

# 10¢ BLACK BOOK DETECTIVE

SEPT.

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MYSTERY  
NOVEL  
EVERY  
ISSUE!

A THRILLING  
PUBLICATION

THE  
MURDER  
PROPHET

Book Length Novel

feat. Black Rat.

BUY WAR BONDS  
AND STAMPS  
FOR VICTORY!



# New! SPECIAL EVEREADY FLASHLIGHT

TRADE-MARK

## FOR CIVILIAN WARTIME USE!



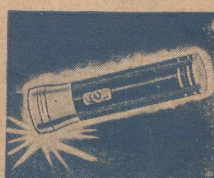
**Made of special 5-ply fibre, new laboratory-tested design saves copper, brass, nickel, chromium and other metals vital to war use!**



**STRONG! . . .** Made of special fibre sheets, tightly laminated in 5 layers, the tube is tough and hard. It will give long years of service!



**WATER-REPELLENT!** This new "Eveready" flashlight is protected by a special water-proof coating which seals out moisture.



**LONG LASTING!** . . . Drop it on concrete floor—this flashlight case can "take" ordinary abuse. It's actually more durable than millions of flashlights now in use.

### METALS HAVE GONE TO WAR!

But metals or no metals, America needs flashlights . . . at home, in business, on the farm, in the factory . . . needs them for a thousand vital civilian uses.

And America shall have them!

This national need—made more pressing than ever by wartime emergency conditions—has been answered by the world's largest

flashlight-and-battery laboratory.

Here it is—the new "Eveready" flashlight made of tough, 5-ply fibre—tested and proven under severest laboratory conditions.

Yet it is made virtually *without* the use of metal. Soon available at all dealers!



**NATIONAL CARBON COMPANY, INC.**

30 East 42nd Street, New York, N. Y.

Unit of Union Carbide and Carbon Corporation



The word "Eveready" is a registered trade-mark of National Carbon Company, Inc.

Keep flashlights loaded with dependable fresh DATED "Eveready" batteries—and have an extra set on hand for your light in case of long-continued use.

**FRESH BATTERIES LAST LONGER . . .**  
**Look for the DATE-LINE**





With the  
United  
States  
at



WHAT ARE  
YOU  
GOING TO DO TO  
**HELP?**



**I Am Ready to  
HELP YOU  
Help  
WIN THE WAR**

*J. G. Locke*  
Director

**EASY TO LEARN  
AT HOME!**

*Turn those precious hours  
you may be idling away  
around the house into price-  
less knowledge which will  
serve you all your life.*

**FREE "BLUE BOOK OF  
CRIME"**

Gives the case histories of famous crimes and how they were solved by experts. This book has been an "eye-opener" to thousands. It told them how they could prepare themselves at small cost and in short time to fill good-pay, responsible positions in Identification Work. Send for it FREE today, stating age.

**This May Be Your Opportunity for  
HELPING TO WIN THE WAR!!**

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## **CRIME IS AN ENEMY**

Training which enables you to thwart crime within our own borders will help to win the war with the Japs and other foreign foes. You'll get such training through the I.A.S. Course in Finger Printing and other Crime Detection Methods, and you can *learn right at home*, in spare time, at small cost.

For 26 years the I.A.S. has been preparing ambitious men to fill responsible positions in Identification Bureaus throughout America. Today over 43 per cent of all the Nation's Identification Bureaus are run by our graduates.

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Scientific crime detection offers excellent opportunities now . . . and the future promises even greater possibilities. A recent Gallup poll shows that 69% of America's population wants every one in the U.S. to be finger printed *right now*. Hundreds of Defense Plants are now finger printing employees. The potential value of finger print training grows day by day.

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**Send For This Great Book Now**

### **INSTITUTE OF APPLIED SCIENCE**

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Gentlemen: Without obligation, send me the "Blue Book of Crime" and complete list of over 840 bureaus employing I.A.S. graduates. Also give me information regarding cost and terms.

(Literature sent *only* to persons stating age.)

Name..... Age.....

Address .....

City..... State.....



• EVERY STORY BRAND NEW •

# BLACK BOOK DETECTIVE

Vol. 15, No. 3

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September, 1942

*A Complete Book-Length Novel*



## THE MURDER PROPHET

Featuring Tony Quinn, Nemesis of Crime

By G. WAYMAN JONES

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PRINTED IN THE U.S.A.





## EARN A RADIO TECHNICIAN'S PAY

If you still have a low pay job—if the War has cut instead of jumped your pay—or if you now have a War job that you know won't last—take a tip from the hundreds of men who have jumped their pay by training at home in spare time to become Radio Technicians. Today these men enjoy good civilian and military jobs in a field with a bright peace-time future.

### Here Is a Tested Way to Begin Earning More Money Quickly

Radio offers you the opportunity to make \$5, \$10 a week extra fixing Radios in spare time a few months from now and to prepare for good full time Radio jobs paying up to \$50 a week. MAIL THE COUPON. Get the facts about how to learn jobs like these at home.

### Why Radio Technicians Can Make \$30, \$40, \$50 a Week

The Radio repair business is booming because manufacturers have stopped making new home

and auto Radios and the country's 57,400,000 sets are getting older, requiring more repairs, new tubes, parts. This is opening new opportunities for full time and part time Radio Technicians to get good jobs, or to open their own Radio repair businesses. Radio Technicians and Operators hold good jobs in the country's 882 Broadcasting Stations and in Aviation, Police, Commercial, Marine Radio. Loud Speaker Systems give good jobs to many. The Government is calling for Civilian Radio Operators and Technicians. Military orders for tremendous quantities of Radio equipment are keeping Radio factories busy, opening more good job opportunities. Men who know Radio are in line for extra rank and pay in the Army and Navy. Radio developments such as Television and Frequency Modulation, held back by the War, make Radio a live-wire field for the future.

### Beginners Soon Learn to Earn \$5, \$10 a Week Extra in Spare Time

Due to the boom in the Radio repair business, practically every neighborhood offers opportunities for a good part time Radio Technician to make extra money fixing Radios. I

give you special training to show you how to start cashing in on these opportunities early. You get 6 Big Kits of Radio Parts and instructions for conducting experiments and building test equipment to help you do better, faster Radio repair work. My 50-50 method—half working with the Radio parts I send you, half studying my lesson texts—makes learning Radio at home interesting, fascinating; gives you valuable practical experience.

### Find Out How I Train You at Home for Good Pay in Radio

MAIL THE COUPON. I'll send my 64-page Book FREE. It tells about my Course; the present and future jobs in different branches of Radio; the many calls for Radio Technicians today. Read letters from more than 100 men I have trained so you can see what they are doing and earning. MAIL THE COUPON in an envelope or pasted on a penny postal.

**J. E. SMITH, President**  
Dept. 2J09, National Radio Institute  
Washington, D. C.

### TRAINING MEN FOR VITAL RADIO JOBS

THIS **FREE** BOOK HAS SHOWN HUNDREDS HOW TO MAKE GOOD MONEY

Mr. J. E. SMITH, President, Dept. 2J09  
NATIONAL RADIO INSTITUTE, Washington, D. C.

Mail me FREE, without obligation, your big 64-page book about present and future opportunities in Radio and how you train me for them.

Age.....

Name.....

Address.....

City..... State.....

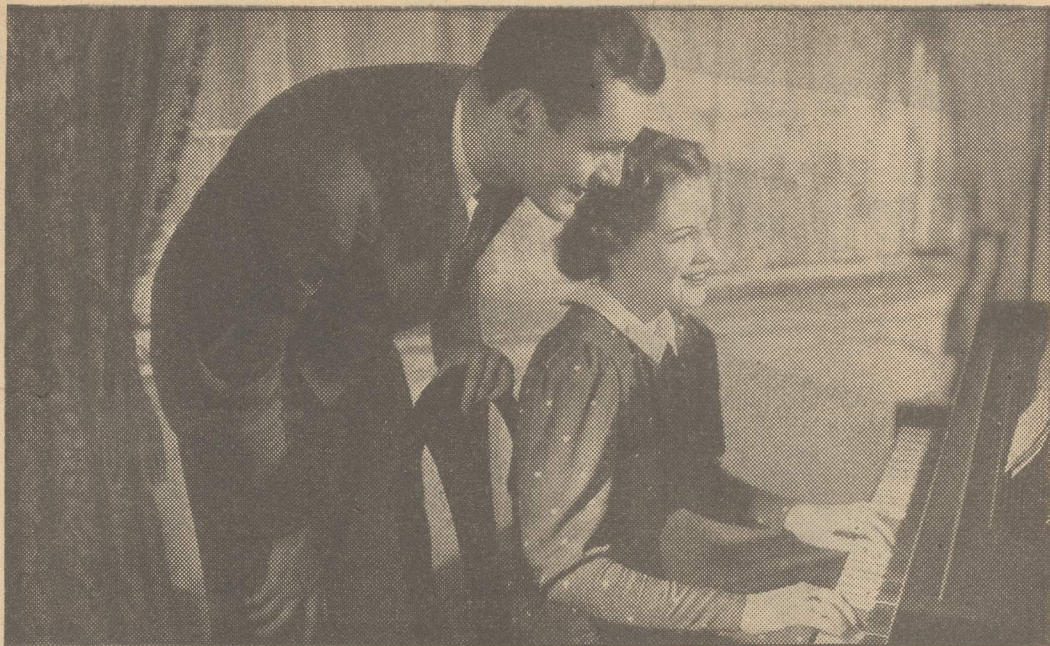


**EXTRA PAY IN  
ARMY, NAVY, TOO**



Men likely to go into military service, soldiers, sailors, marines, should mail the Coupon Now! Learning Radio helps men get extra rank, extra prestige, more interesting duty, at pay up to several times a private's base pay. Also prepares for good Radio jobs after service ends. IT'S SMART TO TRAIN FOR RADIO NOW!





### Plays on Radio

"I am happy to tell you that for four weeks I have been on the air over our local radio stations. So thanks to your institution for such a wonderful course."

\*W. H. S., Alabama.



### Found Accordion Easy

"I've always wanted to play the piano accordion," writes \*H. E. from Canada. "But thought I'd never learn it. Then I read about your lessons. I don't know how to express my satisfaction."

\* Actual pupils' names on request.  
Pictures by Professional Models.

# DO YOU PLAY?

## Say "Yes" Next Time They Ask!

Surprise your friends! Learn to play the piano or other musical instruments this quick, easy way. First lesson starts you playing real tune.

**Y**OU'VE often been asked that question: "Do you play?" Everybody looks at you expectantly, waiting for you to sit down at the piano and entertain the crowd. Are you compelled to embarrass yourself and throw cold water on the party by saying "No"?

What a difference it would make if you could say "Yes". Think of the good times and popularity in store if you could only play the piano or some other musical instrument—the guitar, violin, accordion, saxophone or whichever one happens to be your favorite.

Well, you CAN. You can learn to play any musical instrument you please. You can do it by a method that's **EASIER AND QUICKER** than you perhaps ever thought possible. It takes only a few minutes a day at home, at your own convenience. You save the expense of a private teacher, so the cost is trifling.

### Thousands Now Play Who Never Thought They Could

Does it sound too good to be done? Then remember this: *thousands* have learned to play by this amazingly easy method. Thousands of men, women and children in all walks of life—in all parts of the world. People who had never played before, who knew nothing about music and had no special talent.

Imagine their joy, when, in a remarkable short time, they found themselves actually **PLAYING!** Imagine the astonishment of their friends! No wonder the fame of this amazing method spread, until today, over 700,000 people all over the world have enrolled for it.

### Music Made Easy as A - B - C

How is it possible to learn music so easily? What is this famous U. S. School method of home instruction? Here is the secret: this modern, short-cut method skips the tedious drudgery of old-fashioned methods. Instead, it starts you playing—a simple, popular tune in your very first lesson, another in your second lesson and so on. Fascinating print-and-picture lessons make everything clear. You see what to do—you can't go wrong.

### Send For Booklet With Print and Picture Sample

If you would sincerely like to play a musical instrument, you will be thrilled by the free illustrated booklet and Print and Picture Sample that tells how easily you can learn. Mail the coupon or write for them today, mentioning the instrument in which you are interested. (Instruments supplied when needed, cash or credit.) Address: U. S. School of Music, 2949 Brunswick Bldg., New York, N. Y.

Forty-fourth year. (Established 1898)

**U. S. SCHOOL OF MUSIC,**  
2949 Brunswick Bldg., New York City.

I am interested in music study, particularly in the instrument indicated below. Please send me your free booklet, "How to Learn Music at Home," and your Print and Picture Sample: (Do you have instrument.....)

Piano	Saxophone	Cornet
Violin	Trumpet	Piano Accordion
Guitar	Trombone	Plain Accordion
Cello	Tenor Banjo	Hawaiian Guitar
Mandolin	Ukulele	Other Instrument

Name .....

Street .....

City..... State.....

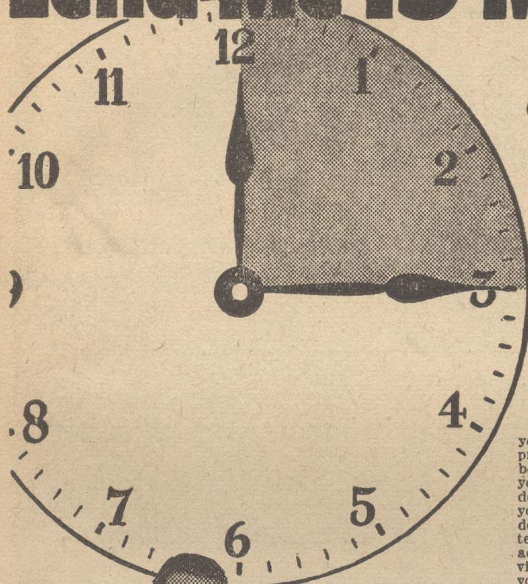
NOTE! If under 16 years of age, parent must sign coupon.

Save 2¢ — Stick coupon on penny postcard



# Lend Me 15 Minutes A Day

**..and I'll prove  
I can make you  
a NEW MAN**



*Charles Atlas*

America's Greatest  
"Builder of Men"

Among all the physical instructors and "conditioners of men" ONLY ONE NAME STANDS OUT. That name is Charles Atlas!

In every part of the country Charles Atlas is recognized as "America's Greatest Builder of Men." Almost two million men have written to him. Thousands upon thousands have put their physical development into his hands!

And now that the call is for men capable of helping America meet and conquer any national emergency, many thousands of others (even those already in their country's Army and Navy) are calling up on Charles Atlas to build the kind of men America vitally needs.

## Here's PROOF Right Here!

"Results come so fast by your method that it seems just as if some magician put on the pounds of solid muscle just where you want them."

—W. L., Missouri

"Feel like a million dollars and have a 44" normal chest —A 2" GAIN"

—L. A. S., Illinois

"My doctor thinks your course is fine. Have put two inches on my chest and 1/2 inch on my neck."

—B. L., Oregon

"My muscles are bulging out and I feel like a new man. My chest measures 38 in., an increase of 5 in., and my neck increased 2 in."

—G. M., Ohio

I'M "trading-in" old bodies for new! I'm taking men who know that the condition of their arms, shoulders, chests and legs—their strength, "wind," and endurance—is not 100%. And I'm making NEW MEN of them.

I don't care how old or young you are, or how ashamed of your present physical condition you may be. I can add SOLID MUSCLE to your biceps—yes, on each arm—in double quick time! I can broaden your shoulders, strengthen your back, develop your whole muscular system INSIDE and OUTSIDE! I can add inches to your chest, give you a vise-like grip, make those legs of yours lithe and powerful. I can shoot new strength into your old backbone, exercise those inner organs, help you cram your body so full of pep, vigor and red-blooded vitality that there's not even "standing room" left for weakness and that lazy feeling! Before I get through with you I'll have your whole frame "measured" to a nice, new, beautiful suit of muscle!

other men in only 15 minutes a day! The answer is "Dynamic Tension," the amazing method I discovered and which changed me from a 97-pound weakling into the champion you see here!

## What 15 Minutes a Day Can Do For You

Are you ALL MAN—tough-muscled, on your toes every minute, with all the up-and-at-'em that can lick your weight in wildcats? Or do you need the help I can give you—the help that has already worked such wonders for other fellows, everywhere?

In just 15 minutes a day, right in the privacy of your own home, I'm ready to prove that "Dynamic Tension" can lay a new outfit of solid muscle over every inch of your body. Let me put new, smashing power into your arms and shoulders—give you an armor-shield of stomach muscle that laughs at punches—strengthen your legs into real columns of surging stamina. If lack of exercise or wrong living has weakened you inside, I'll get after that condition, too, and show you how it feels to LIVE!

## I Was a 97-lb. Weakling

All the world knows I was ONCE a skinny, scrawny 97-pound weakling. And NOW it knows that I won the title, "The World's Most Perfectly Developed Man." Against all comers! How did I do it? How do I work miracles in the bodies of

## FREE THIS FAMOUS BOOK THAT TELLS YOU JUST HOW TO GET A BODY THAT MEN RESPECT AND WOMEN ADMIRE

Almost two million men have sent for and read my book, "Everlasting Health and Strength." It tells you exactly what "Dynamic Tension" can do. And it's packed with pictures that SHOW you what it does. Results it has produced for other men. RESULTS I want to prove it can get for YOU! If you are satisfied to take a back seat and be pushed around by other fellows week-in, week-out, you don't want this book. But if you want to learn how you can actually become a NEW MAN, right in the privacy of your own home and in only 15 minutes a day, then man—get this coupon into the mail to me as fast as your legs can get to the letterbox! CHARLES ATLAS, Dept. 77-Y, 115 East 23rd St., New York City.

## MAIL THIS COUPON NOW!

CHARLES ATLAS, Dept. 77-Y,  
115 East 23rd St., New York City

I want the proof that your system of "Dynamic Tension" will help make a New Man of me—give me a healthy, husky body and big muscular development. Send me your free book, "Everlasting Health and Strength."

Name .....  
(Please Print or Write Plainly)

Address .....

City ..... State .....



Actual photo of the man who holds the title, "The World's Most Perfectly Developed Man."





# LET'S GET THIS STRAIGHT



THIS WAR is being fought by a big Army. It's an army that is called the United States.

Millions of us are in uniforms and many more millions are not, but how we happen to be dressed isn't what's important.

What is important is whether every one of us is in this fight, giving it everything we have. Any less won't win.

Whether you're a soldier on the firing line, or are backing him up as a soldier on the production line, you're fighting for the same things.

The decision, whether or not we are to live in a decent world as free men in the years to come, is in the making now. It's up to you, Soldier.

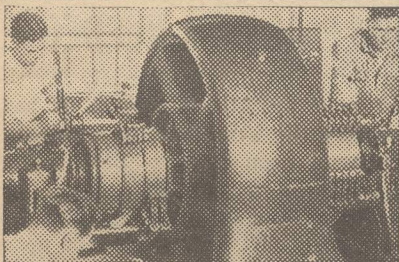
*A Robert G. Smith*

Colonel, G.S.C.  
UNITED STATES ARMY



# AMAZINGLY EASY WAY TO GET INTO ELECTRICITY

*Learn Without Books in 90 DAYS*



Electricity is the mighty power behind our Victory Program. Trained Electrical men are needed. **PREPARE FOR YOUR PLACE** in this amazingly easy way. **"Learn By Doing" in 12 weeks.** You don't need much money—I'll finance your training. **READ EVERY WORD OF MY MESSAGE ON THIS PAGE AND SEE HOW YOU CAN DO YOUR PART EITHER IN THE ARMED FORCES OR INDUSTRY.**



## How Can You Best Serve Your Country Now? How Can You Best Serve Your Country After the War?

### IF YOU'RE DRAFTED

If you enter the Army as a trained electrical man, you are eligible to apply for higher rating and bigger pay. In both the Army and the Navy, rated Electrical Workers hold mighty important jobs—just as skilled Electrical Workers hold vital jobs in civilian life. **AND THIS IS IMPORTANT:** There will be a **TREMENDOUS NEED** for trained Electrical men after the war. By getting your Electrical Training NOW, you will be ready for a **BIG PAY, BIG FUTURE JOB** after your service in the Army is over.

### IF YOU'RE DEFERRED

Everyone cannot serve in our Armed Forces . . . Some may be too young . . . others too old . . . others with dependents . . . and others with some physical defect. If you cannot serve, don't be discouraged. **FROM 16 to 50, EVERYONE WITH PROPER TRAINING CAN SERVE IN WAR INDUSTRY . . .** turning out weapons and materials. **And remember:** Electricity in war time is essentially no different from Electricity in peace time. After the war you'll be an all-around **SKILLED ELECTRICIAN** ready for a good-pay Peace-time job.



