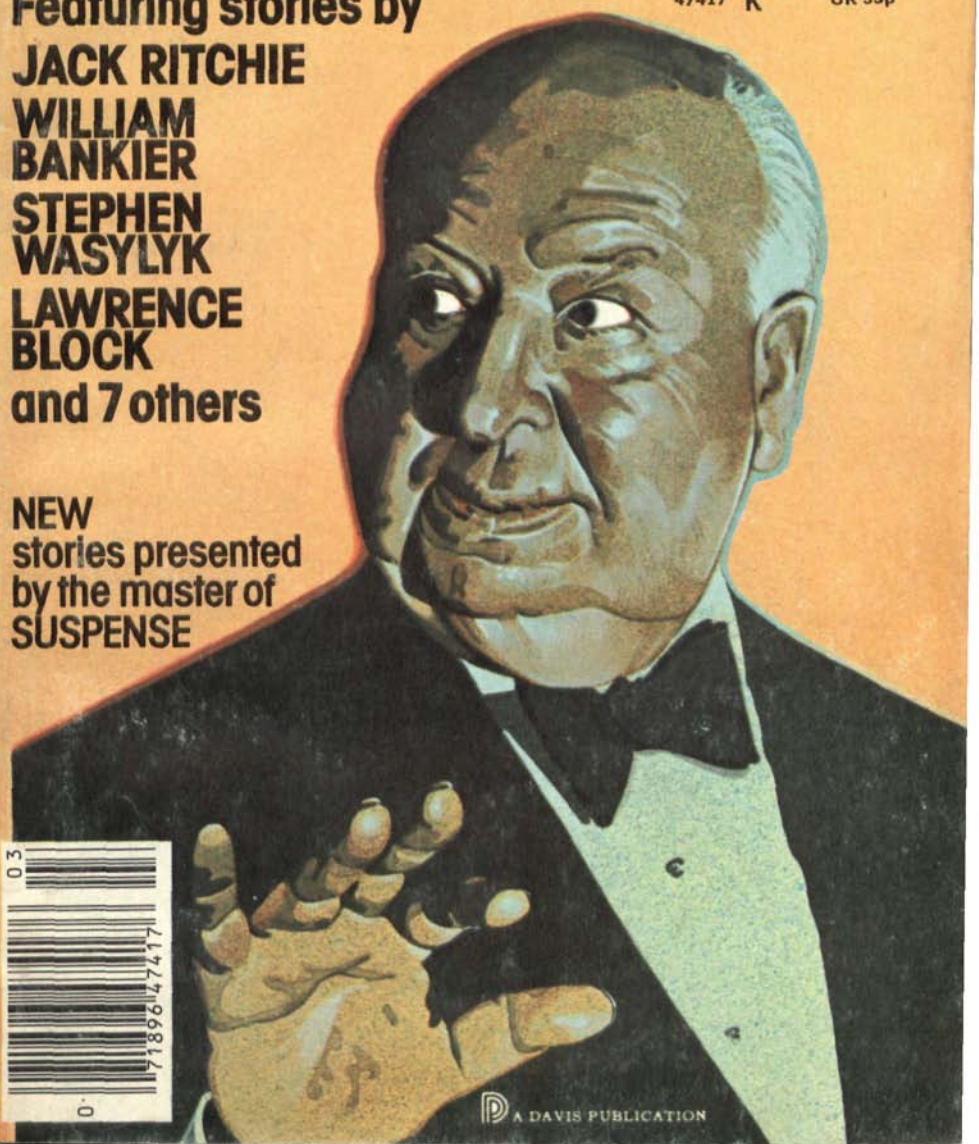
ALFRED

HITCHCOCK'S MYSTERY MAGAZINE

MARCH 1978 75¢
47417 K UK 55p

Featuring stories by
JACK RITCHIE
WILLIAM BANKIER
STEPHEN WASYLYK
LAWRENCE BLOCK
and 7 others

NEW stories presented by the master of SUSPENSE



A DAVIS PUBLICATION

VOLUME 23, NO. 3 MARCH 1978

ALFRED HITCHCOCK'S MYSTERY MAGAZINE

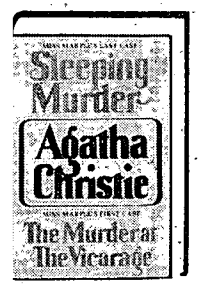
NEXT ISSUE ON SALE MAR. 16

NOVELETTE

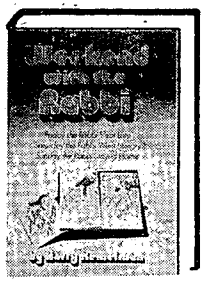
SHORT STORIES

ALFRED HITCHCOCK'S MYSTERY MAGAZINE Vol. 23, No. 3, Mar., 1978. Published monthly by Davis Publications, Inc., at 75 cents a copy. Annual subscription $9.00 in the United States and in U.S. possessions. In Canada and all other countries $10.10. Allow 6 to 8 weeks for change of address. Editorial and Executive Offices, 229 Park Avenue South, New York, N.Y. 10003. Subscription orders and mail regarding subscriptions should be sent to P.O. Box 2640, Greenwich, Ct. 06835. Second-class postage paid at New York, N.Y., and additional mailing offices.

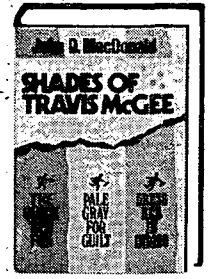
Get as many as 20
with your membership when you choose



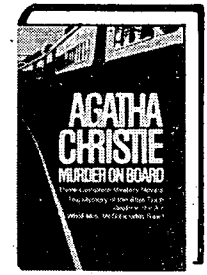
2634. **SLEEPING MURDER** and **THE MURDER AT THE VICARAGE** by Agatha Christie. Two ingenious and imaginative Miss Marple novels. Her first and her last.
Comb. price $15.90



1222. **WEEKEND WITH THE RABBI** by Harry Kemelman. Friday the Rabbi Slept Late; Saturday the Rabbi Went Hungry; Sunday the Rabbi Stayed Home.
Comb. price $13.85

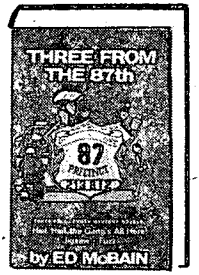


0034. **SHADES OF TRAVIS McGEE** by John D. MacDonald. The Quick Red Fox; Pale Gray for Guilt; Dress Her in Indigo.
Comb. price $16.95

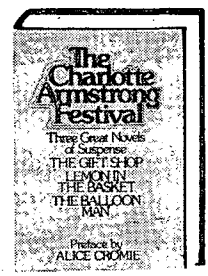


2378. **MURDER ON BOARD** by Agatha Christie. The Mystery of the Blue Train; Death in the Air; What Mrs. McGillicuddy Saw!
Pub. price $7.95

109. **TRIPLE ZECK** by Rex Stout. A Nero Wolfe Omnibus. And Be a Villain; The Second Confession; In the Best Families. Pub. price $8.95



3772. **THREE FROM THE 87th** by Ed McBain. Hail, Hail, the Gang's All Here!; Jigsaw; Fuzz.
Comb. price $15.85



4374. **THE CHARLOTTE ARMSTRONG FESTIVAL.** The Gift Shop; Lemon in the Basket; The Balloon Man. Pub. price $9.95

4903. **ARCHER AT LARGE** by Ross MacDonald. 3 Lew Archer suspense novels. The Galton Case; The Chill; Black Money.
Pub. price $7.95

/hen you join The Mystery Guild, the choice is **ours.** First **you** decide which all-time classics ou want—there's no pre-selected "package" ou must take. And you keep on choosing — electing only the whodunits and new suspense estsellers you want from authors like Christie, emelman, Ross MacDonald, Hammett, Macnes — generally for as little as $2.49.

How the Club Plan works

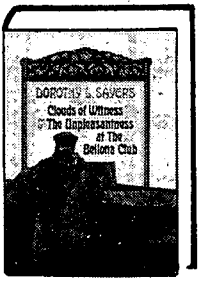
/hen accepted as a member, you first get the ve books you've chosen for only 99¢ plus shiping and handling. If not delighted, you may return them within 10 days, cancel your membership and owe nothing.

Then, about every four weeks (14 times a year), you receive the Club's free Announcement describing the 2 Featured Selections and Alternates. Most selections have a low club price of $2.49 or less, plus shipping and handling. Other extra-value selections are slightly higher but always much less than Publishers' Editions.

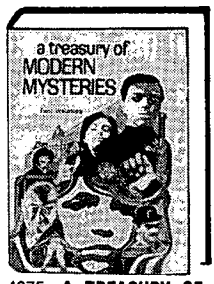
To receive the 2 Featured Selections, do nothing. They will be shipped automatically. If you desire Alternate Selections or no book at

mystery classics for 99¢

any 5 Giant Volumes (Worth up to $87.50 in publishers' editions!)



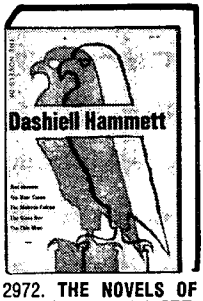
0612. **CLOUDS OF WITNESS** and **THE UNPLEASANTNESS AT THE BELLONA CLUB** by Dorothy L. Sayers. Two outstanding Lord Peter Wimsey mystery novels.
Comb. price $17.90



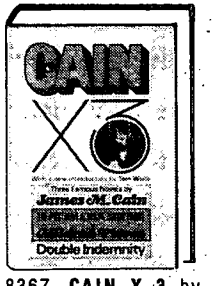
4275. **A TREASURY OF MODERN MYSTERIES.** Over 1,000 pages of recent chillers by MacDonald, Christie, Allingham, Simenon and 15 others. (2 Vols.)
Pub. price $8.95

0133. **MASTERPIECES OF MURDER** by Agatha Christie. The Murder of Roger Ackroyd; And Then There Were None; Witness for the Prosecution; Death on the Nile. Pub. price $9.95

9506. **THE FIVE RED HERRINGS** and **MURDER MUST ADVERTISE** by Dorothy L. Sayers. Lord Peter Wimsey reappears in two of his most famous and challenging cases.
Comb. price $20.90



2972. **THE NOVELS OF DASHIELL HAMMETT.** Red Harvest; The Dain Curse; The Maltese Falcon; The Glass Key; The Thin Man.
Pub. price $10.00



8367. **CAIN X 3** by James M. Cain. The Postman Always Rings Twice; Mildred Pierce; Double Indemnity.
Pub. price $8.95

Note: All prices quoted are for publishers' editions. First number listed is the order number.

all, just state your choice on the form supplied and return it so that we may receive it by the date specified. This date gives you at least 10 days to decide. If for any reason you have less than 10 days and receive any unwanted Selection, you can return it at Club expense.

You need take only four books in the coming year to complete your commitment and may resign any time thereafter.

The Mystery Guild offers its own complete hardbound selections, sometimes altered in size to fit special presses and save members even more.

THE MYSTERY GUILD

Dept. PR325, Garden City, N.Y. 11530

I agree—there's never been a better time to join The Mystery Guild. Please accept me as a member and send me the 5 books numbered in the boxes. Bill me just 99¢ plus shipping and handling. I need take only four books, at regular low club prices, in the coming year to complete my commitment and I may resign any time thereafter. I agree to the Club plan as described in this advertisement. NO-RISK GUARANTEE: If not delighted, return everything in 10 days and owe nothing.

Mr.
Mrs. _____
Miss (Please print)

Address _____ Apt. #____

City & State _____ Zip _____

Members accepted in U.S.A. and Canada only. Canadian members will be serviced from Toronto. Offer slightly different in Canada.

07-MG41

March 1978

Dear Reader:

Welcome to an unusually exciting month in the mystery field. From March 14 through March 17, celebrated writers, entertainers, and political figures from all over the world are meeting in New York City for the Second International Congress of Crime Writers.

With the sponsorship of Eric Ambler, Isaac Asimov, George Harmon Coxe, Mignon G. Eberhart, Stanley Ellin, Richard Lockridge, John D. MacDonald, Ross Macdonald, Hugh Pentecost, Ellery Queen, Georges Simenon, and Phyllis A. Whitney, this major-media event will be attended by some of these giants in the field, and many many others.

There will be visits to Edgar Allan Poe's cottage in the Bronx, to the medical examiner's office, to the N.Y.P.D. crime laboratory, and a high-crime-precinct station. There will be talks and panels by experts, movie screenings, parties, and feasts. In other words, there will be a hot time in that old town this month.

Good reading.

Alfred Hitchcock

Joel Davis, President & Publisher
Eleanor Sullivan, Editor

Sally Smith	Associate Editor
Victor C. Stabile	Vice President & Treasurer
Leonard F. Pinto	Vice President & General Manager
Constance DiRienzo	Exec. Sec., Rts. & Perm. Mgr.
Barbara Bazyn	Editorial Assistant
Susan Calderella	Editorial Assistant
Jim Cappello	Advertising Manager
Carl Bartee	Production Director
Don Gabree	Newsstand Circulation Director
R. V. Enlow	Subscription Circulation Director
Eugene S. Slawson	Subscription Circulation Manager

Irving Bernstein, Art Director

Who cared about some used-up old has-been shooting himself? . . .

MOUSE

by ROBERT TWOHY

Sure, I'll tell you about that night. I remember it. Every second of it.

First, though, I'll tell you about Dixon.

That morning he'd come home just as I was leaving for work. He grinned his lippy grin, then gave a mock stagger, hand to forehead.

"Wow, Mouse, I'm beat! Some big night!. . . I'm taking the day off. I've got to rest up 'cause we got another date tonight. She's going to cook something at her place—then we'll stay in all night. . . drinks,

soft music. . . Mouse, that is a woman! That is really a woman!"

I just looked at him, standing there grinning, and turned and went out.

What a greasy, stupid, dirty-minded louse he was.

Why had I let him move in with me? Well, we were from the same town. I knew him in grammar school and admired him then. All the kids did. He was cocky and quick and strong and made fun of the teachers and did crazy reckless things. He called me Mouse then. So did the other kids, because he did.

In high school I went with another crowd, had nothing to do with him or the hotshots he ran with. I hated them. They all had dirty minds and foul mouths. When he saw me in the halls he'd grin and say things like, "How's it going, Mouse? Getting much lately?" He was a dropout in junior year. I don't remember seeing him around town after that.

O.K., about three months before that night we ran into each other in a coffee shop here in the city. High school was in the past—and I was having a problem. The fellow who'd been sharing my apartment had been transferred in his job, and had moved out, and I didn't know anyone I could ask to move in. I didn't want to handle $210 a month alone.

I had money in the bank because I didn't drink or smoke or buy fancy clothes, but I was saving my money. That's how my mother raised me: save your money, get a stake, and one day you'll have your own business. . . She was a wonderful person, my mother. She passed away when I was fourteen. My father was all wrapped up in his grocery business. He died two years ago. I don't miss him at all. But I've always missed my mother.

I liked my apartment. It was a nice place, small and old-fashioned, quiet. I wanted to stay on there. But I couldn't manage the $210 alone.

While Dixon and I had coffee and talked about the old grammar-school days it came out that he was looking for a new apartment. He seemed all right—he called me Herbert, not Mouse. He talked quiet and the crazy, vicious stuff seemed to be behind him. He was working in a freight office. His clothes were clean, he looked presentable. I told him about my problem and rent, said maybe we could try it together, see how it worked.

That was how it began.

It was all right for a while. He did some drinking and chased around, and now and then he missed work and borrowed a few dollars from me to carry him until payday, but he always paid me back. Once he brought a girl home with him overnight, but the next day Mrs. Loft, the landlady, told me that if there was any more of that, he'd have to go.

I told him. He said, "What are we, back in the dark ages?"

I said, "It's her place, and that's the way she wants it."

He scowled, but then shrugged and said, "All right, Mou— I mean Herbert. I'll not disturb the tender minds in this nunnery any more."

After that he went to his girls' places or took them to a motel. But things got pretty cool between us. I didn't like what he'd said about the apartment. Or that he'd almost called me Mouse.

But I had my room and he had his. I could lock my door, listen to the radio or read, and leave him the living room with the TV. I don't care much about television. Usually he was out at night anyway and would come home late, if at all. It was liveable, and I thought it could last another few months until my lease was up. Then, if I couldn't find another roommate, I'd move out.

Then I met Rosalie.

She was a new waitress in the lunchroom near the shoe store where I worked—small, dark-haired, with bright eyes, a soft voice, a smile.

I ate lunch there and watched her for two weeks before I dared ask for a date. I hadn't had a date in—had I ever had a date? Girls hadn't ever been part of my life. My mother had told me, "Don't get mixed up with girls. Girls can be dangerous for a young man with a future. Most girls think only of themselves." I had a future and I didn't want it ruined. Mother said, "One day you'll meet the right girl, and you'll know." I looked at Rosalie and thought I knew.

We went to a movie. After that it was usually movies, now and then a dinner out. I gave her things—I bought her a gold locket and a wristwatch, and when she told me her record player was broken I paid to have it fixed. And I bought her a dress that she liked in a store window. Twice I helped her with the rent. Once I gave her $150 because her mother owed a doctor's bill.

We would walk in the park and sometimes sit by the lake, look at

the ducks paddling around there, and I'd hold her hand.

One night when I walked her to her apartment building I kissed her goodnight. She smiled at me and her eyelids went up and down and she said in her soft voice, "Oh, how nice you are, Herbert! What a sweet kiss!" After that when I left her at her building, I always kissed her.

I saw her once or twice a week. She said that her mother, who lived with her, wasn't well and got nervous when she was left alone in the evening, and wasn't comfortable when there were visitors. So I never went up to Rosalie's apartment. I'd meet her places, or pick her up after work. They all got to know me in the lunchroom. They'd all smile when I came in to pick up Rosalie.

She seemed the kind of girl my mother'd dreamed of for me.

I just wanted her to be with me—it made me feel proud and happy. It was all I wanted of her for then. I thought when I got to be assistant manager at the shoe store, I'd be earning enough and I'd ask her to marry me. Her mother could live with us—I wouldn't mind—and the three of us would move to a place in the suburbs and be happy together.

Three weeks before the night I'm going to tell you about, I took her to a place across town for spaghetti. At the bar, drinking whisky, was Dixon.

He came over to our table. He looked at her in the way he looked at women, like they were something on a store counter put there just for him. She looked back with her bright eyes.

He said, "What you want is wine with your dinner," and told the waiter to bring a bottle of wine.

Rosalie sometimes had a glass of wine at dinner. That night she drank four or five—as he ordered another bottle—and she laughed a lot. I'd never heard her laugh like that—shrill. I'd never seen her eyes shine the way they shone when she looked at Dixon. Cheap, sleazy Dixon, with his sharpie's grin.

I walked her to her building. I didn't say much and neither did she. She had a funny faraway look in her eyes, and a little smile. I didn't kiss her that night.

In our apartment, Dixon was walking around in the front room. He said, "There's fire there, Herbert. That little fox is wanting

something."

"Fox? What do you mean, fox? And what do you mean, wanting something? Wanting what?"

"Sexual excitement."

I tried to hit him. I'm glad of that. I did try. I wound up on the floor, my lips split and throbbing, but I'm glad I tried to hit him.

He rubbed his fist and laughed down at me. "Mouse, don't waste my time. I fight with men."

I wanted to tell him, move out. Now. But there was the lease. I didn't want to be stuck with all that rent.

I got up. "She's a decent girl. She's not like the girls you're used to."

He shook his head, grinning. "You're unreal, Mouse, you know that? They ought to stuff you and put you in a museum . . . like a relic. I made a date with her."

"What?"

"Sure. While you were in the can. She wants a real man—not a mouse."

I stopped at the lunchroom next day. There wasn't a crowd, just a few people.

She said, "All right, I made a date. So? Did you think you owned me because you gave me a cheap locket and a little money?"

It wasn't cheap. It cost over eighty dollars.

"He's no good. All he wants is—what a man like him wants."

"That's not what *you* want, is it?" I'd never seen her smile at me like that. Before it had always been sweet and warm. Now it was like a sneer. "What *do* you want, Herbert? Do you want to just wear me on your arm, like a pretty bracelet?"

"Please don't go out with him."

"*Please!*" She laughed. "Is that what a man says when he asks a girl for something?"

She walked away from me, then stopped and looked back with that awful crooked sneering smile. "Goodbye, Herbert. I won't say it's been fun—but it's sure been different."

I didn't see her any more. I took my lunch at another lunchroom.

But Dixon was seeing her. And he'd tell me about it.

I tried to avoid him. I'd go in my bedroom and lock the door. He'd

come in from work and take a shower, singing in his stupid tuneless way. Then I'd hear him in the front room. Then my door would rattle.

"Mouse? I've got a date! With Rosalie. Do you want to hear what we did last night? I spent the night at her apartment—and what a night! I won't go into all the details—you wouldn't know what I was talking about anyway. And there ain't no momma living there, Mouse! Rosalie pulled that line on you and you believed it. Is that what you learned at that great high school we went to—to be the biggest sucker in the world?"

I'd just sit there. I wouldn't answer him.

"It's a nice apartment, Mouse. Maybe I'll move in there. You should learn about women, Mouse. What they want is a guy who knows what *they* want, and knows how to give it to them."

On September 27th I got home from work late because I wanted to be sure Dixon had left for the date he'd told me about that morning—a dinner date at Rosalie's.

He was gone. It was after seven o'clock. I got a Coke from the refrigerator and sat in the livingroom, drinking the Coke, looking at the wall and thinking of them together, having dinner right now probably, and later going into her bedroom to do the things they did.

Suddenly I heard a shot.

It came from upstairs. A short hard crack. I'd never heard a gun before, except in a TV show or a movie, but I knew this was a gun.

I sat frozen, the Coke can at my lips, and seconds, maybe half a minute, passed before I moved.

Then I put the can down and went to the door and opened it a crack and listened. There was only silence, dead silence.

Upstairs in front lived a law student that I never saw except on the weekend; he had a job in the day and went to classes every night. Next to him was a new tenant, a sick-looking grey-faced older man who had moved in a few weeks ago that I'd seen several times in the halls. That was all. The other apartment was vacant.

There was one vacancy downstairs too, between Mrs. Loft who lived in front, and me. It was Thursday and she was away doing the janitorial work she did in downtown offices three nights a week.

I looked across at the phone. I could go to it and get the police and say, "A gunshot at 320 Myrtle Street—" and wait in my room until

they came. But instead I went through the door, down the hall, and up the stairs.

I can't explain it. It wasn't like me. It must have been destiny that pulled me up the stairs.

I got on the dark landing and went down the hall to the middle door and turned the knob. The door opened.

The grey-faced man lay on the floor in the dimly lit room. He lay on his back, in a white shirt and old brown slacks. In his right hand was a gun. His eyes stared up. Blood leaked out of a hole in his temple.

After a little I stopped staring at him, and looked around. The first thing I saw was a sheet of paper on a little desk. A bottle of wine with an inch or so in it was beside it. I went over and read:

> You reach a point, you got no hope, everybody's let you down—$127 to my name, and rent's due, everything's due. Just a sick old boozer now. Everything gone. She's gone, kids are gone—who gives a damn?
>
> John J. Hooper.

My first instinct was to go down and call the police. There'd be some excitement, questioning—it might even get in the papers. But probably not. Who cared about some used-up old has-been shooting himself in a second-class neighborhood? And suddenly words that Dixon had sneered at me a week ago were ringing in my ears: "You're a grey mouse. That's why she picked me. You're gutless. All you'll ever do is squeak."

I closed my eyes, then opened them and I stared at the corpse. Then I looked at the note. And I knew what I was going to do.

I took the note and put it in my pocket. I knelt by the corpse, went in the hip pocket, and pulled out a wallet. I took the money out of it. There were five twenties, a ten, three fives, and a couple of ones. I put the money on the desk. With my handkerchief I wiped the wallet carefully and pushed it under the body.

With the handkerchief I picked up the wine bottle and threw it as hard as I could against the wall by the door. It broke and left a stain on the wall. It lay in pieces near the door.

I pulled open a drawer of the desk, then turned the chair in front of the desk over. I took the gun from the corpse's hand, wiped it all over,

and laid it down near the hand.

I picked up the money and went out of the room, pulling the door shut. I went back to my apartment and into Dixon's sloppy bedroom, to his closet. I wiped off each bill where I might have touched it and shoved them deep into one of the worn tan shoes that I'd never seen him wear and put the handkerchief back in my pocket.

Afterward I went out of the apartment and down the hall to the front door and left the building, letting the door fall shut behind me. It locked when it shut. Mrs. Loft was wary of thieves, the place being empty so often at night. The back door was always locked. You needed your key to get into the building.

I walked the streets, going over it, trying to see if I'd made any mistakes.

What I had done was just enough so that the police couldn't write it off as suicide. Not with the gun wiped clean of Hooper's fingerprints.

They'd figure that someone had come into his room, thinking he was out, to see what he could steal. Hooper had thrown the bottle at whoever it was and there had been a fight. Hooper had grabbed the gun from his drawer, and the killer must have taken it away from him and shot him. Then he'd gone through Hooper's wallet, taken the money, shoved the wallet under the body, wiped his fingerprints off the gun, and placed it by Hooper's hand.

The police would ask questions. They'd find out about the locked doors, front and back, and that the law student never returned home until late at night. They wouldn't suspect Mrs. Loft. A woman can kill, even a decent lady like Mrs. Loft, but why should she? For a few dollars? Anyway, she'd been away from the building since six o'clock on her janitorial rounds.

They'd focus on Dixon and me.

So what would they find out about us? That I was quiet, orderly, nonaggressive, and had plenty of money in the bank; that I never missed work, never got drunk, never broke out of my routine.

And they'd discover that Dixon was a high school dropout, a man who went to bars and card rooms, who was reckless and had done wild and vicious things, who never held a job long and was often broke and borrowing money.

A suicide that couldn't be a suicide; an empty wallet under the body;

and in Dixon's shoes, when they got to looking in our rooms, a wad of money.

Dixon would say that he'd left the apartment before seven o'clock, taken a cab to Rosalie's and spent the night with her. And she'd back that up. Sure. The girl he spent nights with, backing up his alibi. Some backing.

How about the time of death? Could he have any other witnesses for where he was at about 7:15, the time that Hooper had died? Could anyone else besides Rosalie have seen him around that time?

Possibly. He might have stopped at a bar. But the police couldn't pinpoint the time of Hooper's death to the minute. The body wouldn't be found until tomorrow, at the earliest. The doctors would be able to give only an approximate time. But I knew Dixon's routine on a day off. He'd lie in bed until afternoon—then laze around, drinking beer and watching serials and movies on TV. Rosalie didn't get off work until seven o'clock. So he'd pick her up at the lunchroom or go directly to her apartment. It wouldn't matter if anyone saw him after that. They'd figure that just before he left our building, he'd gone up to Hooper's room, not knowing Hooper was in, to see what he could steal—found him there, fought with him, killed him, and robbed his corpse.

Why would he have tried to make it look like suicide in such a stupid way? Wiping the gun clean of fingerprints, putting it by Hooper's hand instead of back in his hand? Why would he leave the broken bottle lying on the floor as a tip-off that there had been an intruder? Why put the empty wallet under the body instead of back in the pocket? Why make so many mistakes?

Because he was Dixon, a high school dropout. It was a stupid way to leave things because *he* was stupid. He couldn't plan, he couldn't think. He wasn't me.

I took out Hooper's wadded note. I thought, You've done something decisive, you're hard and decisive now, but will that last? Will tomorrow change things? How about when Dixon's arrested? Will you feel guilty? Will you go soft? Will you act like a mouse and give the police the note?

Slowly, walking along, I tore the note into strips, then into squares, letting them slip off my fingers and scatter in the breeze.

I was near a theater. That was where I would tell the police I had

spent the night. "I got home from work about seven o'clock, had a Coke, went out, walked around a little, saw a movie." There would be nothing unusual about that, I went to the movies pretty often.

It wasn't a good movie. Too much dirty language—movies are so dirty now, most of them. Everything seems so dirty. . .

I walked home. You're not supposed to walk late at night in the city, but I didn't feel nervous. Mrs. Loft's old car was in front of our building. She was back from work.

