fair enough?"

"Sure," Terrell said.

Moran picked up a glossy print from his desk and handed it to Terrell. "There's the mug who shot Paddy Cogan. Know him?"

Terrell studied the dark face, the low, scarred forehead, the bold, angry eyes. He shook his head slowly. "I don't know him. Where did you get the picture?"

"You know something about him though, Sam. I saw your expression."

"This could be the guy Cogan saw leaving Caldwell's." At Moran's puzzled frown he said, "I'll sketch it in for you, don't worry. But tell me the rest of your story. Where did you get this picture?"

"It's a weird thing, Sam. As odd as I ever ran into in this business. We wrote Cogan off as suicide, you know. Well, two days after his death I got a call here in my office. It was from a guy who'd been registered at the hotel at the same time as Cogan. He was on the same floor, just a room away, and he heard the shot. He looked out into the corridor and saw a man closing Cogan's door. He saw only the man's back. But he was able to describe his overcoat, his hat and the color of his hair and general build."

"Why did he wait two days to speak up?"

"That's what's weird. He was with a girl instead of being over in New York on business. He couldn't get involved with the police. Otherwise his wife would know he's cheating on her." Moran lit a cigarette, and grinned faintly at Terrell. "He was pretty damn indignant about it. He has kids in school, a solid pillar of the community. He wasn't going to throw that away just to testify against a killer. But his conscience obviously bothered him a bit, and I started digging. I took the description to the hotel, and talked to the bellhops, elevator men and desk clerks. They'd seen this man, all right. He'd been in the lobby in the afternoon and right after suppertime. And an elevator operator remembered taking him to the floor above Cogan's. Then I played a long hunch. You know there are quite a few sidewalk photographers working this area, so I rounded them up and looked at the shots they'd taken the day that Paddy Cogan was shot. That's how we got this picture. The photographer remembered the guy. These photographers, you know, are all poolroom psychologists. They've got to spot newlyweds, couples in town for vacations, people who'd want a souvenir picture. Well, he thought the big boy looked like a fighter or a wrestler, someone who might be flattered by a picture of himself. But it didn't go. Our guy stopped and glared at the photographer and then walked off fast." Moran grinned without humor. "I like to think of what that did to his nerves. Anyway, we sent the print to Washington, and they traced it. He's Nicholas Rammersky, alias Nick Rammer, age forty-two, with two convictions and a record of minor stuff stretching back twenty years. He's a paid killer. And I want to know who paid him to kill Paddy Cogan."

"I said I'd fill you in," Terrell said. "I had everything but Rammersky's name when I came over. It goes this way. . . ."

Twenty minutes later Moran came with him to the door. He said, "Rammersky will burn for the murder of the girl or the cop. Either way, I'm not particular. He can't hide after your story breaks. And neither can those other crumbs in your backyard . . ."

Terrell drove back through heavy traffic and reached the city shortly after two-thirty. He parked in front of his apartment, and checked the time as he went up the stairs. They would need a couple of hours to get the story organized. By working fast they could make the three-star final at four-thirty. But tomorrow there would be little else in the paper. Karsh would know how to handle it; the editions establishing Caldwell's innocence would hit the city like sledge hammers.

Terrell unlocked the door and said, "Hey!"

There was no answer, no stir of life in the apartment. He stood with his hat in his hand, feeling the grin stiffen on his lips. For several seconds he waited, and then he closed the door and walked slowly through the little apartment. Empty. The breakfast dishes were on the kitchen table, the robe that she had worn was lying across the foot of the bed. The blinds were still drawn, and the bed was unmade. There was the light fragrance of her perfume in the air. But that was all.

He lit a cigarette and looked around the living room, a frown touching his face. She didn't have any reason to risk her neck, he thought. Why shouldn't she clear out? What was in it for her? That was the question everyone had to answer in the cold light of self-interest. What's in it for me? Trouble? Thanks, but no thanks. She must have figured it that way. Why the devil should I feel surprised? he thought.

But he was surprised, Terrell realized sadly. He couldn't mask his disappointment with a practical cynicism. He would have bet anything that she'd stick. His conviction was illogical, but that didn't matter; convictions about people usually rested on criteria that logicians wouldn't accept.

It was then, as he was putting his cigarette out, that he saw the note on the telephone table. He picked it up, feeling the leaden disappointment moving in him. It was written in pencil,

in a neat and careful hand: "Maybe I picked sides in too much of a hurry. I'm trying to be sensible now. Forgive me for backing out. Give me that much of a break."

Terrell stared around the room, shaking his head like a weary fighter. Without her testimony much of his story fell apart. The Rammersky part was intact, but that only proved that Coglan was murdered; it wouldn't help Caldwell. Not in time.

He sat down and called the paper, but Karsh wasn't in. His secretary told him he was at the game. The Game. Terrell had forgotten; Dartmouth was playing and Karsh was there with a party of friends. It irritated Terrell; it seemed incongruous and silly to think that twenty-two young men were now engaged in what they believed to be a struggle of life or death significance; that eighty thousand persons were crowded into the Municipal Bowl to cheer one side or the other; that drunks were waving pennants and that women in fur coats and stadium boots were leaving their lipstick on countless cardboard cartons of coffee. While Caldwell was in jail, and the truth couldn't be told . . .

Terrell stood and looked around, frowning again; something was wrong. The dirty breakfast dishes, the unmade bed—that was wrong. She wouldn't leave without tidying up. Terrell looked at the note he had dropped on the coffee table. That was genuine. His heart was beating faster. He was suddenly hoping that she had walked out on him. That she had left of her own free will.

He sat down and dialled her hotel. When the clerk answered, Terrell said, "Is Connie Blacker there?"

"She's checked out, sir."

"When was this?"

"Let me see—that was around ten this morning."

"Did she leave a forwarding address?"

"Just a second—no, I'm afraid not."

"Was she alone?"

"Sir, I can't tie up this phone indefinitely. I—"

"Was she alone?" Terrell repeated sharply.

"No, sir—there were friends with her. Two gentlemen."

"Was Frankie Chance there?"

"There's a call waiting, sir. If you could stop by—"

Terrell put the phone down and picked up his hat. He went downstairs to get a cab; with the game traffic in town there was no point in taking his car. She'd walked out on him, he was sure of that; when she'd looked the situation over with a cold, little eye, she had seen that it wasn't for her. Heroics, sacrifices—hardly her dish. These thoughts flicked through Terrell's mind as the cab took him across town to her hotel. But they didn't ease the unpleasant tension in his stomach.

At the hotel Terrell talked to the desk clerk, a plump little man with an air of nervous efficiency about him. The clerk described the men who had been with Connie: one was large, with dark skin and hair and the other was sharply dressed, with light hair and thin features. The big man sounded like Briggs, Cellers' bodyguard.

"Would you give it to me in order, please?" he said. "They came in together, the girl in the middle, the men on each side. The big man came to the desk with her, and the smaller man waited a little behind them. Is that right?"

"Yes, Miss Blacker asked for the key and told me she was checking out."

"They all went upstairs together?"

"Yes, that's correct. She must have packed in a hurry. They were down in ten or fifteen minutes."

"Did you hear any of their conversation? I mean, do you have any idea of where they were heading?"

The clerk smiled in a manner that suggested a philosophical approach to life. "People come and people go. That's the story of a hotel."

"Did she seem reluctant to leave? Worried or anything like that?"

"I'm afraid I couldn't say, sir."

"Well, thanks anyway."

Terrell went outside and stopped on the busy sidewalk, wondering what to do next; for a moment he was completely at a loss, unable to think or act. He was caught between two fears, the first that she had walked out on him, and the second that she had been picked up by Ike Cellars' hoodlums. The first fear was selfish, but the other thing was a matter for the police or FBI—but he had no proof beside his illogical conviction that she wouldn't have run out on him. He had noth-

ing. He couldn't alert the FBI because a girl had checked out of a hotel with a couple of men.

Terrell went back to his apartment and called Karsh, but the maid told him everyone was still at the football game. Karsh's son was in with a group of friends, she said, and everybody was coming back after the game for a buffet dinner and some drinks. She'd been working all day on it, she added in tones of happy martyrdom. She liked working for Karsh, Terrell thought, as he put down the phone. Everybody did.