H.C. Lewis

**GET YOUR TRAINING  
NOW . . . PAY FOR  
IT LATER !**

Coyne Training is EASY, PRACTICAL! You **LEARN BY DOING**. No dull books. No baffling charts. No reciting. Don't let lack of money stop you. You can get training first—then pay for it in easy monthly payments after you graduate. If you need part-time work to help out with living expenses, I'll help you get it.

**EXTRA  
4 WEEKS  
COURSE IN  
RADIO  
INCLUDED**

### Get the Facts

This school is 43 years old—Coyne training is tested and proven. Mail the coupon and let me send you the big, free Coyne book. This does not obligate you. So act at once. Just mail coupon.

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**500 S. Paulina St. Dept. 62-84 CHICAGO, ILLINOIS**

H. C. LEWIS, President  
COYNE ELECTRICAL SCHOOL, Dept. 62-84  
500 S. Paulina St., Chicago, Ill.

Send me your **Free Book** and tell me about your plans to help me.

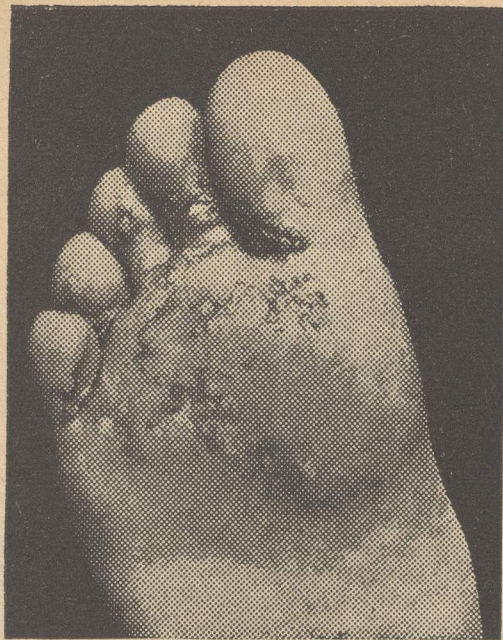
NAME.....

ADDRESS.....

CITY

STATE





# FOOT ITCH

## ATHLETE'S FOOT

*Send Coupon*  
**Don't Pay Until Relieved**

At least 50% of the adult population of the United States are being attacked by the disease known as Athlete's Foot.

Usually the disease starts between the toes. Little watery blisters form, and the skin cracks and peels. After a while, the itching becomes intense, and you feel as though you would like to scratch off all the skin.

## BEWARE OF IT SPREADING

Often the disease travels all over the bottom of the feet. The soles of your feet become red and swollen. The skin also cracks and peels, and the itching becomes worse and worse.

Get relief from this disease as quickly as possible, because it is very contagious, and it may go to your hands or even to the under arm or crotch of the legs.

## DISEASE OFTEN MISUNDERSTOOD

The cause of the disease is not a germ as so many people think, but a vegetable growth that becomes buried beneath the outer tissues of the skin.

To obtain relief the medicine to be used must first gently dissolve or remove the outer skin and then kill the vegetable growth.

This growth is so hard to kill that a test shows it takes 15 minutes of boiling to destroy it; however, laboratory tests also show that H. F. will kill it upon contact in 15 seconds.

## DOUBLE ACTION NEEDED

Recently H. F. was developed solely for the purpose of relieving Athlete's Foot. It both gently dissolves the skin and then kills the vegetable growth upon contact. Both actions are necessary for prompt relief.

H. F. is a liquid that doesn't stain. You just paint the infected parts nightly before going to bed.

## H. F. SENT ON FREE TRIAL

Sign and mail the coupon, and a bottle of H. F. will be mailed you immediately. Don't send any money and don't pay the postman any money; don't pay anything any time unless H. F. is helping you. If it does help you, we know you will be glad to send us \$1 for the bottle at the end of ten days. That's how much faith we have in H. F. Read, sign and mail the coupon today.



## GORE PRODUCTS, INC. T.F.

814 Perdido St., New Orleans, La.

Please send me immediately a bottle of H. F. for foot trouble as described above. I agree to use it according to directions. If at the end of 10 days my feet are getting better, I will send you \$1. If I am not entirely satisfied, I will return the unused portion of the bottle to you within 15 days from the time I receive it.

NAME.....

ADDRESS.....

CITY..... STATE.....



# don't **Worry** about **Rupture**

• Why put up with days . . . months . . . YEARS of discomfort, worry and fear? Learn now about this perfected invention for all forms of reducible rupture. Surely you keenly desire—you eagerly CRAVE to enjoy life's normal activities and pleasures once again. To work . . . to play . . . to live . . . to love . . . with the haunting Fear of Rupture banished from your thoughts! Literally *thousands* of rupture sufferers have entered this *Kingdom of Paradise Regained*. Why not you? Some wise man said, "Nothing is impossible in this world"—and it is true, for where other trusses have failed is where we have had our greatest success in many cases! Even doctors—thousands of them—have ordered for themselves and their patients. Unless your case is absolutely hopeless, *do not despair*. The coupon below brings our Free Rupture Book in plain envelope. Send the coupon now.

## Patented **AIR-CUSHION** Support Gives Nature a Chance to **CLOSE** the **OPENING**

Think of it! Here's a surprising yet simple-acting invention that permits Nature to close the opening—that holds the rupture securely but gently, day and night, at work and at play! Thousands of grateful letters express heartfelt thanks for results beyond the expectation of the writers. What is this invention—How does it work? Will it help me? Get the complete, fascinating facts on the Brooks Automatic Air Cushion Appliance—send now for *free* Rupture Book.

## Cheap—Sanitary—Comfortable

Rich or poor—ANYONE can afford to buy this remarkable, **LOW-PRICED** rupture invention! But look out for imitations and counterfeits. The Genuine Brooks Air-Cushion Truss is never sold in stores or by agents. Your Brooks is made up, after your order is received, to fit your particular case. You buy direct at the low "maker-to-user" price. The perfected Brooks is sanitary, lightweight, inconspicuous. Has no hard pads to gouge painfully into the flesh, no stiff, punishing springs, no metal girdle to rust or corrode. It brings heavenly comfort and security—while the Automatic Air Cushion continually works, in its own, unique way, to *help Nature get results!* Learn what this patented invention can mean to you—send coupon quick!



**C. E. BROOKS,**  
Inventor

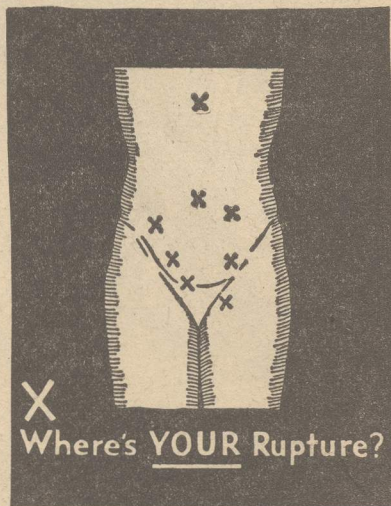
## SENT ON TRIAL!

No . . . don't order a Brooks now—FIRST get the complete revealing explanation of this world-famous rupture invention. THEN decide whether you want the comfort—the freedom from fear and worry—the security—the same amazing results thousands of men, women and children have reported. They found our invention the answer to their prayers! Why can't you? And you risk nothing as the complete appliance is **SENT ON TRIAL**. Surely you owe it to yourself to investigate this no-risk trial. Send for the facts now—today—hurry! All correspondence strictly confidential.

## FREE! Latest Rupture Book Explains All!

Sent You In Plain Envelope **Just Clip and Send Coupon** ➔

**Brooks Appliance Co., 182D State St., Marshall, Mich.**



**X**  
Where's YOUR Rupture?

## PROOF!

Proof of the value and outstanding merit of the **BROOKS APPLIANCE** is clearly shown by the fact that over 9000 doctors have ordered it for themselves or their patients. One doctor alone has ordered for his patients over 400 Brooks Appliances. Follow your doctor's advice! If he says you have a reducible rupture and advises a proper-fitting support, don't subject yourself to further delay, which may prove dangerous, but send us your name and address immediately. Stop Your Rupture Worries! Enjoy the comfort, freedom of action and physical security which this made-to-order appliance will give you.

## Mail This Coupon NOW!

**BROOKS APPLIANCE CO.**  
182-D State St., Marshall, Mich.

Without obligation, please send your **FREE** Book on Rupture, Proof of Results, and **TRIAL OFFER**—all in plain envelope.

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Street \_\_\_\_\_

City \_\_\_\_\_ State \_\_\_\_\_

State whether for Man ☐ Woman ☐ or Child ☐





**Capt. Turnbull (1806-1900)**—like other old salts of his day—rocked a keg of whiskey under his rocker. Its roll recaptured the motion of the wave-tossed ships on which he'd mellowed many a barrel of whiskey.

## From Mellow Whiskeys "Rocked in the Keg" came the Idea for Rocking Chair!



**Mr. Boston** knows rocking mellow a whiskey's flavor. So he achieves Rocking Chair's richness by controlled agitation in his special blending process.



**Get acquainted with Rocking Chair's smoothness!** Buy a bottle—enjoy the mellow taste that made keg-rocked whiskeys so famous. The price is low!

85 Proof (80 Proof in some States)  
75% Grain Neutral Spirits  
Ben-Burk, Inc., Boston, Mass.



# OLD MR. BOSTON BRAND ROCKING CHAIR BLENDED WHISKEY



It would take  
a college education  
to know 'em all



## I Went Nuts in Liquor Stores —by don herold

I used to go crazy in liquor stores, trying to decide which brand to buy. So many brands! The confusion is terrific for the layman liquor layer-inner.

Then a friend told me his system. He said "I've settled on Old Mr. Boston as MY brand —no matter what type of fine liquor I want."

Me—I have too, now.

It turns out that Old Mr. Boston is the one brand name under which you can buy almost every known type of fine liquor. Other big companies make many liquors, but they give them many different names. It's baffling! It's befuddling!

In the Old Mr. Boston line you can buy 30 different liquors, all under the one name, and all easy on the palate and pocketbook.

Old  
Mr. Boston,  
you're  
my pal



You know Boston. And you know its fine old reputation for craftsmanship. Well, you can smack a taste of the old town's 300-year-old reputation for quality in every drop of every Mr. Boston product.

So why not try the Old Mr. Herold plan and use Old Mr. Boston "as a handle by which to call your shots" when you want fine liquors?





The speeding truck hurled Lark's body like a broken rag doll across the gutter.  
(Chapter I)

# THE MURDER PROPHET

*A Complete Book-Length Novel Featuring  
the Black Bat, Masked Nemesis of Crime*

**By G. WAYMAN JONES**

## CHAPTER I

### *A Tardy Murderer*

**B**LACK Gothic, 72 point headline type proclaimed the startling news: **MILLIONAIRE MORDEN MURDERED**. The bold word, **EXTRA**, also topped the first page of the evening's *Sentinel*.

Publishing an extra was a radical departure from the conservative policy of the *Sentinel*, as was the selection of Black Gothic, 72 point type. For, more than a million serious-minded citizens regarded the seventy-year-old news sheet as a symbol of accuracy and convention.

Accordingly, when this standby of



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## Tony Quinn Battles to Halt the Ruthless

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three generations of older readers announced that Millionaire Morden had been murdered, no one could doubt that it was the truth or a sensation warranting an extra.

Yet, Mrs. Harrington, buxom housekeeper for the fourth-floor tenants of the Greenwich Village studio building, more than doubted the veracity of the staid old newspaper.

Noting the glaring black headline, she gulped, swallowed hard and leaned against the corridor wall for support. Then she glanced once more at the huge banner of type which plastered the front page of the copy of the *Sentinel* which was spread out in front of the half-open door of studio B-9.

She lifted widening eyes and peered into the apartment. There was but one Millionaire Morden rating such an outburst from the conservative newspaper. He was Clifford Morden, the longtime tenant of studio B-9.

And Clifford Morden, lean and athletic for a man in his late fifties, was seated before his easel. He was plainly visible to Mrs. Harrington through the partly open door.

In addition Clifford Morden was very much alive. He was engaged in mixing colors on the palette in his left hand with a spatulate tool held in his right hand.

His clean-cut profile was clearly revealed by the powerful white light falling upon the easel, and presumably upon his model who was beyond Mrs. Harrington's vision being situated around an angle of an inner partition.

Only partly recovering her composure, plump Mrs. Harrington picked up the *Sentinel* extra with trembling hands. Irish though she was, and given to trivial superstitions, Mrs.

Harrington did not believe in visions and ghosts.

Anyway, a ghost would be silent. Mr. Morden was slapping colors on the palette with a vigor that made little sounds. Moreover, he coughed a bit, then rubbed the back of his right hand across his chin, a habit he always had.

Mrs. Harrington saw that Mr. Morden's chin was smeared, as usual, with mixed colors of his paints. That settled it.

"Mr. Morden ain't been murdered," whispered Mrs. Harrington on an exhaled breath of relief. "But it's my duty to tell him he is being greatly misrepresented."

SHE stepped just inside the doorway, the newspaper held before her as if the amazing falsehood might bite. She coughed slightly.

"I beg your pardon, Mr. Morden—"

Mr. Morden turned instantly, a frown furrowing his brow.

"What is it, Mrs. Harrington?"

The millionaire, whose one hobby was painting, did not like to be disturbed. Moreover, Mrs. Harrington noted that he glanced, as if much perturbed, toward the model whom Mrs. Harrington could not see.

Mrs. Harrington started to turn the newspaper so that Mr. Morden could read the astounding headline. For a brief instant of time she was aware of shadowy movement at the open window by the fire escape before the studio lights blacked out and a dark shape rushed at her.

Only Mrs. Harrington's old-fashioned, coiled coiffure prevented her from having her skull cracked as her assailant struck. It also warded off complete unconsciousness when she fell, too paralyzed to move.

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## Ruin Stalks a Newspaper when a Sinister

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## *Activities of a Mysterious Killer Horde!*

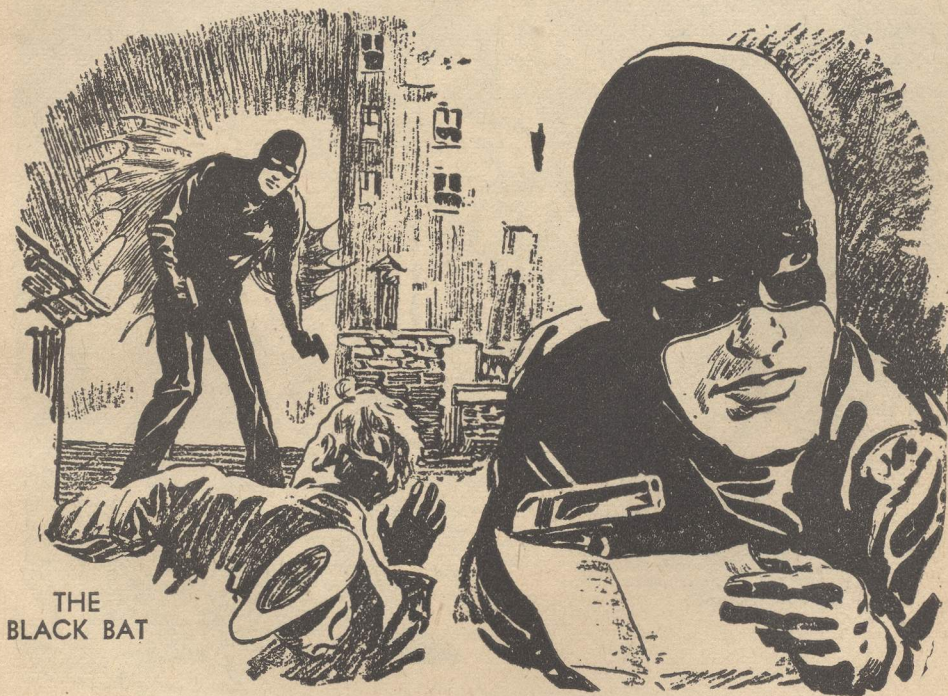
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Vague sounds penetrated the thin veil of her consciousness. She heard a low groan and the clattering of Mr. Morden's mixing palette upon the floor. After that the easel pitched from its stand.

She did not hear Mr. Morden's body strike the floor. Yet her woman's instinct for such things may have caused her to detect the movement of small feet, and to see the brief flashing of a

more acute. The shadow at the open window was recalled, yet she heard no movement toward the fire escape.

Suddenly the inner kitchen door opened and closed again. A metallic click drilled sharply through the silence that followed. Heavy feet shuffled momentarily. Then came a popping explosion that sounded very much like the crackling of a cap on a toy pistol.



THE  
BLACK BAT

little light resembling a cigarette lighter.

The small feet moved hurriedly away. A door opened and shut. There could be only one and that led to the kitchen of the studio. An outer portal of the kitchen opened on the hallway near the rear stairway.

Cold fear clutched at Mrs. Harrington's heart. She was powerless to move, but her mental sense became

A door slammed once more as the housekeeper stirred, trying to rise. From the street four floors below came the sudden, high-pitched wailing of a police car siren.

Mrs. Harrington's memory was still keen because of her cold terror. She recalled a young man she had passed in the corridor before she had seen the murder extra at Mr. Morden's doorway.

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## *Prophet Predicts Murder Before It Happens!*

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Flames from the fire bomb abruptly cut off the Black Bat from Captain McGrath and his raiding policemen.  
(Chapter IX)

He had been a tall, dark-haired good looking young man. She had seen him on two other occasions in Mr. Morden's studio. Once he had arrived with Mr. Morden and the housekeeper had heard them discussing paints. At first, she had regarded him as a salesman, a peddler of paints. But when she had seen him only minutes ago in the hallway, he was bare-headed and disheveled and looked as if he had been drinking.

Whether he had come from Mr. Morden's studio then, she did not know.

The black headline had erased the matter from her mind until now.

**G**ETTING ponderously to her hands and knees, Mrs. Harrington heard feet pounding along the corridor.

"Come along, you!" There was stern authority in the gruff command. "We'll see where you came from! Maybe you paint pictures with your fingers or you fell in a paint pot somewhere!"

"Here it is, sergeant! Studio B-9! Flash a light!"





The studio switch clicked. Piti-  
less white light flooded the apartment.  
It showed buxom Mrs. Harrington  
standing dazedly with the newspaper  
still clutched in her hand.

Crumpled on the floor, his face  
smeared with vivid colors, one hand  
stretched across a canvas as if to con-  
ceal a partly sketched in outline of a  
woman's head, was Clifford Morden,  
noted millionaire.

Millionaire Morden had been mur-  
dered! Just as the conservative *Sen-  
tinel* stated in its story. There was  
no mark of violence.

Morden had died of swift poison,  
later to be identified as deadly, quick-  
acting *strophanthus*. It was in the  
paint he had smeared over his chin  
and his lips.

The *Sentinel's* traditional reputa-  
tion for telling "Nothing But the  
Truth" was confirmed, even as to the  
cause of death."

The homicide captain whose face  
was so red he seemed about to ex-  
plode, was one Captain McGrath.

"He's dead all right!" he growled.  
"It looks like poison just as the *Sen-  
tinel* extra tells it! Only we haven't



been here until just now!"

He rubbed blunt fingers across his sweating, red forehead.

"That's what the *Sentinel* says," suggested another homicide man. "It says—look! The woman's got one of the extras! It states that the police report murder by poisoning, and one suspect has been taken into custody —"

"Shut up!" Captain McGrath roared. "That *Sentinel* extra was on the street half an hour ago! Twenty minutes passed before we realized that no one had been out on this case, and that no such report had been made at the precinct! Hey, is that all you got, frisking this lunatic?"

Captain McGrath took a wallet and notebook from one of his men. He glared at the black-haired young man whose eyes were bloodshot, and whose mouth quivered and drooled over mumbled words. McGrath slapped the young man's cheek hard, rocking his head.

"This your name, brother? Are you Michael Doran? If you are, what do you know about this?"

The young man's eyes closed. His knees buckled and he collapsed down at Captain McGrath's feet.

"Get everything here, every blasted print! I'm taking the other end of this! I'll find out how the *Sentinel* can print an extra giving all the details of a murder that hadn't happened, and ringing in the police department as well. Also, put in a call and have Frank Lark held. Put him in a cell where no one can possibly get to him!"

The homicide men were getting Mrs. Harrington's amazing story as Captain McGrath called Commissioner Warner at headquarters.

"The *Sentinel* is the place to start, Commissioner!" he said. "I'm having Lark held for questioning."

Commissioner Warner and Captain McGrath, confronted by the most bizarre murder in the department's homicidal history, were on their way

to the editorial rooms of the *Sentinel* a few minutes later.

ABOUT this time one of the city's ace police reporters emerged from a bar not far from a precinct station. He carried a copy of the *Sentinel* extra detailing the murder of Clifford Morden and was reading it as he crossed the sidewalk.

He seemed to have had several drinks, but he was walking straight. A man came from the bar behind him. This man walked rapidly along the sidewalk. He flicked a hand toward the police reporter as he passed a small truck parked at the curb.