The law student was home. His light was on upstairs.

I unlocked the front door and went down the hall to my apartment.

Dixon wasn't home. No, he'd be lying in Rosalie's arms. He wouldn't be home all night.

I went to bed, and had fleeting dreams of Hooper, his head lying in blood on the floor, his empty eyes staring at the ceiling, a gun clean of fingerprints by his hand.

Next day when I left for work Dixon hadn't come home yet. He had probably gone straight to work from Rosalie's.

I got off work at five and came right home, thinking they would have discovered the body by now.

They had.

A police car was near the building. I went up the front steps and let myself in. Two big men came out of Mrs. Loft's apartment as I started down the hall. They must have seen me approaching from her window.

Mrs. Loft stood in her doorway. I smiled and nodded to her. She looked at me in a strange, frightened way.

The men wore suits, but I knew they were policemen. They had hard, hooded eyes. One of them said, "Herbert Phipps?" He held out a leather wallet and flipped it so that it opened and showed a badge.

He said, "We'd like to talk to you."

"What is it?"

"Shall we go to your apartment?"

I led the way to my place and closed the door after them. Right away I saw that things had been moved. Dixon's door was partly open and so were a few drawers. Pillows and magazines were a little out of order.

I said, "Have you been looking around in here?"

"Yes. Your landlady let us in. We found a bunch of money in the toe

of a shoe in that room."

"That's not my room. That's my roommate's."

"We know, the landlady told us. You didn't like this Dixon much, did you? We understand he stole your girl. Is that why you tried to frame him?"

"Frame him? What are you—" A word he'd used registered. "*Didn't* like him? What do you mean, *didn't* like him?"

"Dixon's dead."

I stared. "Dead?"

"Shot. In an apartment across town, in bed with your former girl friend, Rosalie Castian. She's dead too."

"*Dead*? Rosalie *dead?*" Things were spinning. I couldn't believe anything I was hearing.

"A guy got in and found them in bed. He shot both of them."

I guess my face looked crazy. They stood looking at me, their faces perfectly calm, their eyes showing nothing.

One of them said after a while, "You'd better sit down."

I went to the couch and let myself down on it. I said, "Are you thinking I'm the one that killed them?"

"No, not you. Another ex-boy friend of hers who had a key to her place. He used to live there with her. His name's Speller. You probably don't know him. He's been in jail the past three months. He had a gun. He went in and found them in bed and shot them. Then he stayed there and got drunk—then this morning he called us. He's in jail now."

Dead, I thought. Both dead. Rosalie and Dixon dead. I remembered Rosalie as she was for me before Dixon met her.

I thought, what is it? What is it about women? What is it?

I wanted to cry. But I didn't. "So you came here," I said.

"Yes. We found from his wallet where he worked, and they said he lived here."

"Why did you search the place? What were you looking for?"

"We came here to find if there was next of kin to notify, but when we got here we found that the landlady had just called the police. Because she'd found a dead man upstairs."

"A dead man? Here?"

"Right. And his wallet was lying under him, picked clean. You didn't know that, I suppose?"

"Of course I didn't know it! I've been at work."

"We found money. It might have been the dead man's. So we think you might have killed him."

"Me?"

"Yes, you. It was supposed to look like suicide. But it wasn't—there were no fingerprints on the gun. After checking everything, it seems to narrow down to you."

"But—" I was up now. My legs were trembling and my face felt stiff. "That's Dixon's room! He must have killed the man before he left for Rosalie's!"

"That wouldn't make sense."

"Why not? When was he killed?"

"Early this morning. About two o'clock."

"But the murder here was much earlier!"

"Was it? How do you know that? You tell *us*—when *was* the murder?"

I shouted, "*I* don't know! I'm just saying that I didn't murder anyone! If a murderer got in this apartment and put money in Dixon's shoe, it was Dixon!"

The other one said, "Actually, you're right. Not about Dixon—about the time of death. The guy upstairs died probably between six and eight o'clock last night."

"And Dixon was home yesterday! He took a day off—I saw him in the morning and he said he was going to do that. I got home about seven and he was gone. He had a date for dinner with Rosalie. I had a Coke, then went out to a movie. He had to have gone up and killed the man before he went out!"

"No," said one. "It just wouldn't make sense."

I stared at him. "Why not?"

The other one had a notebook open. "We traced his movements last night. He stopped at a liquor store a couple of blocks from here, where he's known. That was about 6:30. He asked for a fifth of good bourbon and tried to put it on the cuff. No luck. He scraped around in his pockets, got a few bucks, ended up buying a pint of cheap stuff."

"What does that prove?"

"He stopped at a bar about six blocks from here, tried to borrow money for cab fare from some guys he knows there. No luck. He called the lunchroom where your girl worked—your ex-girl—but she'd left for

home. We already talked to her boss and the other girls there and found that out: That's when we heard about you too. He walked out of the bar. There's no bus line on that street, and anyway we found only fourteen cents on him—so that's probably all he had, not enough for bus fare. So he walked. A guy on the girl's floor saw him knock on her door about 7:30 and said he looked tired and sweaty and angry. You with me, Phipps?"

"Yes," I said. "I'm with you."

"Two miles, Phipps," said the first one. "He walked two miles. That's the distance from here to the girl's place. And he arrived with a pint of cheap booze. Out of character, isn't it? From what we learn he was the type who wanted to act like a sport, plenty of dough—and he arrives for a hot date all beat out and smelly from walking, with a pint of cheap booze. It doesn't make any sense. Not if you have a wad of money you've just stashed in your apartment, two blocks from where you first found out you needed it."

I didn't say anything. One of them moved forward. "Let's go, Phipps." And he recited what they tell you about your rights.

They were herding me out the door. I said, "It wasn't me! It wasn't anyone! It was suicide—it really *was* suicide! I heard the shot, went up, and a note was on the desk. A suicide note!"

"There was no note on the desk." We were in the hall. Mrs. Loft still stood in her doorway and stared at me.

"There was! I took it. I tore it up, because I wanted to make it look like murder, like Dixon had done it. That's why I put the money in his shoe. But I didn't kill him. Why should I? I have over $2,000 in the bank! Why would I go up to his room to rob him? To frame Dixon?"

"No, that doesn't make much sense either. But we don't have to sort it all out now. So we'll just bring you on in and straighten things out later."

There wasn't a trial. Like I'd told them, there wasn't any reason I'd rob Hooper. In the end they believed me as to what had happened. But they had doctors ask me a lot of questions about what my childhood was like and what kind of thoughts I had. In the end they sent me here.

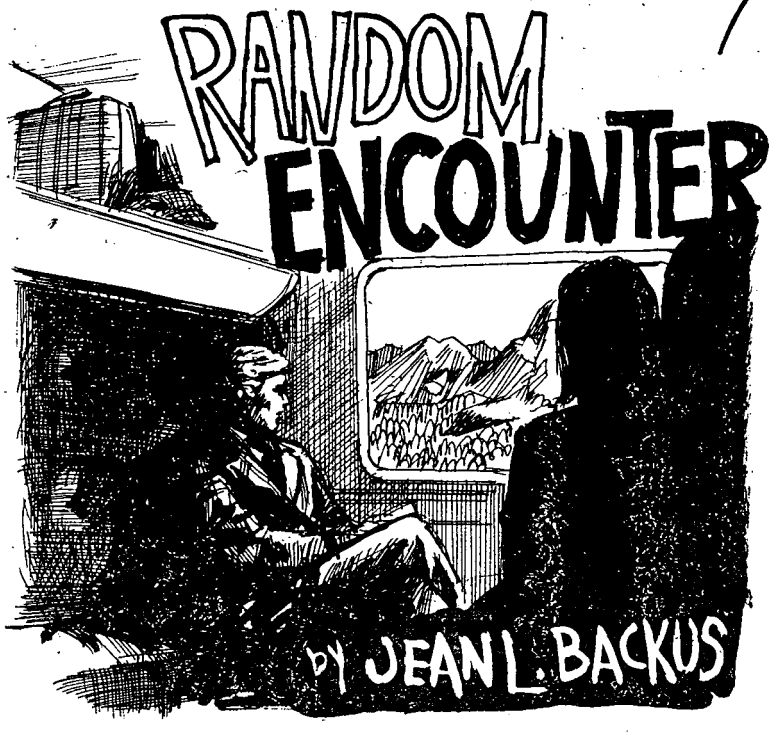
That was eight months ago. I don't belong here, Doctor, I'm not crazy. I just . . . it's just that everything seems so dirty and strange,

and you can't depend on the things you believed in. You can't depend on people. On women. You can't depend on women. They do things to you. They smile at you and say nice things, but they're laughing at you. You can't understand them. They betray you. They're like a different species.

My mother wasn't like that. But—how do you find women like my mother?

She was right. She was always right. I remember she told me once, "A cheap little tramp has been the ruination of many a fine young man." She was a wonderful person, my mother.

The man could have a thousand histories, he could be a murderer . . .



He was already seated in the first class compartment when I got on the train, disappointed not to precede whoever would be my companion on the journey. During many years as a woman traveling alone, I'd learned the advantage this gave me. And having that advantage was one of the small pleasures of my random life. Now I took the window seat facing forward, which I always reserved in advance, and spread out a map to discourage conversation unless I decided to initiate it.

The man opposite hardly glanced at me at all. Probably he'd gauged, as I had, the uncomfortable possibilities in hours of isolation with strangers, particularly of the opposite sex. At any rate, he was now intently watching the crowds on the platform outside.

I didn't ask myself why he fascinated me. I knew. I'd sat too many times on journeys like this one. Usually I thought nothing of the quick male speculation on my costume, today a teal-blue suede suit with matching boots. Nor did I resent the instant shift away when they did look me over. I was used to it.

But this man didn't look at me with or without speculation. While I could disregard such obvious indifference as a rule, today I wished perversely to be natural with my companion, to make him aware of me as a person. But he kept staring so assiduously through the window that I put my impulse on hold.

Behind my book, I watched him, studying what I could see and imagining what I couldn't. He was a bit younger than I, thirty or so, thin and hard with sad grey eyes and a strong nose over a tense wide mouth. His dark-blue suit was impeccably cut of expensive cloth, and above him, in the rack beside an impressive suitcase, was a forest-green Tyrolean hat with a jaunty black-feather in the band.

A professional man perhaps—business or law, or possibly medicine. No, he was too well turned out, his cufflinks and watch were too expensive. A rich playboy maybe. Except that his expression was not vacuous nor his body puffy from overindulgence. In fact, he was on the spare side, as if he'd been hammered from steel, as if he'd been tested by ice and snow and buffeting winds. Anyway, if he were one of the Beautiful People he would travel in his own plane or drive his own fast car.

Outside, the dispatcher blew his curved silver horn and the train left the Lucerne Bahnhof in that wonderful way of Swiss trains, smoothly hugging the rails, exactly on time. The conductor came by for our tickets before we'd left the city limits.

I leaned against the red plush seat and stared out at the lake and the high white mountains all around, thinking about the man opposite me, his background and his interests. Obviously he was disciplined and a gentleman. A soldier? En route to a new assignment? Going home on leave? Was home a cliff-hugging chalet up some mountainside like the ones I could see through the window, with the animals housed under-

neath the living quarters? I doubted it. Home for him was more likely a modern glass-and-steel apartment somewhere in Interlaken or beyond.

I laid my book aside and looked out at the trees and rocks, a waterfall toward which we climbed, a viaduct we glided over with a torrent far below, and a postcard village beside a winding two-lane highway. Unreal beauty and as moving as music. I gave myself to the landscape until I was near self-betrayal with tears or some other fool thing.

I looked at my companion.

Such sad eyes, what I could see of them. Now and then his wide mouth twitched as if he maintained alert tension against something unseen. But what shoulders he had, what strength in the arms and legs, what vigor. Perhaps he was one of the mountain corps, an Alpine guide willing to risk his life against nature for strangers in distress. Imagine having fallen into a crevasse, stuck halfway between light and dark, and looking up to see this man coming to the rescue. Just the sight of him would inspire confidence, his cleated boots banging against ice and rock as he made the descent at the end of a sturdy rope. Then his strong hands tying on a harness, his hands passing over, under, around your helpless body. The pull and tug as unseen others began to raise the burden, when with a moment's hesitation or misstep two bodies would plunge down into. . .

Painfully I changed position to dispel the fantasy, and he started to glance around, but turned back to the window.

"*Schön.*"

Now he faced me, his eyes startled, his mouth tightening momentarily in vexation. Or affront. Did he dislike people in general or only strange women like me?

"*Ja,*" he said, adding something in Schweizer Deutsch. He changed to heavy English when I shook my head, chagrined not to understand his dialect. "*Ja, ja,* iss *schön.* Iss boot-ee-ful."

Then he looked quickly out at the fir trees laden with snow and hung with icicles as they climbed the steep mountains to hidden crests. His rejection annoyed me. After all, I'd spoken first, and with an effort. He could have responded. Well, he had. But just barely.

Perhaps he was in mourning and on his way to a funeral. His parent? Wife? Child? He'd be a comfort in grief, taking over the duties, dealing with morticians, florists, a priest or minister. I could hear his deep

voice, decisive and unimpassioned. He would be correct at the church, seeing to those most affected by the death, kneeling, rising, singing. Did they sing at Swiss funerals? Was there an organ and soloist? What was his religion?

How would I know and why did I care? Religion had no part in my life. None. But I did know that this man would hide whatever bereavement he might be feeling until he was alone. I simply couldn't see him flinging his grief around, talking of it, weeping perhaps.

But why place him at a funeral when he was so full of controlled vigor? He belonged to life—a sportsman maybe, riding a polo pony, swinging a tennis racket, swimming, mountain climbing. And skiing. Leaning far forward, knees bent, as his runners hissed down the packed snow, to pull up with a splendid flourish and a spatter of bright ice fanning all around him. Nothing too ostentatious though. He needed no artificial aids to command attention. He got it without trying, simply by his presence.

I tried again. "Are you going to Interlaken? Is that your home?"

"Pardon, *bitte?*"

I shook my head, embarrassed, and he looked puzzled, almost interested in me as a person for a moment. But then he turned once more to that damned window, steaming over now with our mingled breaths and the heat from beneath the seats. He was a very remote gentleman, as reserved with a strange woman as he would be on a formal dance floor. Any woman he asked to dance would be supremely beautiful, not flawed either inwardly or outwardly. Tall and dignified as he—the daughter of the burgomeister perhaps. Perhaps he was engaged, on his way right now, this minute, to the altar. But why then did he look so sad? Didn't he want to marry the lovely black-haired woman with the white, white skin in the glamorous ballgown?

Hell, she was probably blonde and rosy and wore a dirndl—and he was being carried away from his true love as she lay sobbing in a hayfield outside her father's farm. She was poor, and his bride was rich, and that's why he looked sad.

"Army service?"

He glanced at me from far away. Back in that hateful hayfield no doubt, with the farmer's yellow-haired daughter. He was probably like an animal when he got a poor fool woman in his arms. Why did I bother with him?

"In the Army I haff been, *ja*. Amereecan? You?"

"Yes, I'm an American. I travel all the time, everywhere. I love traveling, it's so interesting. I have no fixed address, and not much money any more, but I get restless after a short time at any one place—"

"Ah, *ja, ja, ja.*"

He'd lost interest, turned his face away. So that settled that. Plainly he didn't want to talk. At least not to me. Maybe if I'd been richer, or normally alluring. . .

This unproductive encounter would end as all others did. My companion might nod as he left the compartment, or he might not, and I would follow him off the train and take a taxi to the Beau-Rivage where I'd stayed before. I'd be shown to a room with a balcony looking up toward Kleine Scheidegg and the Jungfrau. I'd bathe and dress for dinner . . . not veal again, not tonight. Switzerland was crawling with cows on every hillside pasture, and all I was ever served was veal. But tonight I would have a steak. Somehow. I'd celebrate . . . something.

The man opposite was writing with his forefinger on the steamy window. A name.

Without being obvious, I strained to see.

LISA

So the sadness in his eyes was from rejection. Lisa had turned him down. Or she was already married and wouldn't betray her husband. Perhaps she had been a childhood sweetheart and gotten tired of waiting for him to return from wherever he'd gone to make his fortune. Perhaps she'd married the butcher's son, a gross monster who knocked her around enough to hurt her but was careful not to destroy her beauty.

I wouldn't be careful either. If I could get at Lisa, I'd scar her face, make it so ugly this man wouldn't want her. No man would, ever.

But that was all wrong. Terrible misfortune would only bring out his steadfast loyalty and tenderness. No matter what it cost him, no matter what she looked like after I got through with her. Since he was obviously fastidious—nails trimmed, trousers creased, shoes polished—he would be offended by a scarred woman, but his pity would force him to hide his revulsion and keep him chained to her thereafter. Which would serve him right.

LISA

He sighed and jerked his hand across the name, erasing it with an untidy swipe that I wished would blot out my own reflection, distorted by the double glass window. When he caught my smile, he laughed vigorously, sadness fleeing his face, leaving it . . . what?

I looked away, shaken by what I'd seen in those eyes. They were not clear and merry. They were murky and knowing. He knew all there was to know about me, and I hated him for it. He was an evil man. Cruel. He could easily be a murderer, never thinking twice about the life he was taking. What was he like in the moment before shooting someone? Or strangling her with those strong hands tight about her lovely throat? Would that vigorous laugh which avoided his eyes drown out the anguished cries of his victim? Would he dust his hands, kick the body aside, and walk carelessly away?

Now, this minute, was he about to lunge at me from across the way? Could he feel that hostile, that murderous, toward a random companion, just because she was an imperfect woman who was interested in him?

I covered my eyes with my hand, but when I peeked through my fingers he wasn't reacting—he wasn't even looking my way. He had his nose glued to the space where the girl's name had been. So he hadn't laughed a minute ago. And I hadn't seen murder in his eyes.

"Fool." The moment I spoke, he jerked around to face me. "*Nein,*" I said, "not you. I am the fool."

"Pardon, *bitte?*"

"Nothing. I'm sorry."

He nodded, looked at his watch, and, yawning behind his hand, got up to stretch. "Interlaken," he said, looking at me as the train slowed, and his eyes were without expression. "Interlaken," he repeated. "You?"

"Yes, yes. I'm staying for a week. Are you staying? Do you live here? Do you work here? Are you here for the winter sports?"

He shook his head—in dismay? Distaste? Disgust? Or did he simply not understand what I had asked him? Why did I care, why did it matter?

I took my bag from the seat beside me as he put on his Tyrolean hat and brought his suitcase down from the rack. Then as usual in awkward moments, I motioned him to precede me into the corridor. His eye-

brows went up, but he nodded and touched a finger to his hat. In the corridor, he bent to look out the window as the train ran smoothly into the station. I imagined he was searching for a familiar face, a woman who would run into his arms and kiss him and listen as he told her about the weird companion he'd had to sit with on the journey.

The train stopped, and he assumed a military posture as he waited for the door to open and the steps to go down. When he swung onto the platform and went toward the turnstile, people automatically made way for him.

I crawled painfully in his wake and then I saw him falter as a policeman approached him and said something I couldn't hear. There was a short altercation during which my train companion seemed to shrink. Then the policeman said something imperative and the man slouched ignominiously away toward the waiting room.

I felt more strongly deprived than ever. I called to the policeman, hoping he spoke English. "Please, that man you just stopped, I sat alone with him in the compartment from Lucerne."

The officer looked me over with the usual reaction. "Him? I warned him to take the next train to anywhere, Madame. We have a long file on that monster—he preys on rich attractive women for his living." Then his voice changed to cynical hope. "Do you—you don't have a complaint, do you?"

"Yes. Yes, I do. He tried to—"

"Take my arm then," the policeman interrupted eagerly. "We'll go catch him, and I'll have a car take us to headquarters. You can put your complaint in writing, and that will put him where he belongs."

"But my baggage," I said. "It's checked through. You go arrest him, and I'll get a porter and wait here for you. Hurry so you don't lose him."

The officer hesitated, glanced at my feet, and then loped off. His uniform was neat. He was crisply alert, yet with an easy ride to his shoulders. As I turned to look for a porter, I continued to wonder about him, his background and current interests. Crime and law, naturally, because he was a policeman, but was he married? Had he children? A mistress? Did he go skiing on his day off? Did he enjoy music?

I took a taxi to the Beau-Rivage, pleased with my petty coup, and still curious about the police officer. Behind his cynicism, underneath his disgust for my companion of the train, had been genuine concern.

Because he might bungle the arrest? Or concern for me? Hardly that. Few people these days ever consider the victim.

More likely his wife was ill, or one of his seven or eleven children. Or perhaps he had only one child, a daughter who was terribly scarred and crippled. And he worried about how her appearance would affect her future, if total loneliness would make her bitter and unbalanced, eager to hurt someone, anyone—even a stranger—to compensate for the hurt she lived with.

At the hotel my room had the balcony I'd foreseen and I stood for a long time looking at the immaculate purity of the Jungfrau. I wondered what had happened in the station waiting room and if the policeman would come thundering to the hotel after me. Or if he'd figured me out and was laughing heartlessly. If so, then let him try to explain how he'd been taken in a false accusation. Let him lose his job because of it.

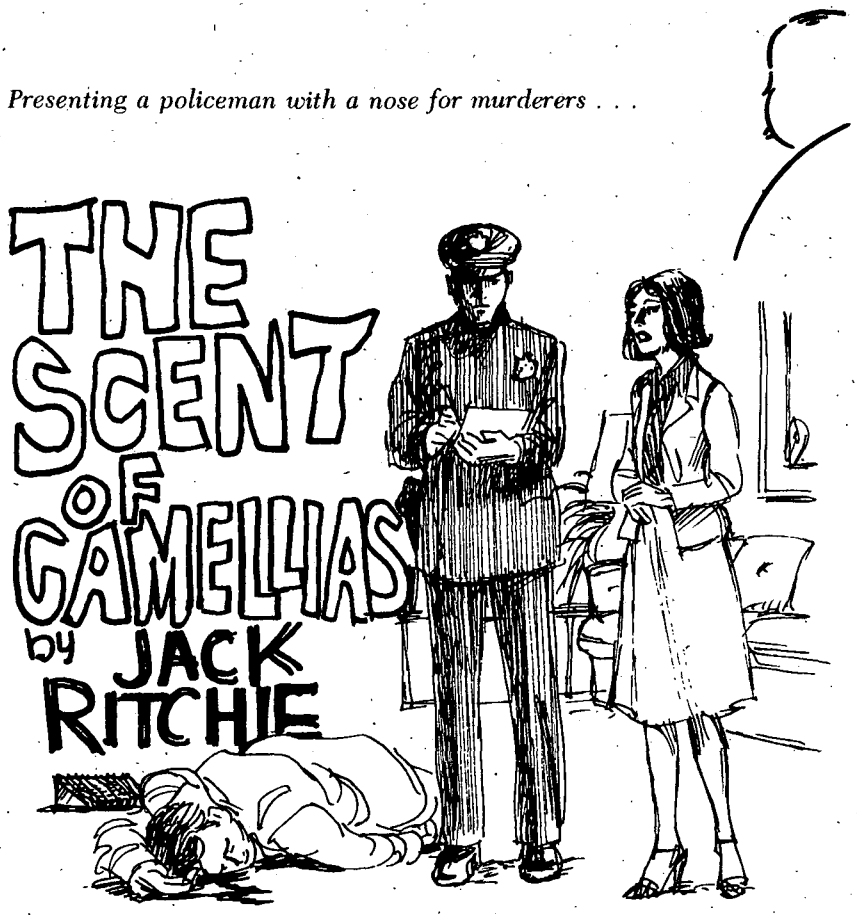
I bathed and went down to dinner, and the veal wasn't all that bad. My waiter was a handsome youngster with a vigorous physique and great liquid brown eyes under yellow Apollo curls. Possibly a student working his way through, or learning the hotel business and devastating the girls every evening after work. I couldn't decide, and anyway he was too young to interest me. I forgot him entirely as I ate my sweet and drank my bitter coffee.

When I finished, I went straight to the front desk and told them my plans had changed. I'd be moving on tomorrow, to Vienna perhaps, or Rome—I'd decide when I got up in the morning.

That settled, I went upstairs to my room and undressed, carefully avoiding any glimpse of myself in the mirror. Getting into bed, I lay awake as I did every night, reliving my random encounter with teenaged monsters on a dark city street when I was very young. They robbed me and threw gasoline and a lighted match on me and left me for dead. All the plastic surgery my wealthy family could buy never achieved more than minimal repair.

Then, as usual, I wept for the helpless, hopeless victims of great and petty monsters everywhere before I fell into my usual troubled sleep.

Presenting a policeman with a nose for murderers . . .



The first person with whom I associated the scent of camellias was my Aunt Mabel—a sweet human being, kind and considerate. She was often my baby sitter as I grew up.

And I remember Carrie Nelson, the first girl I ever dated, and she too carried the scent about her.

When I complimented her on the fragrance and remarked that I rather liked her choice of perfume, she informed me archly that I had

an uneducated nose. She was not wearing a camellia scent. As a matter of fact, she *detested* the odor of camellias. They reminded her of funerals.

Yet I would have almost staked my life on the fact that she perpetually carried about her the aura of camellias. However, I did not press the point, though it did set me to thinking on the apparent popularity of the scent with so many people with whom I came into contact.

When I next saw Dr. Burglund for a routine checkup—he was one of those individuals who literally reeked of camellias—I rather experimentally complimented him on the unique camellia-scented after-shave lotion he was wearing.

He denied that he used any after-shave lotion at all, and that if he did he most certainly would not select camellia since he could not endure that particular odor.

Rather puzzled, I made a few other inquiries of those about me who wafted of camellias, and in every case the individuals not only denied that they were wearing the scent but insisted that they abhored the odor.

After further thought, I decided to shut my mouth on the subject entirely and go about the business of growing up and being educated amid the unexplained whiff of camellias here and there.

At the university, I minored in the social sciences and as a fillip to one of my courses, the class was given a tour through our state prison.

It was there—in the prison courtyard—that I discovered that the incidence of the camellia scent among the prisoners was considerably higher than that in the general population—perhaps quadruple or more.

Our tour continued and we were taken inside the buildings, seeing the shops, the kitchen, the mess hall, and so forth, and finally, as the *pièce de résistance*, we were conducted through the institution's death row.

When I entered the corridor between the cells, I was almost overwhelmed by the odor of camellias. The scent was quite overpowering. And as I passed from cell to cell I realized that every occupant in the row exuded that odor.

Naturally I was thoughtful on the matter as we finished the tour. Besides the odor of camellias, what was it that all of those men had in

common?

They had all been sentenced to die.

Was it possible that for some fantastic reason—physical, psychic, moral, or whatever—I could smell impending death?

No. That couldn't quite be it. While our state still sentences some of our murderers to death, the possibility that they will ever actually be executed is rather remote. Besides, those prisoners in the courtyard who also reeked of camellias were not under the death penalty, though I supposed that a number of them must also be murderers.

Ah! Was that it? Was it possible that I could actually smell *murder?* Or, more specifically, that I could smell *murderers?*

The astounding realization that this might very possibly be true came to me gradually, but inexorably, and I was forced into some thoughtful reevaluations of many of the people in my past.

There was, for instance, Aunt Mabel, whose new husband had accidently fallen to his death long ago as he and his wife strolled along the edge of a precipice. And Carrie Nelson, whose beautiful cousin had drowned in an unwitnessed boating accident while Carrie had managed to swim ashore. And good Dr. Burglund, who chuckled when he insisted that he always buried his mistakes.

I spent several days in a state of acute shock. I had never realized before the amazing variety of people who were actually murderers. And the fact that they were still blithely walking the streets indicated that they had gotten away with their crimes.

My nasal ferreting ability was clearly a gift and, it seemed to me, one I should do something about.

My decision to join the police force shook my friends and relatives—most of whom were in the world of academics. They fervently tried to dissuade me, but my mind was set.

In June, upon receiving my degree at the university, I was accepted as a recruit and sent to the police academy. Upon graduating at the head of my class, I was assigned to a patrol car with an experienced partner at my side.

My first day of duty found us responding to a fire alarm and we arrived at the scene of the blaze just as the first fire trucks pulled up.

My partner and I assumed the duty of crowd control, keeping the gathering spectators from getting in the way of the fire fighters.