Terrell paced up and down the apartment, smoking one cigarette after another, tracing and retracing his steps like an animal in a cage. Everything his eyes fell on seemed to remind him of her; the robe she had worn, the lipstick on the rim of a cup, the bow tie she had used for a hair ribbon; they all brought back memories of her face and form. The silence became exasperating, and he fiddled with the radio until he found a program of dance music. That didn't help particularly, and the announcer kept breaking in to hum the lyrics in a middling-to-bad voice. Terrell cut him off and fixed a drink. He stood in the middle of the room for a few seconds, his frown settling deeper on his face, and then he turned decisively and scooped up the telephone. Superintendent Duggan wasn't in his office, his secretary said; he could be reached at home if it were important. Terrell broke the connection and dialled Duggan's home number.

Duggan's wife answered, and said just a minute, she'd tell Jack, and then Duggan was on the phone, speaking in a soft, worried voice. "Sam, it's been a wild day. I guess you've heard all about it."

"I haven't heard anything. I've been working. I want to report a kidnapping."

"A kidnapping? Who's been kidnapped?"

"A girl named Connie Blacker who worked for Ike Cellars."

Duggan paused, and Terrell heard his heavy breathing. "Why come to me?" he said at last. "It's a Federal charge."

"Aren't you interested? Did Ike Cellars dampen your flaming official zeal?"

"Who the hell do you think you're talking to?" Duggan said, in an angry, rising voice. "I've been kicked around all day, and I'm sick of it. The Council didn't suspend me—but only

by three votes. Ticknor told me off like I was a rookie cop he'd caught drunk on a beat. I'm not taking any more of it—from you or anybody else."

"You're going to take a lot more," Terrell said. "Ticknor can scare up three more votes, don't worry. And after that you're through—another ex-cop whining that he got squeezed out by political pressure. But the charges will read different. You'll wind up at the track keeping an eye on pickpockets for coffee-and-cake money. And you'll jump to attention when Ike Cellars and Mayor Ticknor stroll past you to the fifty-dollar window."

"Save your fight talk," Duggan said. His voice was under control again. "I'm not throwing away thirty-five years in the bureau. You can talk loud and big, Terrell, because you're on the outside. But I'm not."

"You'll be outside pretty soon," Terrell said, "because they're getting ready to plant a boot in your big fanny and kick you out. But if you find that girl you've got a chance."

Duggan said, "What do you mean? What's she got to do with me?"

Terrell was aware of the quickened interest in his voice; then suddenly he realized that he'd been beaten on this story from the start: Paddy Cogan, Connie—someone was always ahead of him. He was the one fighting shadows in the dark.

"I don't understand," Duggan said. "What did you say her name was?"

"I forget," Terrell said. "It started with Smith or something like that."

"Why the cute stuff? I asked you a question. What's the girl's name? What's she got on Ticknor and Cellars?"

"Nothing at all," Terrell said. "I was dreaming."

"You sound wide-awake to me."

"It's a trick I learned in college. Take it easy." Terrell put the phone down on Duggan's protesting voice, and picked up his hat and coat. Duggan wouldn't help. No one would help. She was trouble, and the smart boys would want no part of her. A pillow over her face, the pressure of a finger on her throat—that was the best thing all around. So the smart boys would figure it. But there was still a chance, Terrell knew. He had enough to print now. Enough to blow a loud whistle on Cellars.

WHEN Terrell reached Karsh's apartment it was late in the afternoon, and the early winter darkness had dropped over the city. The crowd was back from the game and a party was underway in the living room.

"Where's Mr. Karsh?" Terrell asked the maid, as she took his hat and coat.

"He's talking on the long distance in his bedroom, Mr. Terrell. Can I bring you a drink or something to eat?"

"No, thanks. I'll forage."

Philip Karsh and a half dozen of what obviously were his friends had grouped themselves about the massive record player, the young men in dark flannels and white buck shoes, the girls smooth and sweet in tweeds and cashmeres. They looked wonderful and happy, Terrell thought, like F. Scott Fitzgerald people, or magazine ads plugging gracious living through a judicious choice of deodorants; the cold wind had put color in their cheeks and their eyes were bright with health and excitement—or more accurately, he thought, an in-offensive awareness of their own good fortune.

At the opposite end of the room Karsh's mistress and an assortment of friends and sycophants were standing in front of the well-stocked bar. To each his own, Terrell thought, as he went over to get a drink.

Jenny was unhappy, he saw; she was frowning and her eyes narrowed when she glanced toward the young group around the record player.

"Hello, Sam," she said absently. "We haven't seen much of you lately."

"Working man," he said, glancing at his watch. "How was the game?"

A bookie named Peterman overheard his question and struck his forehead with the heel of his hand. "He asks how

the game was," he said, staring at the ceiling. "We're on Dartmouth for sentimental reasons, and he asks us how it went!"

"Dartmouth lost, I guess," Terrell said.

"You guessed yourself right to the head of the class. We pay scalper's prices for the tickets because Mike didn't bother to tell us we were going until about noon—then he sends me out for a fistful like it's tickets for a neighborhood movie he wants."

A press agent stopped to say hello and Peterman turned back to the bar still complaining about the price of the tickets, the money they had lost, and Dartmouth's miserable showing. A friend of Jenny's, a nervous creature with streaked blond hair, moved in beside Terrell, and said, "It's a damn shame, isn't it?" She was staring with virtuous anger at the college kids. "Having them here, considering."

"Considering what?" Terrell said.

"Considering everything. Jenny's too damn tolerant, if you ask me."

"I can't stand ugliness," Jenny said. "I never could stand it. Scenes give me migraine."

Terrell got the story by a kind of osmosis, absorbing it through the web of worry that covered all his senses and perceptions. Karsh was the villain—Jenny's father and mother were in town, and Karsh had promised to take them for a drive to the Civil War battlefields. But he also promised (some weeks before, Jenny admitted reluctantly) to take his son, Philip, to the Dartmouth game. So there had been a fine fuss, ending in an apparent decision for Karsh, since Jenny's mother and father had been left high and dry in their hotel room.

"Mom and Dad were fine about it," Jenny said, "but then they would be."

"They're sweet," her friend said, staring with a glassy malevolence at the college crowd. "Sweet, wonderful people. With values."

"And all they wanted," Terrell said, "was an afternoon's tour of the battlefields. Didn't they want Mike to sing 'Dixie' in blackface? Or act out the bayonet charges?"

Jenny looked at him and said quietly, "Knock that off, Sam."

"Everybody's always worried about Mike," Terrell said. "Always grabbing checks away from him, thinking of his own good."

"I give value," Jenny said in a tight, controlled voice.

"You give him inflammation of the ulcer," Terrell said.

Jenny's friend said, "Well! I've been under the impression that I was addressing a gentleman."

"You'd be more at home undressing one," Terrell said. "Give Mike peace. Let him enjoy his boy tonight. He can only keep so many balls in the air at one time."

"What's the matter with you?" Jenny said. "Sore because you have to work for your share?"

"That's it," Terrell said. "I want fringe benefits. I want him to get my mother a job as a copy boy. Then we can all lunch together. Yummy stuff."

"Why don't you mind your own business," Jenny said.

"Why don't you write? You've got a talent for clichés."

"You sarcastic sonofabitch."

"Shut up," Terrell said so sharply that the color left Jenny's cheeks. He stared at his watch, caught suddenly in a bitter, impotent anger.

"Sam, what's the matter?" Jenny said uneasily.

"I'm sorry, forget it." It was now after six: Connie had been gone since ten that morning. Eight full hours. Anything could have happened to her in that time—anything might have been done to her.

The bedroom door opened and Karsh walked out shaking his head from side to side like a groggy fighter. The gesture was burlesque, amusingly exaggerated, but his attempt at lightness was obvious and strained; Karsh was fairly drunk, Terrell guessed, and was trying ineptly to put the room at ease.