Words issued from the corner of his slanted mouth. "That's the guy with the paper! Don't miss!"

The small truck started away from the curb. The reporter, eyes upon the sensational headline, strode along, his movements stiff and oddly uncertain.

He walked directly past a parked sedan and right in front of the small truck. There was a crashing thump of a metal bumper meeting flesh and bone, then the speeding truck hurled Lark's body like a broken rag doll across the gutter.

Leaving him limp and lifeless, the truck weaved into traffic and roared away in a burst of speed.

The order for the detention of Frank Lark, trusted veteran police reporter of the *Sentinel*, was out. On Captain McGrath's word he was not to be permitted to communicate with anyone until quizzed by the police.

But Frank Lark never would be quizzed and no one would have communication with him now. The extra carrying the weird, prophetic story of the Millionaire Morden murder, was clutched in his dead hands.

And in the old building that housed the *Sentinel*, Captain McGrath and Commissioner Warner passed directly among clattering typewriters, and grey-haired copyreaders building new headlines, to the office of George Drake, managing editor.



Drake, a fat little, bald-headed man, looked as if he wished he could take the place of the dead Clifford Morden.

"I tell you, Commissioner, it couldn't have happened that way," he said, his voice hoarse. "Good grief, gentlemen! If it could be as you say, why—why it's the death of the *Sentinel* itself."

"It is as we say, Drake," murmured Commissioner Warner, his features grave. "A detailed story of Morden's murder was printed an hour before it happened!"

## CHAPTER II

### *Blind Man's Bluff*



**N**EVER before in the history of the Big Town had there been such a story about a story. Rather, it was the blazing story of a great newspaper that took precedence over a sensational murder.

The headlines of other newspapers hopped upon the most amazing yarn that had ever been published—the announcement of the murder of one of the city's wealthiest citizens, given in all detail, even to the arrest of one suspect, which had gone to press at least an hour before the murder actually took place.

Several fast editions of other newspapers subordinated the Clifford Morden homicide to the story of the prophetic extra that had hit the streets too soon:

**SENTINEL MURDER MADE TO ORDER**

**SENTINEL SCOOPS ITSELF WITH MURDER**

Naturally all the rival sheets had been scooped by the Morden murder extra. For the first time since its

founding the stalwart, conservative *Sentinel* had dabbled into a new and bizarre manner of presenting the news.

On top of scattered copy and wire baskets reposed the front pages of other newspapers with their condemning headlines. It was the broad, flat desk of Bunt Preddy, conceded to be the toughest news editor in the big town.

At the moment, Preddy's craggy features were hollow with strain and worry. All the hard-boiled exterior of the news editor appeared to be oozing in a steady sweat of misery from his pores.

"I tell you it was a regular call from Frank Lark, our own man, and he's never slipped," groaned Bunt Preddy, ruffling his grey hair with nervous fingers. "Jackson here took the call. It was almost on five-star deadline. I pulled back the front page for a replate. Jackson jammed out the story fast and I took a chance on plastering it as an extra. It couldn't be wrong."

Carl Jackson, a tubby, moon-faced rewrite man, pulled at his unbuttoned collar. Tears actually squeezed from his eyes as he looked from the headlines on the news editor's desk into the hard faces of Commissioner Warner and Captain McGrath.

The usual clatter of typewriters had ceased. It was like the lull of machine guns in some battle.

George Drake, the managing editor, perspiration covering his bald spot, waved his small, plump hands helplessly.

"It seems to have been regular coverage, Commissioner Warner," said Drake. "It's something that might have happened to any newspaper. If only Mr. Rowland were here."

"But it's never happened to any other newspaper!" roared Captain McGrath, his stocky body shaking with rage. "Others have sometimes roasted the police. They've betrayed confidences, they've jumped the gun on stories, but—"



"Take it easy, captain," interrupted Commissioner Warner, his temper better held, and his shrewd brain seeking to judge calmly in an unprecedented situation. "By the way, Drake, where is Mr. Rowland?"

**A**RTHUR ROWLAND, in his early sixties, had been publisher of the *Sentinel* for thirty-two years. His accounting for the policy of unflinching accuracy to its old family stockholders had always been unquestioned.

"Mr. Rowland went up to his Connecticut farm last night to stay over the week end," said Managing Editor Drake. "I have wired him, but have had no reply."

Commissioner Warner nodded absently. He glanced from the veteran copyreaders a round the big horseshoe desk, over the long rows of typewriter desks, and up to the walls.

Framed portraits of past editors, of the founders, of famous reporters of the past bore faces that looked grimly down upon the hushed room.

"As soon as we have Frank Lark's own version of this, we may get something to bite into," Warner stated.

"I'm afraid you'll never have that, Commissioner!"

A crisp, resonant, yet somehow bitter voice rang throughout the big editorial room. There was the creaking sound of a gate opening in the railed-off space of the news room. It was followed by the sharp tapping of a cane, striking first the floor, then desks at either side.

"Tony Quinn?" exclaimed Commissioner Warner, striding toward the tall, whiplike figure of the man feeling his way with his cane. "What brings you here? Have you read—have you heard what has happened?"

Warner took the arm of Tony Quinn, once the battling district attorney, but now very apparently a blind man whose sightless eyes held no life and were ugly to see.

Years before, a mobster's act in

throwing acid to destroy evidence, had sent Tony Quinn from his high office back to the seeming uselessness of a blind man's private life.

Chunky Captain McGrath glowered and his face grew redder than it had been.

"Tony Quinn here?" he grunted, half under his breath. "Then I'll bet the Black Bat's not far away."

For a long time Captain McGrath had been honestly and earnestly seeking to scotch the shadowy wings of the famed Black Bat, wanted as a crook though admitted to be the ruthless pursuer of criminals. At times McGrath was convinced that Tony Quinn must be the Black Bat.

Regardless of the promotions from sergeant to captain his persistent hunt of the Black Bat had brought him, McGrath had sworn he would bring the nemesis of criminals and the thorn in the hide of the police department to justice if it was the last thing he would ever do.

Tony Quinn paused beside Bunt Preddy's broad desk, his sightless eyes apparently staring at nothing more definite than the brass tube of the pneumatic copy chute over the desk. His cane tapped Preddy's head, and he apologized instantly.

**F**ROM the managing editor to the youngest cub reporter, every man looked with vast respect at Tony Quinn's erect, hard-muscled figure. It did not seem possible that a blind man could keep himself in such perfect physical trim.

Captain McGrath had an inner respect for the ex-district attorney, but he kept it from showing. He took up what had been said as Tony Quinn had made his unexpected entrance alone.

"Don't tell us, Quinn, that you've heard something from the Black Bat, and he's in on this crazy murder, too?" demanded McGrath. "And what makes you think we'll not question Frank Lark?"

Fine, little scars about Tony



Quinn's eyes only brought out the clean, fighting features that had distinguished him as district attorney. His face was no longer handsome. But when he smiled there was something that held and warmed most men.

"Frank Lark cannot give his version of the Morden murder story because he is dead," responded Tony Quinn softly. "His body is on the way to the morgue, I judge. He was identified as the victim of a hit-and-run car on Twenty-Third Street a few minutes ago just as I arrived downstairs."

"Frank Lark dead?"

News Editor Preddy and Editor Drake gulped out the words together. Carl Jackson, the moon-faced rewrite man, his eyes still squeezing out tears, groaned.

"Lark's been killed?" His round face went white. "He can't be dead. He phoned in the Morden story—"

"Take it easy, Jackson," Preddy advised, nervously pawing his grey hair again. "There may be some mistake. Mr. Quinn, how did you—?"

Several telephones seemed to be ringing at the same time. They were on a desk next to that of Bunt Preddy. The man at this desk was Compton, the city editor.

He was called "Baldy" Compton by one and all. Probably it was because City Editor Compton's head was as hairless and as smooth as a billiard ball. He was answering one phone while rewrite men were picking up

others. It soon developed that several sources had the same report to make.

Baldy Compton put down his phone, got up and came over to the group about Preddy's desk. There was a choking sound in his throat when he spoke.

"Tony Quinn made no mistake," he said. "Frank Lark has been fully identified at the morgue. It would seem that our one means of discovering the origin of the *Sentinel* murder scoop has been removed."

Bunt Preddy's head was in his hands. As news editor, perhaps he could see the end of his newspaper career. Carl Jackson's moon face was contorted. Anger had its stormy way with his emotions.

"Hang it all, Preddy!" he exploded. "Can't you see it! Frank Lark might have been drunk when he phoned! And then he blundered into a car! I'll be the goat for this!"

QUINN turned his face toward Jackson, but glanced several feet away from him.

"What makes you think Frank Lark was drunk when he was killed?" he queried gently.

"Why—well, I thought he'd had a drink or two," stammered Jackson. "But I didn't think anything of it, seeing the big yarn he had. He talked straight enough."

"Could someone perhaps have been persuading him to talk, to give the

[Turn page]

NO FINER DRINK...





*Sentinel* the Morden murder story?" persisted Tony Quinn.

"Wait a minute, Quinn!" rapped out Captain McGrath. "We are still the police, or has your friend, the Black Bat, tipped you off to something more?"

Tony Quinn smiled gently. His features remained calm and unruffled.

"I've had a slight tip, Captain McGrath," he said patiently. "But you're still the police. I'm only the attorney for the one outside the *Sentinel* office most affected by the murder of Morden. I came here to find Commissioner Warner on behalf of my client and your only apparent suspect, Michael Doran."

"Since Doran has been putting on a phony act, pretending he was doped, just how could you be engaged as his mouthpiece?" demanded Captain McGrath.

"Not mouthpiece," corrected Tony Quinn. "The matter of my retention isn't important. But I am going to bat for Doran. I intend to see him and order a thorough examination to establish the cause of his condition."

Actually Quinn had not been retained by anyone. He had neither seen nor spoken to Doran. But shortly after reading the *Sentinel* extra, he had heard a radio bulletin confirming the killing and stating that Doran had been taken into custody.

He had immediately decided to plunge into the case because it intrigued him and because of an appeal he had received from an unusual source. Believing he could secure valuable information by pretending to represent Doran, whom he planned to question later, Tony had hastened to the newspaper office where he knew the police would convene.

A telegraph messenger entered the room and handed George Drake an envelope. Scanning the telegram briefly, the managing editor's face suddenly grew troubled.

"That's strange," he murmured. "Mr. Rowland did not go to his Con-

necticut farm last night. The caretaker states he has not appeared."

Tony Quinn's face did not change expression, though conflicting emotions rolled along his nerves.

"I've already checked on that," he declared. "I contacted Clifford Morden's attorneys as soon as I was engaged, seeking a motive for Morden's killing and the peculiar scoop of the *Sentinel*."

"I have discovered that Morden might soon have had a considerable block of the newspaper's stock. More than two millions, I would say. Morden was known to have had dinner with Mr. Rowland last night at the Queen's Club."

"Rowland and Morden were close friends, Tony?" asked Warner. "Then where is Rowland today?"

"I would like to know where Rowland is myself," stated Tony.

THE ex-district attorney constantly played a little game that might have been called "blind man's bluff." He was far from blind. True, he possessed acute faculties developed when he had been without sight, but his sight had been restored with additional vision that enabled him to see in the darkness.

Pretty, blond, blue-eyed Carol Baldwin was responsible for the miracle. Carol Baldwin's father, a policeman, had been dying of a gangster's bullet in the Middle-West.

A skilled genius, a country surgeon now dead, had transplanted the living cornea of the dying man's eyes to the orbs of Tony Quinn. As for Carol Baldwin, she was now one of Tony Quinn's cleverest aides.

With Jack (Butch) O'Leary, former heavyweight pugilist, a rough crusher of crooks, Carol was waiting at this moment for a call from Tony, or the Black Bat, telling her how she and Butch O'Leary might get into this bizarre *Sentinel* murder case.

One of Quinn's reasons for representing himself as having been mys-



teriously retained as counsel for Michael Doran, suspect in the Clifford Morden murder, was that he convinced him other lives might be endangered. He realized that a blow had been aimed at the historic reputation of the truthful *Sentinel*.

That would undoubtedly mean some insidious purpose, which probably involved the financial fortune represented by the newspaper.

Tony had not called Clifford Morden's attorneys, as he had stated. He had long known of a personal debt of two millions existing between Cliff Morden and Arthur Rowland, the matter having come to his attention when he was district attorney.

Tony Quinn's present game of blind man's bluff was directed at seeking a murderer. And now he was scrutinizing the faces of these men responsible for the columns of the *Sentinel*, watching their reactions.

### CHAPTER III

#### *Death Goes Hunting*



TONY QUINN had decided before his arrival at the *Sentinel* office that a new call had come for the Black Bat. He had invented the excuse that he was entering this weird affair as attorney for Michael

Doran. The real motive behind his appearance was that he had received a phone call from a dead man.

The veteran Frank Lark had covered the D. A.'s office for several years. Tony had known him to be thoroughly trustworthy.

Frank Lark had called Tony Quinn at his West Side residence shortly after the *Sentinel* extra had hit the streets with the murder scoop.

Frank Lark was too loyal to accuse anyone. He was a newspaperman to the roots of his hair. All that he had

said to Tony Quinn was this:

"Tony, there's a Cliff Morden murder story in the *Sentinel*. You were once a good friend of Morden's and of Arthur Rowland, my big boss. At this moment I'm on the spot. I don't know the mugs. I overheard it said that a Michael Doran will take the Morden murder rap.

"He may be guilty or innocent. Tony, if you'll do something for an old friend on your beat, get into this case up to your ears. I'll meet you at Rooney's Bar, Twenty-Third Street, if you're in time. Silk Kirby will spot me for you."

That had been all. Tony Quinn drove recklessly to Twenty-Third Street. Norton Kirby, better known as "Silk" Kirby, his first lieutenant in the Black Bat role, was with him. A crowd was around a body in the gutter when they arrived. Frank Lark would never talk.

Silk Kirby, once as smooth a confidence man as ever ran a two-bit grift into a ten-grand shake-down, had stayed close to the body. He might spot someone watching.

Afterward, he was under orders to go to the Clifford Morden studio and keep an eye on everything. Tony Quinn expected to visit that studio. When he did, he would be the ruthless, hard-hitting, crook-hating Black Bat.

The news he had divulged about Arthur Rowland, the publisher, had a direct purpose behind it. Perhaps, only Commissioner Warner knew that Tony Quinn could see as well as any man, or even much better.

Captain McGrath suspected it, but never had pinned it upon Tony, any more than he had convicted him of being the Black Bat.

The others in that hushed and breathless editorial room of the *Sentinel*, believed they were listening to a blind man. But Tony was the Black Bat even now, with the eyes of a bat, piercing, fathoming the emotions of those grouped about the news editor's desk.



Peering at Bunt Preddy, the Black Bat recalled that he had known the man when he was a court reporter, and his hair had been black.

It had turned grey almost overnight when Bunt Preddy had accompanied a D. A. investigator to the scene of his only sister's brutal murder.

Preddy now was apparently undergoing torture. As news editor, he was the man responsible for replating the Morden murder story and rushing out an extra on an edition deadline. It might have happened to any news editor, but Preddy was taking it very hard.

**G**EORGE DRAKE, small, bald and pink-faced, had an air of helplessness and defeat. Long managing editor, and next to Arthur Rowland, the publisher of the *Sentinel*, he stood to be ruined by this incredible happening. There was nothing in his expression except weariness and an apparent wish to be alone.

Carl Jackson, the rewrite man, could only be regarded as a go-between. A reporter phoned in he had a murder. The city editor switched the call to rewrite. Jackson had happened to take it, and it had been the Clifford Morden story from Frank Lark.

Baldy Compton, the city editor, was as far-seeing on angles of a story as his nose was long. That was what made him a good city editor.

When Frank Lark phoned he had a juicy murder yarn, Compton's first duty was to secure details quickly, get the story to rewrite, then determine the extra angles on which to assign special reporters and photographers.

The Black Bat saw that Baldy Compton was not one to show the white flag under the attack of other newspapers. There was defiance in his studious, far-seeing eyes, a fighting urge simmering in his brain.

"Well, Tony Quinn, you've opened up some angles for us, at least," said Compton. "I have known for some time that Mr. Rowland and Clifford

Morden had once planned a business partnership before Mr. Rowland became publisher of the *Sentinel*. They were at college together, I believe.

"However, I did not know that any recent finances were involved, or that they were even friendly in recent years. I had understood, on the contrary, that some sort of grudge existed between them.

"If Mr. Rowland was with Morden last night, as you say, and failed to go to his farm, isn't that a matter worth investigating?"

Tony Quinn was well aware that any good reporter is one hundred per cent detective. And a city editor is simply a graduated reporter, who usually wishes he were back on a news beat.

"That's a point, Mr. Compton," agreed the Black Bat. "I'm not at all certain that Rowland's absence is linked to the Morden murder. And for the present, I'm thinking only of my client."

The Black Bat turned to Commissioner Warner.

"How about the medical examiner's report on the exact cause of Cliff Morden's death?"

"He should have something by now," responded Commissioner Warner. "Give him a call, Captain McGrath."

McGrath scowled, but went to a reporter's booth. Tony smiled a little. He knew that McGrath would much rather have kept an eye upon one Tony Quinn, to make sure that he did not turn into the Bat before their eyes, and vanish into the black shadows.

A snappy voice spoke behind Tony Quinn, and a friendly hand touched his shoulder.

"How are you, D. A.? Remember me? I'm the little guy who always used the mugs you didn't want in the paper, and passed up the easy shots you wanted to promote."

"Owl Brennan, too red-headed, too smart, too freckled and too short in person and pocket to get anywhere with the gals," said the Bat. "Your





## SILK

hair's thinning out some, or it doesn't give off the sparks it once did."

**T**HE Bat had apparently been looking away over the red-headed cameraman's head as he spoke.

"Nuts, Tony!" laughed Owl Brennan. "You call it a sixth sense, but I'll bet you can see. Can't fool the eyes of an owl or a bat, you know."

Although he spoke as he did, the Bat was sure Owl Brennan did not really suspect that he could see. But he caught something in Owl Brennan's tone that conveyed a message. It was as if Owl Brennan had the desire to see him alone.

Owl Brennan made it specific a minute later, standing close to the Bat.

"Listen, Tony," he whispered. "When you get a chance, have someone show you to the dark room. I've got something to tell you."

The Bat merely nodded. Owl Brennan walked on. The Bat saw that he had a camera strapped over his shoulder, and there was a bright new flash-light gadget attached to it.

At that moment Captain McGrath returned from the phone. If ever a man smirked with satisfaction, McGrath did now.

"Well, my fine, feathered friend," said McGrath, "so you want us to be sure and have no bruises on your client, Michael Doran. Too bad we will not need the bruises. It turns out your client is a chemist. This was a little matter of murder. Our police chemist discovered something he calls *strophanthus*, a very deadly poison, was in paint smeared over Clifford Morden's mouth."

"Yes," said the Bat, fairly sure what was coming. "And by the strangest coincidence, I'd wager your chemist discovered there was also this *strophanthus*, which is a virulent *glycoside*, about my client's clothes, or perhaps upon his hands."

"How did you know that?" snapped McGrath.

"Point number one for Michael Doran," stated the Bat. "That's exactly where someone might wish to have poison discovered, if Morden died of



that particular variety, and precisely which my client would have been careful to avoid if he were guilty."

"But that holds your client, my friend," said McGrath almost viciously.

"You bet it does," declared the Bat. "And I wouldn't want him running around loose under any circumstances at this stage of the nice, little game of murder I believe has just started. If necessary to hold Michael Doran, I would, as his attorney, sign a murder complaint myself.

"Since I am handicapped by lack of sight, I like to keep my clients where I can put my hands on them without having to enlist the help of the morgue."

The Bat heard a startled gasp. He did not appear to look. But he saw the girl, anyway. She had blue eyes, too big and too innocent, and hair too much the color of real honey to be hiding behind the typewriter of a girl reporter.

Something he had said about Michael Doran had greatly disturbed her.

Phones were jangling. Since the *Sentinel* was an afternoon paper, its day was over. The Morden murder scoop had been its regular last edition. Its next issue would be published the next morning around noon.

**Y**ET members of the staff were sticking around. They conversed in low-voiced groups. As with all newspaper people, the news sheet was their life. They would sweat and work long hours, and complain about their sad lot—and love it.

And so, to each newspaper employee here, this incredible thing that had happened was something personal. The honor or the dishonor of the newspaper was their own.

The Black Bat's inner sight saw these things, while his apparently blind eyes watched the blue-eyed girl hunched behind her typewriter. Something connected with Michael Doran had hit her hard.

"A little job for Carol," reflected the Bat. Then, aloud: "Will someone direct me to the reporters' booths? I have a call to make."

The news editor and the city editor, Bunt Preddy and Baldy Compton, were making a pretense of cleaning up their desks. George Drake, his bald spot still sweating, hurried over.