The firemen, making their way through the smoke-filled duplex, brought out the body of an elderly man—a victim of asphyxiation.

There was the pungent smell of smoke in the air and yet, insistently, I also caught the odor of camellias somewhere near me.

I turned and surveyed the spectators and soon pinpointed the source of the odor. It came from a rather small middle-aged man who watched the blazing home with smiling intensity.

At the police academy we were instructed that, in cases of arson, the nonprofessional arsonist will quite often be in the crowd at the scene of the fire, reaping the enjoyment of his deed.

The look in the man's eyes, plus the odor of the camellias, plus the fact that the fire had claimed a victim, made me decide to speak to him. After all, if this fire was arson, as it indeed might be, then the arsonist was now a murderer.

I moved in his direction.

He became aware of me and turned, attempting to push his way back through the crowd, obviously with the intention of fleeing.

I caught him in a moment and firmly escorted him to our patrol car for questioning. I now noticed that besides the odor of camellias he also smelled faintly of gasoline.

He was quite terrified at being detained and in a matter of seconds he admitted that he had indeed set the fire but that he had not meant to injure or kill anyone and he was sorry about that.

My partner and I took him to headquarters for further questioning and he confessed to being responsible for a dozen other fires set about the city—none of which had previously resulted in any fatalities.

It was an auspicious beginning for me. I was commended for my acuity and I had visions of a meteoric career, solving murders right and left.

In the weeks and months that followed, however, I discovered that a policeman's lot is not solely involved with the crime of murder.

My duties consisted almost entirely of arbitrating family quarrels, making out accident reports, citing citizens for traffic violations, and similar necessary but hardly exciting chores.

According to my partner—a veteran of more than ten years on the force—he had during that time responded to only four calls involving murder.

Nevertheless, I diligently set about the business of learning my craft. I attended specialized courses in the police sciences at the university in the evenings, and went about my duties cheerfully. What with hard work and a certain amount of good fortune, after four years of patrol-car duty, I was finally transferred to the Homicide Division as an acting detective.

During those four years, by the way, I encountered only two cases of murder. In both instances, the murderer was a member of the victim's family who was apprehended at the nearest tavern smelling of beer and camellias—a really dreadful combination.

In my new assignment as an acting detective, my first case involved what appeared to be murder during a burglary. When my partner, Sergeant Rolland, and I arrived at the Cape Cod-style home, we found a dead man in his pajamas on the floor of his living room. He had apparently been struck on the head by a small metal replica of the Eiffel Tower, which lay next to his body.

According to his wife, she had been to see a motion picture and when she returned home she found her husband dead on the floor. She also informed us that she was missing her jewelry, and her husband's wallet was gone from his trousers in their bedroom upstairs.

She was middle-aged and enveloped in a cloud of camellia scent.

In cases of murder, it is of course necessary to prove that one individual murdered another. However, there is an undeniable advantage in knowing *who* the murderer is before any of the evidence is obtained.

After Sergeant Rolland finished his questioning, I interceded. "Mrs. McDougal, you say that you came home at exactly eleven o'clock. How can you be so positive of the time?"

She dabbed at her eyes. "Because just as I came in the front door, the clock on the mantel chimed eleven."

"You came into the living room and found your husband's body?"

"Yes."

"Did you check to see that he was genuinely dead?"

"Of course."

"What did you do next?"

"I phoned the police immediately."

I turned to one of the uniformed officers who had arrived at the

scene first. "When did you get here?"

"At exactly three minutes after eleven," he said rather proudly. "We happened to be only a block away when the call came in."

The fingerprint technician approached Sergeant Rolland and me. "There aren't any prints on the murder weapon. It was wiped clean."

I looked at Mrs. McDougal, but she managed to look entirely innocent.

I resumed my questioning. "After the police arrived, did you leave this room for any purpose?"

She thought about it. "No."

I glanced at the uniformed officer again and he nodded confirmation.

"Mrs. McDougal," I said, "just what do you think happened here?"

She shrugged. "I don't know. But I suppose that a burglar broke into the house. My husband heard him and came downstairs. They fought and my husband was killed."

"Where do you keep your jewelry?"

"Upstairs in a drawer of my vanity."

I nodded agreeably. "A remarkably cool customer, this burglar. First he kills your husband, then he goes upstairs, removes your husband's wallet from his trousers, and searches until he finds your jewelry. Most burglars would have fled immediately after the murder and said the hell with the loot. Are you absolutely positive that your jewelry and the wallet are missing?"

"Positive. I checked."

"When?"

She blinked. "After I found my husband's body, of course."

I smiled. "You arrived home at precisely eleven o'clock. You saw your husband's body. You investigated sufficiently to be certain that he was dead. You phoned the police. You were undoubtedly overcome by shock and grief, yet nevertheless you resolutely went upstairs and checked your vanity drawer to discover that your jewelry was missing. You also went to your husband's trousers and ascertained that his wallet was missing. You finished all of this just in time to greet the officers at the door at three minutes after eleven. Madam, you must have been completely winded to accomplish so much in just three minutes."

She thought fiercely. "Actually, now that I remember more clearly, I came home at about a quarter to eleven or thereabouts. I must have *imagined* hearing the clock strike."

"Mrs. McDougal," I said, "when was the last time you handled your husband's wallet?"

She seemed insulted. "I am not the type of person who goes through her husband's things."

I sniffed at the camellia aura about her again. "Mrs. McDougal, we are going to search this house from stem to stern. We will be looking specifically for your husband's wallet. When we find it, as I suspect we will, we will be interested in seeing if *your* fingerprints are on that wallet and why."

The wallet and Mrs. McDougal's jewelry were found in the bottom of the bathroom laundry hamper under some towels.

When our fingerprint man began dusting, Mrs. McDougal broke down and confessed.

She and her husband, in their pajamas, had been downstairs in the living room watching television. After the ten o'clock news, they had gotten into an argument concerning which program to watch next—her husband being adamant for the late movie and she preferring a talk show. One thing let to another until she picked up the replica of the Eiffel Tower and brained him.

The deed done, she quickly decided to make the event resemble burglary and murder. She gathered together her husband's wallet and her jewelry and hid them in the laundry hamper—she did not anticipate that the police would doubt her story and search the house.

While we booked her at headquarters downtown, I reflected that possibly I might have solved the murder even without the prompting of the camellia scent. And yet, perhaps not. Possibly the significance of the three short minutes might have escaped me if I hadn't known beforehand that Mrs. McDougal had murdered her husband.

During the next four years, Sergeant Rolland and I solved nearly ninety-six percent of our homicide investigations—an unprecedented high for the department—and I was promoted to sergeant. And I discovered that it was indeed true that in more than eighty-five percent of the murders committed the victim knew his killer and was frequently related.

If we did not find him still in the vicinity of the crime, it was usually a simple matter of interviewing all of the victim's friends and relatives until I found the one who smelled of camellias. And once the culprit

had been sniffed out, gathering the physical evidence to convict him became a routine affair.

Our few failures I ascribed to the fact that our killers were probably strangers to their victims and had simply boarded the nearest bus, plane, or train out of town, beyond the reach of my nose.

In the summer of my fifth year in Homicide, Rolland and I were called to the Blackpool Mansion on the lake front.

In the circular driveway, I parked behind the squad cars and got out. In the light of the quarter moon, I surveyed the main building and its extensive shadowy grounds.

"Rolland," I said, "murder among the lower and middle classes is essentially sordid. I wonder if this extends also to the rich."

Rolland extinguished his cigar and put it into his breast pocket. "This place is real class. I wonder if this time our murderer is rich."

"What difference would it make?"

"A lot. Rich murderers don't go to prison."

Inside the building, we located the tremendous living—or possibly drawing—room where we found the owner, an investment counselor named Horace Blackpool, dead on the center rug. It appeared that he had been brained by a gold-plated replica of the Flatiron Building. The probable weapon lay bloody beside him.

The medical and laboratory technicians arrived and proceeded about their work.

Mrs. Erica Blackpool, the victim's wife, had striking violet eyes that widened slightly when I approached her. She was in her middle twenties and enfolded thoroughly in the scent of camellias.

I listened to her story and then reprised. "You say you returned from a movie and found your husband in his present condition?"

"Yes."

"And you returned at exactly eleven o'clock? How can you be so positive about that?"

"The hall clock struck eleven just as I came in the front door."

Naturally I had been experiencing a certain degree of *déjà vu*. "Just what is your guess about what happened here?"

She seemed to study me intently. "My husband goes to his athletic club every Wednesday evening to play paddle ball with some of his friends. I suppose that when he came home he surprised an intruder.

They fought and my husband was killed. My upstairs bedroom has been ransacked and my jewelry is missing."

"You attended this movie alone?"

"Yes."

I glanced about the room. "Weren't there any servants around?"

"They all have their quarters above the garages and usually they're all out of here by at least nine."

A tall distinguished man entered the room and made his way to Mrs. Blackpool's side. "Erica, I do hope you haven't said anything."

"Well, just the bare facts. I couldn't just stand here and say nothing at all."

I regarded him. "Who are you, sir?"

"James Gobbert. I am the Blackpools' attorney."

Mrs. Blackpool nodded. "Horace told me that people in our income bracket should never do or say anything at all without first consulting an attorney."

"Mrs. Blackpool," I said, "will you please tell me again exactly the sequence of events, from the moment you entered the house?"

"Well, as I said, I got home just as the hall clock struck eleven. I walked into the house and when I passed this room I noticed Horace just lying here in a pool of blood."

"You approached close enough to be certain that he was dead?"

"Of course. And he was quite dead. As he is now."

"And then?"

"Well, naturally I called James and asked him what to do. He thought it over for a while and then suggested that I call the police."

"That was very good of him. And then what?"

"My next thought was that Horace was probably killed by a burglar. So I went upstairs and looked around. Sure enough, I found that my jewelry cases were missing."

"Don't you keep your jewelry in a safe?"

"Usually I keep it in the wall safe. But this evening I simply forgot to put it back in. Very careless of me, I'll admit." She seemed to step an inch or two closer to me. "Then I went into Horace's bedroom and it was a mess too. The drawer where he keeps his cigarette cases, lighters, rings, cufflinks, and so on, was completely empty and on the floor."

I consulted one of the uniformed officers. "What time did the first

squad car get here?"

"Three minutes after eleven."

Definitely *déjà vu*.

I watched the fingerprint technician working on the replica of the Flatiron Building. I doubted very much that he would find fingerprints.

I turned and sniffed at the camellia aura about Mrs. Blackpool for a moment. "How long have you and your husband been married?"

"About a year."

"How did you get along?"

"Just fine."

I gathered together the uniformed officers. "I want this house and its grounds searched thoroughly. I'm looking specifically for Mr. and Mrs. Blackpools' missing jewelry. When you find it, I want it tested for fingerprints. All of it."

I surreptitiously sniffed at Gobbert. He was innocent of the odor of camellias, which at least eliminated him as an accessory.

After approximately fifteen minutes, an officer walked into the room carrying a bulging pillow case, the contents of which rattled. "It's full of jewels and silverware."

"Ah," I said. "Where did you find it? In the laundry hamper?"

"No. Under some bushes just outside."

I turned to Mrs. Blackpool. "Madam, I am arresting you for the murder of your husband, Horace Blackpool."

She blinked and Gobbert frowned.

I smiled. "Mrs. Blackpool, you say that you entered this house just as the hall clock struck eleven. You then discovered your husband's body. You took the time to ascertain that he was dead. You phoned your attorney. After time-consuming cogitation he told you to call the police. You did so. And while waiting for them to appear you went upstairs to find that your jewelry and a number of your husband's things were missing. You then went downstairs and greeted the police officers as they arrived at *three minutes after eleven.*" I sniffed the air. "It is quite clear that it would have been physically impossible for you to do all of those things within the space of *three* minutes."

Mrs. Blackpool became thoughtful, and then brightened. "The hall clock is an antique and doesn't keep very good time. I should have remembered that. The last time I checked, it was about twenty minutes

fast. So when it struck eleven, you see, it was really twenty minutes *to* eleven and I had plenty of time to do all of those things I said I did before the police came at three minutes after eleven, real time."

I dispatched one of my men to the hall clock. He returned in less than a minute. "She's right, Sergeant. The hall clock is fifteen minutes fast."

The fingerprint technician spoke up. "There aren't any fingerprints on the murder weapon, Sergeant."

I was beginning to feel a bit uneasy. "Well, I didn't really expect that there would be. However, I think you will find that Mrs. Blackpool's fingerprints are all over her husband's missing possessions."

Erica Blackpool smiled. "No, you won't, Sergeant."

A uniformed sergeant trotted into the room grinning. "We got him."

I frowned. "Got who?"

"The probable murderer. He was laying out there under the gazebo. He's got a broken leg."

I accompanied him back outside where we joined a flashlight-illuminated circle around the supine figure of a groaning man.

The sergeant made an identification. "It's Erasmus Reilly. He's been sent up a few times for breaking and entering."

I sniffed. Erasmus seemed drenched in camellias.

Perhaps it was because Reilly felt that he had been as good as caught in the act, or perhaps he simply wanted to get things over with and be rushed to a hospital where he could receive treatment for his leg, but he immediately launched into his confession.

He had been burglarizing the Blackpool home when Horace Blackpool returned from the athletic club and confronted him in the living room. There had been a struggle and he had struck Blackpool down.

Reilly had then grasped his pillow case of loot and dashed across the grounds, heading for the gate. Unfortunately, it had been rather dark and shadowy and he was not acquainted with the grounds. As a consequence, he had tripped over a marble faun and broken his leg. He had abandoned his loot and been in the long and painful process of crawling to the perimeter of the Blackpool estate when the police arrived and forced him to seek refuge under the gazebo.

I returned to the Blackpool house and Mrs. Blackpool.

"Well," she said, "am I still under arrest?"

I cleared my throat. "No. You are unarrested."

Gobbert snorted. "You cannot erase the deed, the calumny, the embarrassment with just a few words. We intend to sue for ten million."

I sniffed in the direction of Mrs. Blackpool. There was still the scent of murder about her.

I studied her as she studied me. Were we engaged in a combat of intellects? Good against evil? Was that why she had that disconcerting smile on her face?

I frowned at a new thought. Erica Blackpool claimed that she had been seeing a motion picture at the time of her husband's death. The lower and middle classes attend motion pictures, but somehow one does not associate motion-picture attendance with the upper. . .

"Mrs. Blackpool," I said, "did you have money in your own right when you married Mr. Blackpool?"

She nodded. "I had at least ten thousand dollars left in the bank. Lawrence's insurance policy was for twenty thousand."

I blinked. "Lawrence? Who's Lawrence?"

"My first husband. We were married four happy years and then he died."

I was beginning to see the light. "And just how did your first husband die?"

"He got this terrible indigestion and passed away within hours."

I smiled grimly. "Mrs. Blackpool, I am going to secure a court order to exhume your first husband's body. And what do you suppose our pathologists will find in his remains? Arsenic, perhaps?"

She smiled too. "Lawrence was cremated. I personally scattered his ashes over Lake Michigan on a brisk windy day."

I left the Blackpool grounds in a dark mood. While I accept the fact that a great many murderesses get away with their crimes, I still do not like to have it rubbed under my nose, not so figuratively speaking.

The following morning Captain Daniels called me into his office.

He bridged his fingers. "There is this little matter of Mrs. Blackpool suing the department for false arrest."

I laughed lightly. "You know how these things are, Captain. People get so emotional when they are arrested. They say things they don't really mean."

"Well, Mrs. Blackpool really means it. She phoned and said that she is going to press the suit unless you go over there and apologize."

This was too much. Me? Apologize to a murderess? "Never," I said.

Daniel's smiled without showing a single tooth. "Either you go over there and apologize or I transfer you to the Traffic Department."

I drove to the Blackpool estate.

A maid answered the door and led me to a small room opposite the scene of the murder.

In a few moments Erica Blackpool appeared, evidently refreshed after a good night's sleep.

I took a deep breath. "Mrs. Blackpool, I humbly apologize for arresting you for the murder of your second husband."

She shrugged. "Oh, that's all right. Mistakes will happen."

I frowned and took another deep breath. There was absolutely no odor of camellias about her. "Damn it," I said, "what the hell happened to the camellias?"

"What camellias?"

"I mean the camellia scent. It was a veritable cloud about you last night, but it's gone now."

She agreed. "I guess it just washed off in the shower this morning. But I could put some on again if you really like it."

My mouth dropped. "You mean it washed off? It's not a permanent part of your personality?" I was aghast. Erica Blackpool was not really a murderess after all.

She came closer to me and sniffed. "Are you fond of cinnamon toast, or cinnamon buns, or cinnamon anything?"

I was caught slightly off balance. "Frankly, no. I never touch it."

"Good," she said. "Then it isn't something you ate." She smiled. "It's the oddest thing, but my first husband smelled of cinnamon. So did my second. And now you. And I just *love* cinnamon."

She looked up at me. "Now don't get all fretful and worried just because my first two husbands died. Nothing is going to happen to you. I just have this instinctive feeling that you'll be the only other cinnamony person I'll ever meet again and I'd better take advantage of it."

"Madam," I said stiffly, "what are you suggesting?"

"It's fate," she said. "You and me."

As it turned out, she was quite right.

From the beginning of the trial Lawlor realized it was up to him to see that justice was done . . .

HOW SAY YOU?

by EDWARD WELLEN

Drew Lawlor, the foreman of the jury, watched mote fade in beam as courtroom attendants adjusted the blinds against the slant of the sun.

Lessening the glare did not lessen the squinting frown on Judge Graine's face. His hand stood ready to his gavel as he bent his head to the prosecuting and defense attorneys who stood before the bench.

The defendant, on trial for murder in the first degree, let his eyes rove over the spectators, his face still but his eyes burning, his ears

tuned to the whispering attorneys.

The stenotypist used the short wait to flex his fingers above the keys of his machine, like a concert pianist.

The bailiff who sheepdogged the jurors in and out sat beside the jury box, panting slightly.

Juror Number Five, drowsy with lunch and midafternoon heat, gave a guilty start of wakefulness and shot an innocent smile at the judge.

Foreman Drew Lawlor gazed with deliberate distaste at the rail of the jury box. Just before him, out of reach unless he leaned forward, a smudged pair of spots showed where hundreds of other foremen before him had placed their palms on the rail, had gripped it in even-handed justice while standing to render the jury's considered verdict. The Bible for swearing in, the black leather armrests of the witness chair, the varnished tables of the prosecution and the defense—all these, Lawlor supposed, knew the same sweaty acid touch. Worn, all of them. Too much heat of emotion, not enough cold light of reason.

There had been a time when every man did that which was his right in his own eyes. Then, as men filled the earth, a more objective justice emerged. Lawlor hated to think what the world, mad as it was now, would be like without courts. Yet even here Lawlor seemed to himself the only one with balance, the only real adult. It had long been plain to him that most grownups showed as little reason as his daughter Constance. Lord knew he loved Constance, but she was past four and still clinging to her old rag doll. There would be some sense in it if the doll had worth or beauty, but an old rag doll that had long ago lost its beady eyes? Constance and her old rag doll, you couldn't tear them apart.

Lawlor sighed. What he had seen at work here only pointed up the resemblance between Constance and the doll and the public's dependence on justice, blind as it was. From the beginning he had found the courtroom reeking of the acid of fear and hate and sticky with sentimentality. The prosecutor sweated to turn sympathy for the family of the murder victim into vengefulness, the defense attorney to turn sympathy for the family of the defendant into blamelessness. This wasn't justice, it was childish trumpery. The facts should speak for themselves.

When you watched enough ham acting—and what else could you call the dramatic pauses and accusations and the raising and lowering of

voices for effect?—it became hard to hear the quiet voice of the facts. The defense attorney goaded the prosecution witnesses into rage to damn them in the eyes of the judge and jury. The prosecutor, with an eye on the press section, painted a cruel and ruthless picture of the defendant that put the judge and jury in fear of turning loose a tiger. And the judge—supposedly above petty concerns—his sour stomach showed in his eyes.

Lawlor found his eyes following the gaze of the defendant—the man was fixing on someone among the spectators—then he caught himself. It was best not to look at the spectators. He knew what he would have seen—the defendant's wife, her eyes pleading her cause. Or the murder victim's widow, her eyes plaintive with grief.

Sometimes the seating changed, but day after day of the trial he had been resentfully aware that each woman, with her prop of relatives, had sat trying to will the jury her way. Day after day he had kept a face of stone and his thoughts as well.

There was a stir. A huddle at the bench was breaking up and Lawlor again gave his full mind back to the case. He had listened carefully to the testimony and cautiously to the summations. He had heard the case against the defendant and the case for him. He did not let himself feel one way or the other about the defendant as a person. He had listened to all the evidence of motive, opportunity, premeditation, and design. Maintaining a deadpan, he had weighed conflicting statements by equally eminent experts. He had kept an open mind even when the prosecutor brought out the gruesome details of the autopsy and, like a stage magician, produced in evidence a shirt with a sinister stain. The facts were what counted, not the color of the facts. And soon it would be up to him and to the eleven men and women who would follow his lead.

The prosecuting and defense attorneys fixed their eyes on the jury.

The defendant fixed his eyes on the judge.

The judge fingered the neck of his robe and began to charge the jury.

Lawlor listened, filtering out the judge's bias. No one—not even the judge—would sway him.

But after a while a slight movement, a glinting of the brass catch of a handbag, compelled his gaze to a woman among the spectators. And he

saw the doll. Before he saw who was holding it, shielding it from common view, he saw the doll.

The old rag doll that had in its early history lost its beady eyes.

To see it here was to know with growing horror that someone had snatched his daughter from the day nursery. Somewhere a weeping Constance, parted from her doll, was hostage.

The woman held the doll menacingly to her breast, facing it blindly at Lawlor, telling him to see that the jury voted the way she willed. For a frozen moment, Lawlor could not take his eyes from the doll to see whether the woman was the defendant's wife or the murder victim's widow. Then he lifted his gaze and met her eyes.

The bailiff, patting the pocket holding his pack of cigarettes, was on his feet.

Judge Graine reached for his gavel.

"If you desire further instructions as to any point that is not quite clear to you. . ."

He was sending the jury out to find a verdict.

With a mind full of mad confusion, Drew Lawlor rose and turned.

The bailiff, a key in his hand, held the door open.

Everything the medium said seemed to miss the mark until . . .

THE FAKE

by ISABEL LANGIS CUSACK

"I'm chiefly concerned about my health," Leon Swain told the medium. "I'd like to find out about my health."

The woman seated across the varnished oak dining table studied his face. "In good time, in good time. Do you want me to tape the reading for you? It'll be two dollars extra."

"Good idea. By all means." He had forgotten to remove the diamond ring from his little finger. He did so now, under the table.

"So," she said when the tape was inserted and the recorder turned on. "You're what? Forty-four? Forty-five?"

"Forty-nine," he said, not displeased at the inaccuracy.

She nodded. Then she sat silent, her eyes closed. Leon wondered if he was supposed to say something, but decided against it. His friend Colin had warned him not to reveal anything, to be very cautious about giving the medium any clues. "Be truthful," Colin had said. "If you're not, and she's any good, she'll catch you out." Colin was an old hand at this sort of thing, but Leon had never been one for fortune tellers. Only desperation had brought him here—desperation and pain.

He stole a quick look around the cluttered, old-fashioned dining room, wondering what might be hidden behind the screen in the corner—was she going to produce trumpets?—or underneath the pile of clothing on the sewing machine. But one must not be unduly suspicious. She'd been highly recommended and surely would not resort to trickery.

"Who is Roberta?" she asked, startling him. "And would you mind removing your sunglasses?"

"Oh. Sorry." He pocketed the glasses. The room was too dim for her to see his telltale eyes. Her own eyes, fixed on him, were large and bright. She was a stout, rather pretty woman, more his idea of somebody one might meet at a church bake sale than a dabbler in the occult.

"Roberta," she repeated.

He pondered. Roberta Spelvin, the girl he'd had a crush on in the third grade? He had served on the board of deacons of his church with a woman named Roberta something. And there was a Bobby Lee Fielding listed in his apartment building directory but Leon didn't even know if it was a man or woman. Surely not Dr. Fertig's office nurse? Was she Roberta? Or Ruth?

"I've known a few Robertas," he said noncommittally.

Her nod was brisk, authoritative. "You are going to meet someone named Roberta who will have great impact on your life. You will meet her quite soon. Ah—a dark-haired woman. Not Roberta, someone else. I don't like her." She gave a convincing little shudder. "She is not what she seems. Do you know who I'm talking about?"

He almost smiled. He had known many dark-haired women who were not what they seemed. He hoped she wasn't going to hand him a

lot of trite generalities. But no, that wasn't fair—he must give her a chance.

"I—think so," he fibbed, eager to cooperate.

"Are you involved with medicine?"

"Involved with—? If you mean am I a doctor, no, I'm—" He started to say, "a retired accountant," but checked himself, remembering Colin's admonition and aware that retirement at his age was a bit unusual.

Her sharply penciled eyebrows went up. "Yes?"

"That's for you to find out," he said, trying for jocularity and coming off coy.

She just smiled. "You were one of three children."

"Actually, I was an only child," he said, wishing he didn't have to contradict her. The "actually" rather softened it, though, making it sound more like a difference of opinion.

Again the I-knew-it-all-along nod. "I am getting two people. Ah—*not* children. Your parents. Both of your parents are in spirit?"

"In spirit?"

"What you would call dead."

"Oh. Yes. Yes, they are." He was relieved to be able to agree.

"Could your mother have *lost* two children? Perhaps before you were born?"

"It's possible. I remember she was very ill when I was five or six. She never spoke about it. It could have been a miscarriage." He was giving the woman too much information, but he *wanted* her to be right.

She placed her elbows on the table and made a steeple with her fingers. As she rested her forehead against the maroon fingertips, he noted, even in the watery light, that her blonde hair was dark at the roots. He smiled wryly. Perhaps another dark-haired woman who was not what she seemed?

"How did your father die?"

His smile vanished. When he did not respond, she raised her head and looked at him. "Never mind. Don't tell me."

"Really," he said, rather sharply. "I'm not interested in the—in those who have gone on. I was told you were a good diagnostician. I've been having these pains—"

"Quite so. But spirit cannot be hurried or ordered around. Your

mother—such a kind face! Did she wear a blue-and-white-striped blouse?"

Leon fidgeted. "I don't remember." Didn't everyone's mother have a kind face? And probably a blue-and-white-striped blouse?

"You are planning a trip, I see," she said. "Not necessarily a long or extensive one. Perhaps just a short trip." He offered nothing, but she did not give up. "I get this as a spur-of-the-moment jaunt. You suddenly decide—" she snapped her fingers "—to up and go. A little change of scene. I like that. I like your impulsiveness."

He kept his face impassive, but inside he was beginning to sulk. He was not planning a trip, he had never done an impulsive thing in his life, and he didn't give a damn what she did or did not like. But her eyes held him, and he mustered a small, encouraging smile. He would not get anywhere by being hostile.

She leaned, or rather, swooped toward him. "Investments," she whispered. "You could be on the brink of making a bad investment. I'm not saying that you will lose money. You could lose money, or you could make money. But this investment involves other disagreeable aspects that make it—make the game—not worth the candle, if you follow me? I think you know what I mean."

"I am not considering any investments," he said.

"No, of course you're not," she said, and her huge eyes sparkled. "And the reason is, it's in the *past*. I see now that you have already done it. Not too recently, but not too long ago. And it caused you much grief." He did not feel his expression change, but she must have caught a flicker because she plunged on. "*Not* grief. Not grief at all. Aggravation. But there was a lot of money involved. Am I right?"

"I— In a way."

"Wait! Wait! I see a cloud around this money. I see a black cloud."

Leon straightened in his seat. He wished he had his dark glasses on.

"I see death." Her chest was heaving, and her eyes were fastened on a point slightly above his head. "I see a death connected with this money." Her eyes focused on him. "You inherited this money."

Leon swallowed. "There was a death. I did inherit some money."

"Of course," she said, smiling. "But enough of that. I feel this is becoming painful for you. I don't wish it to be painful. I am getting a G. The letter G. Is there someone around you whose name begins with G?"