He wore a superbly cut gray flannel suit with a Dartmouth pennant in the lapel, and was groomed to glossy perfection, everything about him buffed up to a high elegant tone. Smiling he tried to focus the mood of the party on himself, to fuse the awkwardly separated groups together with the heat of personality.

"Let's have a drink, for God's sake," he said, "and then let's get with the college songs. But the old ones! Not this upstart American stuff. Anybody know the one from good ole Babylon U? It's in Latin, I guess." In an unsteady voice he began to sing: "Babble on for Babylon, on the banks of the old Euphrates." He shook his head. "Nope, not right. It's on the slopes of old Mons Veneris, I think."

Terrell crossed the silent room and took Karsh's arm. "Mike," he said, "listen to me. Will you please?"

"Sam, old boy, glad to see you. Did you meet my son? He's ashamed of me, but he's a good kid in spite of that—or because of it, I should say."

"Mike, listen," Terrell said. "The girl is gone. The witness. Cellars has her."

But Karsh was lost to him. "Old college songs, Sam, that's the spirit of the evening. There's one from the ole U. of Peiping—" He laughed as an ad lib struck him. "The University of Peiping Tom, actually. It goes: On Godiva, on Godiva, on right through 'at town. You got to say 'at town; it shows you is a real ole southern boy."

Karsh's son joined them and said easily, "Dad, we've got to peel off. I didn't get a chance to tell you during the game, but we're driving up to Skyport tonight." Young Karsh was tall, dark and his manners were impeccably casual.

"Now wait a minute." Karsh looked puzzled and hurt. "You're staying in town. All of you. I've got suites lined up for you, one for boys, one for girls. We'll have a champagne breakfast in the morning and then we'll all drive over to Skyport."

"I'm sorry, Dad, but the mob has a timetable. We're late now." Terrell had the feeling that the boy's indifferent poise was being severely tried; beneath his negligent manner he was probably sweating like any teen-ager caught in an embarrassing scene before friends. "We'll all take a raincheck, if we may," he said, smiling and touching Karsh's arm. "Thanks for a very gay day."

"That's all right," Karsh said. He patted the boy's shoulder. "Don't mention it. Sorry you have to be on your way. I missed a briefing, I guess. I thought this was to be a real

holiday. Well, have a nightcap anyway. And a bite of something to eat. Make your friends live it up a bit."

When Karsh turned back to Terrell his manner had changed; the boozy good fellowship was gone, and his eyes were empty and cold. "I go on kidding myself," he said. "Thinking there's something besides work. But there's nothing." He shook his head quickly. "The girl is gone, eh? When did this happen?"

"Around ten this morning, I think."

"How important is she to your story?"

"She's it. But I can start without her."

"Are you sure Cellars picked her up? She worked for him, you said. Maybe she's still working for him."

"No, she's on the level. I know, Mike."

"It's a question of how far we can trust her. She may have walked out on you—keep that in mind. Scribbled a note and walked out. There's no proof that Cellars grabbed her. Is there, Sam?"

Terrell hesitated, frowning faintly at Karsh. "How did you know she left a note?" he said.

"Clairvoyance, pure and simple. They all leave notes. Now look. Wait for me in my bedroom while I make another call. I'll put the call through out here and say good-bye to the boy. Then we'll go to work. Could you get everything together in two or three hours? For the Night Extra?"

"I'm ready now," Terrell said.

"Good." Karsh winked at him and walked briskly to a telephone on a table beside the record player. The room was noisy with talk and music, and when he lifted the receiver a girl sitting cross-legged on the floor looked questioningly at him and pantomimed turning off the machine. Karsh smiled and shook his head. "Like noise," he said. Terrell could read the words on his lips. "Blame all mistakes on it."

When the connection was made and Karsh was speaking, Terrell turned and walked into Karsh's bedroom. He closed the door behind him and leaned against it, hearing the hard, laboring stroke of his heart. The music from the living room poured around him but he was aware only of the reactions of his body; the beat of his heart, the tight, cold feeling in his

stomach, and then something in his mouth that was like an essence of fear and betrayal and death.

The extension telephone was on a table beside Karsh's long, wide bed—just a foot or so from Terrell's hand. He looked down at the smooth, black receiver, and a little shudder went through his body. If he lifted the phone he would destroy something in himself; certain kinds of suspicions were too destructive to be entertained casually or cheaply. That much he was certain of. But his feelings were only a small part of what was involved. He knew that, too.

Terrell's hand moved slowly, almost of its own volition, raising the receiver to his ear. He heard music first, a noisy background sound from the record player, and then he heard Karsh's voice, sharp and hard over the music, and insistent to the point of desperation.

"—it can't be covered up, Ike. I'm telling you, it's impossible. Be reasonable, man."

The music beat strongly in Terrell's ear, a pulsing rhythm that matched the quick beat of his heart. And then he heard Ike Cellars' voice, bigger than Karsh's, thick with convulsive anger.

"Don't tell me anything, understand! You keep it out of your paper."

"But Terrell's got everything."

"You keep them from printing it. That's your job. Don't worry about anything else."

"Just a minute—hold on a second." Karsh's cry was desperate and futile; the connection was already broken. Terrell heard Karsh's ragged breathing for an instant before he put the receiver quietly back into its cradle. He stood perfectly still, rubbing his hands on the sides of his trousers. Finally he moved to the middle of the room, and fumbled for his cigarettes. He couldn't seem to think; it was as if his senses had been mercifully numbed by the effects of a terrible blow.

When he heard the knob turn he put a cigarette quickly between his lips and raised his hands to cup the flame of his lighter. The door swung open and Karsh walked into the room, his manner brisk and business-like. "I'm squared away now," he said. "Tell me what you've got, Sam. All of it, from start to finish. Then we'll see how much we can use."

Terrell's face was partially concealed by his cupped hands; he needed that defense now. "Okay," he said, turning away from Karsh. He forced himself to speak evenly, almost casually. "As we both knew, Caldwell was framed. Eden Myles was murdered by a paid gunman named Nick Rammersky. He was paid by Ike Cellars. The unholy triumvirate was Cellars, Dan Bridewell, and our beloved mayor, Shaw Ticknor. Does this surprise you?"

"Dan Bridewell? That's a jolt," Karsh said.

"Isn't it? This story is a gathering of the hypocrite clan. Well, the side angles you know about. The fact Paddy Cogan was unlucky enough to see Rammersky, the attempts to put pressure on Cogan's widow—it fits together, and it's all characterized by the same gamey flavor."

"Can you prove this? Supposing we get sluggish with libel suits?"

Terrell couldn't make himself turn and face Karsh. He stood in profile to him, trying to bring his nerves and emotions under control. Now his hand trembled as he raised the cigarette to his lips, and he was almost physically sick with a blend of shame and anger and pity.

"Well?" Karsh said. His tone was puzzled. "I asked you a question, Sam. What've we got? Provable stuff we can back up with witnesses and written evidence? Or guesses—regardless of how accurate they may be. How much of what you've told me can we print?"

Terrell turned at last and stared at Karsh. For a few seconds neither man spoke, but Karsh frowned faintly at the look in Terrell's eyes. The silence stretched out until Karsh made a worried little gesture with his hand, and said, "What's the matter, Sam? I'm just asking you what we can use."

"Why not ask Ike Cellars?" Terrell said, softly. "From the weather to classified ads—he's the boy to ask. Isn't that right, Mike?" His voice rose suddenly in anger. "Well? Isn't that right?"

"What the hell are you talking about?" Karsh's puzzled smile was a good effort, but his face had turned clammy and white.

Terrell said bitterly, "Don't lie and squirm. Spare me that.

You knew the girl wrote a note. How? How did you know that?"

"I told you—"

Terrell pointed to the extension telephone. Karsh's voice trembled and then he wet his lips and stared at Terrell in silence.

"I heard you talking to Cellars," Terrell said.

"Listen to me—you've got to understand."

"Understand what? That you're working for him? I know that now."

Karsh took a step toward him and raised his hands in a clumsy and incongruous gesture of supplication. "Sam, I was trying to save you—you've got to believe me. From the moment you talked to Cogan and got his story about the prowler—from then on you were slated for the morgue."