"I'll show you, Tony," he said.

All of these older editors had known Tony Quinn long, and affectionately. Commissioner Warner looked as if he would have liked a word with the Bat, but he would wait.

"Come on, Captain McGrath," he urged. "Tony, you can talk with your client when you're ready."

In the phone booth, dialing his West Side home number, Tony riveted his attention upon the blue-eyed girl. She was wearing a light, grey-green spring coat. Her white face was turned, following his movement to the phone booth.

Tony got Carol Baldwin on the wire. He gave her quick directions to come with Butch O'Leary and meet him outside the *Sentinel* building in a few minutes.

"I may arrange with the managing editor for you to have a job as a reporter on the *Sentinel*, Carol," said Tony.

As he closed the door of the booth the blue-eyed girl reporter was talking with another girl of about her own size. Tony saw the reporter hand the other girl a ring of keys.

He read on the reporter's lips a few words.

"Better take my coat, too. It's getting chilly outside."

The grey-green coat was shrugged off, and the other girl took it over her arm. She went out and the reporter slumped into her chair again. Her eyes turned once more upon Tony.

George Drake, the managing editor, had waited courteously. Tony mentioned a girl friend, meaning Carol.

"Anything for a friend of yours,



Tony," said Drake, "and as long as I have this job, which may not be long."

Tony did not probe now. He was merely an attorney to George Drake. He had always regarded Drake as a rather futile editor, but a good yes-man for Arthur Rowland, the hard-working, clever publisher.

"If you'll show me to the photography rooms, I'd like a talk with my old friend, Owl Brennan," said Tony.

He said this, although he could see Owl Brennan waiting at a doorway, watching him. He started across the big room with Drake.

Suddenly above the even harmony of the traffic roar some six stories down, came a shattering, heavy crash.

Tony saw the blue-eyed girl reporter spring to her feet, almost as if the crashing sound had been a blow striking her personally.

## CHAPTER IV

### *Who Expected Murder?*



QUINN'S lightning senses told him that someone in this editorial room had expected that crash, which came from the street below. But which one?

Baldy Compton had jumped to his feet instantly. He had glanced all around the tense news room before his hand automatically picked up a phone. That was a natural reaction for a city editor.

Bunt Preddy whirled his swivel chair, his hand digging into his thick, grey hair. His eyes, too, traveled about the room. Then he lunged to his feet and moved swiftly across the big room toward a window. Reporters followed close on his heels.

George Drake uttered a harsh exclamation.

"What in blazes was that?"

"Someone's always beating the lights," said Tony quietly, but detected a vague note in George Drake's voice that might have signified that he was thinking of more than a traffic crash.

Carl Jackson, the moon-faced rewrite man, knocked a paste pot off his desk as he swung around. And he was looking at Tony Quinn, as if he thought Tony might have something to do with the crash.

"It's very odd, Drake," said Tony. "Everyone here seems to be expecting something bad. You've got an edgy staff."

Drake laughed nervously, and nodded.

"I guess I was thinking of what happened to Frank Lark," he said. "I've been putting off going over to the morgue, which is my duty."

Tony smiled a little. He was looking at Owl Brennan, the short, red-headed cameraman. Owl Brennan had started across the room toward the blue-eyed girl reporter. Now he stopped so suddenly that his feet skidded.

Then Owl Brennan glanced around, and over at Tony, as if he feared his intention to go to the girl reporter had been observed.

Predy turned from the distant window to yell across the room.

"It's an accident! Looks as if somebody was smashed up by a car right in front of our building. Can't see much on account of the crowd."

Baldy Compton scowled, and his voice barked out sharp orders.

"Mason! Owl Brennan! Get downstairs on this fast! Grab a shot before the cops mess up things!"

Owl Brennan went into the photogs' room, and came out. Tony spoke to George Drake.

"I'll be back later, Drake. I think I'll move along now." Then Tony added, "Have one of the boys take me down. I'm rather helpless in a crowd."

Tony went down quickly. As he left the room he saw the blue-eyed girl re-



porter sitting rigidly in her chair, staring at him as if she were fighting back a desire to follow him, to tell him something. He let that go for the moment.

**T**HE girl in the light, grey-green spring coat was frightfully crushed. Her body was caught beneath a shattered coupé. The car had a press sticker on its windshield. Tony Quinn, weaving through the knot of spectators being pushed back by two policemen, realized this was the grey-green coat belonging to the girl reporter upstairs.

And the dead girl still held a ring of keys gripped in her dead hand. She had borrowed the grey-green coat and the coupe, and she had inherited awful death.

A huge empty newspaper truck had its high hood and bumper rammed almost through the coupé. It had struck while the girl was entering the vehicle.

Tony could see the open front of the *Sentinel's* truck-loading platforms half a block from the main building, in another structure across the narrow side street. He saw roughly dressed truck driver's of the newspaper crowding around.

A policeman had cornered two of the drivers. Tony listened.

"I'm tellin' you, copper, some guy I never saw before jumped into the truck and tried to make a getaway!" said one driver. "The fool didn't know the street wasn't wide enough for a U-turn, I guess! He was tossed out, and he ran off before any of us guys got wise to what had happened!"

"Couldn't make a U-turn, huh?" The policeman was tough. "That's the same old stall! I'm notifying all of you truck drivers to report to headquarters! You're covering up! This looks like homicide!"

"So help me, copper!" said the other *Sentinel* driver. "Buck's tellin' you the truth! This is Blocky's wagon, and here he comes!"

Blocky was as short and as tough

as the copper. He was swearing fluently. He had proof he was off his truck when it was grabbed.

Tony saw Owl Brennan getting his shots. He noticed that the red-headed cameraman was using some kind of a flash that showed no visible light. Tony guessed that was a new infra-red light just coming into use since the outbreak of the war. It was black-out stuff.

Reaching Owl Brennan, Tony touched his arm.

"I heard your box click, Owl," he stated. "The crowd is saying it's a woman. Has she been identified?"

The freckles stood out upon Owl Brennan's square face. He spoke through tightly clenched teeth.

"Sure, Tony, I know," he said uneasily. "She is—she was Margaret Ripple, from our society staff. That's just what I wanted to talk to you about. The coat Margaret Ripple is wearing was borrowed from Jane Longren, one of our reporters. That coupé also belongs to Jane. Whoever did it, must have thought Margaret was Jane Longren."

"Let's get out of here, Owl," Tony urged. "We'll find some quiet place for a few minutes. You have your shots."

"Yeah, and I'd rather cut off an arm than watch what will come out on the plate," groaned the photographer. "All right, Tony. I certainly could use a long drink."

**M**OVING along the street, they left the throng gathered about the dead girl and entered a bar some distance away.

"That's the second try at getting Jane Longren, Tony," declared Owl Brennan, downing a stiff drink in the quiet rear booth they occupied. "The other one was an accident, too. A nice fire bomb that didn't go boom-boom went off in Jane's hotel room two days ago. She was supposed to be asleep, but I had just happened to wake her up with a phone call."



"Your girl, Owl?" queried Tony Quinn gently. "I thought you were carrying the torch for Lela Ramer, second ex-wife of Lloyd Ramer, the night club owner. Is she the reason for your recent heavy gambling at some of the night spots? She must have expensive tastes."

Quinn saw the photographer's red head lift up, and his eyes narrowed with bright displeasure. Then he laughed a trifle uneasily.

"So you know about that? You certainly get around," said Owl. "Well, there's nothing serious about Lela—I mean, Mrs. Ramer. But Jane's different. She's new on the *Sentinel* and I wish she were my girl. I can't tell you much more than that.

"She comes from some country burg she refuses to talk about. I fell hard the first day—me and all the other office wolves. However, she hasn't given me much encouragement."

"Jane Longren hasn't given you any reason why she might be wanted out of the way, Owl?"

"None, Tony. She's just a scared, little country girl or—well, not quite that. She's afraid, but she's game. And she swears no one has threatened her, that she hasn't written any stories involving this kind of trouble, and she can't imagine why anyone would want to kill her."

If Owl Brennan could have known that Tony's sightless eyes were studying him, perhaps he would not have kept glancing about, as if he feared someone might also be lurking around to hand him the business.

Owl was showing every evidence of being as fearful of his own safety as Jane Longren might be of hers.

"Describe your girl, Owl," said Tony thoughtfully.

He gave no heed to the description. It was more important to have established that Owl Brennan, with all of his wise-cracking spirit, was afraid.



One foot trapped by the clutch pedal, the driver hung upside down while the truck plunged toward destruction. (Chapter V)



Owl was choosing his words carefully, and that meant he was holding back something.

"But where do I come in, Owl?" said Tony suddenly. "I'm in this only as a blind attorney, seeing a chance, perhaps, to help a poor devil caught in a jam. Say, you heard I intended helping Michael Doran? Just what is Michael Doran to Jane Longren?"

Owl's quick start told Tony he had rung a bell.

"Why, I didn't say—well, yes. That's why I wanted to talk with you, Tony. I've seen Jane meet Michael Doran, but she won't talk about him. Sure, I asked her. I'm that way. She just said he was from her home town, and not to ask her any more."

"You wouldn't imagine this Doran is one reason you don't get places with the girl, would you, Owl?"

"Hang it all, Tony! They say you're blind. You can't be. Or perhaps you're psychic. If you're in this for Michael Doran, I should be against you and him. But I'm not. If Doran's really a friend of Jane's, that's good enough for me."

"Owl, that's square shooting," stated Tony slowly. "Even if you are holding out plenty. What is it you're not telling that's a lot more important than what you've spilled? Come all the way, Owl."

**O**WL was swallowing hard. He gulped more of his stiff drink. He was sweating from every freckle. And that wasn't like the Owl.

"There's not another thing I can tell, Tony," Owl replied flatly. "Anything more would only be guessing. It might involve Jane in more trouble. Forget all the rest of it, Tony. Just do all you can for this Doran guy. We'll say I've a hunch he's been framed for the Morden murder."

"Okay, Owl. We'll let it ride. Michael Doran has been framed. I haven't any doubt of that. So obviously framed that it sticks out. It follows that it was meant to appear as a frame,

possibly to implicate some other person."

"I've got to get back or Baldy Compton will be yellin' his head off," grunted Owl suddenly, standing up.

Tony glanced out through the main entrance. He saw Carol Baldwin and big Butch O'Leary in the front seat of a sedan parked across the narrow street.

No doubt they had spotted and followed him. They would make no contact until he gave a signal. He was sure that Owl Brennan now realized he should not have told as much as he had, without being prepared to tell a bigger something he was holding back.

There were three customers at the bar, and only one bartender. As Owl was swinging his camera strap over his shoulder, a big newspaper truck suddenly nosed up at the front entrance.

One glance showed it was a *Sentinel* truck. It carried a current sign. The advertising made an impact upon Tony's brain.

The sign read:

You'll Find What You Want In  
**WHAT WILL HAPPEN**  
Read It in the *Sentinel's* Column  
**BY THE PROPHET**

That sign seemed somehow curiously interlinked with today's weird happenings. Since he was supposed to be blind, Tony did not speak of it to Owl Brennan.

Two burly men came from the truck cab, slouching into the bar. Tony's quick vision noted that Carol Baldwin and Butch O'Leary, their view of him cut off by the *Sentinel* truck, were moving ahead.

Butch O'Leary evidently intended to drive the sedan to the end of the block, and perhaps circle to a better spot, not having seen Tony Quinn move.

Nor had Carol and Butch given any special attention to the two men from the news truck. What happened came so quickly that Tony was caught unprepared.



Both men from the truck ordered drinks. Owl Brennan was standing. Tony arose, tapping with his cane.

"Hey, so you're in here lappin' up hooch, and the boss lookin' all over for you!"

One of the big truckmen pivoted. His coat pocket was shoved into Owl Brennan's side. The other truckman laughed for the benefit of others in the bar.

"Always know where to find our red-headed cameraman!" he said.

## CHAPTER V

### *Runaway Death Truck*



HARDLY expecting to see tough Owl Brennan so easily subdued, Tony Quinn remained motionless, his mind a tumult of conflicting emotions. What had happened to Owl Brennan? He appeared to be frozen by fear.

Tony heard the man with the coat pocket against Owl grind out low words between his teeth.

"Just as soon blast you here, brother, as argue about it! Come along and maybe you'll live! Tell your blind friend I mean it! Get going, both of you!"

The other man at the bar spoke loudly.

"Look in the *Sentinel* for the picture he's got in that box! First edition tomorrow!"

Owl Brennan apparently had not frequented this bar, the bartender laughed with the others. And Owl was walking out. Tony debated if he could beat a possible slug by a lightning play.

Yet some subtle, intuitive sense warned him that this was just another link in a deadly chain of events that had already brought sudden death to two people.

Any attempt at resistance now might send a bullet smashing into the photographer. Perhaps, Tony reasoned, he could learn more by stringing alone. Besides, the laughing thug over by the bar wasn't holding a tobacco pipe in his own side coat pocket where it stuck out, unobserved by others, pointing straight at Tony.

"Owl, what's happening?" Tony's voice was weak and uncertain. He gave every evidence of being a totally blind man lost in a situation he could not understand.

Not often was Tony so trapped by circumstances that only betraying his ability to see would extricate him. If it had not been for the incredible crimes that must have their inception on the inside of the *Sentinel* office, Tony would not have been forced into this doubtful position.

But he had to remember that someone, or perhaps more than one, in the newspaper's editorial rooms must have known of the last murder committed, the mistake that had killed another girl when it had apparently been meant for the mysterious Jane Longren.

Owl's own reaction decided him.

"Tony! I'll go along," said Owl, his voice quivering.

"Shut up, and come on with that box! Hey, Barker! Show his blind friend to the street!"

Owl Brennan strode toward the street doorway. Tony kept up his pretense, tapping along with his cane, until the other man gripped his arm.

Tony hoped he had delayed long enough for Butch O'Leary to drive the sedan all the way around the block, although he knew Butch would have to contend with the heavy traffic of Broadway for one of those blocks.

Owl Brennan was with the man ahead of Tony, reaching the sidewalk beside the big *Sentinel* truck. Tony could only judge that these two thugs must be regular *Sentinel* drivers. Otherwise, they could not have been in possession of the vehicle.



**W**ITHOUT moving his head, Tony shot a glance along the narrow street. Butch O'Leary's car had not made it all the way around. Then, so abruptly that Tony had no time to act, Owl Brennan jerked to one side, swinging with a hard right.

The thug's head rocked back. Tony saw very little of what happened after that, for his attention had been diverted just long enough for the other man's hand to jump from his arm. A fist snapped up with a paralyzing blow that caught him just under the ear.

Dizzied, Tony swung his cane. It never connected. But the thug's knee rammed into his groin with such brutal force that Tony was flung off his feet. Then a knuckled fist smashed into his face, sending him to his knees.

How Owl Brennan got there, Tony did not know. But the red-headed cameraman was lying on the sidewalk, flat on his back. Evidently he was out cold.

Almost unconscious from the terrific agony doubling him up as the result of the kneeling he had suffered, Tony was unable to try for one of his own guns.

Even while he fought desperately to clear his head, a heavy metal object battered him between the eyes. Abruptly the nearby lights of Broadway were converted into millions of colored stars that vanished in utter blackness.

A heavy, rumbling noise akin to thunder pounded through Tony's head after a long, blank interval and brought him back to reality.

Words ran like brilliant lights through the vision of his mind. They formed patterns:

**WHAT WILL HAPPEN!**

**BY THE PROPHET!**

It was something to read in the *Sentinel*, that staunchly conservative newspaper that had always played down sensational news, and made real, vital happenings more important.

The lights faded. Tony felt as if he were in a great, hollow box hurt-

ling through space. A girl's pretty face appeared. Pallid lips pleaded. They became whispers.

"You've got to help Michael Doran—you've got to help Michael Doran—"

Perhaps, that did it. His eyes opened. In the blackness inside the speeding, bouncing truck, he could see more distinctly than a man of normal vision in the brightest daylight.

He was in the *Sentinel* delivery truck. Two big men were on the broad seat of the cab. The cab opened into the interior for the handling of newspaper bundles.

One of the men spoke, his voice jarring Tony's ears.

"I don't know why, but that's the orders! I'm hoppin' off at the next corner! You be sure to bring the box!"

"Yeah! You stay out of it! I'll be seein' you at the Red Feather!"

Tony picked the speech out of the truck's rumbling. His acute auditory sense could hear the ticking of a watch in a crowded room. The box must mean Owl Brennan's camera. There was a Red Feather night club in the Forties.

**T**HEY had knocked out Owl Brennan, for Tony had seen the photographer lying on the sidewalk. Yet here he was, Tony Quinn, alone in the truck. What had they done with the redhead? Why would they leave Owl and take his camera? And why had they taken him, Tony Quinn, alone?

These men could not know he was the Black Bat. Or could they?

It was a queer business. He was up to his ears in this tangled murder case, and he had not yet employed his striking power as the Black Bat. Thus far, his talented fighting aides had been given no definite assignments.

Only Silk Kirby was watching over a murder studio, waiting for him to appear. As for Carol Baldwin and Butch O'Leary, they had just missed making contact with him.

"All right, hop off!" the driver of



the truck growled to his companion. "I think that car is taggin' us. If it comes too close, I'll do it another way! Too bad Tony Quinn happened to know the boss too well! Makes it tough, but maybe it's doin' a blind guy a favor at that!"

"Yeah! What does he get out of life! Okay! Hold 'er!"

That was one relief. These men had abducted Tony Quinn, and had no suspicion he was the Black Bat. So that did not enter into it. But who was this boss the thug was speaking about?

It might be anyone of several people. For example, he had known every older member of the *Sentinel* staff, including Owl Brennan, for many years.

The truck slowed. One man swung off. The truck picked up speed again. It was on a downhill street. Gloomy warehouses drifted by like shadows. Tony raised himself cautiously.

He felt terribly weak and sick. His hand encountered one of his concealed automatics. Then he had not been searched. They had accepted him as really a helpless blind man who knew someone too well.

He saw the dimmed lights of a car following. That must be Carol and Butch. But the lights kept a measured space behind. That meant they must be tailing the truck only on a hunch.

Butch and Carol could not know certainly that he was in the truck. There would have been fireworks by this time from the loyal, fight-loving Butch. Then again it might not be his aides. Perhaps, the boss was following his own men to see that they carried out their instructions.

Lifting himself up carefully, Tony saw the graflex camera on the seat beside the burly driver.

There was no reason to hesitate any longer. He would jam the gun into the driver's back, and that would be that. There would be some answers, obtained as only the Black Bat knew how to get them.

Unfortunately, he had waited just



McGRATH

a second or so too long. The truck dipped so sharply forward it unbalanced him. The big tires were whispering over planking.

**B**EADED lights ahead warned Tony the truck was starting down the jump-off to one of the rivers, probably the Harlem where dead-end streets were bitten off at the water.

Tony threw himself forward, the automatic stabbing into the driver's back.

"Hold it! Right here or—"

The thug who so calmly planned to relieve the monotony of a blind man's drab existence had, of all things, nerves. More than that, he was filled with yellow fear.

As the burly man screamed, Tony's keen eyes peered ahead, revealing the reason for the man's terror. The gleaming surface of the river was just a few yards away, glimmering at the end of the planked street grade.

The driver must have realized that he was trapped. With his scream, he half-jumped and half-rolled. But as he went over, one foot was pinched by the clutch pedal, and he hung upside down while the truck plunged



toward destruction.

Tony dropped the gun and seized the camera. The truck's tail end reared up. Its nose was already diving when he did an acrobatic turn.

He landed with a thump that jolted the breath from him, but in time to hear the resounding splash as the big *Sentinel* truck dived into the tidal current.

This was the Harlem river where it separated from the Hudson to cut off Manhattan from the mainland and make it an island.

Tony saw the lights of the trailing car come on faster now. But he had no time for that. Perhaps, the key to much of the *Sentinel* murder mystery was down there with the truck.

He thrust the wanted camera of Owl Brennan aside where it would not be spotted. Shedding his coat, he ran forward and dived in. The tidal current was on a fast ebb, swirling him around until he found the front of the submerged truck.

The driver had vanished. Caught in the current, either alive or dead, he had been carried away from the truck.

Tony came to the surface. His piercing gaze scanned the water along the flowing stream. There was no sign of a head bobbing up or of a swimming man.

"Tony! Tony! Butch! I tell you I saw him! Butch! He was in the lights! I'm going after him myself!"

Tony thrilled at the note of keen anxiety in Carol Baldwin's voice. He shouted just as big Butch O'Leary was in the act of leaping into the river.

"Hold it, Butch! I'm all right, Carol! Coming up!"

The blond girl threw her arms around his soaked figure and kissed him.

"I was sure you were in the truck, Tony," she said tremulously when he had quieted her. "But Butch said you probably wanted to be there, and we should wait and see."