Leon sighed. Who didn't know someone whose name began with G? She was back on her safe ground of ludicrousness, but that was better than her groping too close to home. She was either a damn good guesser or a keen student of body language. He would be more careful.

"My cousin Gavin. And I know two or three women whose names start with G. The doorman at my club is named Gunnar. I play chess with a chap named Gross."

Her head moved from side to side, her eyes again out of focus. "Gerda? Gerta? No. We'll get back to it. Your cousin is very ill."

"My cousin died four years ago."

She nodded complacently, as if he had passed a test. "I'm getting a long illness. Gradual weakening, pallor. A hospital room, flowers, nurses. Ah, so sad. So young to die."

Leon sighed. "Gavin died in a car accident. He was never sick, except for measles and pneumonia when he was a child."

The lustrous eyes were suddenly cold. "Pneumonia, as I just described to you in precise detail. I didn't say that it was the manner of his passing."

"Sorry."

"I'm getting a house in the country. A cottage with a fence around, a man mowing the lawn. Window boxes. Geraniums. Do you recognize it?"

Twenty dollars for this, Leon thought, plus two more for a tape that I shall destroy. He said, politely, "I'm sure I've seen such a house."

"But it's not where you were brought up? The man is not your father?" Her tone was incredulous, accusing, and he felt almost guilty as he shook his head.

"My father never mowed a lawn in his life. The extent of his exertions was riding around the farm on a half-track." He laughed, but the laugh held no humor.

"You have great creativity!" she cried. "The piano—you play the piano."

"The cello," he said.

"You have a gift for the piano. You must take lessons." She was leaning toward him again. "Your mouth. Your poor mouth." She punched her fat cheek with a scarlet fingernail. "Here. You should see your dentist. It may not hurt now, but don't wait."

"I wear dentures," he said wearily.

The eyes iced over. "I was referring to your gums. It could be Vincent's Angina. Nothing serious, but nothing to fool around with."

A door banged at the back of the house. "My girls are coming in from school. I have three beautiful daughters. Twins, Ramona and Rowena, and—an older one. They won't bother us. Your father. I see much red, much angry red. Much hate." Her eyebrows were quizzical.

Leon shifted in his chair. "I didn't like my father," he admitted. "But I really would like to discuss my health—"

"When I am ready," she said, and he wriggled on the point of that voice.

"You hated your father. But forgive him. Release him. Leave him to heaven, as they say." She frowned. "The half-track you said he rode around on. I keep getting it. It has significance." She stopped. She was breathing heavily again. "Did he die in a fall from that half-track? Or as a result of a fall?"

Leon's mouth dropped open. He collected himself. "No."

"But that half-track played some part in his death. He died in an accident connected with that half-track."

"No," Leon said again, clinging to his vow of honesty by a technicality. "No."

She turned her head slightly, and one corner of her mouth went up in what she probably considered a Gioconda smile. Her breathing had evened, but Leon was having difficulty with his own.

"Once more I apologize for bringing up painful matters," she said in a syrupy voice. "You are quite pale. Forgive me. Now we'll forget the past. The present, the future—they are what count, isn't that so?"

"Yes," Leon agreed, a shade too heartily. "What is Vincent's Angina?"

"Trench mouth. You're married?"

"Yes. I mean yes, I was."

"Your wife is in spirit? Of course. The lady I saw standing with your parents. In white, holding a book. A great reader. Was she a great reader?"

"She read romances. Nothing else."

"A lovely face," the medium said. "But thin, too thin. Was she tubercular?"

"No. Nor was she thin." He was about to add, "She was obese," but

delicately refrained, since the medium herself tended in that direction.

"Things change," she said vaguely. "Your health! You are concerned about your health?"

The woman's a bloody genius, Leon thought, exasperated beyond all bearing. "That is why I'm here."

She coughed. "Allergy. Your eyes water? You sneeze?"

"Only when I have a cold." He might as well salvage a little pleasure out of confounding her, which was not difficult.

"Ah well, allergy takes all forms. I would give up *entirely* drinking milk. That is your problem."

"I haven't had a glass of milk in ten years," Leon said, all pretense at courtesy abandoned.

She shrugged. Then the labored breathing began again. Her hand flew to her chest and she slumped back, gasping and moaning. For a second, he was quite frightened. "A pain. A bad pain. Have you had an EKG recently?"

"The pain is in my side, in the area of the liver."

She frowned. "Haven't you heard of referred pain? You're sick *there*, it hurts *here*. Do you fear a liver condition?"

"Yes."

She resumed her normal posture and caught her breath. Then she winked. "So we like a little drink, do we?"

"I did take an occasional glass of wine with dinner but I gave it up. Wine is especially bad for the liver."

"Have you seen a doctor?"

"I had my six months' check-up three weeks ago. He found nothing."

"Ah, but the liver is such a tricky little devil. I see—" Her eyes closed and again she sank back in her chair. "Water. Get me a glass of water."

He sprang to his feet and stood rooted. Was this more theatrics? At a feeble wave of her hand, he flew to the kitchen, where two teenage girls were eating cookies. Without a word he seized a glass of cola from the table, dumped it in the sink, filled it with water, and ran back to the dining room. She was just as he had left her. He held the glass to her lips and she sipped. When she was able to sit up, he dropped to one knee beside her chair.

"What did you see?" he breathed. "You said, 'I see.' *What* did you

see? Was it that terrible? Tell me. You can tell me. I have to know."

Her face was puzzled. "See? I didn't see anything. I'm in menopause and I pass out now and then. Nothing to do with you. A few deep breaths and I'll be fine. It happens all the time."

"But my *eyes!*" he cried. He moved so close that he could see his anguished face reflected in her startled eyes. He pulled down the lower lid of his right eye, adding to the grotesquerie. "They're *yellow.* Look for yourself. And Fertig—Dr. Fertig—says they're not, he says I have no signs of jaundice."

"Your eyes are not yellow," she said firmly. He sank back on his heel. "Believe me. If you don't believe another word I've said, believe that. You have no liver problem. Your eyes are fine."

Relief washed over him. On unsteady legs, he made his way back to the chair.

"Gas pains," she went on. "Your pains are nothing but gas. Do you eat legumes? Beans?"

"Lima beans. Not often."

"Give them up. Also broccoli, green olives, and processed cheese. Have your glass of wine. Tonight, have a filet mignon—you like filet mignon?—and *two* glasses of wine. Or a martini. Dismiss illness from your mind. Enjoy life. Get on with your poetry. You were meant to write poetry. Think about women, about remarrying. You can't live in memory."

Leon almost laughed.

"There is someone out there for you. Remember I mentioned a woman named Ruth?"

"Roberta."

She shook her head. "*Ruth.* You and she will share an experience that may be—heavy, as my kids would say. But it will be very brief. Don't worry about it. And I see a woman with red hair, much younger than you, attractive. She is meant to be your companion to the end."

He glanced at his watch, and she stopped speaking. He rose and took a twenty-dollar bill from his wallet. He was pulling out a pair of ones when she said,

"Just the twenty." Her dazzling smile revealed much bridgework. "I forgot to plug in the tape recorder. I *am* sorry."

"It doesn't matter," he said, his anger finally surfacing. "Once was *quite* enough."

Her smile did not falter. As he went out, she said, "Go with God, my brother."

He did not look back.

When the late-model Rolls had driven off, the medium's oldest daughter, a pretty girl in her twenties, came into the room.

"He's not hurting for bread," she said. "Did you see the car?"

"No," the medium said, pushing a button on the recorder to erase the tape. "I saw the diamond. He married money. A ton of it."

"Why did you lie about the recorder not being plugged in?"

"I wouldn't want that tape to fall into the wrong hands."

"You sure winged that one," the girl said. "I couldn't believe my ears. When you pull in the cottage and the geraniums and that old you-should-play-the-piano bit, I know you're desperate."

"He was very tough to read." The medium lighted a cigarette and kicked off her shoes. "His type always is. But I got a few hits."

"What type?"

"The ones with a lot to hide. They tune you out."

"I never heard you that bad," the girl said.

"And nobody asked you to listen, young lady. You know I don't like for you to listen. This is privileged information, same as a doctor or a lawyer."

"A silver Rolls," the girl said. "And he wasn't bad-looking, in a prissy sort of way."

"Forget it," her mother said. "Although I was thinking along the same lines at first, as any mother would. But when I saw what he was—" She shivered. "Did you see how I backed off from the accident with the half-track? The one his father was in?"

"He said there was no accident."

"What he meant was, *it* was no accident. And it *wasn't* an accident. Then he married for money and polished off his wife. She was the 'investment' I spoke of. Well? Do you still think your mother is a fake? Do you think I should have told him?"

The girl laughed. "Not without a lot of proof. And your track shoes."

"Exactly." The woman smiled. "And he looks like such a pillar of society—the kind you'd ask to be executor of your will or godfather to your kids. Ha!"

The girl looked thoughtful. "That's pretty heavy for you, isn't it?

Knowing what you know but not being able to do anything about it?"

"I'm not in the business of handing out justice," her mother said. "I have to remind myself of that from time to time. But in his case, we needn't worry. It's out of our hands. Justice will be done soon enough—that's why I told him to whoop it up tonight."

"So he *has* got liver trouble."

"Not at all. His liver is fine. But here's one you can check me on. Tomorrow afternoon at three-twelve our friend's troubles will be over for good. He will be our *late* friend. Want to bet?"

"Uh-uh. Not with you. Three-twelve? Not three-eleven? Three-thirteen?"

"Three-twelve," the medium said.

The following afternoon as Dr. Lewis Fertig sat waiting for his next patient, he heard a shriek from the outer office. He ran to the door and found his red-haired nurse, Ruth, kneeling beside the body of Leon Swain, who had just expired from a massive coronary. The waiting-room clock said three-twelve.

Unfortunately, the newspapers gave the time of death as three-fifteen and the medium never heard the end of it from her daughter, Roberta.

Gift horses are a poor risk, but what about a gift family? . . .

FAMILY

by GIL BREWER

His name was Martin Brundell, and though it had meant something long, long ago, it meant nothing now. There had been so many harrowing years between the alcohol-eclipsed times of the past and today that he no longer even lived in memory.

He was a loner. He had few friends and those few were wayward and seldom seen, and in pursuit of the same condition as himself.

He was tall, lean, and whiskery, and lived in jeans, a ragged once-

yellow shirt, and a Goodwill tweed jacket.

He first noticed that he was being watched one day in the park. Seated on a bench, nursing a pint of sherry, with the perpetual hangover that pursued his days, he became blearily aware that a young man and woman were closely attending his movements. The couple, munching sandwiches under an oak tree, definitely were interested in him. They would stare at him, then talk sotto voce with averted eyes. Then they realized he had noticed them and moments later they were gone.

From that afternoon on, he knew he was being watched, followed, checked out. True, he was only dimly conscious of all this through the blear of his habitual state, and it only troubled him during those moments when he approached sobriety. He would become slightly desperate then, and mow a lawn or go trash collecting so he could purchase another jug of nepenthe. He somehow managed always to glean enough money for the wine that brought him back to oblivion.

But he was being watched. And it was always the same two people, the young man and girl. They were in their twenties he imagined. He spotted them on the street, in the park, and near the foul rooming house where he slept on an inside porch in exchange for doing a few regular chores.

Once, in the park, when he was particularly out of his skull with Mad Dog, they even snapped pictures of him.

It went on like this for nearly a month. Then it was September. Cold weather would be coming soon—it was already brisk.

Mrs. Gargan, who ran the house where he flopped, was a blowsy woman, somewhat gin-soaked herself, who sometimes fed him chicken parts out of pity.

"You have visitors," she said dryly one afternoon in the second week of the month while he was attending to the trash. "They're waiting in your room. My, you are a mess."

"Thank you," he said.

"Should I serve tea?"

He ignored her and went to the crusty, paint-peeling, fly-speckled, roach-infested porch where he slept on a bare mattress with a torn Army blanket.

The young man and young woman greeted him.

They were posh-looking close up, expensively dressed and groomed, and very clean. They reminded him of a white rabbit he'd owned once.

He'd been clean like that.

He frowned at them, but said nothing. There was something inevitable in the air, as though all three had known they would eventually meet face to face.

Finally he said, "What is this?"

They were standing at the far side of the porch by an orange crate where he kept what belongings he owned. He went over and slumped on the ratty mattress, took out his bottle in the brown paper bag, uncapped it, and drank.

"We've come to offer you a proposition," the girl said. "My name is Georgia Summers, and this is my brother D'Arcy. We know your name is Brundell. You don't have to say anything. Just listen, hear us out."

He didn't respond.

"I'll speak plainly," Georgia Summers said. "We know you're alone in the world. You have nobody, no family at all. We know your condition. Suffice it to say, we know everything about you—"

"Damned little to know," her brother said.

Brundell looked at D'Arcy Summers, not liking him. He liked Georgia though. She was sweet and wholesome, and somehow understanding.

"You've obviously suffered for a long time," the girl said. "You've drunk yourself into a weakened condition, and you're unable to really care for yourself." She hesitated. "This is the proposition. You come to live with us, and we'll take care of you—you'll have a new name, good clothes, food, a place to stay—"

"Yes," D'Arcy said, "and all the liquor you can drink. Good liquor—not that rotgut."

"I like sherry," Brundell said. "Mad Dog, Green Lizard."

"Green Lizard?"

"Never mind," the girl said. "You won't have to worry about a thing. Just be there, that's all."

"What's the catch?" he said, summoning the street conditioning of years. You never got something for nothing, and this something they were outlining was the Bum's Big Dream, the one that kept derelicts sane through the long torturous nights. ("Sure, y'know, they was rich as hell. They picked up ol' Marty and took 'im home and he never did a lick since . . .")

But there had to be a catch.

"There's no catch. Just a condition, that's all." The girl was smiling at him.

"Tell him, for heaven's sake," D'Arcy said.

"Yeah," Brundell said, tilting the bottle for a quick swig. "May as well."

"All right," the girl said. "You're fifty-three, Mr. Brundell. You have two years of college, and you speak well when you're reasonably sober. You've traveled a lot, until the past few years. You were in the Merchant Marine, the Korean War. You're not altogether a—a—"

"Bum," Brundell supplied.

She sighed. "We were orphaned when we were very young and live with our aunt—her name's Wilhelmina Shuster—we've lived with her for many years. She has a brother, August Shuster, who vanished twenty years ago. He wrote her a couple of times, but that's all. They were very close, as brothers and sisters go, and closer than usual. Our aunt is dying, Mr. Brundell. She won't last long, and she keeps calling for her brother. The doctor believes it would be very helpful if he appeared. We're sure he's long dead, but we want to help Aunt Willy. We've told her we hired investigators and are on his trail. Can you guess the rest?"

"I'm August?"

"Yes. You're Aunt Willy's brother. You look like him. God knows; we've searched everywhere, and you have the background to fit. Now just in case you're thinking it won't end when Aunt Willy dies, you'll have the choice of continuing to live on with us or we'll pay you a good sum and let you go. Either way, you win."

"Yes," D'Arcy said. "And all you'll have to do is spend a lot of time with Aunt Willy, regale her with tales of your wanderings, and stuff like that. She won't question you much. She's too old and sick for that. And we'll acquaint you with things about her childhood and August's so you'll know. But there won't be much need of it. She's in a coma most of the time."

Brundell stared blearily at them. He really didn't give a damn about the conditions. It was a chance, *the* chance, and he knew he would take it. It was out of the blue and it tickled him straight to his toes. He had absolutely nothing to lose.

They were afraid he would say no, he could tell. He let them wait a few moments, enjoying their eagerness and their fear.

"What d'you say?" Georgia Summers asked.

"Well, I dunno," Brundell said.

"I *don't know*," D'Arcy corrected him. "I told you, Georgia, it's the one thing Aunt Willy will suspect about him—his speech. He's got to speak the King's English."

The girl ignored him. "What do you say to our proposition, Mr. Brundell?"

"It's a go," he told them. "And as for the King's English, I'll knock her dead with it. I've read books in my time, plenty of books."

Georgia smiled at D'Arcy and her brother frowned.

First they took him to a massage parlor, where he took a steam bath and was mauled by a burly fellow who talked too much. When he went to his locker, he found Georgia and D'Arcy waiting with fresh clothing. Clean underwear, socks, a brand new suit that looked expensive, and brogues.

He badly needed a drink and mentioned it.

They stopped at a cocktail lounge and he was treated to whisky and water. He could only drink half of it, and that nearly knocked him off his head. But he savored the dimly lit interior, the soft music, and the fresh clink of glass and ice. He could learn to drink whisky again, couldn't he?

He ate some soup, managed another half glass of whisky, and they started for home, D'Arcy and Georgia telling him facts and anecdotes they wanted him to remember about August's early days with Aunt Willy. He retained perhaps half of it, and told them so.

"It'll do," Georgia said. "Aunt Willy will believe you're August, don't worry. The main thing to remember is that that's your name from now on. Tonight we'll get to the handwriting."

"The signature," D'Arcy said.

"Yes. You'll have a bank account and you'll be signing checks in August's name. A touch illegal, perhaps, but I think you can do it. You don't mind, do you?"

They were riding, three in the front seat in a roomy new-smelling Cadillac Eldorado.

"Certainly, Georgia," he told her. "I'll carry it through."

He felt oiled, on springs already, and also a kind of contented weariness he hadn't experienced for many years.

The meeting with Aunt Wilhelmina went off well, better than he had expected. She was very excited, but it was obvious, as they had told him, that she was dying. It was in her eyes, in the way she lay unmoving on the bed, in the way she spoke. After a half hour she said:

"Now I can die in peace, August. You've come home, where you belong. After I'm gone, you can look after dear Georgia and D'Arcy, show them a good time. They've been very kind to me all these years and they deserve some fun. It's inconsiderate of me to die, but it can't be helped."

"Don't talk that way, Willy," Brundell said, "you'll be with us for a good long time."

"You still drink a good deal, don't you, August?"

"Well, a drop now and again."

Aunt Willy sighed. "I'll never forget the time you took your first drink. I suppose you recall, August? You and I were together."

He did not know. They hadn't told him. But Georgia came to his rescue.

"Time for your medicine, Aunt Willy. No more talking now. August's home for good, and you'll see him every day. Time enough then for memories."

"Yes, all right. Thank you, dear."

They took him to a tailor and helped him order clothing of all kinds. He took a driver's test, passed it, and they bought him a car, a Triumph he loved. He wasn't drinking so much now, and with the new sobriety and the good liquor when he did drink he sensed wonderful new horizons. He gloried in this existence. He had been meant for good things. His health was improving rapidly. But he had always been like that. Taken in a stupor to a clinic, he'd always responded quickly to the care.

Now he had the best food in the world, the finest vitamins, and perfect care. The house itself was a mansion that stood on fifteen acres. There was a cook, a gardener, and a maid.

He had an entire wing to himself, a suite of rooms. He bathed twice a day in a black marble tub with gold-plated fixtures. True, there was a rundown atmosphere about the place, but he set this down as a condition of aristocracy.

He was August Shuster, with a bank account, not large but accom-

modating, pleasant in-laws, and a dying sister.

It took a month and a half, with Aunt Willy still lingering, before the truth came out. He had not really suspected what would happen, but still possessing the street sense that had been with him for so long, he was prepared.

They came to his room during the night. It was dark with clouds outside, no moon, no stars. He wakened to a footstep, snapped on the light, and stared at them.

"Hello, August."

D'Arcy stood at the foot of the bed with a gun in his hand. Georgia was at his side. They were in their pajamas, D'Arcy's striped with blue and gold, Georgia's a flushing pink.

"What's this?" he asked.

Georgia sighed. D'Arcy cleared his throat.

"You're home at last, August," D'Arcy said. "Your return was celebrated in the newspapers, and you've grown reaccustomed to it here. But now it's all over. I'm afraid we've lied to you.

"Georgia," he said, "go over there and break the window on the balcony, then unlatch the French doors."

She did as she was told. She broke the window with a hairbrush, unlocked the door, and opened it. A gentle wind tugged at the curtains, the lavender drapes.

"I don't understand," August said.

"I'll fill you in, old timer," D'Arcy said, holding the nickel-plated revolver steady on Brundell where he lay in the big bed. "August Shuster was a wealthy man when he vanished. The fortune he left behind has grown into a mountain over the years and has never been drawn on. You know those papers you signed a week ago? You didn't pay much attention, the way you've been signing things with my uncle's name. Well, that was the bank asking you to verify the standings of your wealth. You were left this estate and a vast fortune by your father. Aunt Willy had some, true, but most of it has been spent. Do you see?"

"I think so."

"You don't, but you will. Our Uncle August made a will before he vanished, stating that upon his death all his money would go to Georgia and me, with some for Aunt Willy. But his death has to be verified

unconditionally before we can collect, of course. We were unable to do that, so we did the next best thing when Aunt Willy's money started to run out: we searched for a ringer. And we found you. You are a ringer, you know?"

"I've seen pictures of him, yes."

"You're a real ringer, Uncle August."

"Yes, I suppose so, as a matter-of-fact."

"Now you're a nice old guy really, and I hate to do this, but I must. I'll kill you and we'll blame it on an intruder. Your will is valid. Aunt Willy will probably pass away with the shock and Georgia and I'll have everything."

Georgia sighed. "I'm truly sorry, Uncle August."

"Yes," Brundell said. "I am Uncle August. That's correct. And you are my family. I intend to keep it that way—" and with that he shot D'Arcy Summers through the bedclothes with the automatic he'd kept at hand for the past two weeks. He hadn't known why he'd purchased the gun exactly, but he'd felt better with it. Now he knew—about everything.

D'Arcy sprawled on the floor, dead. Georgia went for his revolver on the carpet, but Brundell was much too fast. He had it in his fist almost before she moved.

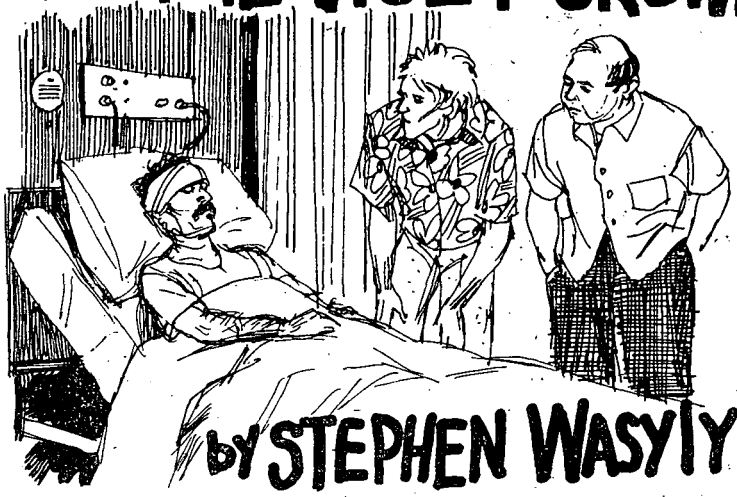
"Now, Georgia," he said. "Run and explain what's happened to Aunt Willy. I'll call the police. There was an intruder and he shot D'Arcy. I tried to catch the fellow, but he slipped away down the balcony. He left only his gun, see?"

Brundell wiped the black automatic carefully on his red silk pajamas, then tossed it to the floor.

"I'm certain we'll be happy together, Georgia dear," he murmured, patting her arm. "I've really become accustomed to having a family since my return."

It is well known that international playboys pursue beautiful women . . .

THE KIDNAPPING OF THE VIOLET GROWER



by STEPHEN WASYLYK

The morning sun brightening the dining room of the Golden Age Retirement Center, Inc., found Morley hurrying through his breakfast and merely glancing at the headlines of the morning paper, one of which announced the kidnapping of the wife of a prominent businessman, a story he ordinarily would have read eagerly.

Closing the paper with a flourish, he smoothed his bright Hawaiian shirt and ran his hands over his bushy grey hair. "Hurry, Bakov," he

said to the heavy man across the table. "We have many things to do before it is time to visit Miss McIlhenny in the hospital. Can you not eat your breakfast quickly?"

Bakov stirred his oatmeal with a deliberate slowness. "I have been thinking of poor Miss McIlhenny," he said.

"There is no cause for worry. The doctors have said she will be all right."

"What do the doctors know? Can they make Miss McIlhenny laugh again as she used to years ago? Although she is eighty-two and alone in the world, Miss McIlhenny is entitled to laugh. I remember the way it was before the inflation, when the residents would pay only a dollar and a bus would take us on a long trip to some interesting place like the seashore or the mountains. Miss McIlhenny enjoyed those trips more than anyone, but now the bus costs five dollars and many of us do not have the money, including Miss McIlhenny, which may be why she does not laugh any more. I think that perhaps if Miss McIlhenny could take such trips she would laugh again."

Morley's fingers drummed the table top slowly. "That is a deep thought, Bakov."

"Am I to stop thinking because I am seventy-five?"

"Indeed not. I say it only because I am surprised that your mind is not busy with complaints about the diet person and your breakfast. Next, you will tell me you like the oatmeal."

Bakov lifted his spoon, tilted it, and let the oatmeal plop back into the bowl, distaste in every movement. "That is as impossible as the bus rides for a dollar."

Precisely at the visiting hour of ten, they stepped from the elevator on Miss McIlhenny's floor and made their way down the long corridor, passing a large young policeman standing before the doorway of the room next to hers. Morley glanced at him curiously.

A petite nurse, her auburn hair pinned up beneath her white cap, her eyes green and sparkling, and her teeth even and white, stepped from Miss McIlhenny's room and held up her hand.

"Oh, Mr. Morley, Mr. Bakov," she said. "You will have to wait because the doctors are with Miss McIlhenny at the moment."

"We will wait," said Morley. He leaned forward, his voice confidential. "Tell me, why does the young policeman stand in the hall

like a large blue statue?"

"I guess I can tell you," she said. "Everyone in the hospital knows. Did you read about the kidnapping yesterday afternoon?"

"I was too busy to do so. Who was kidnapped?"

"Julia Flaxworth, the wife of Julius Flaxworth, who invented something when he was young and made a fortune manufacturing it." She sighed. "Why can't I meet somebody like that? I'd be happy to grow old with him while I spent his money."

"Kidnapping a helpless rich woman is a terrible crime," said Morley, "but you have not yet said why the large young man stands in the hall."

"He's guarding the only witness. Mrs. Flaxworth was kidnapped yesterday afternoon while working in her garden where she raises prize-winning violets. With her was a friend, Ziggy Peru, an international playboy who the gossip columnists hint had something going with Mrs. Flaxworth. And Mr. Capistrano, the gardener. The two kidnappers struck Mr. Capistrano on the head and shot Mr. Peru. When Mr. Capistrano recovered consciousness he called the police, but before they could question him he collapsed and went into a coma. The doctors can't understand it. The blow on the head doesn't appear to be serious and the X-rays show nothing."

"It is believed the kidnappers might harm Mr. Capistrano?" asked Morley.

"That's what I hear," she said. "Before he collapsed he told the police only that there had been two men. They didn't even get a description, so they have no idea who they are looking for. Without Mr. Capistrano, they have nothing."

Morley frowned. "It is strange. Why did not the evil kidnappers also shoot the poor garden person in the first place? Then there would be no witness at all."

"I don't know." With a waggle of fingers and a smile, she headed for the nurses' station.

Morley, his hands tucked into his hip pockets, strolled after her slowly, Bakov lumbering behind.

As she passed the young policeman in the hall, she gave a little toss of her head. He smiled and touched his cap, his admiring glance following her.

Morley stopped before the young man. "Megan Regan is indeed a

bright young woman," he said.

The policeman grinned. "I see that age hasn't dulled your appreciation of feminine beauty. I've already proposed but she insists she intends to marry a rich man, not someone as poor as a cop. What she doesn't know is that I don't intend to stay in uniform forever. I have a college degree, I'm fairly intelligent, and I work hard. Soon I'll make detective and after that who knows? I could be police commissioner."

"She would make a fine police commissioner's wife," said Bakov. "What is your name?"

"Sean Casey."

"That is a good name for a police commissioner." Morley eyed the door of the room. "Mr. Capistrano is still unconscious?"

"The doctors are with him now."

The door of the room opened. A middle-aged, half-bald doctor who was burdened with a weight problem worse than Bakov's stepped into the hall, followed by a bearded young doctor with thick brown hair.