"I brought you the whole story," Terrell said. "You could have smashed them to bits with it. But you killed it. We'd wait until we had it all, you said, the drama and the color, but the whole thing in one piece, like a beautiful symphony." Terrell's voice became savage and ugly. "But you were lying. I had the guts of the story the first night, but you threw it out. Threw away Caldwell's only chance. Then I traced down Paddy Cogan, and got the truth from him, a scared, drunken little cop hiding in a cheap flea trap in Beach City. But he was dead before his testimony could do any good. Then Mrs. Cogan came in with her story, and you buried that, too. More lies. Wait till we have it all, the drunks singing *Faust*, the symphony of news." Terrell pounded a fist into his palm.

"I fell for it like any prize fool. But I was too close to you, Mike. I believed in you. You taught me this business. For a dozen years you were my model—I even tried to dress like you when I was a copy boy. It's a laugh, isn't it? And you played on that, didn't you—on my feeling that you were an old-style hero, colorful, romantic, generous, anything for a pal, always good for a touch, kind and decent to the core." Terrell's voice was trembling. "That was my picture of you. And it was there for you to use."

"No, Sam, no—listen to me, for God's sake."

"Then the girl talked," Terrell said bitterly. "And we had

them cold. But you squealed to Cellars again, and now she's gone. Where?" Terrell caught him by the lapels of his expensive suit and shook him with all of his strength. "Where is she? What have they done with her?"

"I don't know—I don't know."

Terrell let him go and Karsh turned away and sat down slowly and wearily on the side of the bed. His face had gone slack, and he was breathing with a definite physical effort, like a man in pain. "I needed money, I always needed money." The travesty of a smile twisted his lips. "The plea of the absconding bank teller, the defense of a kid who snatches a purse. You'd think I could come up with something more original. A treatise on the pleasures of amorality, or the need for more thieving bastards in a world gone boring itself to death with uplift." He sighed and a little shudder went through his body. "Gambling, alimony, that little fop of mine outside—they suck money out of me every minute of the day and night. My salary covers Jenny, and most of my bar bills. And not much else. Cellars offered to chip in a few years back. At first it was simple; a gambling story played down, a picture of a girl friend stuck in the paper. Little things. Kill a divorce story, ease up on some character in trouble with the tax people—favors I could do with a pencil or a telephone call. But I got in too deep. I couldn't pay him back. It wasn't simply money, there wasn't much of that actually. Ike was afraid I might invest in blue chips or hit the books for a bundle and get clear of him. Take this apartment building. It's owned by a combine headed by Cellars. I never get a bill. I ask for it and the manager says sure, right away. Only it never comes. Bookkeeping snafu. Next month without fail, Mr. Karsh. And next month never comes. I trade in a car at Cellars' agency. The salesman says, 'You're really doing us a favor, Mr. Karsh. Your old car is perfect, and these new ones are dogs. So what say we trade even?' He boxed me in on all sides, making things easy, making it impossible for me to break clear." Karsh shook his head wearily. "Didn't you ever spot it? Half the city room tumbled years ago. You know the way I bounced guys before the Guild came in? Sent city editors off to Paris, or back on police? I had to; they'd get too close to what I was doing, or they'd be sick

of killing stories they knew we should print." Karsh stared up at Terrell, his eyes pleading for understanding. "Then the Caldwell story broke, and you stumbled on the fix, and Cellars expected me to keep you quiet. If it was just my job at stake I might have told him to go to hell. I don't know. But it was your life, Sam. Cellars wanted to kill you. I convinced him it would be smarter to kill the story. So we played you for a fool. Everything you dug up went back to Cellars—and nothing went into the paper. But you're alive, remember that, *I saved your life*. Maybe you don't believe me." Karsh tried to smile, but his face was a mask of despair. "Hell, I don't believe myself. I like being a big shot, being surrounded by sycophants I can walk on for the price of a drink. Add all that to your picture of Mike Karsh."

"Where's the girl now?" Terrell said.

"I don't know. I swear it." Karsh got slowly to his feet and moistened his dry lips. "Is she important to you?"

"What difference does that make?" Terrell turned away from the pain in Karsh's face, and rubbed the back of his hand roughly over his mouth. "She's important to herself. She's a hundred-pound girl who got in trouble with hoodlums because she was willing to tell the truth." He turned sharply back on Karsh. "What the hell is your philosophy? That she doesn't matter? That she's like a marker in a game? Like Paddy Cogan and Eden Myles? Inanimate objects pushed here and there by the important people?"

"She won't be hurt, Sam. She'll be all right."

"Is Paddy Cogan all right?"

"He shot himself."

"Cogan was murdered," Terrell said. "By the hoodlums who killed Eden Myles. And you fingered him. You told Cellars he was ready to talk. And Cellars had him killed. Didn't your partner tell you he was arranging an execution?"

Karsh was swaying from side to side like a drunk. "No, that's not true."

"You killed him. Do you want the girl's death on your conscience too? Where is she?"

"I don't know, I don't know."

Terrell turned to the door. He didn't know where to go or what to do, but he wanted desperately to get away from

here—away from this waste and shame, away from the guilt in Karsh's face.

"Wait, Sam, wait. Please."

Terrell looked back and saw the tears trembling in Karsh's eyes. But nothing could touch him any more. The pity and sadness was gone, and there was nothing left but anger.

Karsh touched his arm tentatively and Terrell said, "Take your hands off me."

"Listen to me, please listen to me," Karsh said, in a low voice. "You meant something to me. That was on the level. Everything else about me was phony—okay, fair enough. But I respected you—and wanted you close to me. That's the truth—for what it's worth."

"It's not worth a damn," Terrell said, and slapped Karsh's hand from his arm.

"Sam, please don't leave like this, I can—"

Terrell walked out and slammed the door on Karsh's entreating voice. The living room was empty and silent; the music had been turned off. Evidently Jenny and her friends had left with the college crowd. Glasses were everywhere and a cigarette was burning a black groove in the shining surface of the coffee table. Terrell found his hat and coat and let himself out.

TERRELL stopped at a bar near Karsh's hotel, and drank two double whiskeys, but the liquor failed to dissolve the sickening coldness in his stomach. He didn't know what to do next; betrayal, he had found, was mercifully numbing.

The story would break, of course. Nothing could stop it now. When Rammersky was picked up for Coglan's murder, he would talk—he wouldn't go to the chair and leave Cellars in the clear. And when Cellars fell he would drag old man Bridewell and Mayor Ticknor with him.

Terrell didn't need a newspaper to print his story. He could give it to Sarnac, and the national committee of Caldwell's party would splash it across the country. They had shrewd tough lawyers who would love this case, and press agents who would drop the facts like bombs on the opposition party.

But would that help Connie? No: he could free Caldwell and win an election, but he couldn't save an honest little blonde whose only mistake had been trying to help him. There was no point in trying his tipsters and contacts for a lead to her. Even if he went about it by hints and indirection, they would be unwilling to stick their noses into Ike Cellars' personal business. And the word would get back to Ike that the blonde's whereabouts was becoming a matter of concern and speculation. That might force his hand in the wrong direction.

No—it wouldn't do. He needed something that would stampede Cellars tonight; that would take his mind off everything but survival.

"Another one?" the bartender asked him.

"Yes, thanks." An idea had occurred to Terrell, and as he examined it a small, unpleasant smile touched his lips. It might work nicely. And there was something cruel and destructive in it that appealed to his need for reprisal. He

walked to the phone booth at the end of the room and looked up the number of the Weston Hotel, where Frankie Chance had an apartment.

The hotel operator connected him with Frankie's room and after a few rings the connection was made and Frankie Chance said, "Hello?" in a sharp, impatient voice.

"Frankie? This is Sam Terrell. I'd like to see you for a few minutes. Can I come over?"

"We don't have mutual interests, snoop. And I'm busy."

"This won't take long."

Chance paused. Then he said, "You feeling unhappy about the beating you took the other night?"

"Live and learn," Terrell said. He began to smile, but his eyes were cold and hard. "This is another matter. I want to tell you who killed your girl. I'll be over in five minutes."