"That was right, Butch," Tony agreed, noting the woeful expression on the ex-pugilist's ring-scarred features. "And you're just in time to share in a night of real work. First, home fast for a change of clothes. I'll tell you your spots on the way."

"The Black Bat flies tonight, Tony?" queried Carol.

"That's the answer, Carol," said Tony. "And it must be quickly."

## CHAPTER VI

### *Startling Evidence*



S CAR tissue was the only thing that marred the once handsome face of Tony Quinn. And these marks about the eyes served to make his features stronger and more striking.

Tony was in the laboratory of his own big house on the West Side Drive. This was concealed back of a fireplace that swung out like a doorway at a special touch.

There had been no word of Owl Brennan, and Tony dismally concluded the redhead was either dead or being kept a prisoner for some obscure reason.

The light of his laboratory dark room was red and vague. But as Tony lifted one plate he had taken from Owl Brennan's camera out of its developing bath, the horror it revealed was all too clear.

There was the crumpled figure of the girl who had borrowed a coat, car keys and death from Jane Longren. As Owl Brennan had shot this one close-up with his infra-red flashlight, the camera's unfailing eye had recorded faces of those closest to the murdered girl.

One face was tilted sharply, the eyes looking straight at Tony Quinn. It was as if the owner of that face



had caught the presence of the cameraman and looked directly into the lense while the shot was being snapped.

The face was handsome in a rugged way. The features were bony. The forehead was high, and the eyes were set under cavernous, jutting brows.

Perhaps, Tony was seeing more of the face than the camera really outlined. For, it was a face with which he had long been familiar.

Arthur Rowland, the missing publisher of the *Sentinel*, had been at the murder scene! His hands were partly lifted as if he had made a last-minute effort to shield his features, but had been too late.

**T**ONY took another plate from the bath. It had been with two more in the carrying box attached to Owl Brennan's camera. Upon this the figure of Arthur Rowland was shown bending over the dead girl in the grey-green coat.

Tony put a strong glass over one face on the negative.

"If he were witnessing the murder of someone close to him, Rowland couldn't portray greater grief," observed Tony softly. "There is something more revealed in his features than merely discovering that a girl of his newspaper staff has been killed violently."

The bony countenance of the publisher mirrored utter despair.

But it was the negative from the third plate in Owl Brennan's camera that puckered Tony's mouth in a low whistle. Tony was seeing a picture which, from other angles, had been on the front page of every evening newspaper.

"Owl was surely holding out plenty," said Tony grimly. "I think Carol should attach herself as closely as possible to Miss Jane Longren without delay, and not permit that interesting young woman to get out of her sight for even the slightest moment."

**A**T the moment Tony was looking at a view of the interior of the Clifford Morden studio. It was a clear-cut shot, undoubtedly made with the infra-red light.

There was the fallen easel and the canvas in its frame. Morden's body lay partly under the easel, with one arm stretched across it protectively. Mrs. Harrington, the buxom housekeeper named in the first news stories, was lying on the floor a few feet from Morden's body.

But what caught Tony's keen eyes was the window opening on the fire escape. A man's shoulder and one leg, and the side of his face were revealed, the profile showing under a snap-brimmed hat.

From the position of the furtive figure in the fire escape window, it was impossible to judge whether he was entering or leaving the murder scene. Although only the profile was visible anyone of thousands in the Big Town would have instantly identified the features of Arthur Rowland.

"Let Captain McGrath get his hands on these photos, and there will be the dickens to pay," mused Tony thoughtfully. "Owl Brennan must have rushed to Morden's studio as soon as he saw that extra to get shots like these. He must have arrived right after the murder, just before the police arrived on the scene, and snapped the pictures in the dark, taking a chance on what they'd reveal!"

The phone extension in the laboratory buzzed. Silk Kirby was on the wire. The one-time confidence man, who had first met Tony Quinn when he had entered the then blind man's house to rob him, and who had stayed to become as great an enemy of crooks as Tony himself, had been instructed to call every half hour.

"If you have ideas about the Morden studio, sir, I wish to report the police have finished, locked the place and departed," reported Silk. "They have left one policeman on guard. He is at the front door. There is a rear



entrance. Also there is the fire escape."

"Stand by, Silk," said Tony. "We are on the move. Tell me, did you note if the artist's canvas or anything else has been removed?"

"Only the body, sir."

"Right, Silk. Keep close watch. If anyone attempts to enter and remove anything before I arrive, intercept him quietly without attracting the police."

"That I will, sir."

Tony emerged into his warm living-room. Carol Baldwin and Butch O'Leary were eagerly awaiting orders. They were issued quickly.

Tony gave Carol the address of the downtown hotel where Owl Brennan had said Jane Longren had narrowly escaped death by fire. He watched the little sparks of excitement dance into Carol's blue eyes.

**T**HE girl who had given Tony Quinn his eyes, his almost invincible armor as the Black Bat, was happiest when she was helping him fight dangerous crooks.

Carol had other ideas about Tony, too, but he held these off, chiefly because of the bright danger of the life he was leading.

"Stick by Jane Longren wherever she goes, and be careful," was Tony's only instruction.

"Jane Longren is as good as walking with two shadows," said the blond girl.

"Butch, I have a tough assignment for you," declared Tony. "One *Sentinel* truck was seized and used for murder tonight. Another truck, as you know, probably was stolen and also intended for a murder, only that one back-fired. The truck drivers hang around some bar near the loading rooms. You will find what you can hear."

Butch O'Leary's ugly, battered face showed some disgust. He surveyed his calloused knuckles.

"Ain't much chance of a scrap there, boss," he complained.

"Fights are where you find them, Butch," murmured Tony with a smile. "And you usually do. I want especially to learn what the truck drivers may have to say about this murder of Clifford Morden. Also, if any driver mentions the Red Feather Club, in the Forties, make talk with him."

Tony had remembered one man on the intended murder truck had said he was drifting over to the Red Feather. It seemed a queer place for a man of his type. The Red Feather Club was a high class night spot.

Tony knew that it was owned by one Lloyd Ramer who rated high as being on the up-and-up. No gambling. No off-color stuff. Just good food and drinks and entertainment at the usual quadrupled prices, all legitimate.

It occurred to Tony that Owl Brennan's disappearance might be linked to the club, and he decided to look into the matter later.

"I should have thought of this sooner," Carol stated, producing a newspaper clipping. "I was reading the *Sentinel* while we waited for you, Tony. I came across this in that 'What Will Happen' column, written by The Prophet. Like the murder extra tonight, it seemed strangely radical for the *Sentinel*."

Tony took the clipping and read swiftly.

If a certain owner of a night club with the name of a feather learns that Bart Nemoss, ex-racket czar, is frequenting a certain gambling spot not far from his legitimate nighterie the heat may be turned on suddenly.

The owner of the feathery night spot is supposed to have long ago forsaken the business of rackets, but Nemoss once was prominent in the divorce affair by which the nighterie man dispensed with his number two wife.

Fireworks might be expected at any time. It is reported that the night-spot man has a piece of that gambling place and that Nemoss is trying to muscle in on the feathery night club.

Tony's mouth was hard as he tucked the clipping into his pocket. That thinly-veiled accusation in The





BUTCH

Prophet column was almost as out of place in the *Sentinel* as the Morden murder scoop had been.

"I wonder just who The Prophet can be, and how that stuff slipped by without being checked by the higher-ups," mused Tony. "That column might as well have named Lloyd Ramer of the Red Feather.

"Add the fact that one of those truck drivers, working with some tough mob that has attached itself to the *Sentinel*, was headed for the Red Feather Club and you have quite a pattern of crime."

However, Tony Quinn decided that angle would have to keep for the present. It was possible that had he, as the Black Bat, struck first at the suggestion of the scandalous item of The Prophet, an open killing, and later a weird delayed murder might have been prevented.

But the Black Bat had another objective now.

When he left the house with Butch O'Leary driving, he was clad in sombre black from head to toes. A

slouched, broad-brimmed black hat concealed his face.

Presently, he would don the disguise that made him the shadowy, hard-hitting terror of the underworld, and the bane of Captain McGrath's eventful life in the homicide bureau.

As the big car glided downtown and Carol alighted near the brightest lights of Broadway, Tony was attempting to keep an open mind in respect to Arthur Rowland, *Sentinel* publisher.

Two camera shots had been condemning, so far as Rowland was concerned. Yet, Tony recalled that in the newspaper office several of the higher-ups had acted strangely when Margaret Ripple was killed by a truck. It was as if one of them had actually anticipated the murder.

He thought of George Drake, the managing editor; of Bunt Preddy, the news editor; of Baldy Compton, city editor; and of Carl Jackson, the rewrite man who said the dead Frank Lark had telephoned the Morden murder yarn.



Of them all, only Bunt Preddy had seemed to act in a purely natural manner, rushing to the windows to investigate the sounds of the crash.

The others had remained where they were, oddly motionless and apparently more intent upon watching each other. For newspaper men, that was decidedly queer.

Yet, even Preddy's actions could have been a cover-up Tony realized, though something about the man forced him to discount the theory. Preddy seemed to be a straight-shooter.

Then there was Owl Brennan. How did he fit into the scheme of things? And what had become of him? These were the questions which plagued the Black Bat as he sought to unravel the baffling skein of mystery.

## CHAPTER VII

### *Trapped by Police*



KEEPING a sharp vigil at the head of the fourth-floor stairs, Silk Kirby could see the bulky figure of a sleepy policeman in a chair. The officer was on guard before the door of the Clifford

Morden murder studio.

Unseen by the policeman, Silk Kirby signaled with a gesture. What seemed to be the figure of an enormous bird of darkness floated silently past him and into the studio apartment hallway.

Had the policeman looked that way, he would have missed the shadowy Black Bat moving silently along the hallway wall. Tony Quinn, all in black, with a ribbed cape that could strangely take the form of the wings of a giant Black Bat, was noiseless as he made quick work of a door.

This was the rear door, leading into the kitchen of Studio B-9. Inside

the kitchen, the Bat was invisible, blending with the dark. He required no light. His uncanny vision in the gloom showed him the smallest detail of his surroundings.

He saw bits of glass sparkling on the floor near an inner doorway leading to the studio itself. Then he held the metal base of a bulb, marked with tiny letters. He smiled grimly.

This was an infra-red light bulb, dropped and broken. The Bat knew too well the origin of that bulb. Owl Brennan must have let it fall after he had snapped that incriminating shot of the murder studio.

The body of the slain Morden was recorded on that plate. So was the furtive figure of Arthur Rowland. It was in the Bat's mind now that Owl Brennan probably had no idea that Rowland was in that shot taken by that invisible infra-red flash in the darkness.

Could Arthur Rowland himself be the killer? And had he somehow suspected or definitely learned that Owl Brennan had appeared on the scene to snap pictures before the murderer could get away?

The Black Bat was perplexed. He couldn't conceive of the publisher as a killer. Yet, one of the photographer's shots revealed Rowland's presence.

Had Rowland come to visit Morden only to arrive immediately after the crime? And had Owl arrived just in time to snap a picture in the dark which showed the publisher escaping by way of the fire escape for fear of being implicated in the case?

It was a bewildering set-up and the Black Bat was far from satisfied with developments. One factor definitely cast suspicion on the publisher. And that was his failure to appear publicly and help his own newspaper in its hour of distress.

Whoever the criminal was, the fact remained that the two tough thugs who had attacked Tony and Owl in the bar, had seemed to know the cam-



era carried valuable plates, and they were intent on keeping the camera. But who had hired them?

**T**HE Black Bat thrust his somber reflections aside, and stepped into the studio. There was a chair on the model's stand. It set the Bat's mind to wondering who had been seated there when Morden died. What woman with a clear conscience would have fled the murder scene before the police arrived?

The canvas upon which Morden had been working lay untouched beside the fallen easel. The Bat needed no light to follow the lines of sketched-in head and shoulders, a profile incomplete as to detail or color.

An inner sense told the Bat he had seen that profile before. It was the outline of a girl's features from hair to throat. The small nose was slightly, impudently tilted, and the forehead line showed a length that denoted intelligence.

Suddenly he recognized that profile. It was obvious now why Owl Brennan had withheld so much from Quinn. The profile on that canvas belonged to pretty, blue-eyed Jane Longren. The girl whose life was menaced, and for whom another girl had died, had been Clifford Morden's model!

"Does that mean Jane Longren knows the identity of Morden's killer?" the Bat asked himself. "And does Owl know, too? Had he withheld this information from Quinn to protect the girl or someone else?"

"Or, is Owl himself in some manner linked with the murder gang? And was there some sinister reason behind his swift arrival upon the murder scene to snap a picture which condemned Arthur Rowland, his own boss?"

The Bat's mind was in a turmoil. Anything was possible. Men killed for strange reasons. Yet, both Rowland and Owl Brennan were old friends of the Bat's, and he could not

bring himself to believe they were actually involved in the killings.

Grimly he determined to keep an open mind. He glided through the dark studio room, then came upon something which was linked with the chief incriminating evidence against Michael Doran, the man he had declared he was representing.

Peering at the fallen canvas, the Bat noted a rusty, brown blotch on its surface. More of the same stain covered the floor. And there was the chalk line which showed the position in which Morden's body had been found.

"He fell as he died," decided the Black Bat softly. "He must have struck his nose on the easel frame. It bled profusely. The police report he died from a quick-acting poison. This may give me the opportunity to pass up a demand on Captain McGrath."

Cutting the brown stain from the canvas, the Black Bat placed the segment in an inner pocket. All indications had been that Morden had succumbed from *strophanthus* communicated through paints smeared upon his mouth. However, the Bat had his own ideas about that.

Abruptly the Black Bat was aware of a rustling, scraping movement outside the wide window. Someone was ascending the fire escape. The window was closed, but the Bat's ears were as keenly sensitive as his eyes.

He moved quickly behind an angle in the wall. The noise from the vicinity of the fire escape had ceased. An old-fashioned desk stood in a corner. The police evidently had cleared it of letters or papers.

**E**XAMINING the desk thoroughly he found a concealed drawer built into the back. It had escaped the police. Listening for the renewal of the intruder's climb on the fire escape, the Bat looked at a faded photograph that was wrapped in fine white silk.



"That might have come from a wedding dress," mused the Bat.

The fine writing penned on the back of the photo was difficult even for his amazing eyes in the darkness. He could make out only a few words:

"It is best this way—"

There had been more, and a name. But the paper of the photo had been torn and the name was gone. The photo paper was thick.

"Just what this adds up to may be the one link that will remove suspicion from Jane Longren and Owl Brennan."

As the Bat uttered this whisper, putting the photo into a hidden pocket, the fire escape window creaked. A formless shadow, the Bat moved into position beside the window.

He was motionless as two men, clearly visible to him, opened the window and came through together. The interior of the studio was shrouded blackness to the intruders. They whispered.

"Easy with the light. That copper at the door may be awake. The boss said it must be in the old desk—there—"

The ray of a pencil flashlight shot out. A husky, commanding whisper came from the shadowy figure, that seemed like a monster Black Bat hovering by the wall.

"Don't move, either of you! What is it you seek? The Black Bat speaks! You haven't a chance to resist!"

Hoarse grunts came from the surprised intruders. The fellow holding the light flicked it off instantly, no doubt believing that concealed them from the feared Black Bat.

The Bat's fist lashed out, clipping the one man cleanly on the chin as he was snapping out a rod. The second man, unable to see, threw himself flat on the floor, a gun streaking into sight.

The Bat smashed the man's gun wrist with his hard kick, and the gun bounced across the floor. Unfortunately, all this action had happened

so suddenly that the Black Bat was unable to prevent noise.

From the kitchen behind him came a clear, shrill whistle. He heard Silk Kirby's signal, followed instantly by thudding blows. Whether these were delivered by Silk or others, the Bat had no time to discover.

The front door of the studio burst open. The hard voice of none other than Captain McGrath himself exploded into the room. McGrath had the light of the hallway behind him, but the studio was still black to his eyes.

That was a mistake, for as the Bat considered his position and was mov-



ing with flashing speed toward the fire escape window, he saw the intruder he had knocked down roll over. Orange flame lanced from a gun in his hand, aimed at McGrath in the lighted doorway.

**A** POLICE positive blazed in another man's hand beside McGrath. The shot was well-placed, evidently aimed at the explosion of the other rod. The man shooting at McGrath groaned once, then his weapon fell from his hand.

From the kitchen doorway behind the Bat the beam of a powerful flashlight bored across the room. The Bat heard McGrath's roar of pain and rage, and saw the captain holding bloody fingers where the intended killer's slug had crossed his hand.

"Are you there, Captain?"

The strident call came from behind



the Bat. He knew then that McGrath's sudden, inexplicable raid upon the murder studio was a complete trap. He wondered if this had been caused by the men coming up the fire escape?

But there was no time for speculation. It seemed he was caught in a net from which there was no escape. If he could divest himself of his Black Bat garb, and become merely blind Tony Quinn, he might have some thin excuse for being here in the murder studio.

But that was impossible now. The Bat thought of diving for the window and the fire escape. However, that would put him squarely into view as a target for at least half a dozen police guns.

It was as tight a spot as the Bat had ever been in. In addition, there was the bad luck of Silk Kirby probably having been trapped by the police coming from the rear.

The man from whose hand the Bat had kicked a gun was still flat on the floor where he had thrown himself. Now the Bat moved with a fast backward leap toward the policeman with the flashlight.

He heard McGrath shout as the beam cut across his webbed, black cape and his flying figure.

"The Black Bat! Get him! I might have known he would be in it!"

Because he was a phantom target, and he could see the others clearly, the Bat was out of the light beam before a gun could flame. Moreover, he was between two groups of McGrath's men, and one man was smart.

"Hold the fire! He's between us! Grab him!"

The flashlight beam darted about. It outlined the Bat again. The Bat sent the light clattering to the floor with a smash to the policeman's jaw.

There was an explosion of blinding light. It did not come from a gun. It filled the murder studio with a fierce, white blaze, driving back McGrath's men and enveloping the Bat.

## CHAPTER VIII

### *Murder in a Morgue*



WILLIAM BLACK, senatorial candidate, wore greying sideburns which made him look benign. He had a massive chin, and his voice was deep and convincingly eloquent.

Carol Baldwin had seen newspaper pictures of William Black with an honorable before his name. He had probably invented the title. He looked like a much worried man.

Carol was in the corridor of the sixth floor of a second-rate hotel in the Forties. She had engaged a room and registered. By her own connivance her door was just across the hall from a room occupied by Jane Longren, girl reporter of the *Sentinel*.

Jane Longren had been in her room. Carol had not seen her, but she had a good description and her door had opened on a slight crack.

As she saw a stout figure and heard a rap at Jane Longren's door, Carol opened her door and stepped out fully dressed for the street.

She appeared not to notice the Hon. William Black, if such he was. Yet she marked his quick, apprehensive glance at her, his scowl and the hasty turning away of his benign face.

The elevator was nearby, and Carol only pretended to press the button. Her quick ears heard a low, musical voice.

"You, Mr. Black? I didn't expect —"

"Let me come in," interrupted Mr. Black hastily. "I must see you at once, after what has—"

Carol lost the rest of it. She obtained only a passing glimpse of Jane Longren's pretty face. Queerly, some woman's intuition made her like the brief view. Carol was clever, an ef-



ficient aide to the Black Bat, but like all women, she worked a great deal on her emotions.

Carol returned quickly to her room. She wished she had been able to get accommodations on either side of Jane's, but this had failed. She could hear only the faintest murmur of voices.

Taking a chance, she crossed the hall, and placed an ear to the door behind which the Hon. William Black apparently had some urgent reason to see Jane Longren.

She could detect nothing definite, but she did hear Mr. Black's voice rise as he was about to leave.

"I'll wait for you in the lobby! You're sure old Mac will do it for you? I tell you, it's the only way, Miss Longren!"

Carol already was headed for the downstairs lobby. Whatever this meeting of the well known politician and the girl reporter might mean, it was not too intimate. Mr. Black had called Jane by the respectful Miss Longren.

Carol expected a tough job of trailing a car when she followed Jane Longren and Mr. Black from the hotel. But it was simple. Moreover, it had become puzzling.

For, as Jane emerged from the elevator, Mr. Black had arisen from a lobby chair and went out ahead of her to the street.

When Carol followed Jane through the door, she observed that Mr. Black apparently had no intention of being seen in public with the girl reporter.

IT was even more mysterious to Carol that Jane and Mr. Black walked instead of calling a taxi. And they were going in the direction of the *Sentinel* building!

"It would seem that Mr. Black doesn't intend to leave any possible witness to his little jaunt with a girl reporter," mused Carol.

There was more of this mystery at the entrance to the *Sentinel* building.

Only one elevator was operating because it was off-time for the afternoon newspaper. Carol watched Jane pass Mr. Black at the *Sentinel* building entrance and take the lead.

Mr. Black waited half a minute. Then he glanced about furtively. For a man of his dignity, he was certainly doing a sneak act.