"It is as I suspected," said the older man. "He's suffering from traumatic shock brought about by the blow on the head."

"Is there a possibility he might be faking?" the younger doctor asked.

The older man's voice was condescending. "It's hardly possible that a man of his age would have the emotional and physical control to fake a coma under examination."

Sean Casey's head was turned toward the nurses' station at the end of the hall where Megan Regan stood talking. The door of Mr. Capistrano's room stood slightly ajar.

Pulling Bakov with him, Morley slipped inside and closed it.

Bakov's voice was a horrified whisper. "*What are you doing*?"

Morley motioned him into silence.

The man on the bed was small and slightly built, with curly hair that projected above a white bandage like a crown, his healthfully tanned face bisected by a full black mustache. He lay still, his eyes open and fixed on a spot on the ceiling. The arms resting outside the sheet were strong and sinewy, the body flat and hard from years of outside labor. Although Mr. Capistrano was in his sixties, he looked strong enough to outwork, outeat, and outdrink the doctor who had examined him.

Morley nudged his shoulder. "I am Mr. Morley. This is Mr. Bakov."

Mr. Capistrano lay motionless.

"I do not think you are in this coma," said Morley. "I think you are too healthy to be bothered by a little hit on the head in spite of the words of the fat little head doctor."

Mr. Capistrano's eyes never moved.

Morley sighed and turned away, took a step and whirled back, in time to see Mr. Capistrano's eyes flick away from him.

"Aha!" said Morley triumphantly. "It is as I thought. You are playing the game of the possum, but you cannot fool the doctors forever. Why will you not speak to the police?"

Mr. Capistrano held a frantic finger to his lips. "Not so loud!"

"What kind of man are you?" demanded Morley. "A poor woman has been kidnapped and an unfortunate international playboy killed. You are the only witness, yet you refuse to help."

"You don't understand." Mr. Capistrano motioned them closer. "Ordinarily I'd do anything to help, but I'm no fool. When the two men came in with the Halloween masks on their faces, Mrs. Flaxworth screamed. One of them told her to shut up and slid a white sack over her head. As he did, the sleeve of his grey coveralls slid up and I saw a tattoo above his right wrist."

"That is indeed a wonderful clue," said Bakov. "You should have told the police immediately."

"Wait," said Mr. Capistrano. "I was holding a small spade and when I raised it to crown him, the other man hit me. When the police arrived and I started to tell them what had happened, one of the young detectives reached for his notebook—" Mr. Capistrano's voice sank to a fearful whisper. "*He had the same tattoo above his wrist!*"

Bakov gasped. "How could that be? A kidnapper could not also be a detective!"

"I wasn't taking any chances. The kidnapper had no way of knowing I'd seen that tattoo unless I said so and I wasn't about to do that when he could be standing right in front of me. I collapsed and pretended I couldn't speak until I could decide what to do. To tell the police was ridiculous. They wouldn't believe me. They would say the knock on the head had scrambled my brains. The doctors would say the same thing. And the detective with the tattoo would know that I could connect him to the crime. He would find it easy to get rid of me."

Morley frowned. "That is a real dilemma. Is it possible you are mis-

taken? Although this is not as popular as when I was a boy, many men have tattoos above their wrists."

"Not like this. How many could have a large red rose surrounded by the message *I Love Mother Rose* in blue ink?"

A sound at the door snapped Mr. Capistrano rigid, his eyes again fixed on the ceiling.

A heavyset man with close-cropped hair came into the room, followed by a thin young detective with a badge pinned to his lapel and a middle-aged man in a well cut blue suit.

The heavyset man stopped short when he saw Morley and Bakov, closed his eyes, and stood for a moment before allowing one of them to open, as if hoping the two men were apparitions that might disappear.

His lips thinned, an internal pressure sending color creeping up his face, both eyes fully open now, bulging with anger. "*What are you two doing here?*"

Morley folded his arms. "Why do you shout in the presence of a sick man, Lieutenant Hook? Do you not know you are in a hospital?"

Hook pointed at the door. "Get out!"

"Do not be so hasty with your get out," said Morley. "Perhaps we can help you solve this terrible crime as we did the others."

"I don't *need* your help!"

"Aha," said Morley. "Then you have returned Mrs. Flaxworth safely to her loving husband and you have placed the heartless kidnappers and murderers in jail where they belong." He shook his head. "But I do not think so. I think instead that poor Mr. Flaxworth has received a phone call demanding perhaps a million dollars for the return of his unfortunate wife and you are here because you desperately hope Mr. Capistrano will awake suddenly and tell you of the evil men who took her and killed the international playboy."

"It was a half million and it was a note, not a phone call," said the man in the blue suit. "But you are right. The ransom demand has been made. Unless Mr. Capistrano can help us, I must deliver the money by seven this evening."

Morley studied him. Julius Flaxworth was a handsome composite of things expensive, from his carefully trimmed grey hair to his imported shoes, but his pale face and tortured eyes flawed the picture.

Morley patted him on the shoulder. "Do not worry. We are very good friends of Lieutenant Ironhead Hook, the homicide person, who

we help when he has difficulty catching the vicious criminals."

Hook muttered under his breath, marched to the door, and motioned Casey inside. He pointed at Morley and Bakov. "How did they get in here?"

Casey's surprised eyes fixed on the two old men.

Hook placed a forefinger on Casey's big chest, emphasizing each word with a jab. "I have half a mind to suspend you without pay. No one but medical staff was to be allowed in this room, but you let in these—" he fumbled for words "—these doddering, ancient, dried-up—"

"Intelligent persons," supplied Morley.

"Busybodies!" snapped Hook. "They look harmless. They're not. There's no telling what damage they may have done."

"As usual you speak without thinking," said Morley mildly. "We came in to help. Who else is capable? The fat little head doctor? He comes and shines his little flashlight into Mr. Capistrano's eyes but he does not really look at the man. And you—" Morley's voice held a touch of indignation. "You know only the law and not people. The young policeman is to protect Mr. Capistrano from criminals. We are not criminals, but others may be." He pointed dramatically at the tall young detective. "How do you know *he* is not a criminal?"

"*He* is a policeman!" Hook yelled.

"I have heard of policemen who break the law," said Morley. "Not many, but a few. Would it do any harm to ask where the young man was when this terrible crime took place?"

"We have no time for such nonsense," snapped Hook.

"Wait a minute," said the puzzled young detective. "I was on duty in the squad room, filling in for McGonigle, who is sick. You know that, Lieutenant."

"Of course," Hook said and turned back to Morley and Bakov. "Now please leave."

"If you insist," said Morley. He paused before the young detective and held out his hand. "I am Morley. What is your name?"

Surprised, the young detective shook hands, revealing a tattoo above his right wrist. "Sativa."

"That is an interesting tattoo," said Morley. "Your mother was named Rose?"

"Not exactly. Rose was the name of my foster mother."

"She must have been a good woman. Did she raise many foster children?"

Sativa shook his head. "Only me and her real son. We were like brothers."

"The real son has a tattoo also?"

Sativa's eyes widened. "How did you know that?"

"It seems logical," said Morley modestly. "Where is he now?"

"At Mr. Flaxworth's plant. Larry is chief of security there." Sativa turned to Flaxworth. "You know him, Mr. Flaxworth."

"I thought I recognized the tattoo," said Flaxworth, "but my chief of security is named Hagweed, not Sativa."

"I was under no obligation to change my name," said Sativa.

Morley broke in. "It's a big place, this plant?"

"There are three buildings," said Flaxworth. "One for the offices, another for manufacturing, and a warehouse for storing inventory."

"Business must really be excellent for you to require three such buildings," said Morley.

Flaxworth frowned. "Unfortunately, business is off at the moment. We're working only one shift and our inventory is so low the warehouse is almost empty . . ." He broke off, folded his arms, and turned angrily to Hook. "We came here to question Mr. Capistrano, not to talk about foster brothers, tattoos, and my plant."

Hook glared at Morley and thrust a furious thumb at the door.

"We will go," said Morley. "But before we do so I will tell you a few things." He held up his index finger. "Number one, you cannot question Mr. Capistrano because he will not answer you." He held up another finger. "Two, it is not necessary to question him at all because we have considered the facts and have solved the whole mystery—we know where poor Mrs. Flaxworth is being held against her will." The third finger popped up. "Number three, we must stay here to keep poor Miss McIlhenny company because she has no one, so we will allow *you* to go and rescue the unfortunate Mrs. Flaxworth."

They all stared at him until Hook's resigned voice broke the silence. "I'm a fool for asking, but where do you think she is?"

Morley gestured impatiently. "Obviously, she is in Mr. Flaxworth's empty warehouse because she was kidnapped by the chief of security Hagweed. What better place to hide her than a place where no one would look?"

Hook purpled, his voice growing louder with each word. "*And how did you reach that remarkable conclusion?*"

"It is not necessary to shout," said Morley. "It is very simple. The kidnapper has a tattoo such as Detective Sativa wears, and since *he* could not be the kidnapper it must be the foster brother, Hagweed."

Sativa's voice was angry. "Larry wouldn't do anything like that! How do you know the kidnapper has a tattoo like mine?"

Like Lazarus rising from the dead, Mr. Capistrano sat up slowly, bringing a stunned silence to the room. "Because I told him," he said.

Hook's unbelieving eyes swung from Capistrano to Morley.

Morley gestured at the door imperiously. "Do not waste time here. Mrs. Flaxworth requires your help." He frowned. "Perhaps Bakov and I should go, after all. I am not sure you are capable. . ."

Hook poked a trembling forefinger at him. "I'll speak to you later!" To the others he barked, "Let's go!"

After they had rushed out, Mr. Capistrano sighed. "I'm glad that's over. You don't know what a strain it's been, pretending to be in a coma. I haven't had much practice since my wife died. She liked to talk, you know."

When Morley and Bakov checked Miss McIlhenny's room, they found that the doctors had spirited her away to the nether regions of the hospital for a series of tests that would require several hours. They returned to Mr. Capistrano who made up for his self-imposed silence by talking nonstop until an excited Megan Regan dashed in with the news that Mrs. Flaxworth had been found, bound, gagged, and blindfolded in a vacant office in Mr. Flaxworth's almost empty warehouse. She also announced that Sean Casey had arrested Larry Hagweed after a brief struggle.

Morley smiled. "It seems to me a brave person like Sean Casey who might someday be police commissioner would be a good catch for a wise young woman."

Megan Regan leaned close and whispered, "You're right, Mr. Morley, but don't push it. It has to be handled just right so the big clown thinks it's his idea." She flounced out.

Mr. Capistrano began pacing the room. "Do you realize I'm still in danger? The other kidnapper is still loose. Until the police put him in a cell, I'm in trouble because only I can place Hagweed at the scene of

the crime."

"Perhaps the security person Hagweed will tell them where to find the other man," said Bakov.

"If he did that, he'd be admitting he was guilty." Mr. Capistrano glared at Morley. "It's all your fault."

Morley smiled. "Do not be nervous. It does not matter what the criminal person Hagweed says or does. As they say on the television, he and his partner will take the fall for this terrible crime."

Bakov nodded. "They talk very funny on television. Once I watched a whole program and did not understand a word. Some evil men spoke of icing a broad, but the picture was about some poor young woman who locked herself in a hotel room that did not even have a refrigerator and smoked cigarettes. At the end, everyone shot everyone else so there was no one left to explain. There was only the final scene of the poor woman's last cigarette burning a hole in the carpet, which must have made the poor hotel manager very angry."

Mr. Capistrano's eyes rolled. "I think I'll go back into my coma."

Morley cocked his head, listening. "I think it is too late."

Lieutenant Hook led the parade into the room: Mr. Flaxworth, his hand wrapped protectively around the arm of an attractive blonde woman dressed in slacks and a blouse, Detective Sativa, and Sean Casey.

Flaxworth stepped forward with the woman. "My wife insisted on thanking you personally," he said to Morley.

Mrs. Flaxworth took Morley's hand in both of hers. "They told me you deduced where I was being held. I shall be eternally grateful."

Morley nodded. "You should thank Mr. Capistrano also. He noticed the tattoo and received a knock on the head when he tried to protect you."

"Of course," she said. She hugged Mr. Capistrano warmly. "Thank you, dear friend. Soon we shall be back together raising our prize-winning violets." Her eyes filled with tears. "Poor Ziggy," she said. "He can no longer give us his expert advice. I'll be happy only when the terrible man who shot him is brought to justice."

"Hagweed was alone in the warehouse and he refuses to talk," said Hook. "Mr. Capistrano, you must tell me everything you can remember about the other man."

"I can't tell you a thing," said Mr. Capistrano. "He was behind me

and he never even spoke."

Hook scrubbed at his jaw with the edge of his hand. "All right. We'll simply have to check out Hagweed's friends one by one."

"You will waste your time and the taxpayers' money," said Morley.

"Mr. Morley," said Hook wearily, "as much as I hate to admit it, you've been a big help. Don't spoil it now."

"I spoil nothing," said Morley. "I wish only to point out it is not necessary to look for the second man. He is already in this room."

Hook stared at him for a moment, then cleared his throat. "You had better explain or, so help me, I'll book you for withholding evidence."

"The evidence is in front of your eyes," said Morley. "When Mr. Capistrano tried to help Mrs. Flaxworth, he was not shot, he was merely struck on the head. Obviously, it was because no one *desired* to shoot him. But why not? Like the international playboy, was he not a witness who could cause trouble?" Morley turned to Mrs. Flaxworth. "After the man placed the bag over your head, you could not see but you could hear. Did the international playboy shout or attack the men or do something that would cause him to be shot?"

She held her face in her hands. "Oh dear. It was all so ghastly and confusing. All I remember is that horrible blackness and being terrified." She dropped her hands suddenly and stood rigid. "I heard it," she whispered. "I didn't think of it until now but I *did* hear it."

"Hear what?" asked Hook.

Horror crept into her voice. "One of men said, *'I'm sorry, Ziggy.'* " She began to weep, her face in her hands.

"You see?" asked Morley quietly. "The purpose of the crime was not to kidnap Mrs. Flaxworth but to kill Mr. Ziggy Peru, the international playboy. What real kidnapper would call him by his first name and apologize for shooting him? To find the man, you have only to ask yourself, who would do such a thing? The weeping Mrs. Flaxworth already knows."

They all stared at Flaxworth.

Hook's eyes swung to Morley. "Why?"

Morley sighed. "Can you not puzzle it out for yourself? It is well known that international playboys pursue beautiful women, only to cast them aside like used toys and break their hearts when they tire of them. Obviously, Mr. Flaxworth did not want that to happen to his beloved wife, but he could not simply shoot Mr. Ziggy Peru because

then he would be arrested. So with his inventor's mind, he planned to kidnap her with the help of his chief of security, Hagweed, who must also be his trusted friend. During the kidnapping, he could shoot Mr. Ziggy Peru and the police would never suspect him. Then he would pay the ransom to Hagweed, who would return it to him so it would all cost him nothing and Mr. Ziggy Peru would be dead, while his beloved wife could continue to grow her prize-winning violets without having her heart broken."

Hook gave his head a hard little shake as if tossing off the effects of a sudden blow. "That is so fantastic it makes sense." He turned to Flaxworth. "Suppose we go down to my office and talk about it."

Flaxworth smiled sadly, shrugged, then pulled a small revolver from inside his coat. "Don't move, please," he said. "I wouldn't want to hurt anyone."

Everyone froze. Except for Bakov, the little group had clustered in the open area at the foot of Mr. Capistrano's bed. Denied his usual midmorning snack of tea and little cakes, Bakov was pouring himself a glass of Mr. Capistrano's ice water in the hope that the cool liquid would still the rumbling of his empty stomach.

Flaxworth backed toward the head of the bed.

Hook, his hands half raised, said, "There is nowhere to go, Mr. Flaxworth."

"Of course there is," said Flaxworth. "The open window is an appropriate exit under the circumstances."

He stepped backward quickly, placing himself within reach of Bakov, who calmly brought the heavy plastic water pitcher down on his head, driving him to the floor, the pitcher splitting and gushing ice cubes and cold water over both of them.

Bakov gasped and went rigid before pulling his soaked shirt away from his body with a delicate forefinger and thumb. *"That . . . is . . . indeed . . . very . . . cold!"* he said in a quavering whisper.

Early that evening, Morley and Bakov watched the big black Mercedes head down the driveway of the Center and pause before joining the traffic in the street.

"The brother of Ziggy Peru is a nice person even though he is also an international playboy," said Morley. "It was not necessary for him to come and thank us for catching the murderer."

"He also explained how you were wrong about Mr. Flaxworth's reason for committing such a terrible crime," said Bakov.

Morley's voice was indignant. "How was I to know the international playboy intended to buy Mr. Flaxworth's business until he discovered that Mr. Flaxworth was in big financial trouble? Mr. Flaxworth begged Ziggy Peru to tell no one because he knew that if he had a little time he could set things right, but if Ziggy Peru told, Mr. Flaxworth would be ruined. But Ziggy Peru was not a nice person and desired to ruin Mr. Flaxworth's business so he could buy it for nothing. So Mr. Flaxworth killed him."

Bakov allowed himself a little smile. "Still. . ."

"One cannot be expected to know everything," said Morley loftily. "International playboys are supposed to chase only the beautiful women, and not also to buy entire businesses. That is indeed strange behavior for an international playboy and if Mr. Ziggy Peru had only trifled with Mrs. Flaxworth as he was supposed to do perhaps Mr. Flaxworth would not have shot him."

"Ah, well," said Bakov. "It is over and tomorrow poor Miss McIlhenny returns from the hospital which is a good thing."

"We will have a surprise for her," said Morley, smiling.

"A surprise? Why do I not know of this?"

"Because you were hungry as usual and left to eat your dinner. The brother of Ziggy Peru insisted we deserved a reward but I told him we could not accept money for capturing a vicious criminal which is only our duty as citizens. But I thought of what you had said this morning and I spoke to the director and he agreed. The brother of Ziggy Peru will give him the money and the director will arrange for a few bus trips to the mountains and the seashore such as we used to have before the inflation and everyone may go for nothing, including poor Miss McIlhenny so perhaps she will laugh again."

Bakov chuckled. "That is indeed wonderful but it is to be expected of an international playboy."

"I do not understand."

Bakov's eyes were innocent. "Do not international playboys exist to make the ladies happy?"

Another mirror on another wall with another story to tell . . .

LADIES OF THE EVENING

by S.S. RAFFERTY

They both felt uneasy, and showed it in the way they added the last touches to their makeup. Each was silently critical of the other. Ronnie felt that Marion was being too lavish with mascara and lipstick. It was cheap, although it had to be admitted that Ronnie's own makeup case was as expensively stocked as any around.

The real reason for the contempt was jealousy. Ronnie was thickening around the middle, and dreading the stricture of the girdle on the

dressing table, while Marion was fastening the garter belt around a fantastically small waist and rolling a taupe stocking up from foot to leg to thigh—a very firm thigh.

"A little old-fashioned, isn't it?"

"The garter belt, you mean? Well, you have to give them what they like."

"How long have you been at this?"

Marion thought for a moment. "Five—no, six months."

"Well, just wait till you have a few years behind you. You won't be so fancy then. It'll be just another night."

"Well, I'll tell you," Marion chuckled. "I think if you're going to do something, you should do it well. And I'll tell you frankly, I don't know how you survive in that awful dress and ratty hat. Who are you doing, Marjorie Main?"

Ronnie scowled.

"Hey, look, it's your own game, so don't pay any attention to me. But we do have to work the stroll together, and I just have a feeling that your get-up won't draw flies. You look dowdy. Matronly."

"Talk about gall," Ronnie fumed, pulling the girdle up over ample hips. "Time was when I could knock over four or five a night, and I didn't need any sleazy dresses or plastic see-through shoes either."

Marion adjusted a strap. "What do you mean, sleazy? This dress is satin. Very expensive."

"Your problem is that you overdo it. The makeup, the clothes, the shoes. Day-of-the-week panties, for God's sake. Today is Tuesday, by the way. You're wearing Friday."

"Maybe I'm thinking Tuesday. Who cares? And as far as records go, five a night is no big thing. I've tricked thirty-eight this week!"

Readjusting spitcurls over a slightly wrinkled forehead, Ronnie turned and snapped, "You've got to realize this neighborhood's a helluva lot different from the Bronx. It's a whole different kind of traffic."

"They'll love me," said Marion assuredly, blotting lipstick and adding a touch more mascara.

"Ready *now*?" Ronnie asked impatiently.

"As I'll ever be," Marion said perkily.

"Well, come on, dearie. The trade's waiting. Just watch yourself tonight. I hear you like to take chances."

They adjusted their dresses, and left the room on spiked heels. Out-

side, there were whistles.

"Nice frame on this one," one of the men said with a leer.

"Naw, Sergeant Donnelly is cuter," said another.

The girls ignored them and sashayed out of the precinct house. Sergeants Marion Donnelly and Ronald Collins, the best decoy cops in the business, were on duty together for the first time.

"I don't know," said the communications officer to the watch commander. "It doesn't seem to me those guys are going to get along. Ron Collins looks ticked off."

"You'll understand when you hit 45, my boy," the watch commander said. "Everything goes to hell for a guy after that. You get touchy about the younger competition."

Neighbors can be like women—you can't live with 'em and you can't live without 'em . . .

YOUR MOVE, CHARLIE

by ERNEST SAVAGE

When she asked him where he thought he was going with that suitcase in his hand he said he was going to visit an old Army buddy for a few days. But instead he drove his Datsun pickup to a town he'd found on the map that looked just right, small enough and far enough away. It was called Mountain Meadows, and driving up the good two-lane road from the valley he knew he was going to like it. It was high enough at 2,500 feet to have four seasons and he could grow apples

there, he thought, something he'd always wanted to do. On the coast they have one season all year and there's not much you can do with it.

The real-estate agent he went to in Mountain Meadows was friendly and efficient. He told her what he wanted and how much he had to spend and the third place she showed him he said he'd buy. Late that afternoon they opened escrow at the title company on Main Street.

He paid the full purchase price with a cashier's check he'd brought with him and the escrow officer said they could probably convey title to the property in less than three weeks if he wanted. He said three weeks would be fine and when they asked him how he wanted to take title to the property, he said as Walter A. Jenkins, a widower.

That didn't surprise the real-estate lady. Mr. Jenkins had looked like a widower to her from the first. Sixty-six years old, skinny as a starved rat, and just plain worn out with life. She figured his wife had probably died not long before, but she didn't ask. She liked him, but she didn't think he'd last long; a year maybe and the place would be back on the market again. She'd seen it happen before. A lot of people came up here to retire but couldn't get their old roots down in the new soil and quickly faded away. She had a good nose for future listings and she smelled one now. Still, she thought, you couldn't help liking him; there was something in his eyes, like a secret.

He stayed over that night in a motel in Mountain Meadows and first thing in the morning he went out to look at his new place. It would do nicely, he thought, even on the morning after, so to speak. A good garden area with a fence to keep the deer out, a separate roomy garage/workshop set back where he would want it, and a stout little house with decent enough furniture in it, considering it had been vacant for six months. He'd bought it "as is" and was well pleased despite all the deferred maintenance. He would want things to keep himself busy.

Three weeks later when she asked him where he thought he was going with that suitcase in his hand again he said to visit the same friend. He'd be gone maybe four days this time, he said.

It was his second trip to Mountain Meadows and the first thing he did when he got there was drop by the title company and pick up his grant deed and policy of title insurance and a set of keys to the house. Then he went to the bank and opened a checking account with five

hundred dollars in cash, and rented a safe deposit box for the deed and policy. Then he went around to the utility offices and ordered services started the next day, putting down cash deposits in lieu of references. He said he came from back East and references wouldn't do them any good anyway. Then he went to a nursery and bought a set of garden tools and a few bales of redwood mulch and talked to the man there about how to deal with the local soil. Everybody was so nice and friendly that he found himself smiling back at people for the first time, it seemed to him, in years.

There was about an hour of daylight left when he got out to his place and he unloaded his stuff in the workshop, opened up the house to air, and started looking around, feeling the pleasure in him grow. What he liked most was the roominess of the place, a hundred fifty feet wide by two hundred deep. When you've lived in a third-floor walkup for thirty years you lose your sense of space.

There were only two neighbors you could see through the tall stands of pine and oak and he liked that too. Directly across the black-topped road was a small freshly painted house with what looked like some fruit trees out back, and immediately adjoining on the west was another place about the size of his and about as run-down looking. He'd have to buy some paint soon, he thought, and get started on that when the trees and garden were in. Something like pride of ownership was already stirring in his blood. On the east side there was nothing but pine and oak, but he'd remembered seeing on his way past a big old house set deep among them, and that pleased him too. He felt he had a great deal of catching up to do, a great deal of happiness to gather around himself, and this was surely the place to do it.

At last light he walked his yard, planning the layout of the trees—cherries, pears, apples, all the good cold-weather fruit—and then he saw his neighbor to the west, a man. He was standing behind his house with what looked in the fading light like a can of beer in his hand. They looked at each other for a moment and then the man seemed to raise his beer in salute and Walter raised his right hand in a tentative response.

That night Walter stayed at the motel in town, and as soon as the stores opened in the morning he bought a stock of food at the grocery store and a few more bales of redwood mulch and a hundred feet of hose at the nursery.

When he got back home—as he thought of it now—the water had been turned on and the electric and gas men were there waiting for him. After they'd gone, Walter marked the precise spots where he'd plant trees and he laid out the future vegetable garden according to a plan the nurseryman had given him. Then, after lunch, he began to dig. He worked all afternoon until the light began to fade.

He'd overdone. His back hurt and his hands were blistered and when he straightened up spots danced before his eyes. He groaned out loud, not hearing or seeing his neighbor standing on the other side of the fence until he spoke.

"How about a cold beer?" the neighbor said. He had a can of beer in each hand and Walter hobbled over to accept one. The cold beer felt beautiful in his blistered hand and even more so going down his throat.

"Thanks," he said. "It really hits the spot."

"You look tuckered." The man stuck his hand over the fence and Walter took it, wincing under the pressure.

"My name's Charlie Wells."

"Walter Jenkins," Walter said.

"You alone, Walter, or married?"

"Alone," Walter said. "Are you married?"

"You better believe it," Charlie said and Walter caught a familiar note in the tone of his voice. Bitter, baffled.

For a moment they stood looking at each other, recognizing each other, and then Charlie said, "Any kids?"

"Nope," Walter said. "Do you?"

"Nope, sorry to say. She never wanted any—the wife, that is. She said they was nothing but trouble and most of the time I guess they are, but I'd sure like a grandkid or two to visit up here. It's great country for kids."

"Yes, it is," Walter said, having thought that already himself. "Kids and dogs. I figure to get a dog soon."

"You buy the place, Walter?"

"Yeah, just closed escrow. I'll be moving up permanent a week or ten days from now."

"Up from where?"

"Well—San Francisco." He hadn't really wanted to reveal that and wouldn't have if he hadn't been so damn tired. He felt like sagging to

the ground right where he stood.

"We're from Sacramento," Charlie said, "Maude and me. I retired six months ago and we came up here to try it out. Maude says you can't tell about a place for a year or two, but I say you can't tell about living that long at our age. We're renting, which is just a waste of money as far as I'm concerned." Charlie thought that Jenkins looked pretty bad, but he knew he didn't look a hell of a lot better himself. Just a couple of beat-up old men in what they called the golden time of life, he thought. "Well," Charlie said, "I guess I better be getting back or you'll hear old Maude bellow for me. She likes to keep an eye on me. Nice meeting you, Walter. I'll see you later."

"Thanks for the beer," Walter said.

He took a long hot soak in the tub that night and gave himself a stern lecture. He'd overdone and gotten too tired and had almost said "*We'll* be moving up" instead of "I'll." The trouble was he hadn't talked to anyone for so damn long—ever since he'd retired himself a year ago—that he'd almost forgotten how. But still, he felt good sitting in the hot water thinking about his trees and the whole bright future ahead. And if ever a man was creating his own destiny, it was surely he. Poor Wells, he thought obliquely. The plan was so simple when you thought about it, and if you had the guts to do it—and above all, he supposed, if the circumstances permitted. Maybe they wouldn't in Wells' case.