"You dirty, filthy scum, I'll—"

Terrell laughed shortly and dropped the receiver into the hook. He returned to the bar, finished his drink and then went outside and caught a cab. "Weston Hotel," he told the driver, and settled back to enjoy his cigarette.

The sky was bright and lovely with stars, but the wind surging through the city was soft and exciting with the feel of snow. Lines of traffic stretched up and down the noisy streets, and the sidewalks were jammed with hurrying crowds, young couples on their way to or from the movies, cleaning women lumbering to work in heavy woolen coats, and the usual assortment of panhandlers and drifting young males.

Terrell walked through the crowded lobby of the Weston, and took the elevator to Frankie Chance's floor. He went along a clean, warm corridor to the apartment and rapped lightly with the back of his knuckles. Frankie pulled the door open and said, "Come in, snoop. I prayed you'd come. I swear to God, I prayed." His voice was trembling softly and there was a look of murder in his eyes. "Get in here fast." His hand was in the pocket of a gaudy dressing robe and Terrell knew he was holding a gun.

"There's no point in being mad, Frankie," he said. "I'm not here to needle you. I'm here to do you a favor."

Chance closed the door and took the gun from his pocket. "What did you say about Eden? I want to hear it again,

Terrell. I want to hear it before I bust all the teeth out of your head."

"I'm here as a friend, Frankie, believe me."

Chance's eyes narrowed. "You're trying to be wise, eh?"

"Not at all," Terrell said. He smiled and sat on the arm of a chair. Lighting a cigarette, he glanced around for an ash-tray. There was a fifth of whiskey on the bureau, and an assortment of medicine—aspirin, cough syrup and bottles full of variously colored pills. To his left was an alcove that had been fitted out as a dressing room; it was hung with clothes brushes, long leather shoe horns and two full-length mirrors. A dozen or so suits and sports jackets hung neatly above rows of glossy shoes and loafers.

"Don't stall," Frankie said. "What are you trying to tell me, Sam?"

Terrell glanced at him, still smiling faintly. "I could do this leisurely, but I never got my kicks pulling wings off flies. Your girl was murdered on orders from Ike Cellars. A thug named Nick Rammersky did the job with his ten little pinkies. That's it, Frankie. The guy you work for, the big boy who tosses you your bones—he had Eden killed."

"Shut up!" Frankie said softly. "You already said too much."

"You probably know Rammersky," Terrell said, watching the cold, mad rage working in Frankie's face. "He's new in town, but he'd stand out—he's a big mug with a scarred forehead. Ike brought him in for the job. Did you meet him?" Terrell laughed softly. "I see you did. Had a drink, played a hand or two of gin with him maybe. Did you talk shop? The clean-up in Vegas, the mob shooting over in Baltimore. And did he mention that he choked the life out of your girl?" Terrell's voice was suddenly harsh as a whiplash. "Did he toss that in as small talk?"

"You want me to shoot?" Frankie whispered the words in a queer, straining voice. His eyes were wet, and his body was shaking. "You want me to kill you?"

"Ask yourself one question, Frankie. Would I come here without proof?"

Chance stared at him for seconds, digesting this, and then he sat down slowly on the edge of the bed. "What's your angle?"

"I like justice," Terrell said drily.

"Proof—what kind of proof you got?"

"It's an interesting and devious story," Terrell said casually.

"Eden Myles was peddling a few innocuous facts to Richard Caldwell. You follow me? Or do words like 'innocuous' tax you, Frankie?"

"You keep talking, or I'm going to beat it out of you," Frankie said.

"She was peddling them on orders. You were probably in on it that far, Frankie. And Eden thought it was as simple as that, too—get Caldwell's ear, give him a few bum tips. Wheels within wheels, a bit of standard political flimflam. But she didn't see the end of the script," Terrell said, watching Frankie's hot dark eyes. "Ike planned to have her killed in Caldwell's home—and frame Caldwell for her murder. Cellars had no animus against your girl, Frankie, but she could have been troublesome later. Maybe trouble seems too strong a word. A nuisance, at least. So that's the story. Rammersky came in the back door and knocked Caldwell out. Then he strangled Eden and left."

"You mentioned proof." His voice trembled. "Where is it?"

"First, Rammersky was seen bolting away from Caldwell's by a little cop named Paddy Cogan. Secondly, Connie Blacker heard Cellars explaining the phony deal to Eden. You know Connie, Frankie. And you know she's straight."

"She's a square, an oddball," Frankie said, but a tide of angry color was moving up in his smooth brown cheeks. "What'd she tell you?"

"She was at Eden's apartment the night Eden was killed. Staying there as Eden's guest. Cellars arrived about ten-thirty, and told Eden she had to put on an act at Caldwell's that night. Get him drinking, and then start screaming and pretend that she'd been attacked and so forth. And as an added precaution, Cellars went on, one of his men would come in the back way and knock Caldwell unconscious, make it look as if he and Eden had struggled around a bit till he fell and hit his head. Cellars' man would disappear—leaving Eden alone to face the aroused neighbors and eventually the police. Eden would testify that Caldwell had become abusive, and had attacked her. This, Cellars assured her, was all she had to

do or say." Terrell looked for an ashtray again, then shrugged and tapped a length of ash onto the floor. "Connie heard this conversation, and talked to your girl when she came into the bedroom to change. Eden was frightened. She thought the whole deal was raw. She didn't know just how raw it was going to be."

"They didn't have to kill her," Frankie said. Tears were starting in his eyes. "She never hurt anybody. She was kind to everybody. We were together for five years and she never looked at another guy. We were going to buy a six-flat over in Baycroft next year. Live in one flat, and live off the rent from the others. It was what she wanted. Something solid. A place of our own that we'd have if times got bad."

"Did you know she was pregnant?" Terrell asked quietly.

Frankie twisted around to look at him. "Don't lie to me," he said. "Don't lie to me."

"The autopsy didn't lie. She was three months pregnant. You didn't know, eh?"

Frankie began to pound the foot of the bed with the flat of his hand, gently at first, but the blows fell harder and harder, until he was hammering the wooden bar with all the strength of his arm. "She wanted it. I didn't." The words came strangely through his quivering lips. "I was scared. For her. But she wanted it. And she was going to have it. She told me that it was fixed up, but she was going to have it." The tears were running down his cheeks and a moaning little noise sounded in his throat.

"Play it for all it's worth," Terrell said. "Beat your breast and shout 'Mama Mia.'" Contempt put an edge to his voice. "What were your plans for the kid? A job running numbers, or maybe selling programs and peanuts in a burlesque joint? Then take him back to Sicily to show the old folks how well you'd done in free, democratic America. Were those your dreams, you ginny bastard?"

Frankie seemed hopelessly confused; he opened and closed his mouth but he couldn't manage anything but incoherent little grunts.

"Beautiful dreams," Terrell said. "Then Cellars put his foot down, and there's nothing left but a grease mark on the floor. And Ike goes on as if nothing happened."

"I got to ask some questions around," Frankie said, forming the words slowly and laboriously, as if he were just learning to speak. "I'll find out how much truth you've told me."

He dropped his robe on the floor and took down a raglan topcoat from the dressing room alcove. "Nobody ever talked to me the way you did," he said. "So I'll see you again, don't worry." He transferred the gun to the pocket of his topcoat and pulled a soft felt hat low on his forehead.

"Wait a minute," Terrell said.

But Frankie paid no attention to him. His young, spoiled face was closed and hard, and his eyes were already fixed on something beyond the room. He moved to the door and reached for the knob.

"Wait a minute," Terrell said wearily. He didn't understand his change of heart, but he knew he couldn't turn this mad dog loose on the city. "Don't be a sucker, Frankie. You start after Cellars or Rammersky and you'll get your head blown off."

"Sure," Frankie said. "They're tough guys."

"I've been steaming you up for personal reasons."

Frankie turned and looked at him then, his hand still on the door knob. "What kind of personal reasons?"

"Cellars picked up Connie Blacker. She came to my apartment last night and that's where he found her this morning. I wanted him to start worrying so hard about his own skin that he'd forget her. I thought you were the boy to worry him."