Carol noticed that Jane had avoided the elevator. The girl reporter had taken the open stairway. Mr. Black took this same means of ascending.

Carol was puzzled for a moment how to trail the pair safely. She gave Mr. Black time to disappear on the first turn of the stairs. From there she followed cautiously by the creaking sound of Mr. Black's shoes.

Since Tony Quinn had informed her of a possible position, she resolved to make a bold entrance in the event Jane and Mr. Black were headed for the *Sentinel* news room.

She would ask for Mr. Drake, the managing editor. If she found him, she would say Tony Quinn had sent her, that she was a friend for whom he had spoken.

In the "graveyard watch," that interval between the afternoon final and the next morning's first edition, all of the humming life goes out of a newspaper. It was more so tonight than usual on the *Sentinel*.

For, it seemed truly a graveyard shift to the few old copy-readers with their green eye-shades, and the half-dozen rewrite boys, telegraph editors and emergency reporters kept on duty in the news room.

There was the usual penny-ante game, but no one had any heart in it. Lights were blacked out in most of the big room, and the corridor of the sixth floor was filled with shadows.

Perhaps the darkness seemed ripe with brooding death, for the few on the graveyard shift were not telling the customary shady yarns, or kidding each other.

Bunt Preddy, the news editor, was hanging around, as was Baldy Comp-



ton, the city editor. George Drake, the managing editor, had been in his office for a while, but he came out and wandered away to one of the other departments.

**B**ALDY Compton and Bunt Preddy seemed restless. Preddy went out and came back from the "morgue" on the same floor, at the back of the long corridor.

He spread out numerous clippings and past photos dealing with stories that had affected the dead Clifford Morden.

Baldy Compton swore when he saw these.

"I'm going out and try and drown it, Bunt," he said. "Want to join me? I hope I have such a hangover I can't show up in the morning."

"No dice, Baldy," Preddy answered. "I'm hoping we'll have some word from the old man."

He meant Arthur Rowland, the publisher. In spite of the plate in the Bat's possession that showed Arthur Rowland to have been on the murder scene downstairs when Margaret Ripple had died, he had not come up to the editorial offices.

"And if I get my hands on Owl Brennan, he's through!" snapped Baldy Compton. "Why would he duck out on that pix, even if it was—well, what it was?"

Baldy Compton took his overcoat and hat, and stormed out of the news room.

So it happened that Carol Baldwin, reaching the sixth floor closely behind the soft-footing William Black, senatorial aspirant, and Jane Longren who had preceded him, found it easy to slip along after them without entering the editorial department.

At the dark rear of the corridor, William Black disappeared from view. Carol crept forward. She came to a swinging door which opened into a dark connecting hallway.

Not being sure of what was beyond this, or how far Jane Longren and

William Black had preceded her, she paused, listening.

She was about to risk passing through the dark hallway when she heard the mutter of a man's voice.

From the sound she judged that someone was pacing the floor and talking to himself. This blocked her. So far as the mysterious mission of Jane Longren and William Black was concerned, she had to wait until the muttering ceased.

It might have been three minutes, or five minutes, or longer, as the time dragged on. Then suddenly Carol heard hurrying footsteps. The muttering had ceased abruptly.

Carol shrank into the darkest corner. She saw William Black come from the dark hallway, almost running, but trying to proceed noiselessly. He peered nervously over his shoulder while he stuffed papers into an inside pocket.

For long minutes there was silence, except for the distant voices in the news room and the faint clicking of teletype machines, grinding out the night's grist of filler copy for the early edition.

**S**OMETHING warned Carol that Jane Longren should have come out with William Black. An inner impulse of fear sent her into the dark hallway, hurrying.

She was remembering what Tony had told her about Jane Longren being threatened, and how the other girl had died by mistake in Jane's grey-green coat.

Having been a newspaper woman, Carol instantly identified the open door leading into the morgue. In there were archives of the *Sentinel*, covering past generations. Pictures and stories in thousands of files.

Stories of the oldest families and the newest. Pictures of society leaders, and photographs of major criminals. Thousands of happenings in lives of the past and present.

In a word, it was the newspaper



morgue—a terrible weapon which could be wielded against many persons if it ever fell into the wrong hands.

Only a few light bulbs were burning at scattered spots. Carol listened, heard no one, and stepped inside. Her hand flew to her lips in time to suppress a little scream.

"Old Mac," a genial, seventy-year-old man, had been the keeper of the *Sentinel* morgue for years. A long time ago he had been a brilliant reporter, then a city editor, then a copy-reader, and finally keeper of the morgue.

That was his pension. No one ever heard of a newspaper man drawing any other kind of an endowment.

But Old Mac was through with pensions, through with the world. His thin, white hair was matted with blood. His eyes were open and staring. He was looking at the ceiling, but not seeing it.

Carol had been long enough with the Black Bat to have cool nerve. She thought first of William Black, and his furtive departure, and next of Jane Longren.

She had not seen the girl reporter come out. Holding her breath, her hand gripping the little automatic in her handbag, Carol edged along a shadowy row of high steel files, her eyes seeking for movement.

Just beyond the last light in a dark corner, she noticed the huddle of bright cloth that was Jane Longren's dress. Fearing the worst, but forgetful of herself, Carol ran forward quickly.

She saw Jane's white face and her honey-colored hair. The girl's bosom was rising and falling with her breathing as Carol bent over her. Then it was that hands like steel probed from the darkness of a space between the steel files.

They choked a scream in Carol's throat. A sapper or some other weapon thumped her cruelly into complete oblivion.

CAROL thought she had just closed her eyes. But when she opened them she was in a nearly dark, quiet room. The smell of hot metal filled the air.

Her head was aching. When she moved she discovered her hands and legs were stiffly bound.

Her fingers touched iron plates of the floor on which she lay. Machines like monsters loomed ghostlike about her. At one side was an immense pot above which hung a slight glowing of fire.

She knew now where she was. This was a stereotyping room. It would be the one department of the *Sentinel* that would be vacated for several hours between days.

Carol found her breathing hampered. Tape pasted across her mouth caused that. She saw a vague figure moving in the semi-darkness near the huge cauldron of liquid metal from which the press plates for the newspaper were molded in the machines ranged about the big pot.

Carol moaned, trying to scream. She could not see the face of the man who bent over her. But she heard the cruel, flat-toned voice.

"I'm removing the tape. If you tell why you are here, and who sent you, you'll not be hurt. If you scream now, or refuse to talk, the bottom of the metal pot will be tapped. That metal will pour out over you like a river of fire. You and this Longren dame."

The tape was ripped from Carol's mouth. She repressed a cry of pain.

"Now who sent you here?" demanded the hard voice. "Don't lie. Did you come from the Black Bat? I'll ask but once. I have no time to waste."

Carol was thinking rapidly. Her captor must be someone on the inside of the *Sentinel*. The murder of Old Mac, the morgue keeper, was evidence she might expect no mercy, even if she talked.

"I don't know what you mean," she murmured. "I'm a friend of Jane Lon-



gren's. I saw her come upstairs. I wanted to see her, so I followed."

A cruel hand slapped Carol's cheek brutally. The man lifted his head, listening.

"That you, Pointer?" he demanded.

"Yeah, it's me," grunted a voice. Another man emerged from the shadows. "We've got to beat it. Some of the truck crew are burnin' up. One guy's on his way up here. The boss said to bring the reporter dame, and shut up the other one."

"Okay," said Carol's immediate captor hastily. "The freight elevator clear?"

"Yeah. That's the way I came up!"

Carol tried to scream. But her mouth was closed by cloth that almost strangled her as it was stuffed into her throat. The new arrival picked up the light figure of Jane Longren and started into the shadows.

Carol saw the other man step over to the huge pot of liquid metal. There was a grinding of steel as an iron cap opened at the bottom of the big container.

Carol saw metal running out across the iron plates. She could feel the reflected heat several yards away.

"Too bad you're not important enough to keep around because you're a swell looker," said the cold killer. "When you're found, it will teach a few persons we're not fooling. So long, beautiful."

## CHAPTER IX

### *'Black Bat' Seized*



**F**LAMES from the fire bomb set off in the Clifford Morden murder studio cut off the Black Bat abruptly from Captain McGrath and his raiding policemen. The blaze was apparently of magnesium and thermite in a small quantity. But it would have seared a man's

eyes in a few seconds.

The Bat grabbed up some pillows, flinging them upon the bomb. But even as he did so, he knew he could not hope to smother the flames. If there were a flower box with sand in it, he'd have a chance. But there was nothing available.

Grimly he realized that nothing could save the studio from destruction. Perhaps, all of the old-fashioned building would go. But that was not of immediate concern. For, the living intruder who had exploded the small bomb was already in the window leading to the fire escape.

The man who had wounded McGrath and had, in turn, been shot by one of the policeman apparently was lying in the center of the swiftly spreading fire. It occurred to the Bat, then, that the bomb was meant to prevent identification.

Hoarsely shouting policemen backed away from the blaze. The Bat jumped for the escaping man in the open window, while bullets from police guns riddled the air about him. He reached the intruder while he was still on the fire escape platform outside.

With his spreading cloak and hissing voice the Bat must have appeared as a terrible, gigantic bird of the night, a half-human, half-animal bird of prey. Desperately the man turned, throwing up his arms across his face.

The Bat recalled his kick had likely fractured one of the man's wrists. But it was no time for kindness. He drove knockout knuckles to the man's jaw, catching him in his arms as he fell.

The intense heat flaming through the window compelled the Bat to move fast. Suspecting the fire escape must be guarded by McGrath's men four stories below, the Bat started up instead of down the fire escape. He could see the edge of the roof of the six-storied old building.

"You've got it coming, friend," he said softly to the sleeping man in his



arms. "But if I left you, it would only be to burn, and that would give no answers."

Since the building was, for the most part, inhabited by artists, the Bat judged he might find his way from the roof through a skylight.

Before he passed to the escape ladder of the sixth story, the dead weight of the unconscious man slowed his movements.

Then the sudden blossoming of flames from other windows close to the murder studio on the fourth floor told him that most of the building might be doomed before the fire department could gain control.

The white light under him outlined his climbing black figure. The spread of his ribbed cloak, like bat wings, shielded the burden of the man in his arms, but he was fully revealed to some of McGrath's men.

Through the crackling of the fire sounded snapping explosions of police guns. Slugs whined off the iron of the fire escape too close to be pleasant. He gained the roof edge, however, without being hit.

**R**ESTING the weight of the unconscious man, the Bat had a look around that was far from reassuring. No other building seemed to join this one on the same level.

"Every fire escape and probably every stairway inside will be blocked by McGrath," said the Bat, as he heard fire department sirens. This calls for strategy, unless I want to walk right into McGrath's arms. And with that wounded hand he'll not be softened up any."

Only seconds remained now. Police would be swarming up the fire escapes where the blaze did not block them. They would be coming through roof trap doors as soon as the word was passed that the Black Bat had been seen.

"But I'm sure McGrath did not know there was anyone but myself in the studio," mused the Bat. "He

probably isn't even aware that he was shot by another man who is being cremated. And he wouldn't know I put on the rescue act for this other fellow."

This gave the Black Bat a sudden plan, a ruse that might be made to work, if he could get the unconscious fire-setter off the roof. There were several art studios skylights but only two trap doors.

Transporting his prisoner to the nearest studio skylight, he smashed out glass and found that one side opened.

He could not see the distance to the studio floor inside, but he swung the other man through the opening, holding him by the wrists until his feet were extended downward.

"May be tough on the legs, my friend," he said whimsically. "But murder and arson get you into spots like this."

He swung in and dropped almost as soon as the limp man thudded on the floor. He got a hallway door open. The corridor was empty in this ell of the building, and he saw the rail of a stairway going down.

By this time the spreading fire had jumped across all of one side of the building. He had carried the unconscious man to the door when he saw and heard two policemen at a corner leading into the corridor.

Then he got a break. A command was called out.

"Hey, you fellows! Don't take a chance on going up! McGrath has ordered everybody down! The old trap's going up fast!"

As the two men disappeared, the Bat reached the back stairway. He carried his victim down three flights. But at the third floor, a sudden blast of fire from a crashing wall blocked him away from the only inside stairway at that end.

**O**NE side of the building was still clear. Upper floors were apparently deserted. The Bat smashed a



flimsy door open with his shoulder and got into a third-floor room, closing the portal behind him.

He was at the window opening it when a fleet of clanging fire trucks appeared in the street below.

Looking out cautiously, he saw tenants of this third floor at other windows. They also had been cut off from flight on inside stairways.

Women and men were screaming. Ladders were run up to some windows. Firemen began swinging two

chance that this will work."

Working rapidly, he divested the unconscious man of his outer garments, thankful that the fellow was of about his own size.

In another fifteen seconds the sleeping man was wearing the dark clothes and the ribbed black cloak of the Bat.

The Bat slipped into the light grey suit the man had been wearing. Then he held the figure of the other man upright in the open window and

***With the Future of America at Stake, Tony Quinn Fights  
Desperately Against a Monster of Espionage Whose  
Slimy Tentacles Reach Clear Across the Country***

**IN**

# THE BLACK BAT'S BATTLE

*An Exciting Complete Mystery Novel  
of Sabotage Conspiracy*

**BY G. WAYMAN JONES**

*Packed with Action, Surprises  
and Suspense from Start  
to Finish!*

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life nets. A woman jumped into one and was helped out safely.

From a nearby window two men plunged to safety into the other net. The Bat chuckled as an idea occurred to him. He could see more uniformed policemen than usually were to be found at a fire.

"McGrath certainly believes he has the Black Bat this time," he murmured. "And he may be right at that. However, there just happens to be a

waved his arms. The firemen moved the life net over. The Bat gave the unconscious man a shove that made it appear he had jumped.

Watching only long enough to see that the man wearing his Black Bat cape had landed squarely in the life net, he moved back into the smoke-filled hallway, shielding his face.

He fought his way to another studio several doors away and smashed his way in.



When he appeared at the window, the Black Bat had smudged his face with the ever-present black dust of the studio furniture. He pulled the other man's snap-brim hat down over his eyes, leaned from the window and began waving and yelling.

Plummeting to the life net below, he had an advantage that he himself had created. A short distance away, it seemed that half the police department of this precinct was crowded around someone in the street.

He could almost hear Captain McGrath gloating over having the Black Bat delivered right into his hands.

The Bat kept a hand rubbing over his face, pushed away helping hands, grunted he was all right, and faded from among the firemen into the crowd held on the fire line. In half a minute he was all the way around the block, where Silk Kirby had left his car.

**H**E was a little sick and fearful that Silk Kirby might have been knocked out and left behind by the police, although they would likely have brought him from the burning building. Then a hand touched his shoulder.

"Great snakes, sir! I saw you jump and I thought they had you sure! How did you—?"

"The same goes for you, Silk," replied the Bat quickly. "Get the car moving, and tell me about it as you drive. I must fix my face. Tony Quinn has a quick call to make on a client who is in jail."

Silk Kirby had learned never to be surprised at the Black Bat's sudden and unpredictable actions. This speed and abruptness had saved their lives and the Black Bat's identity too many times.

"I whistled a warning, sir, and laid out two of McGrath's men cold," Silk informed him. "I would have come in to help you, but I was blocked. Then that fire busted loose.

"I'd about given you up, sir, when

I heard them saying the Black Bat was on the roof. Then I saw you jump from that window."

"You're too old at the confidence game to believe everything you see, Silk," chided the Bat. "Head for police headquarters. By the time Captain McGrath has announced his capture of the Black Bat, I hope to be either with Commissioner Warner or interviewing my adopted client, Michael Doran."

On the drive across town to headquarters, the radio interrupted a program to give out a bulletin:

Another queer tragedy was added tonight to the strange circumstances involving the *Sentinel* newspaper. John McPhail, in charge of the morgue at the *Sentinel* building, was found murdered.

Apparently he was killed by someone who entered the *Sentinel* morgue. No arrests have been made.

It was also announced by the police that the mysterious crook known as the Black Bat broke into the studio where Clifford Morden was murdered this evening.

The Black Bat was captured after the building was set afire, and he was forced to jump from a window. Jane Longren, a reporter on the *Sentinel*, is missing and is being sought by the police.

## CHAPTER X

### *A Stubborn Suspect*



**A** GAIN restored to the personality of the supposedly blind Tony Quinn, the Black Bat uttered a startled exclamation at the closing line of the terse radio bulletin.

"Jane Longren missing? That means Carol either missed her or has trailed her somewhere." His face turned grim and bleak. "That may be far from good. Another murder? Old Mac, in charge of the *Sentinel* morgue? Silk, do you realize what's in such a newspaper morgue?"

Silk Kirby was too old a hand at the confidence game to miss the answer to that one.



"It's a morgue with enough dead ones, meaning stories and pictures, to probably ruin hundreds of persons or blow millions right out of their pockets, sir," was Silk's reply. "Perhaps, that is what the shooting's all about."

"You may be right, though I think that's only part of it. The Morden murder goes back a long way. I would say it might be connected with a wedding of many years ago."

"A wedding, sir."

Before Tony replied, his fingers found something in the pocket of the suit taken from the man now being held as the Black Bat. He gripped a book of matches.

"Red Feather Club," he murmured as he read the printing.

His hands went through other pockets. He found and unfolded a typed note. It stated:

Destroy this at once. Don't wait for second murder extra. Item in The Prophet column is enough. Put Nemoss ahead for tonight. Change order on girl. Unharméd to bait father.

"Doesn't make much sense, sir," grunted Silk Kirby. "Wait! Nemoss is the old booze racket czar from Chicago who came to town again last week. I recall there was some trouble between Nemoss and Lloyd Ramer when the latter was running the old speakeasy on Forty-sixth street. Remember?"

"Silk!" exclaimed Tony. "For a respectable gentleman's valet and a reformed character, you certainly keep in touch with things. And why should I remember a speakeasy run by Lloyd Ramer in the old days?"

"I thought, sir—you know in those days—well, didn't all law officials know what speaks were paying? I mean—"

Not often was Silk Kirby's nonchalance disturbed. But now he stammered and halted in confusion.

Tony Quinn laughed in warm amusement.

"All right, Silk, forget it," he said easily. Then his features turned grave. "This Nemoss business may

prove very important. That Prophet column I told you about mentioned Nemoss was prominent in a divorce affair between Lela and Lloyd Ramer. Know anything about that?"

Silk Kirby nodded, his pale features sober and pensive.

"Sure. Nemoss was supposed to have been running around with Lela, Ramer's No. 2 wife, before they split up. Rumor has it that Lloyd was getting tired of Lela anyway. Nemoss and Ramer had a run-in about it, and Ramer passed around some threats, but nothing ever developed."

"And now the Prophet—whoever that scoundrel is—has hinted that Nemoss is trying to muscle in on Ramer's Red Feather Club," said Tony. "Looks as if things are ripe for more bloodshed. Where does Nemoss hang out?"

"Well, I heard he's been running a game for himself at the Four Owls Club," responded Silk. "It is rumored that the Four Owls is the bad little brother of Ramer's Red Feather Club and that Ramer has a piece of it."

**T**ONY Quinn snapped his fingers and the depth of his breathing quickened.

"Silk, we'll only be a few minutes with Commissioner Warner," he said quickly.

"All at once we're adding more angles than the world has wars onto the *Sentinel* puzzle. In a little while you are to find this Nemoss and stick to him for his own good."

Reaching headquarters a short time later, Silk led his employer into Commissioner Warner's office. The latter's usually humorous smile was missing. Hard lines were around his mouth and eyes.

"Sure, Tony, you can see Michael Doran right away," he replied in answer to Tony's request. "I'm expecting Captain McGrath to report any minute now on his capture of the Black Bat. I thought perhaps you would like to hear how it happened.



Hang it all, Tony! I don't feel good about this.

"I had other ideas about the Black Bat. I had even hoped he would get into this *Sentinel* mess and pull at least one real murderer out of the bag."

Commissioner Warner had long suspected that Tony Quinn was the Black Bat, although he never admitted it openly.

Tony's dull, apparently sightless eyes were now staring over the commissioner's head.

"I'll be glad to wait, Commissioner," Tony agreed politely, flashing a faint smile.

Captain McGrath pushed into the office. As he opened the door, he did not look like a man who had just apprehended a clever crook who had been giving him a run-around.

Pausing at the door, his face turned to a man behind him for the moment.

"Take him to the morgue!" he roared angrily. "I get the Black Bat and he turns out to be nobody but Slick Morgan, a cheap hired killer. Then he croaks himself right under our noses!"

The man behind Captain McGrath was a police medical examiner.

"I don't think he killed himself, begging pardon, Captain," said the M. E. "I saw him when he started to have convulsions. I would say he hadn't been conscious after he hit that life net. But it was undoubtedly a cyanide that got him."

"Whatever it was, what do we get—*what did you say?*"

McGrath seemed to realize the enormity of what the M. E. had just said.