The next morning he didn't get out in the yard until after ten and it was all he could do to pick up the shovel and get on with the digging. But it was a job that had to be done, and done soon.

"Looks like a grave," Wells said a half hour later. Walter hadn't seen him come up to the fence and was startled. He looked critically at the hole he'd been working on and thought: by God, it does look like a grave.

"What it is," he said, "is what they call the French Bio-Dynamic Intensive Method of Gardening. I've got this pamphlet on the subject. They've been developing it over at Stanford or someplace." *Calmly*, he said to himself. "What you do is, instead of turning just one foot of topsoil, you turn two, only I'm turning four myself because the guy down at the nursery said this ground is so damn porous you'll lose all your water if you don't mulch it deep. Then"—was he going on too

long?—"you take the top dirt and put it on the bottom and the bottom dirt on the top and lace it all with redwood compost. That way—"

"We had a garden in the place we sold in Sacramento," Wells said, "but Maude says why start anything up here until we know we like it? She wouldn't even let me put in a tomato, for God's sake."

Wells had sounded wistful about it underneath the permanent bitterness, and Walter sighed with relief. There were so damn many things you had to watch, you didn't know which way to look. He studied the hole again and decided it didn't look like a grave at all, it was just a big sloppy hole in the ground and Wells had said that to start a conversation. Or maybe Wells had graves on the mind.

"What're you gonna put in?" Wells said.

"Well, right here a cherry tree—a bing. And an apple, a peach, a pear, an apricot, and maybe an almond over there." He pointed.

"Well, get dwarf size," Wells said. "I would. That way you can throw a net over 'em when the fruit ripens. Keep the birds off."

"That's a good idea, Charlie, thanks." They smiled at each other and Walter thought: He'll be a friend, the first since I left the job. Not that he really wanted one. What he wanted was just peace. But still, a friend was a friend.

He went back to work and Charlie drifted back to his house. Just before noon, a woman who introduced herself as Miss Hanley came over from the house across the road with a peach pie in her hand. She introduced herself, welcomed him to the neighborhood, and handed him the pie. A piece of cheesecloth was draped over it.

"I'll want that cloth back," she said, "and the pan too, but not the pie, Mr. Jenkins. Stella said you needed building up and Stella was right."

"Who's Stella?" His blood surged a little at the strange name and he wiped the sleeve of his shirt across his sweating brow.

"The real-estate lady who sold you the place," Miss Hanley said. "She said for me and Irma to fatten you up. Irma's my sister. Her and I ran our own restaurant in Stockton for twenty-five years and if there's one thing we know about it's food."

"You've got a nice-looking place," Walter said.

"Thanks. We just painted it again this spring." She turned and looked at it critically. "It does look nice, don't it?"

"I'm going to paint mine as soon as I settle in," Walter said. "White,

like yours. It's cooler in the summer."

"Good! Brighten up the neighborhood. I don't mean to cast no aspersations," Miss Hanley said, looking sharply at Charlie's place, "but some people have no pride."

"They just rent," Walter said.

"So what? It's where they live, ain't it? How long's she been dead?"

"Who?"

"Your wife. You're a widower, Stella says."

"Oh—well, let's see." Walter blinked twice and picked a number. "Six months now, I guess."

"You miss her?"

"Well—after forty years." Long years, he'd almost said. He was wishing Miss Hanley would go away. He was hot and tired and more nervous than he'd ever figured to be about it. He hadn't figured on being nervous about it at all, it seemed so right to him.

"Myself," Miss Hanley said, "I never married and neither did Irma and neither one of us is sorry about it. Our parents were at each other's throats every day and we had enough of that when we was kids."

"Well, sometimes it's that way," Walter said.

"It was that way with you, wasn't it, Mr. Jenkins?"

"Well, it wasn't all good, that's for sure." A weak smile wavered across his face.

"Tomorrow," Miss Hanley said, "we make soup. Irma'll bring you over a big pot in the afternoon and you eat it, mind?"

"I'm leaving tomorrow morning," Walter said quickly. He had planned on leaving the day after, but at the moment flight seemed the better part of valor. "In fact, this pie—"

"Eat it!" Miss Hanley said sternly. "It'll look good on you. If you don't finish it before you leave, you can freeze what's left. When are you coming up permanent?"

"First of the month," Walter said.

"Well, we make soup twice a week, so there'll be some for you when you get here."

"That'll be nice."

She looked him up and down critically and shook her head as though she didn't think he'd make it. "Somebody hasn't been feeding you," she said and Walter thought: That's true, that's always been true.

He watched her as she turned and strode back across the road, a short, powerfully built, no-nonsense kind of woman with crisp grey-blue hair framing her round good-looking face. In his relief at her departure, he found that he liked her.

The pie was delicious and he ate half of it at lunch, with milk, and the rest that evening with coffee. He'd take the cheesecloth and the pan back in the morning before he left.

There wasn't much to do. The utilities were included in the rent and he'd cut the phone off months ago when he realized it hadn't been used since he retired. He'd have to notify the union business office of the change of address for his pension check, but that was nothing. He supposed he should notify the post office too even though they practically never got anything but a bill now and again and some union stuff. He couldn't remember the last letter they'd received. There was the bank account to close out and he would stop by the real-estate office and pay another month's rent along with giving his 30-day notice on his way out of town. He'd take the TV and all the clothes—certainly *all* the clothes—and the suitcases and the trunk, but he'd tell them they could have the rest of the stuff, such as it was, if they wanted it.

And what else? He worried that he might forget something, particularly since he'd been up to Mountain Meadows and seen how many different ways they could come at you without even knowing it. He'd gone over it time and again, ticking it off on a list in his head. He'd need some help getting the trunk down the back steps from the third floor—he'd known that from the start—but there was this big kid down at the corner he figured he could get. And if somebody saw them it wouldn't matter. Thirty years they'd lived in that building and didn't know a soul in the place. He could hardly believe it. Let's just try it for a month or two, she'd said, and they'd been holed up there ever since. If it hadn't been for the job he'd have gone mad years ago.

And what else? Nothing, he thought. It was just a matter of doing it now.

He arrived at Mountain Meadows at 10:30 on the night of the 30th, a day early. He'd told Miss Hanley and Charlie Wells he'd be coming up on the first and figured they'd be looking for him then, not now. He pulled into the garage, turned off the lights, shut off the motor,

and sat for five minutes before getting out.

He wasn't nervous, but he felt a kind of animal sense of caution. The Hanley place was dark, but he thought he saw a light through the trees at Wells'. You never knew about Charlie, given that wife of his. He could be out prowling around the yard just to be out; it would be like him to come over and offer to help unload the truck, and that wouldn't do. Walter stood by his back porch for another five minutes, watching and listening.

The half moon was brighter than he would have thought possible. It shone down through the clean air like a night scene in the movies where you could see a quarter mile in every direction. He hadn't figured on that, which just goes to show you, he thought. But it had to be done now, so he did it. It was only 30 feet or so from the back of the pickup to the hole in the ground where the cherry tree would go, and it didn't take him more than a quarter of an hour, even with all the shoveling.

He was up early the next morning and went downtown to have his breakfast before the nursery was open. He returned around 10:00 with six trees in 15-gallon cans on the bed of the truck. He looked like a mobile park coming down the road, but there was no help for it. He put the cherry in first and had the hole filled and packed and the watering basin laid out before Charlie showed up at the fence.

"You're a day early," Charlie said.

"There was no special reason to stay down," Walter said, "so I came up last night."

"Thought I saw you," Charlie said. "Around eleven or so."

"Yeah." Walter tightened the grip on the shovel in his hand.

"Is that a dwarf?"

"Yeah."

"That's smart," Charlie said. "Throw a net over a dwarf tree when the fruit ripens and the birds won't get it."

"I know." Walter's grip on the shovel handle relaxed. Wells didn't look good at all, he thought, worse than before. His skin was grey as a whale.

"When you gonna get that dog you was talking about?"

"Oh, not for a while yet," Walter said.

"If I was free like you," Wells said, "I'd have a dog right now. No

companion like a dog."

"You're not free?"

"You know damn well I'm not, not with the kind of wife I've got. What kind of a wife did you have, Walter?"

"Something like yours, I guess."

"I thought so. I could smell it on you."

Irma Hanley came over late that afternoon and introduced herself and welcomed him home. She had a pot of soup in her hand and looked him up and down the way her sister had, as though there was a lot of work to be done here. "Split pea," she said, "with a lot of ham in it and thick enough to roll into balls. Build a man up, Mr. Jenkins."

"Thanks," he said.

"Has your house been swamped out yet?"

"What?" What brought that on, he thought. "Well, I've—"

"I mean we know this woman that's good at it and don't charge much. Near a year's worth of crud in that place."

"Well, I've started on it," Walter said, wondering why they always came at him when he was so damn tired. "And I'm pretty good at it myself. I mean housekeeping."

"Wife was sickly, was she?"

"Well—" Lord God, he thought, and said, "Well, in a way, yes."

"Passed on—when? Six months ago, was it?"

Was that what he'd told the sister? "Yes—about that," he said.

She looked past him at the trees, all of which were in their holes now. "It's good to see a man put trees in the ground," she said. "It shows he's got faith in the future. Eat that soup, Mr. Jenkins. We make it twice a week."

"Yes, I know," he said. "Thanks again."

Late that August, Stella Williams, the real-estate lady, stopped by to see him. He'd just finished painting the place—white with yellow trim—and it looked pretty as a picture. It would make a great little listing, she thought, coming up the drive.

The Hanley woman had told her she wouldn't recognize Mr. Jenkins after four months and she almost didn't. He was in his back yard talking to Charlie Wells through the fence. He'd just given Charlie a big sack of corn and was telling him how to cook it—"You don't boil it,

Charlie, until it comes loose from the cob, about seven, eight minutes is all."

"Well, I never!" Stella said. "Mr. Jenkins, you look marvelous!"

"Thanks," he said. "Feel good too." He smiled at her.

"And your garden!" she said. "And your house! I can't hardly believe it!"

"This here," Walter said, "is my neighbor, Charlie Wells. Charlie meet Mrs. Williams." Stella turned to Wells, half hidden behind the bag of corn, and the smile fell off her face as though pulled with a string. The man is half dead, she thought.

"A pleasure," she said, offering her hand over the fence.

"Same," Charlie said, giving her hand more than a firm shake; he'd seen her smile die and it made him mad. *He* knew what he looked like.

He thanked Walter for the corn and said that he was glad to have met Mrs. Williams and turned and walked away, seething. He felt like a man caught in a giant spider web and he knew if he didn't bust out of it soon the spider would eat him like a fly.

When she asked him where he thought he was going with that suitcase in his hand he said he was going to visit an old Army buddy. But he didn't go visit an old Army buddy, he went down to San Francisco and did some snooping around he'd had in mind to do for quite some time now. He was back in the middle of the second afternoon, but he didn't go see Walter until the next morning. He was clean-shaven, which surprised Walter. Walter had almost never seen Charlie clean-shaven.

"Walter," Charlie said, "I know all about it."

"All about what?" Walter said. He was staking a tomato plant that was growing more fruit than it could handle. He straightened up; he knew what was coming.

"Look," Charlie said, "I don't want to cause no trouble—"

"Well, then don't, Charlie."

"I won't," Charlie said. "At least not for you. But I want to know what happened, just how you did it."

"Did what?"

"Come on, Walter! Look, I went down to San Francisco day before yesterday. I looked you up in an old phonebook and I found out where

you lived. And I found out something else too. I found out your wife didn't die no ten months ago or whatever. I found out she didn't die at all."

"Then where is she?"

"You want me to tell you?"

"No. No, I don't."

The two old men stared at each other for a moment, but there was no animosity between them; just different kinds of fatigue.

"Tell me how it went," Charlie said quietly.

Walter sighed. "You should have done it when you came up from Sacramento," he said. "What it takes is that you've got to move, you've got to move at least two hundred miles away. And what it takes is she can't have no sister or brother or friend who might wonder about her. And it takes a pretty low type woman to qualify, Charlie."

"I've got one."

"And you've got to have guts enough to do it, Charlie."

"That's all I've got left," Charlie said, "just the guts."

"It's not easy, Charlie, no matter what she's like."

"I know that, but what've I got to lose?"

You've got *me* to lose, Walter thought, but he didn't say it. It will unravel, he thought. Charlie picked it up from me and somebody'll pick it up from Charlie and maybe the third or fourth down the line will blow it and it'll unravel all the way back to me. But he'd known it would; he'd known it couldn't last. At first he'd thought that it might be the elusive perfect crime, but he'd soon learned there's no such thing. And there shouldn't be, he thought. You buy something one day, you pay the cost the next. It's the law.

"You've got to be careful," he said. "And maybe, for starters," he added, beginning to grin, "your new place shouldn't be next to a guy like you."

"I get you," Charlie said, and he began to grin too, the first time in months.

"And another thing," Walter said.

"What?"

"Watch where you plant your trees."

"Huh? Why?"

"You see that cherry—?"

"Yeah, it's not doing so well, is it? Is that where?"

"Yeah, that's where."

"Poison—"

"Yeah, poison."

"There's a lot to watch, isn't there?"

"More than you know," Walter said.

"Should I do it, Walter?"

"It's your move, Charlie."

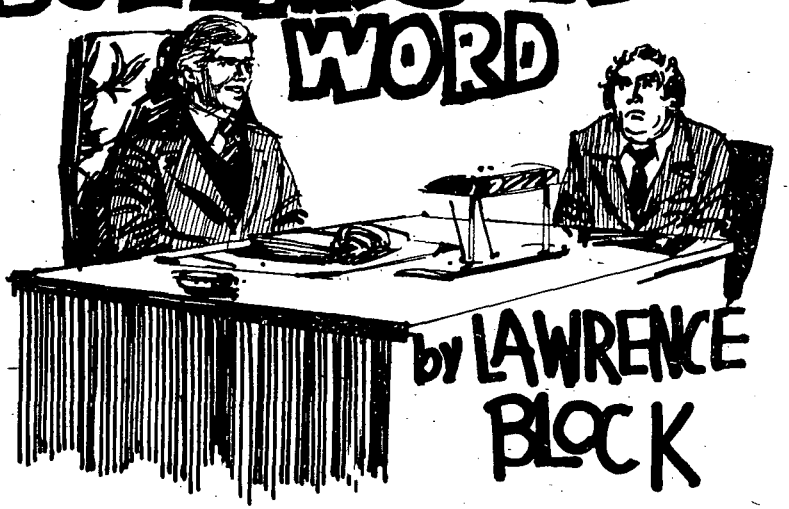
Charlie gazed through the trees at his house and the smile on his face died. There's not one damn thing I've got to lose, he thought. "I think I'll do it," he said.

"I was afraid you'd say that," Walter said. "Well, come on in," he said, "and I'll tell you how it went."

Before he turned toward the house, he took a long look at his baby grove and wondered if he'd ever see fruit on the lacy young limbs.

When a writer is desperate to earn more than 5¢ a word he's likely to write anything . . .

ONE THOUSAND DOLLARS A WORD



by LAWRENCE BLOCK

The editor's name was Warren Jukes. He was a lean sharp-featured man with slender long-fingered hands and a narrow line for a mouth. His black hair was going attractively grey on top and at the temples. As usual, he wore a stylish three-piece suit. As usual, Trevathan felt logy and unkempt in comparison, like a bear having trouble shaking off the torpor of hibernation.

"Sit down, Jim," Jukes said. "Always a pleasure. Don't tell me you're

bringing in another manuscript already? It never ceases to amaze me the way you keep grinding them out. Where do you get your ideas, anyway? But I guess you're tired of that question after all these years."

He was indeed, and that was not the only thing of which James Trevathan was heartily tired. But all he said was, "No, Warren. I haven't written another story."

"Oh?"

"I wanted to talk with you about the last one."

"But we talked about it yesterday," Jukes said, puzzled. "Over the telephone. I said it was fine and I was happy to have it for the magazine. What's the title, anyway? It was a play on words, but I can't remember it offhand."

" 'A Stitch in Crime,' " Trevathan said.

"Right, that's it. Good title, good story, and all of it wrapped up in your solid professional prose. What's the problem?"

"Money," Trevathan said.

"A severe case of the shorts, huh?" The editor smiled. "Well, I'll be putting a voucher through this afternoon. You'll have the check early next week. I'm afraid that's the best I can do, Jimbo. The corporate machinery can only go so fast."

"It's not the time," Trevathan said. "It's the amount. What are you paying for the story, Warren?"

"Why, the usual. How long was it? Three thousand words, wasn't it?"

"Thirty-five hundred."

"So what does that come to? Thirty-five hundred at a nickel a word is what? One seventy-five, right?"

"That's right, yes."

"So you'll have a check in that amount early next week, and if you want I'll ring you when I have it in hand and you can come over and pick it up. Save waiting a couple of days for the neither-rain-nor-snow people to get it from my desk to yours."

"It's not enough."

"Beg your pardon?"

"The price," Trevathan said. He was having trouble with this conversation. He'd written a script for it in his mind on the way to Jukes' office, and he'd been infinitely more articulate then than now. "I should get more money," he managed. "A nickel a word is . . . War-

ren, that's no money at all."

"It's what we pay, Jim. It's what we've always paid."

"Exactly."

"So?"

"Do you know how long I've been writing for you people, Warren?"

"Quite a few years."

"Twenty years, Warren."

"Really?"

"I sold a story called 'Hanging by a Thread' to you twenty years ago last month. It ran twenty-two hundred words and you paid me a hundred and ten bucks for it."

"Well, there you go," Jukes said.

"I've been working twenty years, Warren, and I'm getting the same money now that I got then. Everything's gone up except my income. When I wrote my first story for you I could take one of those nickels that a word of mine brought and buy a candy bar with it. Have you bought a candy bar recently, Warren?"

Jukes touched his belt buckle. "If I went and bought candy bars," he said, "my clothes wouldn't fit me."

"Candy bars are twenty cents. Some of them cost a quarter. And I still get a nickel a word. But let's forget candy bars."

"Fine with me, Jim."

"Let's talk about the magazine. When you bought 'Hanging by a Thread,' what did the magazine sell for on the stands?"

"Thirty-five cents, I guess."

"Wrong. Twenty-five. About six months later you went to thirty-five. Then you went to fifty, and after that sixty, and then seventy-five. What does the magazine sell for now?"

"A dollar a copy."

"And you still pay your authors a nickel a word. That's really wealth beyond the dreams of avarice, don't you think?"

Jukes sighed heavily, propped his elbows on his desk top, tented his fingertips. "Jim," he said, dropping his voice in pitch, "there are things you're forgetting. The magazine's no more profitable than it was twenty years ago. In fact, we're working closer now than we did then. Do you know anything about the price of paper? It makes candy look pretty stable by comparison. I could talk for hours on the subject of the price of paper. Not to mention all the other printing costs, shipping costs,

and more other costs than I want to mention or you want to hear about. You look at that buck-a-copy price and you think we're flying high, but it's not like that at all. We were doing better way back then. Every single cost of ours has gone through the roof."

"Except the basic one."

"How's that?"

"The price you pay for material. That's what your readers are buying from you, you know. Stories. Plots and characters. Prose and dialogue. Words. And you pay the same for them as you did twenty years ago. It's the only cost that's stayed the same."

Jukes took a pipe apart and began running a pipe cleaner through the stem. Trevathan started talking about his own costs—his rent, the price of food. When he paused for breath Warren Jukes said, "Supply and demand, Jim."

"What?"

"Supply and demand. Do you think it's hard for me to fill the magazine at a nickel a word? See that pile of scripts over there? That's what this morning's mail brought. Nine out of ten of those stories are from new writers who'd write for nothing if it got them into print. The other ten percent is from pros who are damned glad when they see that nickel-a-word check instead of getting their stories mailed back to them. You know, I buy just about everything you write for us, Jim. One reason is I like your work, but that's not the only reason. You've been with us for twenty years and we like to do business with our old friends. But you evidently want me to raise your word rate, and we can't pay more than five cents a word to anybody because we haven't got any surplus in the budget. So rather than raise your rate, old friend, I'll have to give your stories back to you. I don't have any choice."

Trevathan sat and digested this for a few moments. He thought of some things to say but left them unsaid. He might have asked Jukes how the editor's own salary had fluctuated over the years, but what was the point of that? He could write for a nickel a word or he couldn't write for them at all. That was the final word on the subject.

"Jim? Shall I put through a voucher or do you want 'A Stitch in Crime' back?"

"What would I do with it? No, I'll take the nickel a word, Warren."

"If there were a way I could make it more you know I would—"

"I understand."

"You guys should have got yourselves a union years ago. Give you a little collective muscle. Or you could try writing something else. We're in a squeeze, you know, and if we were forced to pay more for material we'd probably have to fold the magazine altogether. But there are other fields where the pay is better."

"I've been doing this for twenty years, Warren. It's all I know. My God, I've got a reputation in the field, I've got an established name—"

"Sure. That's why I'm always happy to have you in the magazine. As long as I do the editing, Jimbo, and as long as you grind out the copy, I'll be glad to buy your yarns."

"At a nickel a word."

"Well—"

"Nothing personal, Warren. I'm just a little bitter, that's all."

"Hey, think nothing of it." Jukes got to his feet, came around from behind his desk. "So you got something off your chest, and we cleared the air a little. Now you know where you stand. Now you can go on home and knock off something sensational and get it to me, and if it's up to your usual standard you'll have another check coming your way. That's the way to double the old income, you know. Just double the old production."

"Good idea," Trevathan said.

"Of course it is. And maybe you can try something for another market while you're at it. It's not too late to branch out, Jim. God knows I don't want to lose you, but if you're having trouble getting by on what we can pay you, well—"

"It's a thought," Trevathan said.

Five cents a word.

Trevathan sat at his battered Underwood and stared at a blank sheet of paper. The paper had gone up a dollar a ream in the past year, and he could swear they'd cheapened the quality in the process. Everything cost more, he thought, except his own well chosen words. They were still trading steadily at a nickel apiece.

Not too late to branch out, Jukes had told him. But that was a sight easier to say than to do. He'd tried writing for other kinds of markets, but detective stories were the only kind he'd ever had any luck with. His mind didn't seem to produce viable ideas in other areas. When

he'd tried writing longer works, novels or non-fiction, he'd always gotten hopelessly bogged down. He was a short-story writer, recognized and frequently anthologized, and he was prolific enough to keep himself alive that way, but—

But he was sick of living marginally, sick of grinding out story after story. And heartily sick of going through life on a nickel a word.

What would a decent word rate be?

Well, if they paid him twenty-five cents a word, then he'd at least be keeping pace with the price of a candy bar. Of course, after twenty years you wanted to do a little better than stay even. Say they paid him a dollar a word. There were writers who earned that much. Now, there were writers who earned a good deal more than that, writers whose books wound up on best-seller lists, writers who got six-figure prices for screenplays, writers who wrote themselves rich.

One thousand dollars a word.

The phrase popped into his mind, stunning in its simplicity, and before he was aware of it his fingers had typed the words on the page before him. He sat and looked at it, then worked the carriage return lever and typed the phrase again.

One thousand dollars a word.

He studied what he had typed, his mind racing on ahead, playing with ideas, shaking itself loose from its usual stereotyped thought patterns. Well, why not? Why shouldn't he earn a thousand dollars a word? Why not branch out into a new field?

Why not?

He took the sheet from the typewriter, crumpled it into a ball, pegged it in the general direction of the wastebasket. He rolled a new sheet in its place and sat looking at its blankness, waiting, thinking. Finally, word by halting word, he began to type.

Trevathan rarely rewrote his short stories. At a nickel a word he could not afford to. Furthermore, he had acquired a facility over the years that enabled him to turn out acceptable copy in first draft. Now, however, he was trying something altogether new and different, and so he felt the need to take his time getting it precisely right. Time and again he yanked false starts from the typewriter, crumpled them, hurled them at the wastebasket.

Until finally he had something he liked.

He read it through for the fourth or fifth time, then took it from the typewriter and read it again. It did the job, he decided. It was concise and clear and very much to the point.

He reached for the phone. When he'd gotten through to Jukes he said, "Warren? I've decided to take your advice."

"Wrote another story for us? Glad to hear it."

"No," he said, "another piece of advice you gave me. I'm branching out in a new direction."

"Well, that's terrific," Jukes said. "I really mean it. Getting to work on something big? A novel?"

"No, a short piece."

"But in a more remunerative area?"

"Definitely. I'm expecting to net a thousand dollars a word for what I'm doing this afternoon."

"A thousand—" Warren Jukes let out a laugh, making a sound similar to the yelp of a startled terrier. "Well, I don't know what you're up to, Jim, but let me wish you the best of luck with it. I'll tell you one thing. I'm damned glad you haven't lost your sense of humor."

Trevathan looked again at what he'd written.

> I've got a gun. Please fill this paper sack with thirty thousand dollars in used tens and twenties and fifties or I'll be forced to blow your stupid head off.

"Oh, I've still got my sense of humor," he said. "In fact, you know what I'm going to do, Warren? I'm going to laugh all the way to the bank."

Harper wondered how much of their mother's propensity for doom had been handed down . . .

THE PRODIGAL BROTHER

by WILLIAM BANKIER

The ceramic mug on Norman Harper's kitchen table was in two shades of blue with a streak of sunshine yellow. Norman pulled out his chair and sat down opposite Karen and his daughter Anita. Before he took his first sip of coffee, he said,

"This is new, isn't it?"

"I got it yesterday at Peter Jones," Karen said. "To replace your old favorite that got broken. Do you like it?"

"Nice. It's all sky and light. It's the way I feel."

"That's why I picked it."

Never in his life had Harper been so inclined to say how happy he was. Back in Montreal before he moved to England, when he was locked into the public-relations business, a sense of well-being was a rare thing. When it happened, he hesitated to mention it for fear it would go away. But here in Wimbledon, out of the P.R. rat race and being well paid to do a job he would have performed for nothing, he found himself continually talking about his good fortune.

"What's on for you today?" Karen asked.

"Not much. I'll walk over to the office and answer a couple of letters." Simply by meeting and impressing some key people and by being the right man at the right time, Harper had landed the plum job of publicist for the All England Lawn Tennis Club. This meant his main job was to provide the news media of the world with material about the annual prestige tennis tournament known as Wimbledon Fortnight.

"See this?" Anita Harper was holding up the morning newspaper, indicating a grainy photograph on the business page. "That's the computer section, and that's me."

Harper took the paper and saw his daughter with a couple of male colleagues huddled around a printout. She looked cute and businesslike with her feathery short-cut hair and her tinted spectacles down her nose. On arrival in London three years ago, Anita had taken a job with an American petroleum company now busy drilling for offshore oil in the North Sea. With no experience or training but with diligence and a quick brain and a charming sense of humor, she had managed three promotions and was now sitting very prettily indeed.

"Great picture," Harper said. "Must be trick photography—you look as if you're working."

"Daddy!"

Harper finished his coffee and held the new mug, still warm, in both hands. There was something very nice about it; he liked this mug. "How about you, Karen? Can you meet me for lunch?"

"I was going to tame the garden," she said. "But for lunch, I could be persuaded to change my plans." Lunch with Norman meant a good feed at one of their favorite restaurants in Knightsbridge. And then they usually went on to drift through the Victoria and Albert or the

Natural History Museum, as bemused by the vast halls and pillars and the exquisitely made cabinets holding the exhibits as by the bones and paintings and cameos themselves.

"If you want to take advantage of the sun to do the garden . . ." Norman began.

"That's all right, I can garden tomorrow." Karen's confidence came from an awareness that England was experiencing its second consecutive summer of drought. "It never rains in sunny Southern Counties," she said.

Anita got up and took her handbag from the top of the refrigerator. "If you guys are going to start doing song titles," she said, "I'm getting out of here."

"I'll see you out." Karen pushed back her chair.

"No need."

"I want to make sure you're really gone."

Alone at the table, Harper turned the new mug in his hands, enjoying its smooth slide against his skin, enjoying the easy feeling in his stomach. He would never take this lack of tension for granted. There had been fifteen years of the other life, the chemical taste in his mouth, the sudden awareness that he had been sitting rigid for an hour and the ache in his muscles when he forced himself to relax. Now, at 43, he felt like a well fed lion basking in the sun. Was this the way everybody else lived or was he now one of the lucky few? He suspected he was one of the lucky few.