"You want the girl, eh?"

"That's right."

"You're brainy. Using me to save her hide."

"It's no good, Frankie."

"Why not? I'll worry him plenty. And if I get my head blown off, what difference does it make? You'll have your girl. I'm a nothing to you. A ginny bastard, wasn't it? The kind of slug who'd raise a kid to run numbers or work in a burlesque joint." Frankie was smiling but he sounded very much like a child trying not to weep. "Wasn't that you talking a few seconds ago?"

"I shouldn't have," Terrell said.

"You don't know me. You don't know Eden. But we're tramps to you. Isn't that right?"

"For Christ's sake, stop being so emotional. Who am I to judge?"

"Stop being emotionall! That's pretty funny!" Frankie turned away from the door and sat on the edge of the bed. He stared steadily at Terrell for a few seconds. Then: "Are you a Catholic?"

Terrell sighed. "This is relevant, I'll bet."

"Well, are you?"

"I don't know."

"What do you mean, you don't know? You are or you aren't. You know. One way or the other."

"Was Jesus of Nazareth Christ Incarnate? Catholics answer yes," Terrell said. "I'm not sure."

"What the hell are you talking about?" Frankie said irritably, and moved to the door. His young face looked suddenly very tired and old. "I think I'm going to die tonight," he said.

"You're doing a good job of talking yourself into it."

"It's the way I feel." Frankie shrugged lightly. "That's why I'm talking like an oddball. It's important. You think she was a tramp, eh?"

"I think she loved you," Terrell said. "She wanted to have your baby. She was no tramp."

Frankie nodded slowly. "That's a logical way to look at it. It's funny that what you thought of her should matter to me. But you may be the last guy I'll ever talk to about her. So it makes a difference."

"You're selling yourself a deal," Terrell said. "You'll die all right. You'll be hit by a truck wandering around asking people about their religion."

"No, it won't be that way," Frankie said. His hand turned the knob slowly and the door opened an inch or so. "You bought yourself an address," he said. "Bancroft's nursing home, on Madden Boulevard near the city line. Take it down."

"What's that?"

"It's where Ike sent the little blonde," Frankie said. "You should know how close you came to not getting it. So long

now." He opened the door and slipped quickly into the corridor.

Terrell listened to his heels clicking sharply toward the elevators, and then he picked up the phone and gave the operator Superintendent Duggan's home number.

The Superintendent's wife answered, and told him that Duggan had gone back to the office. She sounded upset. "He just dashed away, right in the middle of that TV program he likes so much. It's the one where—"

Terrell broke the connection and told the operator he wanted the police board. It took him almost five minutes to get through to Duggan. Finally Duggan's voice cracked in his ear. "Yes? Who is this?"

"Sam Terrell. Listen, I've got an address I want you to take down."

"Sam, you must live under a rock. Don't you know the whole goddamn city is upside down? We picked up a hoodlum named Rammersky who tells us he strangled Eden Myles. Caldwell's clear."

"The Bancroft nursing home," Terrell said, raising his voice over Duggan's. "There's a girl being held there. Connie Blacker."

"Wait a minute," Duggan said. "We already got that tip. The Bancroft nursing home. Hang on."

"What are you talking about?" Terrell yelled, but Duggan was off the line.

He returned a full minute later, and said, "I just checked with Radio. A couple of cars are on their way to pick her up."

"Where did you get the tip?"

"Mike Karsh called about ten minutes ago. Told us the girl was being held against her will, that she was an important witness against Ike Cellars."

"When will you know if she's all right?"

"When the cars report to Radio. Sam, I'm busy as hell."

"I'll call you back," Terrell said, and put the phone slowly back in place. He sat on the bed and lit a cigarette. Mike Karsh . . . He shook his head, completely bewildered.

The time passed slowly. He paced the room, counted Frankie's suits, read the labels on bottles of patent medicines, and then stared at the cover of a magazine that was lying

beside the bed. The illustration was of a kitten peeking around a bowl of geraniums. He studied it for a full minute, irrelevantly aware that this particular conjunction of subjects would probably be distasteful to him the rest of his life.

Five minutes passed. He called Duggan again, and was another couple of minutes getting through to him. Then he said, "Have you got the girl?" His voice was high, and he could feel the uneven lurch of his heart.

"Yes. They've taken her over to St. Anne de Beaupré's and made three arrests at the Bancroft home. It's a phony joint."

Terrell's hand tightened on the phone. "What's the matter with her?"

"Christ, I don't know," Duggan said impatiently. "She's in bad shape. That's all they told me."

THERE were two police cars parked in the gravelled driveway before the accident ward of St. Anne de Beaupré's hospital. The red emergency light flashed above the wide doorway, and farther down the lane a white ambulance was angled against the receiving ramp.

The patrolmen from the squads were chatting with attendants, while a nurse filled out their forms at the registration desk. As always, the atmosphere was one of casual tension; this was an arena of bright lights and rubber-tiled floors and antiseptic smells, a theatre where the highest tragedies were acted out before nurses, interns and cops—a tough, unimpressive audience that could watch the drama efficiently and still find time to worry about time-off and coffee-breaks.

Terrell nodded to the patrolmen and said to the nurse, "Connie Blacker. How is she?"

"Admitted," the nurse said. She looked up at him and smiled quickly. "Hello, Sam. You're a stranger. She's under oxygen, I think. She was having some kind of respiratory trouble. What's the matter? You look pretty rocky yourself."

"Nothing," Terrell said. "Where is she?"

"Just down the hall. In Emergency."

"Thanks," Terrell said, and turned into the wide white corridor. He knew his way around every hospital in the city; he had sipped coffee in this one, and kidded with nurses while waiting for an accident victim to die, and when it was over he had called the desk with only a momentary and impersonal regret that someone's life had come to an end.

Now it was all different. A tall, balding doctor came out of the emergency ward, and Terrell caught his arm. "The girl they just brought in," he said. "How is she?"

"Not too good. You're a friend of hers?"

"That's right, I'm a friend of hers."

The doctor removed his glasses and polished them on his clean white smock. He looked much younger with the glasses off; his eyes were mild and clear and intelligent. "She was injected with considerably too much morphine," he said. "That was sometime this morning, I gather. Then she spent the day in a tank—the treatment for violent, you know. Wet sheets from head to foot. She's completely disoriented now. Out of sheer fright, I'd say. And the morphine has affected her respiratory center."

"Will she be all right?"

"I don't know. I'd say yes, with some qualifications. We're giving her oxygen, and an antidote for the morphine. She's had the raw material for a lifetime of nightmares packed into a very short period of time—that will give her trouble. She'll need help."

"Yes, sure," Terrell said.

"Why don't the police clamp down on places like that nursing home?" the doctor said. "It's staffed by quacks who have no more business treating patients than a two-year-old child. A two-year-old would do less harm, in fact. It wouldn't be quite so callous and sadistic. Why don't they close them down?"

"I don't know," Terrell said.

"You see plenty of cops at the ball games," the doctor said. "Cheering the home team and stopping a fist fight every month or so. Why don't they put them to work where they'll do some good?"

"That day may be coming," Terrell said.

"I'll be surprised."

"I think you will," Terrell said. "When can I see her?"

"Not for a couple of hours anyway. You can leave a message if you like."

"Thanks, I'll give a phone number to the desk."

"She's had a rough time; be nice to her."

"Don't worry about that," Terrell said.

As Terrell entered the reception room the door opposite him opened and a *Call-Bulletin* photographer named Ricky Carboni came in and put his bulky camera on the floor.

"Sam boy," he said, "how goes it?" Ricky was an old-timer,

a big, balding man with dark eyes and a quick, warm smile. "Where's the girl?"

"You mean Connie Blacker?"

"Yeah, how is she? Ready to be immortalized?"

"She's in no shape for pictures, Ricky. Not for a couple of hours."

"I'll have to wait then, and think about my overtime adding up, tick, tick, tick, with every passing second. Karsh said to get a picture—regardless or irregardless."

"Karsh? What the hell is going on, Ricky?"