"You mean to say you think he was murdered right under our noses? It's impossible! Anyway, his being the Black Bat doesn't—"

McGrath glimpsed Tony Quinn and Silk Kirby at Warner's desk. His eyes dilated and anger flushed his cheeks with a tide of blood. Time after time, McGrath had been sure he had cornered the Black Bat, and that he was

Tony Quinn.

"You—Quinn?" McGrath swallowed hard. "When did you get here? Where did you come from?"

"Why, Captain, you seem upset," said Tony cheerfully. "I heard over the radio at home that you had caught the Black Bat. Seeing I wanted to interview my client, Michael Doran, I took the occasion to come along now and congratulate you."

**M**cGRATH fumed, experiencing unusual trouble with his speech.

"Commissioner! Quinn's been here how long?"

"He arrived a few minutes after you got the Black Bat, captain," replied Commissioner Warner. "He dropped in to see his client. I'm having Doran brought here."

Seldom had Captain McGrath ever been at a loss for words. He seemed to go into a muttering monologue.

"I got the Black Bat—the Black Bat—"

The medical examiner confirmed what had been said. The man the Black Bat had tossed into a life net had died a few minutes later, evidently from a virulent poison. Yet, he had seemed to be unconscious all of the time.

"Could someone in the crowd about him have used a hypo?" asked Tony.

"I'm afraid that's just what happened," replied the medical examiner.

"I got the Black Bat," grumbled McGrath, "and he turns out to be a cheap, hired killer."

The police captain broke off and glared suspiciously at the blind man.

"You say you were home when you heard the Black Bat was caught?" he demanded tersely. "Then how come you smell of smoke? That's it! You and Silk Kirby both smell of smoke! I'll bet you two were at that fire!"

Silk Kirby's bald head glistened, and there was an unholy smile on his smooth face.

"I told you sir, you'd be found out," he said, to Tony's amazement. "Now



you'll have to invite Captain McGrath and the commissioner to try one of your charcoal broils. I have to send out a suit every time you mess around with a steak on that charcoal thing."

Captain McGrath stayed alive and conscious by grim effort. Commissioner Warner spoke hastily.

"Doran will be right along. We'll leave you alone with him here, Tony."

McGrath pivoted and went out.

"Anything more on the latest *Sentinel* murder?" Tony inquired idly.

"Nothing except that Old Mac had his skull fractured, and Baldy Compton reports the girl reporter, Jane Longren, is missing. By the way, Compton found Old Mac's body and we haven't many details. They don't want to talk much in the *Sentinel* office. I suggest that you go over there with me as soon as you've talked to your client."

"Gladly," assented Tony. "I want a talk with Arthur Rowland, and there's another matter, Commissioner, that may mean more trouble. But it will keep a few minutes, I hope."

"Can't say about Rowland, Tony," said Commissioner Warner, his face hardening again. "We have a quiet pick-up out. Rowland hasn't come back to his office."

**B**EFORE Tony could digest this information, along with the other pressing matter of an old-time racketeer and gambler named Nemoss, the client, Michael Doran, was brought in.

Tony spoke quickly with Silk Kirby, at one side. He directed him to pick up Butch O'Leary and go at once to the Four Owls Club.

"Another murder may be in the making," he told Silk.

Tony Quinn could see only stubbornness in the brooding, black eyes of Michael Doran.

Tony's scarred and vacant eyes looked at nothing. He appeared not to see the expression upon his client's tightened features.

"I don't want to seem ungrateful, Mr. Quinn," Doran said tensely. "I don't know who sent you. If I wanted a lawyer, I've heard enough about you to know you would be good. But I've nothing to say now. I didn't ask for any help."

"That's the trouble, Michael," declared Tony gently. "But you are on the spot, you know that?"

"I have nothing to say, Mr. Quinn."

Tony lowered his voice. Doran's black eyes were bloodshot. His fingers still showed stains of paint.

"You were working on some new paints, something for Clifford Morden, weren't you, Michael?" persisted Tony.

"Not today—I hadn't seen Mr. Morden—no! I'm saying nothing."

Tony tried a different tack. He spoke of Michael Doran being a chemist. But his adopted client now took refuge in silence. Doran listened a minute or two, then uttered a flat warning.

"I'll only listen until they take me back, Mr. Quinn. It's no use."

Tony seemed to fumble in his pockets. He held a faded photograph so that the face was partly turned to Michael Doran.

"The studio may be burned and the sketch that Morden was working on may be destroyed, but there may be other means of proving the identity of the girl who was the model," said Tony quietly.

The tense, desperate lines abruptly drawing Doran's mouth, and the terrible look in his black eyes told Tony more than words might have revealed. Still, Doran refused to speak.

Then Tony shot the works.

"You see, Michael, the girl who was the model sent me to you," he said. "Jane Longren doesn't want to see you burn, even if some friend or someone close to her committed the murder."

"I don't know her!" Doran's words were emphatic.

Doran was looking at Tony's sup-



posedly blind eyes. Tony saw him crouch, his teeth clenched. Then Doran rose from his chair, silently as he imagined, and lunged, grabbing for the photograph in Tony's hand.

Tony could have summoned instant help. He preferred to make Doran just miss the photograph. A quick twist of Doran's elbow sent him to his knees. Tony held him there, writhing helplessly.

"You misjudged the hearing of a blind man, Michael," he said calmly. "You just said you didn't know Jane Longren. Then why the attempt at taking the photo, which is so much like her it is probably Jane Longren's mother?"

"I'm not saying another word!" grated Michael Doran, and he didn't.

## CHAPTER XI

### *Death at Four Owls*



AMES ran to high stakes in the Four Owls Club. It was the kind of entertainment that you went up four flights of stairs to find. A pair of hard-eyed men took your measure at the foot of

each flight, after you had passed inspection at the door.

Silk Kirby was adept at a few disguises. From old cronies he had the password of the Four Owls. In appearance he was a gawking, country yokel, with every evidence of money that new, loud clothes could give him.

Ugly Butch O'Leary was spotted across the street from the Four Owls. Silk had picked him up at the *Sentinel* truck platform, where Butch was on the verge of landing himself a driver's job.

"You know, Silk, the guys on the truck that went into the river were really *Sentinel* drivers," Butch informed Silk. "But they hadn't been

on the job long. I heard they've been on two drunks in a couple of weeks and went joyriding in a truck both times."

"That's something to know, Butch," said Silk. "And you haven't seen or heard anything of Carol after she left to trail Jane Longren?"

"Haven't seen her since," admitted Butch. "But word came down after that old morgue guy was bumped off, that none of the *Sentinel* men were to talk to reporters of other newspapers. It seems something happened up there besides the murder, and that maybe Jane Longren was snatched."

"But Carol was supposed to be sticking with Jane Longren," reminded Silk. "I don't like it. There are too many things happening. Right now I want you to be sure to spot whoever may come out of the Four Owls Club suddenly, if something cracks up there."

Silk and Butch were greatly worried about Carol. But they never altered Tony's orders unless compelled to do so by unusual circumstances. Silk's job right now was to keep an eye upon an old-time racketeer, Nemoss, and see that he did not get murdered.

The Four Owls had several varieties of games in what had once been an open one-room loft. About a hundred suckers were being taken for a ride at the various games.

Having used the right password, indicating he wanted a good play, Silk Kirby planted himself where the ivories were rolling. From the outset he lost good money, though he disliked the idea.

"If I'd just palm my own ivories once, I'd get even," he muttered under his breath.

But he realized that one smart play like that would place him under suspicion. This game wasn't meant for that kind of sucker luck.

He saw Nemoss at the other end of the table. The one-time big racketeer, who had misplayed the game with one



of the wives of another small-time shot of several years before, was blessed with a nose and eyes like those of a weasel. His face was narrow. His senses were sharp.

Silk decided that Nemoss either was standing in with the house, or had been deliberately baited into thinking he could win big money at the Four Owls.

It was cash play and the Nemoss pile looked as if it should be inside a bank cashier's window.

**S**ILK edged closer to Nemoss. He had taken in several faces that might be expected in such a place as the Four Owls. He saw no one who looked as if he had killing on his mind at the moment.

A friendly fellow touched Nemoss on the shoulder. He laid a newspaper clipping in front of the old racketeer.

"Did you see this in the *Sentinel*, Nemoss?" he asked.

It was undoubtedly the same clipping that Carol had showed to Tony Quinn. Tony had told Silk of the item in The Prophet's column. Silk watched Nemoss. The old gambler either had no nerves or he was skeptical.

"Those column guys get around," said Nemoss, loud enough for Silk to hear. "Ramer won't like that statement about Lela."

Nemoss pushed the clipping aside and went on with his play when the dice came around. He was hot. Any one who can roll a nine and make it, then roll another nine and make it, and do it the third time is more than hot.

He's under suspicion!

Silk was watching that. Something drew his attention to another table. He had often seen pictures of Arthur Rowland, the publisher of the *Sentinel*.

Now, in spite of all that had become a menace to the character and fortune of the *Sentinel* within the past few hours, Arthur Rowland apparently

was intent only upon seeing where a little ball would drop, as he piled greenbacks on a number.

That was just before there was a sudden commotion at the door.

"You can't come any farther!"

One of the hard-eyed guards issued the curt warning. Silk had a glimpse of as pretty a girl as he had seen in a long time. She had honey-colored hair and baby blue eyes.

"But I must get in!" her voice rang out desperately.

Silk saw Arthur Rowland jerk his head around. Rowland whirled from the table where his money was riding, taking one stride toward the door.

Whether the lights went out before or after the shot, Silk could not determine. A man groaned, and a body thumped to the floor in the sudden blackness.

Silk remained motionless for seconds. The gun flash had come from a spot close to where the girl was arguing with the guard.

The man who fell was Nemoss, the old racketeer. Silk's position close to Nemoss as he groaned, then gurgled in his throat, informed him of that.

Also bright and clear in Silk's mind was the position of the door, and that of Arthur Rowland, the publisher. Although there had been a weird Prophet column warning that Nemoss might meet with sudden extinction, Silk realized something else that might have happened.

**A**S ARTHUR ROWLAND turned from the roulette table toward the doorway, he had been in almost a direct line between the girl and Nemoss. Silk Kirby had played many little games that involved a sort of blind man's buff.

He had the faculty of fixing details of persons and surroundings whenever lights went out suddenly. He was sure he could not be mistaken. That slug could have been meant for Arthur Rowland!

He heard the girl utter a little



scream that was instantly cut off.

Silk acted upon impulse. Smashing heedlessly against other people, he stormed across the room. When he collided with the burly guard at the doorway, he discovered that the fellow was holding the girl.

"Stay put, chum!" growled the guard.

No reply came from Silk, but his snapping fist was aimed slightly below the sound of the guard's voice. The blow traveled only six or eight inches and bone crunched.

Silk had been frisked on entering, and had prepared for it by toting no gun. But now he grasped the weapon of the fallen guard, and his fingers bit into the girl's soft shoulder.

"Out, sister, and fast!" ordered Silk. "If you're who I think you are, you've been attending too many murders! Let out a squawk, and I'll rap your lovely chin and carry you!"

Then a man's deep voice cried in panic.

"Martha! Martha!"

The girl might have been Martha, and she might have replied, but Silk forestalled that with a hand over her mouth.

He had no time to identify the person who had called the girl. He rushed her down the first flight of stairs in the darkness.

One of the two men there interposed. Silk took a long chance. He had heard that Lloyd Ramer, owner of the Red Feather, owned a piece of the gambling club.

"The boss said to get her over to the Feather if she showed up," chanced Silk. "There'll be heck to pay if she's in on the Nemoss thing."

"Who are you?"

Silk thought instantly of the note from the pocket of the man who had turned out to be Slick Morgan, the McGrath Black Bat catch.

"Slick, you fool!" snarled Silk. "You think I'm hangin' around for the cops! Nemoss rode out!"

"Okay, Slick," the guard replied.

"Say, we'd better lam through the get-away! Come on! The regulars will all be out before the cops get a buzz!"

This was a break. If only somebody didn't turn on the lights suddenly. The girl was moving without resistance now. The obliging guard seemed to fade through a wall with Silk following closely in the blackness.

The door in the wall closed. They were in a room of a building next door to the Four Owls. And there was a light in the room. The guard started to turn his head.

**K**EEPING a grip on the girl with one hand, Silk's other hand slammed his gun down on the back of the guard's skull. He heard the girl gasp, and he removed his hand from the pinching grip he had kept on her mouth.

"You go with me quietly, or do I have to hand you one?" said Silk. "I think I've heard you described. You wouldn't be this Jane Longren, of the *Sentinel*?"

The baby blue eyes got to Silk. He never liked to see a woman cry. The tears welled up, tracked down smooth cheeks. The girl was nodding desperately.

"Then give me the gun, sister," pleaded Silk. "We'll leave it here after it's wiped. Hurry!"

"The gun—that shooting, you mean—why I haven't a gun and I didn't—"

"Come clean!" Silk had dealt with the soft ones before, and usually they had tiger claws. "Possibly you're the Prophet that writes that *Sentinel* column. You write murders, and then make them happen. Is that it?"

"You're not—not the police?"

The girl's anxiety was genuine.

"In a way yes, and in a way very much no," retorted Silk, then put in some more he thought might get to her. "Why did Rowland start to you, just before someone shot him?"

"Shot? You said shot—oh—"

It was a complete fade-out. That was also genuine. Silk picked Jane



Longren up in his arms, and opened the door of the room into a hallway with a stairway showing. He could hear voices somewhere on the floor below, which would be the second.

Silk didn't debate his next move. There was a red light over the window at the end of the hallway. That meant a fire escape.

Anyone would have believed the Donnybrook fair was going on at the foot of the fire escape. Not having seen Silk Kirby emerge, big Butch O'Leary was doing his best to lay out all those who emerged from the Four Owls Club.

Butch had piled half a dozen or more tough mugs around him. Silk hailed him from the fire escape. He was carrying the unconscious figure of Jane Longren. She was as nice a bundle as Silk had ever held so close to him.

"Lend a hand, Butch!" called out Silk. "The cops will be here any minute now."

A call had been put through. Sirens announced police arriving from several directions at once.

Swiftly Silk placed the sleeping girl in the rear seat of their car. They were moving fast when another machine shot away from the side entrance to the Four Owls.

"Follow that grey sedan, Butch!" snapped Silk. "Don't lose it! And if it's fight you're wanting, I think we may be in for it!"

Silk had seen Arthur Rowland, the publisher, in the front seat of the grey sedan beside the driver.

Whether Rowland was leaving willingly or otherwise, the sedan was filled with men who had lately been attached to the Four Owls Club.

**A**S SILK directed Butch to keep the Rowland car in sight, he was trying to get everything straight in his mind. Recalling the shot which had killed Nemoss, he decided that the slug could either have just missed Rowland, or it could have come from

Rowland!

If the girl had fired the shot, she had ditched the weapon quickly.

"At the first chance, Butch, run that sedan off the street," ordered Silk. "But don't smack us up too much. Remember the girl."

A pair of flame-spitting guns made spidery lines in the windshield.

"Here we go!" Butch yelled, feeding the car more gas.

As two men in the rear of the grey sedan started shooting, their driver slowed down to turn into a side street.

Butch neither slowed down nor made any attempt to turn. He shot their car ahead with all it would take.

The front bumper sliced through the back of the grey sedan. It carried the other machine all the way across the intersecting street and a sidewalk, smashing it against the high stoop of an old brownstone house.

The driver of the sedan and Arthur Rowland stayed in the wreckage. Four other men scrambled out and started away. Still another man lay on the pavement with the back of his head too flat to be of much use to him.

Silk leaped to the pavement beside Butch. They pulled Arthur Rowland from the wrecked sedan. He was alive. But his face was bloody and he was unconscious.

The crash had snapped up windows, started women screaming. Somewhere in the distance a police siren was sounding when Butch had their own car backed out of the tangle and started away.

At Silk's direction, Butch parked the car a block from headquarters a short time later.

"I'll contact Tony and see what he wants us to do now," said Silk. "You keep an eye upon Rowland and the girl. Don't be tough, but make sure Rowland sticks around. As for the girl—"

Silk emitted a combined gasp and oath. He was looking into the rear of their car. Perhaps, she had recovered at the time of the crash with the other



car. They had been busy then with Arthur Rowland.

But Jane Longren, the girl reporter, was no longer there!

## CHAPTER XII

### *Motive for Murder*



**B**Y WHATEVER means the elusive Jane Longren had escaped those who had removed her from the *Sentinel* building, only to show up later at the Four Owls Club, and then again dis-

appear from the car of Silk Kirby, it had seemed that Carol Baldwin had been left to die horribly in the *Sentinel* stereotyping room.

Even with the public announcement of the murder of John McPhail, the morgue pensioner, no word had been given to the police concerning Carol. And for this there had been a definite reason.

Editors and members of the *Sentinel* staff were fighting desperately to prevent rival newspapers from learning more than the law compelled them to admit.

So it happened that while homicide men were making their routine investigation of old Mac's murder, no one had occasion to question the bandaged hands of one of the editors.

When Carol Baldwin, gagged and helpless, had seen the rivers of liquid metal streaming across the steel plates of the floor toward her, she had struggled desperately to free her hands, to force the gag from her mouth.

Her frantic effort loosened the cloth stuffed into her mouth. She screamed. Her wild cries for help reverberated through the deserted stereotyping room as the hot metal flowed closer to her bound body.

Suddenly feet pounded across the

floor and the tall figure of a man wearing a topcoat and hat loomed above her.

Only a few minutes before this time, Baldy Compton, city editor, had discovered the murder of Old Mac, pensioner of the morgue.

"Good grief, another one!" Compton had howled dismally. "We haven't enough trouble on our hands! You'd think this was some mob hangout instead of a halfway decent newspaper shop!"

In the stereotyping room the man in the topcoat bent down over Carol. He swore sharply when he lifted her up, for his hands had come into contact with the running metal that had seeped close to her bound body.

His own hands seared, Carol's rescuer got her out of the metal room into the gloomy corridor where he shouted for help.

"Hey, Bunt! Jackson! Some of you boys! Come here!"

Ready and willing hands were quickly freeing Carol. She saw the stern face of her rescuer. His hat had been swept off and his head was as shiny as a billiard ball.

She heard him called Baldy, and she realized she had been saved by Baldy Compton, the *Sentinel* city editor.

Bunt Preddy, the grey-haired news editor, suggested carrying Carol into the news room. But Baldy Compton, nursing his seared hands, was quick-thinking.

"No, boys," he said. "I don't know who she is or how she happened to be out there. Except for her screaming just in time, we would have had more than straight murder on our hands. I think we are up against a mob of some kind. For the moment take the girl into Mr. Rowland's office."

"But if she's hurt—"

**G**EORGE DRAKE, the timid, indecisive managing editor, started to speak. Carol was quick to understand what Baldy Compton meant. The city editor was trying to keep



as much as possible from the police and the public.

"I'm all right," she assured them. "I have Mr. Compton to thank for my life. I'm Sue Sharpe, a friend of Tony Quinn. I was told to see Mr. Drake, the managing editor, about a reporter's job."

George Drake breathed easier, but his eyes were troubled and much puzzled. Bunt Preddy ran his long fingers through his hair.

"What were you doing back in the stereotyping room, Miss Sharpe?" demanded Preddy. "You say you came up here to see Mr. Drake? If you were back there, did you see—did you know we have had another—?"

"There has been a serious accident, Miss Sharpe," interrupted Baldy Compton. "Perhaps, you were back there and saw—"

Carol judged the best thing to do was get in her version of what had happened.

"I came up to find the news room," she said. "I saw a girl reporter, Jane Longren, I've known on the outside. I thought she could direct me to Mr. Drake's office. So I followed her back along the corridor.

"Just as I got to a dark doorway back there, someone threw a cloth over my head and knocked me down. I've still got a bump on the back of my head."

Carol had decided to reserve what she really had seen for the Black Bat.

"Then you didn't see—you didn't know someone was killed, Miss Sharpe?"

Carol showed proper alarm.

"Someone killed—you don't mean Jane Longren? Why, the men who tied me up and tried to burn me to death took Miss Longren away. I heard them say someone they called the boss wanted her."

The editors and several reporters were staring at each other. Then a short distance down the corridor the elevator disgorged a squad of policemen.

"Take Miss Sharpe into the private rest room of Mr. Rowland's office," directed Baldy Compton. "Since she isn't important to the cops right now, maybe we can learn the truth about this business before we have the *Sentinel* displayed in all the headlines as some kind of torture chamber."

No one had mentioned finding the murdered old man in the newspaper morgue, so Carol decided to let her own story ride as it was.

She realized that the body must have been discovered or the police would not be here.

Then she heard George Drake, the worried managing editor, voice his great anxiety. Also she learned by what luck she had been rescued.

Baldy, just how much will we tell the cops?" asked Drake.