The mug had something etched on the bottom of it. Harper turned the base around and saw the words, "Hand Made in England by Chelsea Crafts." Then he saw the initials, TH.

He recognized those initials, the way they were formed. The T was joined to the H by a coiled line like a little length of electric wire. Norman's big brother Tom had invented this logo for himself years ago when the two boys spent all their time together. Norman had made one too, a more obvious symbol using a common upright line between the initials. But Tom had made a big thing of the coiled wire. They were reading *Tom Swift and His Electric Rifle* at the time and this symbol of power was important to him.

Karen was back in the kitchen. "What's the matter?" she said, sounding concerned.

"Look at this."

"I know. They make a lot of ceramics there."

"I mean the initials."

"TH?"

"Tom Harper."

It was all he needed to say to her. Karen knew all about her husband's missing brother. Perhaps missing was too dramatic a word but they both agreed it had gone beyond the point of a man being too lazy to answer letters. Four years ago, when they were still in Montreal, their Christmas card to Tom had come back marked, "Not at This Address."

"Is it Tom's sign? That's incredible," Karen said.

"It's even the way he makes the letters. It has to be him."

Harper was feeling a surge of excitement. If Tom was here in London, it would be too much. He had been blaming himself for losing sight of his brother, although the truth was that Tom had been the one to let the correspondence lapse. Still, Norman had seen Tom coming apart, the drinking, his resignation from the teaching post at Kitchener High School, then the failed marriage and separation from his wife and sons. It was not enough for the brother with the stable life to write letters and sit back waiting for replies. He should have gone to Tom, spoken to him, taken hold of him, helped him, instead of leaving him to sink or swim.

Now it looked as if Tom was just down the road in Chelsea. What a fantastic break. It was not too late—he could find him and they could get their lives back together again after all these years.

"Let me have the telephone directory, will you, Karen?" Harper said. There was a compact, contained look about his big, greying head and the boyish lips were firm as he ran his finger down the column of names. The ceramic mug was at his elbow. "Here it is," he said. "Chelsea Crafts, 25A Wellington Mews."

"Do you want me to dial?" Karen reached for the telephone.

"Too early." Harper was reading his watch. "There won't be anybody there before nine-thirty. Anyway, it would be better if I go and see them."

When he was shaved and dressed and at the front door with Karen, she said, "If you run into Tom you won't feel much like meeting me for lunch."

"This could have been made last year." Harper hefted the mug in a

plastic bag. "He might have quit and moved on."

"Still, why don't we make lunch another day?" She could see the excitement in his eyes, could imagine the anticipation he was feeling. "Concentrate on what you're doing."

"What I'll do is phone you as soon as I know," Harper said. "We might lunch late and go see that new Bogdanovitch in Leicester Square."

Harper walked to Wimbledon Park underground station and caught a District Line train to Sloane Square. Here, not exactly sure of the streets, he hailed a taxi and gave the driver the Wellington Mews address. Then he sat back and stretched his legs in the spacious spanking-clean interior of the cab and thought about Tom. Was it possible he was going to see his brother here in London after so much time? The coincidence of finding his initials on the mug was incredible, but such things had happened to him before.

When had he last laid eyes on Tom? This was a difficult question. A flood of memories came rushing in on Harper—Tom dribbling in and scoring a jump shot for the school basketball team; Tom entering the house, tanned, dusty, and exhausted after a day's labor in the railway yards; Tom in his cassock and surplice waiting confidently for the organ to introduce the processional hymn so he could fill the church with his soaring tenor.

The taxi rocked around a 90-degree turn and Harper held on. None of these images, he knew, related to the last time he had seen his brother. That was in Baytown railway station. He and Karen were on their way back to Montreal after a holiday weekend at home. Tom had driven them to catch the train and was waiting to see them off. His two boys were doing something pointlessly energetic around the platform pillars. The brothers stood silently watching and only now, years after the occasion, did it occur to Harper that they could have been watching themselves as children.

"Here we are, mate," the driver said. "Sixty pence, please."

Harper paid and as the cab drove away he looked around Wellington Mews. The paving was uneven brick, oil-stained in places. It was a narrow laneway lined on either side with former garages and stables converted now to dwellings and businesses. There was a lot of shiny paint in evidence, doors with brass fittings, and flowering trees in tubs

stood incongruously beside overflowing dustbins. A sign pinned to the door of Chelsea Crafts said, "Ring and Enter" so Harper rang and entered.

He saw a modern desk with a typewriter and a telephone on it and an attractive blonde girl behind it. When she saw him, she began to stand up, then frowned and sat down again. A glass-front cabinet held a display of mugs, pots, vases, and ashtrays. A flight of wooden steps led to the floor above where sounds of activity suggested to Harper that work was being done.

"Can I help you?" the girl caroled, each word on a different note. She loved her work, loved life, loved everybody who came through the doorway. Looking as she did, she probably got it all back with interest.

"Yes, I bought one of your mugs and I have a feeling I know who made it." Harper unwrapped and showed the mug. "TH. I think I know who did that."

"Those are, in fact, the initials of the craftsman," the girl said, "but I'm not supposed to identify our people. You'll have to speak to Mr. Gorman."

She pressed a button on her telephone and soon Mr. Gorman appeared from a doorway near the foot of the stairs. He was younger than Harper, bearded, very natty in tailored denim. He looked at the base of the mug as he listened to Harper's story.

"You're Canadian yourself, I expect," he said.

"Yes, I am."

"A Canadian made this mug. He was quite good, he could have been very good. Tom Harper."

Harper felt the floor slide back and forth under his feet. "He's my brother," he said, his own voice echoing inside his head. "Is he still here?"

"Afraid not." Gorman was looking at Harper in the way television doctors look at the relatives of dying patients. "You resemble him, you know. You'd better come into my office."

The office was small and crowded with filing cabinets and shelves of ledgers. Gorman's desk was littered with papers; his job was clearly the grubby side of the business, ordering materials that kept going up in price, trying to get customers to pay.

When he had cleared a seat for Harper, he sat on the edge of his desk and said, "As I told you, Tom Harper could have been one of our

best people; he could have made a lot of money. But he just wasn't reliable. I had to let him go."

"Alcohol?"

"Yes. And badly, not just the occasional Friday afternoon. As soon as he got some money ahead he'd vanish. We might not see him for a week. And after that, his work would suffer."

"Not just his work," Harper said. Gorman's holy attitude was getting to him.

"What?"

"*He* was suffering too," Harper said. "My brother was suffering."

"Oh, I dare say." English courtesy—I forbid you to have an argument with me.

"When did Tom finish up? When did you last see him?"

"What's today?" Gorman turned his desk calendar. "It'll be two weeks on Friday."

Harper felt the dizzy sensation again. Such a near thing! Tom had been walking back and forth on these premises less than fourteen days ago. "I don't suppose you have an address for him?"

"Nothing. He gave me an address for tax purposes once, but when I tried to contact him there they'd never heard of him."

Harper left Gorman in his office. The disappointment must have registered on his face because the girl behind the desk said as he went by, "Is everything all right, Mr. Harper?"

"Not really. I thought I'd found somebody but I guess I haven't."

"You're Tom's brother Norman, aren't you?"

Her knowledge made sense. Unless Tom had been lobotomized, he would find it mandatory to go after any woman as beautiful as this one. "He talked about me?" Harper said.

"We talked at times, yes." She gave a cryptic smile, some pride in it, some pain. "He thinks a lot of you. He kept saying you were the only member of the family to amount to anything. When he'd had a few beers he always got back to that."

"Thank you for telling me." It was worth a try. "Can you tell me where I might find him?"

She was fumbling inside her handbag. "I have an address." She took out a slip of paper and handed it to Harper. "He told me I could look him up there if I ever got the chance."

Harper looked at the scribbled address. "Montreal?" he said.

"That's right. He seemed to think London was going to become a problem for him. He said he was going home."

Harper copied out the address and gave the paper back to the girl. At least it was a place he could write to—not that Tom would ever reply. "Thanks a lot. This may help."

"I hope it does. If you see him or talk to him, tell him Gillian was asking. Gillian Mill."

"I will." It was hard to turn away from her. They were both smiling.

"I'd know you were Tom's brother even without an introduction. The resemblance is striking. You even dress the same."

"When we were kids, people thought we were twins." He tucked Tom's address in his pocket. "Well, thanks for the help."

"My pleasure. Ciao."

Outside, the sun was hammering down into the mews, reflecting from glass and painted brick, hurting Harper's eyes. He walked down the cobbled paving, the soles of his shoes slipping on the uneven surface.

From the shadowy doorway of an open garage, a voice said, "Harper?"

He turned and faced the darkness. "Yes?"

"Come here, me boy."

He took half a step forward and then instinct stopped him, a curtain of cold fear touched him and stopped him. A man stepped forward, put his hands on Harper's shoulders, and dragged him into the garage. Harper saw a freckled face and a lot of red hair parted on the side and combed wet. The man was in suit trousers and a striped business shirt, no tie, the sleeves rolled up. His ankle was bothering him—he limped.

Somebody else was in the garage. A fist hit Harper in the stomach and he almost passed out. The redhead was supporting him from behind as punches struck him on the chest and in the face. Harper had never been beaten up before and he was astonished to discover it didn't hurt. Not yet, anyway. He could smell motor oil and rust and the thought flashed through his mind that he would never inhale that sharp tang again without remembering the shock of fists smashing into him.

It was over and two men were sitting him on something hard, propping him against the wall. Now a face came close to his in the darkness, close enough so he could smell a pungent lemon aftershave. The voice against his ear was husky and confidential.

"Harper, me boy. We're letting you live because you did help. But don't try to disappear again. We may need you. And we can always find you."

When he felt strong enough to stand, Harper limped out into the light. The mews was peaceful and deserted and disavowed all knowledge of the nasty experience he had just undergone. His first inclination was to find a policeman, but something told him this was not the thing to do. He thought it out as he walked slowly towards the main street.

First of all, the police could do nothing for him except to look for unknown assailants. But the second point was the important one. This was obviously a case of mistaken identity. Harper had no enemies; the bullies were after Tom. And from what the voice said, Tom was involved with them. He had helped. So if the police got lucky and found the men, Tom might be the loser.

No, the thing to do was to make himself presentable enough to show up at home without terrifying Karen, and then to decide calmly the next move.

Harper's battered face made little impression along the street. Most people didn't notice him and the few who did glanced away instantly. He found a pub with a grotty washroom and a sliver of mirror in which he could see that he was not too badly off. One eye was swollen, his nose had stopped bleeding, the side of his jaw was bruised. He would check beneath his shirt when he got home, but he pressed his ribs now and decided none were broken.

As he washed in cold water, a surprising sense of well-being came over him. No, better than that; it was a feeling of triumph. This beating had been intended for Tom but Norman had absorbed it in his place. He had done something for his brother at last, and if his body was aching his soul was soaring.

The cleanup worked wonders—he had seen tennis players with hangovers who looked worse. Before he left the pub, Harper sat at an oak table splashed with colored light from a stained-glass window and drank a pint of ale. He let his mind go and by the time he went to catch the train home he knew what he had to do and what he had to say to Karen.

"It shouldn't take more than a couple of days," he said. They were

sharing the same folding reclining chair in the garden, Karen stretched out in her bikini and Harper seated on the footrest section. The concrete birdbath beside them was dry and so was the hard grey earth and the drought-scorched grass. "If Tom isn't in Montreal I can take the next plane back. But I have a feeling he'll be there."

"Never mind the next plane back," Karen said. "Stay at least a week. Enjoy yourself."

"If we're talking about a holiday, you ought to come too. Anita's old enough to take care of herself."

"It isn't a holiday. It's you finding your brother and having some time alone with him."

So Harper got on the telephone and booked a flight the next afternoon. Then he went around to his office at the tennis club and cleared himself for a week.

Dinner that evening was an intense affair for Harper. The heightened awareness he had felt after the beating was undiminished and he found himself valuing the company of his wife and daughter more than ever before. Karen made a banquet of it with four tall candles on the table, red wine in crystal goblets, and a massive joint of beef. She was a girl with a great sense of occasion and whenever Harper had reason to take a trip she always managed things so he felt he was a character in a film drama.

On this night, the sensation was one of a successful enterprise well and truly begun—yet his throat ached with the tug of potential tragedy just below the surface. He had concealed from Karen and Anita the facts of the attack upon him in the garage, his knowledge that the punishment was meant for Tom, and the implications this held if his brother was involved in something criminal. The way he told it, a couple of Chelsea football supporters had gone at it in a pub and Harper had made the mistake of mixing in.

Anita's boy friend showed up after dinner looking mandarin-like in his slim moustache and silken shirt. He shook Harper's hand and wished him a good trip, then he and Anita were gone to The Grapes and Karen could raise what was troubling her.

"What happened at the ceramics place today, Norman?" she said. "Did you learn something you haven't told me?"

"I learned Tom worked there until two weeks ago, that they sacked him for drinking, and that he's probably gone back to Montreal."

Harper never invented a lie for his wife, but sometimes the truth he told her was incomplete.

"But something is troubling you. I've sensed it all evening."

"Nothing. What do you think?"

"I think they told you something bad. Maybe Tom was very ill. Or maybe he stole from the company. I'm sorry—anything. Whatever it was depressed you so you went and got drunk and got into a fight."

"That's a marvelous scenario but there's no truth in it whatever." This was why he encouraged her to invent her own version of what happened; it pleased him to be able to reassure her by dismissing it out of hand. "Now come here," he said, "so I can eat your earrings. *Je suis le croqueur de diamants.*"

She left her chair and sat beside him on the settee. "Remember Zizi Jeanmaire?" Karen said. As newlyweds, they had seen a film featuring the leggy French dancer in an exotic ballet about a girl who ate diamonds.

Wine and candlelight and the recollection of that sensuous dance put Harper in just the mood for Karen, who could match legs with Zizi or anybody else. Anita came home in the early hours of the morning and smiled to find some of her parents' clothing abandoned in the living room. They were not like other mothers and fathers. They were like kids themselves.

Not appreciating farewells at airports, Harper kissed Karen at home and then journeyed out to Heathrow by himself. It was another fine day and the airplane took off right on time. His bruises and swellings were looking better but the ridge of eyebrow visible above his right eye was a reminder of Tom's situation and Harper thought about it as he sat in the plane drinking rye whisky.

The key to the mystery was that whispered statement, "We're letting you live because you helped." Obviously they were criminals of some sort and Tom had taken part in their activities—he had been useful. And he might be useful again, the voice had said; "We may need you." But what was the crime? Harper could not imagine Tom involved in anything as sordid as narcotics. But he had no illusions. With the same confident spirit in which he tried to score with anyone in skirts, Tom would knock over a bank or smuggle currency.

The whisky was doing its job. Harper closed his eyes and lapsed into

a sort of half dream. He and Tom were crouched behind the garage beside the old house on Standard Street in Baytown. Before them on the ground lay a heap of burnt-out cones and cylinders, the collected residue from last night's fireworks activities. Yesterday had been the 24th of May, Firecracker Day. The cardboard shells in their colorful wraps, pungent now with the smell of burnt gunpowder, deserved a more spectacular end than just to rot on wet lawns or in garbage heaps. The funeral pyre was Tom's idea and he had stolen a handful of matches from the box in the kitchen.

But before the stuff was properly ignited, their mother was among them and the blows she delivered were devastating because she had never struck the boys before. They ended up trembling in bed while she raged and wept below them.

Years passed before Harper began to understand his mother's exaggerated reaction to what was only a boyish prank. He himself began to experience periods of her grim Irish depression, which he would control, when the mood became unbearable, with a couple of red-and-black capsules. But Moira Harper had it all to do by herself, living in those dangerous years before such medication was developed.

Now, as the airplane carried him swiftly back to Montreal, within a couple of hundred miles of where his mother and his childhood were buried, Harper wondered how much of that Gaelic propensity for doom had been passed on from Moira to Tom, and perhaps even to himself.

After the plane landed and the limousine ran him in and dropped him on Peel Street outside the Mt. Royal Hotel, Harper did what he had done over twenty years ago when he first moved from Baytown to Montreal; he walked over to the Central Y.M.C.A. on Drummond Street and got a room. It was cheap and neat and uncomplicated there. He needed only a few minutes to unpack the single bag and as he put his things away in the musty chest of drawers Harper had an overpowering sense of being alone in the world. It seemed to go with the tiny room and its history of young displaced souls in residence. Thank God he could summon up Karen and Anita at a time like this. His cozy home in Wimbledon, his perfect job at the tennis club—he was *not* alone.

But Tom might be alone at this moment, facing all kinds of trouble from the mews attackers—or, worse still, unaware that the danger ex-

isted. Harper found the slip of paper with the address given him by Gillian Mill and went outside to hail a cab. It was less than ten minutes away, an apartment block on Lincoln Avenue. The somber maroon brick walls were coated with grime and the marble vestibule made Harper think of a grand lavatory.

A row of buttons, one for each apartment, was set in the wall near the inner door. The button for Number 7, Tom's according to the address slip, had no name card beside it. Anonymous to the end, Harper thought as he pressed and waited. A buzzer snarled inside the lock and he was able to open the heavy door and go inside.

The hallway smelled of soup and stained upholstery. Harper went up a short flight of marble steps and found the door marked 7 just off the landing. He knocked once and the door was opened immediately.

She was silhouetted against pale light from the room behind her and even before she spoke Harper recognized her.

"Surprise, surprise," Gillian Mill said. "Come on in."

He followed her into a kitchenette no bigger than a telephone booth. A kettle was steaming on a gas fire. "Tea's up," she said, getting down a second mug to set beside her own. She was obviously alone, Tom was not here. Harper felt a mixture of disappointment and racing excitement.

"Just like home," he said.

They carried their tea into the lounge and perched across the room from each other on cheap furniture. Out of the office setting, Gillian Mill looked younger and more vulnerable.

"Tom gave me a key as well as the address," she said. "I didn't tell you that."

"We have to hold back something."

"We're very close, Tom and I. It worried me when you came in looking for him the very next day after those two men."

"Red-haired chap?"

"With freckles. Then there *is* something going on." The mug trembled as she raised it to her lips. "Tom was worried those last few days. When he said he had to get out of London I thought he just owed money. But this is worse, isn't it?"

"I think so."

"Don't you know? You're his brother."

Harper touched his jaw where the swelling was almost gone. Beating

be damned, he had still never knowingly done anything to help Tom out. But that was why he was here.

"Where is he?"

"I don't know. I let myself in when I arrived this morning. I'm waiting for him to show up."

"You were quick off the mark."

"I told Mr. Gorman there was illness in my family in Cornwall. He gave me a couple of days off."

"Will that be time enough?"

She began to look more sure of herself. "Depending how things are with Tom, I may never go back at all."

The dim room in the dying building began to spook Harper. He gave the girl his telephone number at the Y and she promised to call as soon as Tom showed up. Then he fled into the sunshine and walked quickly downtown.

There was polished wood and a fine smell of beer inside The Shamrock. Harper took his customary stool at the end of the bar and began to drink Guinness from a fat black beaker. The bartender who served him left his post for a minute and disappeared through a doorway at the far end of the bar. A moment later he returned, followed by the aristocratic presence of Pat Leary, and the two of them stood together looking Harper's way like visitors at a zoo.

Leary put his arm around the bartender's shoulder and said something to him. Then he came towards Harper with a smile on his lacquered face and his right hand extended through cuffs of blue mohair and white lines. Harper could never be sure if Leary painted himself a little, but his skin had the rich tones of a cheap oil painting and you could count the individual hairs in his glistening black eyebrows.

"Norman, it's you," he said. "What a grand surprise. My boy just told me my old friend Tom Harper had showed up, but I'm equally glad to see you."

"I'm looking for Tom myself," Harper said. "How goes it with you, Patsy?"

"We're making money hand over fist. To tell the truth, it's embarrassing. The streets are full of wealthy American visitors, God save their troubled economy."

"Have a drink with me, Pat."

"I will. But it's on the house." Leary smiled at the bartender who bent to his refrigerator cupboards and began opening bottles. "So you're looking for your wandering brother," he said. "Last I heard, Tom was searching for you."

"Oh? I never heard that. The fact is, Patsy, I haven't laid eyes on my brother in years, and that's the hell of it." It was uncanny, and just on the verge of being comic, but whenever Harper entered The Shamrock, and especially when he talked to the owner, he found himself sounding progressively more Irish.

"I remember when Tom first came in here over a year ago," Leary said. "Thinking it was you, I was all ready to go up and say I knew you'd hate England. Then I saw that interesting variation in the Harper eyes. Have you ever marked the difference, Norman?"

"It's easier for someone else to see."

"Yours have a look of holy self-assurance in them. You've never done anything wrong in your life, have you, no need to answer, so who can face you down? But Thomas, poor doubting man, he's part of the great imperfect mass and he knows it. He's got the look in his eyes of the scavenging animal, always afraid he's about to be caught."

"You make him sound pathetic," Harper said, feeling some resentment. There was a different quality about Pat Leary today; time had soured him.

"Your brother is not pathetic, he's just the normal stuff of the human race," Leary said. "You'd never understand that, Norman. You're one of the angels."

The bar became busy and Leary went away to see to things in other areas. Harper had three more beers, enjoying the sensation of getting a little high with the Montreal summer streets waiting for him outside. Just as he was readying himself to leave, Leary reappeared at his side.

"I'll keep an eye open for Tom, though I haven't seen him for months. He has a way of disappearing, your brother."

"I know. He showed up in London for a while but I missed him. They told me he was coming back here."

"Then he'll arrive sooner or later. Where can he find you if he comes in?"

"I'm registered at Central Y. Humble Harper, they call me."

"Fair enough. And Tom, I suppose he'll book himself a suite at the

Queen Elizabeth. Nothing but the best."

"No, he has a place on Lincoln Avenue. But he wasn't home when I looked in earlier."

Harper left The Shamrock, walked on down to Dorchester Boulevard, and sat on a bench in the sun. Endless traffic streamed in six lanes in both directions in front of him and as he stared and blinked he felt the effect of jet fatigue. Sooner or later he would have to sleep. Looking left, he saw the gleaming black glass tower where he had spent fifteen years as a P.R. man, being straight-faced-serious about the most ludicrous projects. Clouds moved in the glass prism.

He must have dozed for a while because he felt his head come off his chest with a snap. The sun was a degree or two further down the sky. He thought of Gillian Mill and wondered whether, if Tom was still absent, she might come out with him for dinner. He got up and stepped to a taxi waiting in traffic, opened the door, and got in. Ten minutes later he was in the marble lavatory ringing the Number 7 bell. There was no reply.

Harper tugged at the inner door. It swung open and he went through. Up on the landing, as he knocked at Number 7, the door creaked inwards. Harper took a step inside and encountered the same cold net of fear as when he entered the dark garage in Wellington Mews. He froze and held his breath. There was a slight movement in the dim room to the left, a scuffing noise, a thump. Then silence.

His right hand found a light switch. The sound had been Gillian Mill trying to pick herself off the floor. Her blood was soaking into the threadbare carpet.

Harper knelt beside her and turned her over. They had done a much more thorough job on her than on him—her pretty face was grotesque. He tried to translate into words the sounds she was making. It sounded like, "I didn't tell them."

"Don't try to talk," Harper said. "Just move your head yes or no." He was holding her against his knee, feeling the rhythmic shuddering in her body.

"Were they after Tom?"

She nodded.

"Do you know where he is?"

Again her bloodied head moved up and down.

"I have to know. I have to get to him and warn him, or help him. Can you tell me where he's gone?"

The single word was like a moan, but he understood it clearly. Home. Tom had gone home.

"All right. Now listen, Gillian. I'm going to leave you. I have to go, I'm in danger too. But I'll call the police and they'll be here within minutes with an ambulance. They'll fix you up and give you protection. O.K.?" She was silent in his arms. He lowered her gently and crept out of the room.

On the street, he kept his head up, looking for men trailing him while he walked as fast as he could east along Lincoln. At the first call box, he rang the police and gave them the address of Tom's apartment, saying a girl had been beaten up.

Half an hour later, safe in his room at the Y, Harper lay on the bed and with his eyes closed could almost see sleep rolling towards him like a tidal wave. He had time to realize that his call to the police might get his brother into trouble. If they apprehended the brutes who were doing the hitting, Tom could end up being linked to them. But it couldn't be helped. Gillian needed immediate care and Harper was in no position to ferry her to the hospital.

His last image before he slept was of the red-haired man and his invisible, whispering companion following himself or Gillian across the ocean on the trail of the missing Tom Harper, probably on the same airplane. It had to be that way. How else could they have located her so quickly?

He slept eighteen hours. It was ten o'clock on the following morning when he sat up in bed, his next move clear in his mind. Taking towel, soap, and room key, he walked down the hall to the communal bathroom where he showered and shaved. Again the years fell away and he was a young journalist newly arrived from the sticks, delighted with his low-paying job on a tabloid that was about to fold.

Those were the years when he strode around the magnificent city at night, splendidly drunk and speaking exuberantly inaccurate French to waiters and cab drivers and bar girls, climbing the stairs time and again to Ciro's to hear the Joe Holliday Quartet, sobering up at dawn in distant parts of town, and then walking home within view of great bridges. Karen's inviting face across a crowded restaurant was still two

years away.

Spruced up and with his packed suitcase in hand, Harper checked out of the Y and walked to the Avis office on Dominion Square, where he rented a sedan. By midday, he was speeding down highway 401, passing Dorval, heading for the Ontario border.

It was incredible the way Baytown never changed. As he drove in, Harper saw new people walking on Front Street but many of the same shops were there. Teddy Marcus was probably inside his book store—but how could he be? He was fifty when Harper left over twenty years ago. And inside Sullivan's Barbershop, old Sweets Cameron was probably still clicking his scissors and breathing through his mouth.

Driving past the high school, Harper swallowed hard against the rising sob in his chest as he saw the windows of classrooms he had inhabited for all those golden, glorious years. Tom had carried the football well on the broad playing field, taking the lumps as usual while his young brother stayed out of it on the sidelines, organizing clever rhyming cheers in safety.

"No more of that, Tom," Harper said aloud in the car. "I'm coming this time."

The house on Standard Street looked unchanged too. That was the thing about a collapsing porch and peeling stucco, Harper realized. It stayed the same because it had noplace to go.

Tapping twice with the brass oak-leaf knocker, he considered opening the door and walking in as he would have done when he lived here. But that would have been unfair to Mary, might have frightened her. It was bad enough showing up unannounced—he really should have telephoned from Montreal.

"Hello, Mary," he said as his sister opened the door.

She denied him the slightest show of surprise. "I knew it would be you. When Tom showed up this morning I said, you wait, Normie will be here before supper."

She stepped back to let him in, her cloudy eyes expressionless in her round beaming face. Her hair was the straight, styleless shag of a woman who could hardly see. Failing sight would also explain the two crayon strokes of her lipstick.

She lead the way through the dark hall and into the dining room, moving expertly amid familiar surroundings.

Tom's voice sounded from the kitchen. "Is that Norm?" He walked into the room with a beer bottle in one hand and an empty glass in the other.

"Found you at last, you bastard," Harper said. The handshake, brief but firm and achingly familiar after so many years, said much that the brothers would be unable to put into words.

Tom poured the beer. "Here, drink ye all of this in remembrance that there are twenty-three others in the case." He handed the full glass to Norman. "How's your drink, Mary?" he said as he went back to the kitchen.

"Fine, I'm coasting." Just a passing, mystic wave of the hand as she found her glass.

Harper sat down at the dining-room table, the oak dropleaf job with rounded corners. He remembered wartime Sunday afternoons when Mary was dating lads from the air station. Table-tennis matches were played then on this table and the uniformed boys would start as what they were, champions of Vancouver or Toronto or wherever they came from. But those missing corners soon got to them as did the glass-front china cabinet waiting to receive their backswings with a smash, and they ended up embarrassed amateurs, losing to girl friend, mother, father, both little brothers, everybody but the dog.

"Cheers," Harper said, and he drained most of a very necessary beer.

"You sound unchanged," Mary said. "England must agree with you. How's Karen? How's Anita?"