"Don't ask me. Or ask away if you like, but don't wait for a sensible answer. Karsh just tore the Night Extra into tiny scraps. Everything's out except the want ads. And the whole damn daytime staff is back putting a new edition together. I thought you were working when I saw you. Everybody's in. Williams, Tuckerman, all the photographers. Aren't you glad you're in this racket? Think of all the little people sleeping their lives away while we get the chance to run around in the dark. Well, I'm going to find the poker game. Take it easy."

"Sure," Terrell said. He went outside and one of the patrolmen said, "We're riding in, Sam. Need a lift?"

"Thanks, I'm going back to the shop."

"It's on the way. You in a hurry? Smitty here likes to get a little daily practice with the siren."

"No, I'm not in a hurry." Terrell climbed into the squad car and lit a cigarette. This was very accurate, he realized; he was in no hurry to see Karsh. But he had to see him. One more time . . .

The lights were on in the city room, and the atmosphere was one of hectic tension; a cluster of men were busy at the city desk and copy wheel, and alongside them the picture editor was briefing two photographers who looked as if they had just been yanked from their beds.

Terrell stopped inside the doorway at the end of the room, and let his eyes drift over the various groups putting the edition together. Normally the Night Extra was put to bed by a staff of three. But now everyone was in; Williams handling the city desk, Tuckerman hunched massively beside the police

speaker, and all of the top writers and reporters from the day-time shifts.

Karsh stood directly behind Williams, one foot propped up on a chair, talking urgently and imperatively to Ollie Wheeler. Occasionally he punctuated his points by pounding his knee, and every now and then he turned away to take a quick look at the clock above his head. He was perfectly groomed, elegantly turned out in a dark blue suit with a flower in the lapel. His face and eyes were bright with a tense, good-humored excitement, and it was obvious to Terrell that the whole staff was reacting to the challenge of his personality. He was running every phase of the show; even a stranger would have picked him out instantly as the mainspring of all this seemingly disorganized activity.

Terrell dropped his coat over a chair and walked toward Karsh and Wheeler. He could see the city behind them as a dark mass visible through the floor-to-ceiling glass windows. A few pinpoints of light gleamed from tall buildings, but most of the city slept quietly in shadowed silence.

He stopped beside Karsh, and Wheeler, who saw him first, said, "Here's Sam now. Where've you been, Sam?"

Karsh turned to him, a quick, easy smile lighting his face. "You're just in time. I want you on the main story—every detail in chronological order. Don't waste time on the Parking Authority—just mention it as if the readers knew all. They will when they read Ollie's piece. He's doing a special story on that mess."

"I'll get started, Mike," Ollie said.

"Yes, get with it." Karsh was still looking at Terrell, but his manner was business-like and impersonal. "Bridewell issued a statement half an hour ago—owned up to all his crimes, including not curbing his dog several years back. The mayor can't last much longer than it takes city council to get in session. They're licked, Sam, really smashed."

"And I'm supposed to write the big, hot story," Terrell said. He lit a cigarette and flipped the match aside. "The works, eh? All stops out?"

"Certainly. Chicanery in high places will sell more newspapers than faithful dogs and kindly old schoolteachers." Karsh spoke with his characteristic incisiveness, and nothing

in his manner indicated that this was more than a routinely important story. "Get started now," he said. "We've got about half an hour before the edition goes in."

"And how do I handle you?" Terrell asked him coldly. "How do we tint and shade the image of Mike Karsh? Are you portrayed with an arm around Ike Cellars' shoulder, and a hand reaching for the public trough?"

Karsh winced slightly. "No metaphors, please. Never oversell a good story. Play my part for what it's worth. No cover-ups—but don't get off on a tangent. Stick to the straight line. Eden Myles was murdered by a hoodlum named Rammersky." Karsh's voice rose and fell with the monotonous insistence of a metronome. "Rammersky was hired by Ike Cellars. Caldwell was framed. Here's how and why. Bang that home and forget about subtlety and a graceful prose style."

Tuckerman looked up then and covered his phone with a huge palm. "Mike," he said. There was an unmistakable significance in his tone and as Karsh turned to him, a silence settled around the immediate area of the city desk.

"What's up?"

"Ike Cellars," Tuckerman said. "For you."

Karsh smiled complacently, and began to screw a cigarette into his holder. He glanced at the clock above him, and said, "I expected to hear from him before this." He touched Terrell's arm. "Now look: you get on an extension and take down our talk. This may be good." He waved to the switchboard operator sitting behind the police speaker. "Nell, put Tuckerman's call through to me here and hook in one of these front desks. All right, Sam. Ready?"

Terrell said, "Yes, let it fly." He sat down and put on earphones. His reaction was compulsive; he had been trained by Karsh and he responded almost instinctively to the excitement in Karsh's voice.

Karsh picked up a phone and leaned against the city desk. "What's up, Ike?" he said. His voice was almost respectful, but an ironical little smile twisted his lips. Standing there he winked down at Terrell, and he seemed completely strong and confident, framed against the night, his bold, handsome head outlined against the shining glass windows. "Something wrong?"

"I hope you're not being cute." Terrell heard the suppressed anger in Cellars' voice and the harsh sound of his breathing. "Photographers from your paper are hanging around my house. They say you sent 'em."

"That's right," Karsh said. "You're going to look nice on page one."

"I pay you to keep me out of the paper. You cross me, and you're through."

"What do you want me to keep out? That you paid a killer to strangle Eden Myles? That you framed Richard Caldwell to keep the city in your own pocket?"

Cellars said softly, "I'll settle with you, don't worry."

Karsh began to laugh. "You're heading for the front page of our next edition. Murderer, perjurer, pickpocket, pimp—have I forgotten anything?"

"Just your good sense, Mike." And then Cellars broke the connection.

"Okay, okay, let's get going," Karsh said, putting the phone down and slapping his hands together like a ringmaster.

The tempo picked up again and after another look at the clock, Karsh came over and read Terrell's notes. "Put that conversation in a box for page one. Now get started on the main story."

Terrell couldn't make him out. He stared up at him for a few seconds, and then said, "You'll look bad in my version, Mike."

"So I look bad," Karsh said. "It's part of the story. I've cleared my end of it with the publisher. No cover-ups. The truth. And he's agreed to handle it my way. I want the whole story—I told you that once. And we've got it."

"Okay," Terrell said sharply. He lit a cigarette and rolled a sheet of paper into his machine. Dramatics, he thought as he rubbed his hands together in a nervous, ritualistic gesture. Deadline, the big story, and Terrell telling all. Karsh was steel that could bend in any direction. And snap back as good as new when the pressure was off. Quite a trick. But not my hero, Terrell thought. Not the man I thought he was . . .

He worked slowly at first, getting his lead down right. After that he needed exact names, dates and addresses for the body of the story. He had clips on Eden Myles and Cellars

and Caldwell sent up from the morgue, and a bit later called the detective division in the Hall for background on Rammersky's arrest, and a direct quote from his confession. A detective he knew well filled him in and said, "A big night, eh, Sam? We got another dead one, you know. Frankie Chance."

Terrell took the cigarette from his mouth. "What happened?" An illogical sadness welled in him. Frankie Chance had gone out to die for his girl. Worried about his soul. Was Jesus of Nazareth Christ Incarnate? Frankie didn't have a clue.

"It happened out near Cellars' home," the detective said. "One of Ike's bodyguards got him. There's more to it, but I can't give it to you now. Maybe in a half hour or so, eh?"

"Sure," Terrell said. He told Karsh about Frankie Chance, but Karsh said, "Never mind him. We'll run something about it on page six. Don't clutter up your pieces with the bit players."

"Okay. Here's the lead then."

Karsh scanned it quickly, a little grin touching his lips. "This is okay. Fine." He gave the first page to the slot man at the copy desk. "Play the election angle," he said, "in the headline and the subheads. Caldwell was framed. He's in the clear. The how and why later."

Terrell went on working, and Karsh took the pages as they came from the typewriter and handed them on to Williams, who proofed them and funnelled them to the copy wheel. Dozens of other stories were coming up to the desk now—biographical sketches, statements from Sarnac, and other top men in Caldwell's party, a complete recap of the first story, with an artist's sketch of Rammersky's probable route away from the murder scene. All of this copy was being cut to fit the available space, then proofed and capped with heads, and finally shot upstairs to the pressroom to be set in type.

And the minutes ticked away.

Terrell finished his last paragraph and took the paper from his machine. He wasn't satisfied with it, but there was no time for tinkering now; he could smooth it up for the next edition. "This does it," he said. A copy boy took the page up to the desk where Williams was standing waiting for it. Terrell looked around for Karsh but didn't see him. He lit another cigarette, and went up to the city desk.

Tuckerman said, "A call came in for you from St. Anne's. A doctor there says to tell you that you can come and see the girl. She's asked for you." Tuckerman grinned amiably. "Connie Blacker, a long-legged blonde. A real dish. You're lucky."

"Yeah, sure," Terrell said. He was staring about the crowded, noisy room. "Where's Karsh?"

Tuckerman twisted his big body around in his chair. He glanced at Ollie Wheeler, who was finishing his story, and then over at the picture desk. There was a small frown on his long, placid face. "Might have gone up to the pressroom," he said. He caught Williams' eye. "Mike say anything to you about leaving?"

"Hell no." Williams stood up and looked around him. "He wouldn't go out. Not alone. Not tonight."

A copy boy said tentatively, "I saw Mr. Karsh at the elevators a few minutes ago. Maybe a little longer."

They all turned to the boy and Tuckerman said, "Was he dressed for the street?"

"Yes, he had his coat and hat. I met him when I was coming up with coffee."

Tuckerman swore softly. "He's crazy." He was reaching for the phone when it began to ring. He picked it up, listened for a few seconds, and then let out his breath slowly. "Sure, Mike." Tuckerman turned and handed the phone to Terrell. "Karsh. He wants to talk to you."

Terrell took the receiver and said, "Where the devil are you?"

"Just across the street. Lindy's. That all-night dope den that sells us our coffee and reefers. It's the first time I've been in here. God! A foul smell of sugared doughnuts, and this waitress—I swear, Sam, she can read a whole page of a comic book in under five minutes. Why have we let her languish here? Why haven't we hired her?"

"Mike, call a cab and go home," Terrell said. "Or come back here and we'll have a few drinks. Everybody's in the mood." Terrell glanced around the desk. "Tuck is building up a thirst and even Williams looks ready to tie one on. How about it?"

"It sounds fine," Karsh said. "A cleanly shining bottle of

booze and a night of harmless lies with the boys. But not tonight, Sam. I've got a date."

"Where? With who?"

"I don't know. It's a face behind a windshield. That's all I saw. I'll know more about him later."

"You damn fool," Terrell said. He covered the receiver and spoke quickly and softly to Tuckerman. "Karsh is in Lindy's. Get a squad over there. I'll try to keep him on the line." Tuckerman grabbed a phone and Williams stood and stared at the clock above his head. They were still four minutes from deadline.

"Mike?" Terrell said. "You still there?"

"Sure." Karsh's voice had changed; he sounded very tired and very sad. "I wouldn't go without saying good-bye, son. You should know that."

"Don't go outside. Sit in that booth. You hear?"

"Sam, I played it tough tonight. It wasn't the way I felt. But there was nothing else to do. Trying to re-establish yourself in someone's—well, it's no go. But Sam—"

"You listen to me," Terrell said sharply. "Don't seduce yourself with visions of a grandstand gesture. Stay put. You hear me?"

"Sure, you're yelling like a fishwife," Karsh said. "But you listen to me. I'm sorry I let things change between us. I'm sorry I let that happen. I'm sorry about everything. I should have said this simply and—quietly to your face. But there wasn't time."

"There's time now," Terrell said. He could hear Tuckerman talking to a sergeant in the Hall. "Time for anything you want to say. Let's have that drink and talk things over."

"We always think there's time," Karsh said. Suddenly his voice was sharp and hard again, and running through it was the familiar thread of good-humored mockery. "Take it easy, kid. You've got the world ahead of you. And you're a Mike Karsh product, genuine and unadulterated. Remember what I taught you about the newspaper business, will you?" Karsh's voice trembled slightly, and then he recovered himself and said quickly, "Will you do that? Remember what I taught you on the job? And forget everything else? Everything I did?"

"Of course, Mike. Of course. But sit still. We're coming—"

Terrell stared at the phone in his hand. The connection was broken.

"A squad is on the way," Tuckerman said.

"Sam, come here!" Ollie Wheeler called. He was at the big, floor-to-ceiling window staring down at the street. The rain had streaked the thick glass with long silver lines. Terrell went to Wheeler's side, jarred by the urgency in his voice. Tuckerman and Williams came up behind him, and Wheeler said, "Tickets, please," in a bitter lifeless voice.

The street below them was dark except for a patch of light that fell on the shining pavement from the all-night restaurant.

Terrell saw Karsh standing in that square of brilliance, his figure square and blocky, his face shadowed by the brim of his homburg. Even from the distance that separated them, Terrell could see the cigarette holder in Karsh's mouth, and the gleam of the white silk muffler at his throat.

A car swung into the street a half block away and came toward Karsh with its lights turned off; it rolled silently through the darkness, angling toward him with the fluidity of a shadow. Karsh turned to meet it, moving purposefully, his arms swinging with an easy rhythm and his cigarette holder cocked at a jaunty angle.

It was a pantomime they witnessed, a dumb show; the sound-proofed walls of the *Call-Bulletin* sealed them into a cocoon of silence.

The car picked up speed suddenly and shot past Karsh. When it was gone, swaying on its springs at the next intersection, Karsh lay in the gutter looking small and unreal, like a broken toy in a child's make-believe of life and death. The silence made the tableau infinitely more terrible.

For an instant Terrell didn't realize what had happened; he thought Karsh had thrown himself out of the car's path. It wasn't until he saw the fragments of glass gleaming in the sidewalk that he knew Karsh was dead; the bullets that killed him had also smashed the window in the restaurant.

Wheeler made a harsh, whimpering noise in his throat and struck the window before him with the flat of his hand. "Garbage collections will be improved. Taxes will be lowered

a tenth of a mill. That's reform, that's progress." His voice was shaking.

"Cellars is through," someone said. "And Ticknor is all finished." For some reason the comment struck Terrell as irrelevant.

He turned and sat down wearily at a desk. Karsh didn't have to . . . This was the thought running through his mind. Except to prove—to prove what? That he was Mike Karsh. That he could make the gesture. No trip to South America with a tidy collection of blue-chip stocks. No screams of innocence. He had handled the story superbly—at last. The Night Extra was a writ of habeas corpus for Caldwell, an epitaph for Mike Karsh. He was the man I wanted him to be, Terrell thought. Finally. By a devious, preposterous route he had gone to glory.

Tuckerman brushed his shoulder with a fist as he walked back to the city desk, and Ollie Wheeler said, "I'd like to get drunk tonight. Anyone interested?"

"Sure," Williams muttered. "Why not?"

The tears stung Terrell's eyes. He had never felt this way in his life before—lost and hurt and alone. Later he would go out to the hospital, and that would be all right. The doctor had said to be good to her, and he wanted to do that very much. He wouldn't feel alone then. But now he hurt all over.

Above him the illuminated second hand made its last circuit before deadline and the loud, warning bell rang shrilly. Everyone looked up at the clock. The forms were locked up, the presses were ready to start rolling.

Terrell folded his arms over the typewriter on the desk and put his head down wearily. When the bell stopped ringing, its echoes lingered in the long room for a few seconds, and then trembled slowly away into the silence.

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A scream of terror

shattered the quiet
of the big city's swank
residential section.

When the police arrived at
Richard Caldwell's house,
they found him drunk and
dazed, staring at the beautiful
girl who lay dead at his feet.

It looked like an out-and-out
murder case—but was it?
Caldwell was the reform
candidate for mayor, and he
had sworn to put the city
bosses in jail.

Sam Terrell, reporter, thought
it was a frame-up and set
out to get the truth.

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