"Fine, all fine. They send love." He went on for a minute about the glories of the job plugging the tennis tournament, an easy set piece he was used to delivering. But as he talked and Mary smiled, he sensed her isolation and the way his presence in the room was nibbling away at it already. It was painful to realize that the check he sent her in the mail each month was not good enough. She was a person and she needed people.

Tom came from the kitchen with a full glass and two full bottles, one of which he set beside his brother's glass. Tom was blocky now, almost barrel-chested, so solid he could not slump. He sat on the straight-backed chair just the way Harper remembered their father sitting—legs apart, feet planted firmly, thick chest rising from a curved abdomen encased in a balloon of grey flannel. Harper felt if he looked

under the table he would see the old man's shiny black high-laced boots.

"How very nice," Tom said. There was the shy glancing aside, the half smile that the experienced Harper family member could read as a show of great affection. "What brings you back here?"

"Just an impulse. With Wimbledon Fortnight over, I get to take some time off. Actually it was Karen's idea I get on a plane and come." Harper had decided not to mention the trouble in front of Mary. He and Tom would find time sooner or later.

The time came sooner. Mary insisted on preparing supper without help; she knew the kitchen and had been managing for years. The brothers ended up in the overgrown garden, sitting on a gliding swing that was immobilized in grass a foot tall. Irises run wild bloomed around them and late-afternoon sunlight glistened on the jewelled wings of a hovering dragonfly.

"O.K.," Harper said. "What's happening? I know all kinds of things, Tom. What's going on?"

"How much do you know?" The insolent confidence persisted from long ago.

"That you worked in London for Chelsea Crafts, making ceramic mugs. That you came and went, and they had to let you go."

"I'm a boozer. And a loser."

"Maybe worse than you realize. When I was in Wellington Mews two guys gave me a controlled beating. They thought I was you. No question about it from what they said."

"I believe that. What did they say?"

"That they'd let me—you—live because I'd helped. But I was not to disappear because they might need me again."

Tom Harper frowned. "They'd had their last from me."

"Last what? What did you do for them?"

Tom got up, stood in the tall grass, spilled half a bottle of beer onto a patch of earth behind the old garage. "Remember the famous bonfire, Norm?" he said. "Better late than never. No chance of burning the wall now. Mum would be pleased."

"What is it?" Harper persisted. "What sort of foolishness were you into?"

"Not foolishness, little brother. Patriotism. Unless they're one and the same."

"I don't follow."

"I did. I listened to long stories about how the English came and took over the land. How they tried to dominate and suppress us. And then the famine, with our women and children literally starving to death in cold huts by tens of thousands."

"What are you talking about?"

"I'm talking about freedom for Ireland after all these years. About the I.R.A." The sheepish expression on Tom Harper's face did not exactly mark him as a true believer.

"You don't buy that madness any more than I do. Who tried to sell it to you?"

"Patrick Leary. Sitting in the back room of The Shamrock early in the morning over jars of smoky whiskey." Tom sat down again, facing his younger brother on the old swing with all its paint weathered off. The wood looked natural, as if nature grew swings. "It's really your fault, Normie. I came to Montreal following in your footsteps. You seemed to have the magic touch, or else you knew the way to go. That's why I went to England too. My life was bloody murder, boredom and drink and failure. I thought if I could duplicate your moves I'd be a winner too."

Harper wanted to say something encouraging to Tom about his life but there was nothing that would ring true. "But how come the I.R.A. at Leary's place? This is Canada. There's nothing going on here."

"Only the raising of money. They need cash for gelignite. And alarm clocks."

"But you haven't any money."

"No. I was the courier. Sort of a delivery boy. Leary would get together a bundle of cash—they don't like checks or bank accounts—and I'd shoot across to London and make the delivery. My fine Canadian face and voice made excellent camouflage."

Mary's voice rang out from the kitchen informing them that supper was ready. The brothers got up and stepped off the swing, then stood for a moment in the path facing the back of the house. Behind them, a slanting post intended to anchor a clothesline served as a platform for a homemade birdhouse. Somewhere in a tattered photo album was a snapshot of the two boys in high school cadet uniforms standing just this way with their arms entwined. The young Norman was holding a slice of bread with a crescent bite out of it and Tom had a small Union

Jack on a stick protruding from his belt.

So that was it, Harper thought. Tom had helped, and they let him live. Now they might want him again and he was trying to disappear. Once in, never out.

"You might wonder why they'd be after me, a low-class messenger. But you see, I did a silly thing. I volunteered."

"For what?" Harper's heart was sinking.

"To go on active service. I showed up with my cash delivery just when a major blitz was to be carried out. A whole mess of bombs in the Oxford Circus area. But one of the lads who was to make a drop fell downstairs and broke his ankle. A very Irish thing to do. So I asked to be allowed to take his place. And Healy said I could."

"Let me guess," Harper said. "Healy has a soft husky voice and he calls you 'me boy'."

"That's right."

"And the lad who broke his ankle has red hair and freckles."

"Right again. Sean Culkin." Tom squinted at his brother. "Ah, the lads who thumped you. Sorry about that."

"Never mind. What happened?"

"The inevitable unexpected. I took one of their plastic bags and left it on the first-floor landing of an office building near Bond Street underground. They were all timed to go off after midnight. No casualties intended—just a demonstration of how devastating we can be."

"Oh, God," Harper said. "I read about those bombs."

"Yes, and about the cleaning lady. Set down her mop and bucket and picked up the bag just as it went off. Fifty-three years old and a very youthful and pretty grandmother according to the press."

They moved slowly towards the house. "So you packed it in," Harper said.

"Or so I told Mr. Healy. He laughed and said there was no such arrangement in the I.R.A. I promised I'd say nothing to anybody but he pointed out you can't run an army on that basis. So I changed bed-sitters and went out of sight."

"Why Chelsea Crafts?"

"To save some money to come home. I'd learned ceramics teaching a class at Kitchener High. But the cash kept going on drink so I ended up working my way back on a freighter. Anyway, it looks like I just got

out on time, with Sean and Healy getting so close."

Through dinner, Harper wondered when to inform Tom about Gillian Mill. He would have to know. But there was no telling what he might do as a result. Harper ate while his sister and brother did most of the talking. The style of cooking on Standard Street had not changed. The sausages were charred black, the mashed potatoes had lumps, and there was lots of that unique salad—chopped cabbage and onion mixed together with mayonnaise and liberally dosed with salt and pepper. It was the best meal he had tasted in years and he cleaned his plate.

Mary insisted on washing up alone so Harper had Tom to himself in the living room for a while. He said, "You know about Gillian Mill?"

"Sure. She showed up in Montreal yesterday and told me you'd been looking for me. And she described my Irish friends who came in before you. That's why I faded to Baytown."

"They found her."

"Who did?"

"The redhead and the other. I came by not long after, in time to call an ambulance."

Tom Harper stared at his young brother, the expression in his eyes so level he looked almost stupid. It was an animal look. It suggested he knew exactly what he had to do, but doing it would be hateful and dangerous. "I'd like to borrow that rented car, Normie," he said flatly.

"Stay out of Montreal, Tom. They're trying to find you. Gillian didn't tell them you came here."

"I have no choice. I'm going after Pat Leary."

"Why him? He can't be behind your trouble in London."

"No. But he must have set them on Gillian. They'd never have found the apartment without help."

Harper had a terrible recollection of the moment in The Shamrock when he mentioned Tom's address to Leary. The man had been probing, he could see that now, so Gillian's suffering was his fault.

"Tom," he said, "listen. I'll go to Montreal and talk to Leary. I've got enough friends in London, he won't dare mess with me. I'll make a bargain with him. He calls his thugs off you and I forget what I know. Let them go on killing each other, but leave the Harper family alone."

"What about Gillian?"

"That was bad but she'll mend in time. Meanwhile, will it be better

for her if you get killed by Leary? Or if you kill him and go to jail forever?"

Tom was silent, his face sullen.

"Then I'll drive back in the morning," Harper concluded. "You sit tight here and by this time tomorrow your troubles will be over."

Harper spent a restless night in his old room, aware of the calcimined wallpaper surrounding him and the same distant railway sounds clanking in the dark outside the screened window. In the morning, Mary made him Fried Eggs Baytown, their edges burned crisp as bacon rind. He relished them, swabbing the greasy plate clean with toast. Tom was still in bed when he drove away at ten.

Passing Dorval on the way in to Montreal, he thought it would make sense to go to the counter and book the soonest flight out that evening. The girl at the Air Canada desk put his name down for a seat on the plane departing at half past nine. Then, leaving the terminal, he passed a bank of phones and decided to ring home. There was nothing to report yet, but suddenly it seemed very important he should call.

He dialed direct and Mary answered, her voice a subdued how "Hello?"

"It's me, Mary."

"Oh God, Normie. Tom is dead! They killed him."

"What?"

"Two men. They came to the door and I said he was in the garden. They went through and I heard shots and then running in the lane."

Harper almost asked her what they looked like before he remembered she couldn't see them. Anyway, he already knew. He felt himself sinking in a sea of anguish—this was how he had helped his brother, by leading the killers to him. Mary was asking him a question. He said yes, he would be home as soon as he could make it. That was true enough. But in the meantime he had more reason than ever to visit Pat Leary.

Behaving responsibly out of habit, he turned in the car at the rental office. Then he walked to The Shamrock, went inside, saw no sign of Leary, and headed for the door at the end of the bar.

A bartender he had never seen approached him but Harper smiled and said, "A package for old Patsy. Not to worry, he's expecting me."

There was a short passage and then another door, padded with green leather and brass studs. Without knocking, Harper opened it and walked

into the office. Pat Leary swung around in his swivel chair and as soon as he saw the visitor's face his hand went for the side drawer in the desk.

The hand was in the drawer when Harper slammed it shut with his knee. As Leary screamed, Harper seized his mouth in one hand, twisting the flesh shut while his other hand grasped Leary's throat. In seconds he had Leary out of the chair, across the desk, and onto the carpet where he knelt on his arms, both hands around Leary's throat now, squeezing, but not hard enough yet to cut off the air.

"I'm going to kill you, Pat. Your people tried to beat Tom in London and got me by mistake. Then you battered that poor girl—*you* did that. And now you've killed my brother."

"Norman," Leary managed, "this is war. The cause is just. A lot of people are dying but it can't be helped."

"Bullshit, Pat."

"We'll win. Someday we'll win. But right now the enemy is strong and determined—we must have security. Tom left us, he knew us—he had to die."

"And now it's your turn."

"That's crazy. You've got a life to live, Norman—family, success in England. Kill me and you throw it all away. That's insane."

"Of course it is. Who ever said revenge is anything but insane?" Harper tightened his fingers and saw Leary's eyes bulge from the pressure and the realization it was actually happening to him. "But you forget, Patrick," he said. "I'm as Irish as you are."

When Leary was dead, Harper got up and picked up the telephone. A buzzer on it was labelled "bar." He pressed it and when the bartender came on he said, "Leary doesn't want to be disturbed. We're discussing business."

"Right."

"But when Sean and Healy come in, he says send them right through."

He put down the phone, found the revolver in Leary's desk drawer, and placed himself in the swivel chair facing the leather door. He decided that when it opened he would kill the redhead first. But now his job was to wait, and to force himself not to think about Karen or Anita, or about his blind sister who would now live even more alone in Baytown. Stubbornly, he would keep his mind on his brother Tom.

Classified MARKET PLACE

The rate per word for Classified Ads is $1.00 each insertion, minimum ad $15.00—payable in advance. Capitalized words 40¢ per word additional. Space reservations close 1st of 3rd month preceding COVER date. Send order & remittance to R. S. Wayner, Classified Ad Manager, DAVIS PUBLICATIONS, INC., 229 Park Ave. South, New York, N.Y. 10003.

ADDITIONAL INCOME

NOW! MAKE MONEY USING YOUR CAMERA. Booklet 1.50. Emerson House, 5343-A, Diamond Hts., San Francisco, CA 94131.

BLUEPRINTS, PATTERNS & PLANS

NEW CRAFT PRINT CATALOG — Choose from over 100 great easy-to-build plans. Send $1.50 (completely refunded with your first order). BOAT BUILDER, (CP Div.) — 229 Park Avenue South New York, NY 10003.

BOOKS & PERIODICALS

LARGE Catalog Free; Mystery-suspense books: Save to 70%. Spencer Books, P.O. Box 186, So. Laguna, CA 92677.

FREE CATALOGUES, hardbacks, paperbacks. Search Service, Detective Mystery Booksearch, Box 15460, Orlando, Florida, 32808.

FREE Bargain Book Catalog: Moneymaking, Hobbies, Sports, Fiction . . . Tom Carson, Box 513, Ardmore, OK 73401.

BOOK Readers and Collectors! Send titles wanted to: S&S Books, 80 North Wilder, A-23, St. Paul, MN 55104.

A BI-MONTHLY SCIENCE FICTION MAGAZINE by Isaac Asimov. Send $5.95 for 6 issues (includes shipping & postage) to Isaac Asimovs' Science Fiction Magazine, P.O. Box 1855 G.P.O., New York, NY 1001.

FREE CATALOG—10,000 Titles! Good used hardcover/paperback novels. Chadde, 45 MHD, Grand Marais, MN 55604.

FREE List! Used hardcover mystery detective fiction. Bill Dunn, 251 Baldwin Avenue, Meriden, CT 06450.

FREE Journal Exposing religion a gigantic deception. Truth Seeker, Box 2832, San Diego, CA 92112.

BUSINESS OPPORTUNITIES

MAKE Magnetic Signs. Big profits. Details, Universal, Lenora, KS 67645.

STAY HOME! EARN BIG MONEY addressing envelopes. Genuine offer 10¢. Lindco, 3636-DA, Peterson, Chicago 60659.

BUSINESS OPPORTUNITIES—Cont'd

$30.00 HUNDRED Stuffing Our Circulars into Stamped Addressed Envelopes. Immediate Earnings. Beginners Kit $2.00. COLOSSI, 1493-61 Street, DC-2, Brooklyn, NY 11219.

1000% PROFIT Bronzing Baby Shoes. Free Literature. NBC, Box 1904-DG, Sebring, FL 33870.

$3000.00 MONTHLY. Immediate income. Stuff envelopes at home. Information, send self-addressed stamped envelope Cottage, Box 730-DFB, Baldwin Park, CA 91706.

$500.00 profit stuffing 1,000 envelopes. Details $1.00 (Refundable). Elamco, B-13337 D4, Waldo, AR 71770.

GUARANTEED $178.00 WEEKLY. Work one hour daily. Free Brochure. FAS, Box 13703, San Antonio, TX 78213.

HOW TO RECRUIT COMMISSION SALESPEOPLE! Free details! Success publications, 35 Interlachen Place, Excelsior, Minnesota 55331.

$350 Weekly Mailing Letters. Free Deails. Bronxville House, Box 311-D, Bronxville, NY 10708.

$25.00 DAILY possible stuffing envelopes! Details Free. Service, Box 715-D, Lynbrook, NY 11563.

BUMPER Sticker Printing Device. Cheap, Simple. Portable. Free Details. Bumper, POB 22791(TW), Tampa, FL 33622.

CABLE/FM Broadcast station. Start your own. Operate from home, church, school. No investment/experience needed. Excellent income. Free details. CAFM, Box 5516GC, Walnut Creek, CA 94596.

GUARANTEED! $480.00 weekly, spare time only. Free brochure. Fifita, 1815 East 2nd Avenue, Durango, CO 81301.

BUY IT WHOLESALE

SAVE MONEY! (5) wholesale catalogs $3.00. World Directory $4.00, Domestic Directory $4.00, Surplus Directory $2.00. Buy all 8—$10.00. Winchester Enterprises Inc. 2807SS Hargrave Street, Philadelphia, PA 19136.

COINS, CURRENCY & TOKENS

SPECIAL! 10 Different BU Lincolns $1.00. Tressel, Box 795, Pompano, FL 33061.

Classified Continued

DETECTIVES

NEW! The Big Brother Game . . . 230 pages detective techniques, FBI, CIA, KGB, OSS, wiretapping, tailing, electronic surveillance, surreptious, entry, weapons, countermeasures, much much more . . . postpaid $9.95. Quimtronix, Box 548-DV, Seattle, WA 98111.

EDUCATION & INSTRUCTION

UNIVERSITY DEGREES BY MAIL! Bachelors, Masters, PhD.s. . . . Free revealing details. Counseling, Box 389-AH-3, Tustin, CA 92686.

INFORMATIVE BOOKLET—"How to Write a Classified Ad That Pulls." Includes certificate worth $2.00 towards a classified ad. Send $1.50 (includes postage) to R. S. Wayner, Davis Publications, Inc., Dept. CL, 229 Park Avenue South, New York, NY 10003.

LEGAL ORDINATION! Tax Benefits! Clergy Discounts! UDM, Box 501, Poplar, MT 59255.

ELECTRICAL EQUIPMENT & SUPPLIES

GIANT Bargain Packed Canadian Surplus Catalogs $1.00. Etco Electronics, Dept. DG, 183G Hymus Blvd., Pointe Claire, Quebec H9R IE9.

EMPLOYMENT INFORMATION

WORK WANTED. EXPERIENCED HOUSEKEEPER NEEDS EMPLOYER. WRITE: DOLORES GARABILES, 35 Womens Club Street, Galas, Quezon City, Philippines.

GIFTS THAT PLEASE

FREE Give Away!!! Over $10,000 in cash . . . merchandise. Simply Request a Gift Catalog. FREE. Select your top 3 choices by order number on 4x6 cards . . . Rush to: Gift Boutique Enterprise, Defoor Rd., Dept. 458B, Toccoa, GA 30577. Enclose $1.00 Postage.

SPECIALTY Gifts. Stupendous Discounts. Free Brochure. McElvane's, 2251-D Clinton, Alameda, CA 94501.

HYPNOTISM

FREE Fascinating Hypnosis Information! Startling! DLMH, Box 487 Anaheim, CA 92805.

MAILING LISTS

YOUR opportunity, $12/1000 names. Hoskins, Box 403, Caldwell, NJ 07006.

MAILORDER OPPORTUNITIES

FREE mail business magazines. Concho Bulletin, Box 4055DP, Sanangelo, TX 76902.

MONEYORDER OPPORTUNITIES—Cont'd

START YOUR OWN BUSINESS . . . TWO OTHER BUSINESS OPPORTUNITIES! . . . $1.00 (REF) CMO DIVISION, 116 N. CALIFORNIA HOBEART, IN 46342.

MISCELLANEOUS

AMAZING Psychic Phenomenon. Communicate with your subconscious mind. Ask questions—Get answers. Guaranteed instructions $2.00. D. Dresco, Reedsport, OR 97467.

PUBLIC RELATIONS FIRM DESPERATELY NEEDS $10.00 bills with 3 sevens in serial number, will reward with FREE Florida Vacation for two, good anytime during the year. Write Quicksilver Enterprises, 274 Woodworth Ave., Yonkers, NY 10701.

FREE, UNUSUAL BOOKS & PRODUCTS:

Over 200 sources. Send $2.00: R & M Enterprises, 306 Stephenson Avenue, Escanaba, Michigan 49829.

GREAT ENTERTAINMENT. Old radio programs. Cassettes, reels, 8-track. Free catalog. Radio Memories, Box 2297, Newport News, VA 23602.

MONEYMAKING OPPORTUNITIES

$1000 MONTHLY POSSIBLE, mailing commission letters. Information—Free! OPPORTUNITIES, Box 721D, Lynbrook, NY 11563.

$250.00 profit/thousand possible—stuffing-mailing envelopes. Offer: Rush stamped addressed envelope: Universal-ADVS X16180 Fort Lauderdale, FL 33318.

$300.00 WEEKLY, Mailing Circulars. Write: McGUIRE, Box 144, Tacoma, WA 98412.

$30.00 HUNDRED STUFFING our circulars into stamped addressed envelopes. Beginner's Kit $2.00 Mustachi, P.O. Box 46D3, Brooklyn, NY 11219.

$500 per thousand stuffing envelopes, free supplies. Rush stamped envelope: Mosely, 19 Rodney, Seafard, DE 19973.

MAKE Big Money with amazing tropical seed business. Marks Enterprises, 5515 Ranchero Lane, Dallas, TX 75236.

$1,000 month easy plan mailing letters. Details free. Stalco, Box 2778, Anaheim, CA 92804.

$50,000 easily in short time addressing, mailing envelopes. Free details. Darby & Sons, Box 1213-D, Evanston, IL 60204.

$500/thousand stuffing envelopes. Free details. Rush self stamped envelope. H. Mognet Co., Box 449D, Warren, Ohio 44482.

Classified Continued

MONEYMAKING OPPORTUNITIES—Cont'd

$180.00 WEEKLY Mailing Circulars. Start Immediately. Everready, 422D Clermont Ave., Brooklyn, New York 11238.

FANTASTIC Profits: Mailing Circulars. Free Samples. Grahamco, DPBX 99371, Tacoma, WA 98499.

$480 WEEKLY POSSIBLE MAILING CIRCULARS. No Gimmicks. Free Details. Guaran'eed. HABCO, Box 678-DP, Lufkin, TX 75901.

$2,000.00 Monthly possible stuffing envelopes! Details! Send stamped self-addressed envelope. Continental, Box 2230D, Oceanside, CA 92054.

LOOKING FOR INCOME SECURITY? Unlimited earnings possible selling books and information by mail. No experience work from home—tested program—free details—stamp appreciated. Austin Security, 50 Madison Avenue, 1st Floor, Bridgeport, CT 06604.

THOUSANDS of dollars made monthly by commission mailers. Free Details — Send stamped envelope, Wellman 601, S. Lincoln, Denver, CO 80209.

MAKE YOUR CLASSIFIED AD PAY. Get "How to Write A Classified Ad That Pulls." Includes certificate worth $2.00 towards a classified ad in this publication. Send $1.50 (includes postage) to R. S. Wayner, Davis Publications, Inc., Dept. CL, 229 Park Avenue South, New York, NY 10003.

NEW EASY HOMEWORK PLAN. STUFF CIRCULARS. BIG $$$ Write: A&I, 5343-J, Diamond Hts., San Francisco, CA 94131.

MONEYMAKING OPPORTUNITIES—Cont'd

$180 weekly mailing circulars. No gimmicks. Write: Leister, Box 22346-D, S.F., CA 94122.

PSYCHIC advises on business, love and personal direction. Donations appreciated. Jamil, P.O. Box 10154, Dept. M, Eugene, Oregon 97401. Phone anytime. (503) 342-2210.

PERSONAL

FORMOST MATRIMONIAL CATALOG. Photos, Details, 45 pages $2-Mailed Sealed by OIB, Box 893, Sta. A, Montreal, Canada H3C 2V8.

START YOUR OWN BUSINESS

TYPING SERVICE. Home business. Detailed report, $7.50. Success Secrets, P.O. Box 2105, Clearwater, Florida 33517.

RECORDERS, SOUND EQUIPMENT, RECORDS

FREE list of Old Radio Mystery Programs on cassette tape. Tapes Unlimited, 6640 Penn South, Richfield, MN 55423. Sample Cassette $2.00.

RUBBER STAMPS

RUBBER stamps made. Three lines $3.75. Rubber Stamps, B1337-E3, Waldo, Arkansas 71770.

TIPS FOR THE HOME, ETC.

PRACTICAL tips for home, garden and workshop and in "1001 How-To Ideas." Send $1.50 for your copy (includes postage) to 1001 How-To Ideas, 229 Park Avenue South, New York, NY 10003.

15 BRAND NEW MYSTERIES FOR JUST $1

Match Wits with Great Sleuths and Authors!

Travis McGee
One Fearful Yellow Eye by John D. MacDonald. Summoned by a beautiful young widow, McGee tries to find who stole her late husband's estate...and digs up some deadly surprises. (Publ. Ed. $8.95)

Hammond Innes
The Big Footprints by Hammond Innes. Britain's master of suspense pits a ruthless hunter against a champion of wild elephants in an exotic East African game park. (Publ. Ed. $8.95)

Inspector Maigret
Maigret and the Spinster by Georges Simenon. An eccentric old maid insists someone moves her furniture around at night. Maigret laughs. Then events take a sinister turn. (Publ. Ed. $6.95)

Velda Johnston
The Etruscan Smile by Velda Johnston. Samantha flies to Italy in search of her mysteriously vanished sister. She finds an archeologist, an ancient Etruscan statue...and terror. (Publ. Ed. $7.95)

Sheriff Chick Charleston
The Genuine Article by A. B. Guthrie, Jr. Who killed cattle baron Frank Grimsley? The colorful cow-town sleuth of **Wild Pitch** is back in a tale of solid detection and suspense. (Publ. Ed. $7.95)

Lillian O'Donnell
After-Shock by Lillian O'Donnell. Ms. Mici Anhalt, social worker, interviews the pregnant wife of a slain society hairdresser...and a "routine" case turns into a nightmare. (Publ. Ed. $7.95)

Inspector Ghote
Filmi, Filmi, Inspector Ghote by H. R. F. Keating. The plucky little Bombay detective tackles the murder of a movie star whom the entire Indian film colony wanted to see dead. (Publ. Ed. $5.95)

Dick Francis
In the Frame by Dick Francis. His cousin's wife is brutally murdered by an unknown intruder and Todd – a painter of horses – tries to help. Suddenly he becomes the chief suspect! (Publ. Ed. $8.95)

The Dortmunder Gang
Nobody's Perfect by Donald E. Westlake. This time those heroes of the Hot Rock caper run amok in the Transatlantic jet set – exposing forgers, counterfeiters, phonies and an unexpected killer. (Publ. Ed. $7.95)

John Ball
Police Chief by John Ball. After years as cop in a crime-ridden big city, Jack Tallon becomes police chief of a quiet small town. Then a series of vicious rape-murders erupts. (Publ. Ed. $6.95).

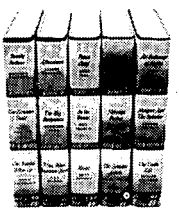
Mignon G. Eberhart
Family Fortune by Mignon G. Eberhart. Her newest spine-tingler. A border-state family is divided by the Civil War and an inheritance that leads to murder. (Publ. Ed. $7.95)

Inspector Hemricks
The Tenth Life by Richard Lockridge. A cat has nine lives, so the saying goes. Hemricks meets one with ten...it leads him into a den of perilous intrigue and murder. (Publ. Ed. $8.95)

Owen Sela
An Exchange of Eagles by Owen Sela. In 1940, two Intelligence men stumble on a certain secret weapon that could turn World War II into Armageddon...unless **they** destory it! (Publ. Ed. $8.95)

Patrick Dawlish
Elope to Death by John Creasey as Gordon Ashe. A mother fears her heiress daughter has eloped with a maniac. Dawlish pursues them – to the edge of a Mediterranean cliff. (Publ. Ed. $6.95)

Brian Garfield
Recoil by Brian Garfield. When Fred Mathieson happens to witness a mob boss' crime, the mob decides to rub him out...with his whole family. A tale of explosive suspense. (Publ. Ed. $8.95)



Please enroll me as a member and send me at once my five triple-volumes shown here, containing fifteen mysteries. I enclose no money now. I may examine my books for one week, then will either accept all five volumes for the special new member price of only $1, plus postage and handling, or return them and owe nothing.

As a member, I will receive free the club's monthly Preview which describes my next selections but I am not obligated to accept them: I will always have at least ten days to reject any volume by returning the form provided. I may return any book at the club's expense for full credit. For each monthly triple-volume I keep, I will send you only $4.39, plus postage and handling. I understand I may cancel my membership at any time.

THE DETECTIVE BOOK CLUB, ROSLYN, N.Y. 11576

Name _____

Street _____ **8-QT**

City _____ 30-59-8A

State _____ Zip _____

Note: Members accepted in U.S.A. and Canada only. Canadian members will be serviced from Ontario, offer slightly different in Canada.

Use this postpaid card to get $120.25 worth of mysteries for only $1.

15 BRAND NEW MYSTERIES FOR JUST $1

Worth $120.25 in Publishers' Editions!

First Class
Permit No. 7
Roslyn, N.Y.

Business Reply Mail
No postage stamp necessary
if mailed in the United States

Postage will be paid by

THE DETECTIVE BOOK CLUB

Roslyn, N.Y. 11576

(See other side for further details.)