"Exactly what happened, leaving out this little matter of Miss Sharpe," retorted Compton. "I started out to get a drink. I saw the back of a man I could not identify, hurrying down the stairs.

"At the same time I heard a scuffling sound in the direction of the morgue, and went back there. Shortly after that a scream came from the stereotyping room and I went down to investigate. That was Miss Sharpe here yelling for help."

"But what about that Prophet column?" demanded Drake, his features haggard with strain. "By this time everybody's seen that blasted item about Nemoss and Ramer. The cops will surely ask how that got by."

**B**ALDY COMPTON scowled, his lips settling in a savage line.

"We're licked there," the city editor admitted. "I wish I knew how that slipped into type. Everybody here says they didn't see the proofs. Jackson was supposed to handle the column, but he says he forgot about it. Yet it got in anyway. Something tells me we've got a skunk, and maybe a killer right on the *Sentinel*."



The homicide detail rushed into the news room. Bunt Preddy, the news editor, took Carol's arm.

"Come on, Miss Sharpe," he suggested gently. "Suppose we hide you in Mr. Rowland's office before the police see you and ask questions."

Carol had another and better idea. She had quickly fixed up her face and hair. Now she smiled at the others.

"I'm accepting the reporter's job I came to get," she murmured. "And as a reporter I'll not be noticed. Perhaps, the police will want to look in Mr. Rowland's office anyway."

"I think you have the makings of a good reporter, Miss Sharpe," said Baldy Compton quickly. "She has the idea, boys. All right, Miss Sharpe, you haven't asked Mr. Drake for a job yet, but I'm hiring you myself. Just mix around. You're a cool number."

Carol was sure that Baldy Compton was too smart to believe all of her story. But it gave her the chance she wanted. Several policemen hurried toward the doorway of the morgue where Old Mac kept his last, long vigil over the archives of the newspaper.

Carol easily kept from coming into prominence. She heard the homicide men saying that Captain McGrath would be "burned up."

It seemed that McGrath and some other men were at the moment engaged in a further investigation of the Clifford Morden studio.

The editors and the graveyard shift members of the staff were clustered around the doorway of the morgue. A sergeant in charge was shooting questions. Carol listened for a moment.

"I discovered the body," she heard Baldy Compton say. "I was on my way out after a drink, and I saw the back of a man wearing a grey overcoat as he hurried down the stairs. I would have followed him, but I heard something like a scuffling sound back here, and I came back. Old Mac was

lying just like that, inside the door."

"What is this report about a girl reporter, Jane Longren, being lost?" said the sergeant.

Carol saw Bunt Preddy, the news editor, produce a cigarette case.

"All we know is that Jane Longren was seen to come into the building by the elevator operator, and to come up the stairs," said Preddy. "This is her cigarette case. It was lying a few feet from the body. But no one saw Miss Longren leave the building."

As Carol had predicted, the sergeant in charge ordered an immediate search of the sixth floor, including all of the private offices.

"And with all that has happened to the *Sentinel*, has Mr. Rowland returned at any time?" the sergeant demanded brusquely.

"I'm afraid he hasn't," replied Baldy Compton. "I understand there is a quiet police pick-up out, just in case something might have happened to Mr. Rowland."

**C**AROL moved away, unobserved.

She recalled there must be another entrance to the morgue, other than that reached through the corridor and the main doorway.

Surely, Jane Longren and she had been carried from the morgue that way after they had been knocked out.

She found the small door near the rear of the long room filled with file cases. All attention being for the moment upon the body, and the preliminary inquiry, Carol reached the inside of the morgue without being detected.

It was simple enough to find the place where she had seen Jane Longren on the floor just before she herself had been knocked out. And here she saw the front of one of the steel filing cabinets pulled out the fraction of an inch.

"Black," she read on the little card. Then, "From T to Z."

Carol opened the filing case noiselessly. The letter 'W' was between



T and Z. She found the letter 'W' which would be the first letter for William and several other names.

The thick manila envelope that had contained clippings and photos relating to William and other Blacks whose first names started with a 'W' was the only empty container in the file.

Hearing someone moving through the long room, she crumpled the envelope and thrust it inside her dress. She knew now why William Black, candidate for senator, had paid his furtive visit to the *Sentinel* morgue.

Five minutes later, in a quiet corner of the big news room, Carol knew something more of why the Hon. William Black, politician, had sought the files of the *Sentinel*.

In emptying that manila envelope, the candidate who had been brought here by Jane Longren had missed one thin, newspaper clipping.

Carol glanced at this, drew in a quick breath at what it implied, and figured that her next move must be to put this information in the hands of the Black Bat. For, she had seen why there could have been a motive for the respected William Black to commit murder, if need be, to recover the contents of that single envelope.

Yet, Carol could not at the moment make any move that would bring suspicion upon her. She might have contacted the Black Bat, had she known that he had at this time arrived at police headquarters.

Carol's reluctance to take positive action now included any move to leave the *Sentinel* building.

For one thing, the police had ordered all persons to remain on the sixth floor until their investigation was completed.

But chiefly, Carol had a feeling that some member of the *Sentinel* staff had been detailed to watch her.

She noticed a moon-faced writer who had been near her ever since she had made that quick trip into the morgue.

Carol had no means, then, of knowing his identity. But Carl Jackson, the rewrite man who had done the Clifford Morden murder yarn, was watching her closely. She recalled noticing him with the others when Baldy Compton had first rescued her.

SHE tried moving casually from one part of the news room to another. She had been correct. The moon-faced writer sauntered across the room and seated himself at a desk near her.

There being a typewriter on the desk before her, Carol made a pretense of working. Nearly everyone in the news room had been questioned.

But Carol's strange role in the tragic happenings inside the office had been kept covered from the police.

It was the strangest situation in which she had ever been placed. And the following hour or more was like

[Turn page]

NO FINER DRINK...

for Salesgirl—or Sailor





the unreeling of a fantasy to Carol's keen mind.

Here were leading editors of the Big Town's most conservative newspaper trying desperately to conceal facts that might enable other newspapers to further attack the *Sentinel*.

Gradually other news items came flashing into the office. From the sharp comments made around her, Carol learned in quick succession of the night's startling happenings, all of which tied up with what she already knew.

"The Clifford Morden studio is burning. Captain McGrath captured the Black Bat."

Carol heard Baldy Compton, the city editor, swearing lustily. She was sick and faint over this first news. Then—

"The Black Bat has been identified as Slick Morgan, a gunman."

Carol felt like crying out with relief. The moon-faced man was still not far away, keeping her under his eye.

The police had made no more progress toward solving the murder of Old Mac, the morgue keeper. But here came more sensational news.

"Nemoss, old-time gambling and racket czar, was murdered at the Four Owls Club tonight," yelled a reporter, reading a bulletin from the teletype system. "His death was virtually predicted by the Prophet in the *Sentinel*, in which trouble with the owner of the Red Feather Club was hinted."

Bunt Preddy and Baldy Compton swore in futile rage, while Drake began to pace nervously up and down. Everyone of them was tremendously upset.

"Now we really are in a jam!" moaned Compton. "Another killing, and the *Sentinel* will be held responsible." Then his eyes flashed angrily. "I'll find out who wrote that Prophet column and how it slipped into print without anyone seeing proofs if it takes me a week!"

Carol felt like screaming out what

she knew. Then another item came in on the teletype machines.

"Arthur Rowland, publisher of the *Sentinel*, was seen at the Four Owls Club just before Nemoss, the racketeer, was killed."

Bunt Preddy ran his fingers through his grey hair and snorted in disgust.

"Now how do you like that?" he snorted. "So Rowland's been running around loose all this while, leaving us to hold the bag!"

George Drake said nothing, but his face was a mixture of strange, conflicting emotions, and Carol thought she detected a furtive gleam in his eyes.

Then a faint, startled gasp escaped from Carol's throat when she saw Jane Longren walk quietly into the office!

## CHAPTER XIII

### *Who Is the Prophet?*



CAROL BALDWIN was dumfounded when Jane Longren walked into the *Sentinel* news room. She saw the moon-faced writer who had been watching her glance quickly about as if he expected some immediate action.

The yellow-haired, blue-eyed girl reporter had a slight bruise on her right temple. Otherwise, she appeared uninjured and thoroughly at ease.

Before she seated herself at a desk, the girl looked straight at Carol, as if she had never seen her before.

Come to think of it, Jane Longren never had seen her.

Carol watched Bunt Preddy, the news editor, start up. But Baldy Compton, the city editor, pulled him down.

While Jane had been mentioned as having been seen just before Old Mac was murdered in the morgue, Carol realized that the few policemen still hanging around probably did not



know the girl.

Carol noted that, except for that slight bruise, Jane bore no evidence of having been mistreated. Carol judged now was her time to get out from under the eye of the moon-faced guardian and contact the Black Bat.

This was made unnecessary. A cane tapped on the floor and along the desks. Then the cane ceased to tap. Blind Tony Quinn, conducted by the blind, unsmiling Silk Kirby, came across the news room.

"You see the girl, Silk?" Carol heard Tony say. "Take me to her."

Jane Longren half started from her chair, but sank back, staring at Silk Kirby. It was quite obvious that she recognized the man who had forcibly removed her from the Four Owls Club. But she was game.

Tony Quinn saw the blue eyes widen, but they swiftly narrowed and became hard. The eyes of the editorial group, of the members of the staff, and of the few policemen were upon Tony Quinn.

None but Silk Kirby knew that the Black Bat's greatest relief when he had entered was in seeing Carol Baldwin there unharmed. Beside Jane Longren's desk, the Bat paused briefly.

He permitted words to slip from the side of his mouth.

"Meet me outside as soon as I leave here, Jane. I have word for you from Michael Doran. Understand?"

While his eyes did not appear to register, the Bat saw that his words had struck home. The girl winced as if she had been struck a physical blow.

"You will wait for me at the south entrance," added the Bat, and then he was moving along.

Silk Kirby steered him past the desk where Carol was seated. Only a magician would have seen the passing of the folded paper from Carol to Silk, and from him to the Bat.

The Bat had it palmed, unfolded and read before he reached the main group of desks, although he did not appear to move his hands.

**T**O OTHERS the typed words on the paper would have been meaningless jargon. But the Bat read the letters Chinese fashion, from the bottom right-hand side upward, and then across.

Straightened out, that which Carol had been idly tapping out on the machine before her, read:

Hon. William Black—Jane Longren—in morgue murder—W. Black file gone—have convict clip—moon-face next desk watching me—find Hon. Black—

George Drake, managing editor, rubbing his hands nervously, was the first to greet Tony Quinn.

"I'm sure glad to see you, Tony," bubbled Drake. "I gave your Miss Sue Sharpe a job, as you requested. She's over there."

The Bat smiled and nodded. Just then the harsh voice of Captain McGrath broke in, coming from the elevator entrance, as another squad of police rushed in.

"So, Quinn, you beat me up here!" McGrath was fuming. "All right, you men! We want Arthur Rowland! He was seen to come here right after Nemoss was bumped off! And maybe he knows something about the murder of Old Mac, too!"

The Bat turned at a little scream. It came from Jane Longren. She was on her feet.

"Old Mac? He was killed? You mean, Old Mac of the morgue?"

"You ought to know!" It was a roar from McGrath. "I heard you were up here when Old Mac was bumped, Miss Longren! So you know all about it! And from a description we have, you were also about to meet Arthur Rowland at the Four Owls Club when Nemoss got the works! It's about time we had a showdown!"

The Bat saw Bunt Preddy, the news editor, start up, his greyish face working. Baldy Compton, the city editor, spoke first.

"Hog-wash, McGrath! Have you got a warrant to come breaking into



our news room shooting questions?"

"I don't need a warrant!" snapped McGrath, anger having its stormy way with his emotions. "This is murder. Someone here—and maybe it's you—is responsible for this Prophet column which predicted the Nemoss killing."

Grimly, the police captain extended a copy of the *Sentinel*, the pages turned to the scandalous column.

"You can't pin that on me!" fumed Compton, his face flushing.

"No?" McGrath's voice was low and ominous. "Who wrote that? I aim to find out if I have to sweat every one of you in a third-degree chamber. This newspaper seems to be running a murderer's communication and information bureau. In fact, maybe the killer is one of you. Talk, before I lock all of you up on suspicion!"

The city editor sputtered in anger and confusion, then finally got a grip on his temper.

"We know as much about it as you, McGrath," he said. "Jackson, over there"—he indicated the moon-faced rewrite man—"has been handling the column off and on, but he says he didn't write it. In fact, we've been leaving it out some nights."

"I plan to conduct my own investigation to find out who wrote it and how it got in print. Our make-up editor is out with a cold, and the extra man we hired can't be reached. None of us here saw any proofs on the column, but somebody downstairs let it go through."

"It sounds fishy, Compton," growled McGrath, "but I've never known you to lie. The police will look into this if we have to question every *Sentinel* employee."

**T**HE Black Bat saw that Jane Longren was trembling. He moved suddenly, tapping with his cane and came beside her.

"I'm Michael Doran's attorney," he said loudly, then quickly lowered his voice. "He doesn't want you to talk. And Arthur Rowland is waiting for

you at a hotel. See this?"

The Bat was holding an old photograph at his side so only the girl could see it. It was the faded picture taken from Clifford Morden's desk.

"What is this?" McGrath exploded. "Your client, Quinn? You can't go around picking up clients like that! For her own good, I demand that Miss Longren tell where she has been since lunch time today?"

Tony was compelled to admire the cool nerve of the pretty, blue-eyed girl. He knew only part of the strain she had been through within the past few hours. But she had proved a tough young woman to handle.

She played up now even better than he expected.

"You'll have to ask my attorney where I've been since lunch time, Captain McGrath," the girl answered quietly. "I can't remember everything."

"Say! You're not her mouthpiece, any more than you were Michael Doran's!" shouted Captain McGrath. "Quinn, if I thought you were really blind, there might be some excuse—"

"Let it go at that, McGrath. As Miss Longren's attorney, Tony has the right to prevent her from answering questions."

It was the cool voice of Commissioner Warner. He had come up behind the small group. Then Warner divulged some information that really startled the police captain.

"You may be interested to learn that a small sticker of a printed Black Bat was found on the inside of Slick Morgan's collar, evidently put there by the Black Bat himself. That means, of course, the Bat was really in the fire but tricked us by changing clothes with Slick Morgan."

"I'm arresting Miss Longren here on suspicion and as a material witness!" shouted Captain McGrath, snorting in rage. "When I get her—say? Where is she? She was right here!"

As Commissioner Warner had en-



gaged Captain McGrath over the little matter of having nabbed the wrong Black Bat, Tony had given Silk Kirby a quick signal.

For the second time tonight, Silk was holding the soft and desirable figure of Jane Longren close to him.

This time Jane was unresisting. In fact, she helped Silk to shield her from McGrath's distracted eyes with his light topcoat as they reached the *Sentinel* corridor and went toward a back stairway.

"Miss Longren will be produced at the proper moment," stated Tony. "In the meantime, I am suggesting to Commissioner Warner that a few hours be granted by the police for Arthur Rowland to recover from minor injuries sufficiently to put the department straight on what may be some vital clues to the wanted killers."

**B**ALDY COMPTON, the city editor, confronted Tony, his lips set in a hard line.

"Look here, Tony!" he said belligerently. "What is this? I'm for the law all the time! But the good name of the *Sentinel* is at stake now. It is imperative that our next editions start clearing up the tragic scandal attached to our newspaper."

"That's right—that's right," agreed George Drake, the managing editor. "If you have found Mr. Rowland, we have every right to know about it. We demand—"

Only Bunt Preddy was staring wearily at Tony Quinn and saying nothing. Then moon-faced Carl Jackson, rewrite man, got up and came over.

"I'm not an editor, but I'm involved in that Morden murder story, and I have something to say about this!" exclaimed Jackson. "More than that, Tony Quinn here was the last person seen with Owl Brennan, the cameraman. And who has seen Owl Brennan since then? Maybe Quinn can explain his disappearance."

Baldy Compton stopped Jackson

with a grip on the side of his neck that whirled him around.

"Shut up, Jackson, and keep out of this!"

Quinn looked up and spoke quietly. He told of the attack on Owl and himself, but said nothing about salvaging the graflex camera.

"I'm worried about Owl myself," he concluded. "When I came to in the truck he was gone. If I knew where he was and how I could help, I'd go there instantly."

"He may be in the hands of the killer gang that is trying to wreck the *Sentinel*," declared Bunt Preddy. "Though why they'd want him I can't understand."

**H**ALF an hour later, Jane Longren was sleeping in a hotel room especially engaged by Tony Quinn. Only Tony and Silk Kirby knew the secret of the long sleep she would have, Silk having administered a sedative.

Commissioner Warner was with Tony and Silk, in Tony's car.

"Tony, I figure it would be a break for the police if the Black Bat did take a hand in this case," murmured the commissioner. "We seem to be up against a stone wall, and there may be more trouble ahead."

"We have Arthur Rowland, suffering with concussion and out of his head, under guard and with special nurses. You have this mysterious Jane Longren, also safely sleeping for many hours."

"You seem to think that Michael Doran did not kill Clifford Morden, and we know he couldn't have killed Margaret Ripple, Old Mac or Nemoss."

"That's right, Commissioner," Tony agreed. "If I knew the Black Bat, I would certainly have him visit several places. In the meantime, the police should forget the whole thing. First, when court opens, I suspect one or two libel suits will be filed against the *Sentinel*."



"Libel suits, Tony?"

"Yes, Commissioner. Clifford Morden has a stepson, named Grannan. A murder story might be construed to have caused the Morden murder. You see the *Sentinel* story was faithfully followed out."

"I hadn't thought of that, Tony."

"Then there's Lloyd Ramer, Commissioner," went on Tony. "You see, he was virtually named as part owner of the Four Owls Club, and in the Prophet's column it was mentioned he might have a wish to see Nemoss, the old racketeer, removed because of previous wife troubles."

Commissioner Warner nodded.

"But that's crazy," he said. "Ramer is in no position to sue."

"Anyone's in a position to sue, Commissioner," contradicted Tony. "And within twenty-four hours, I'll venture to say that many of the old-time stockholders of the *Sentinel* will be dumping their holdings."

"Tony, you believe that's what is behind all this?"

"I wouldn't be at all surprised," was Quinn's quiet reply. "In fact, I have an idea a certain prominent politician may have been paying through the nose to cover up for his past misdeeds."

## CHAPTER XIV

### *Murdered but Alive*



EARLY on the morning of the third day following the fatal shooting of Barry Nemoss, Butch O'Leary telephoned Tony Quinn while the latter was enjoying his breakfast coffee in his West Side home.

"I'm worried about Carol, boss," grunted Butch uneasily. "She's gaily playing the part of a reporter although the killers may strike again any time.

I'm stickin' close by, but if the mobsters are in the *Sentinel*, how am I going to know when they strike?"

"I'll call Carol out of the place soon, Butch," promised Tony. "In the meantime, stay on duty and do the best you can."

There was a sudden, insistent buzzing at the door. Silk Kirby was pushed out of the way by the figure that burst in. Silk wasn't one to be pushed about either. The visitor was a spectacle.

His freckles stood out sharply. Dried blood caked his forehead. His red hair was hatless. His lips were swollen and his shirt was torn.

This was the figure presented by none other than Owl Brennan. He came in and stood before Tony Quinn. His voice trembled with anger and anxiety. He looked as if he hadn't eaten since his disappearance.

"Okay, Tony! What have you done with her? You win! I'll tell you all you want to know—all that I know!"

"Sit down, Owl," said Tony calmly. "Have some toast. A cup of Java is indicated. I take it that you either broke out, were thrown out, or you're putting on a show. I would be grieved if it is a show. I rather liked you, Owl."

"For Pete's sake!" shouted Owl Brennan. "You're not hooking me up with what happened that other night, or are you? I didn't know any more than you did—"

"Okay, Owl," interposed Tony. "Coffee? Then we'll talk. About the shot you had of the killer—of Arthur Rowland getting out of the Cliff Morden studio—"

"Rowland? The Morden studio? Tony! You're crazy! He wasn't—why, he couldn't have been—I mean—yes, I know I was there. But I didn't see Rowland. I didn't see anyone—that was a shot in the dark—and I couldn't talk—"

"Because Jane Longren was the model who ran away when Morden was killed, Owl," snapped Tony.



"Yes, I know. Also, by this time you are aware that the *Sentinel* has been sued for two millions by Curt Gran-nan, a step-son of Morden, and for another half million by Lloyd Ramer, of the Red Feather Club. And all the suits seemed to have been prepared ahead of the causes, Owl."

Owl Brennan's short figure col-lapsed into a chair.

"I don't know about those things. 'What's more I don't care!' he shouted. 'Yes, I kept back about Jane being in Morden's studio. I don't even know why Morden was painting her portrait.'"

"And I didn't see Rowland or any-one else when I shot that infra-red flash. Heck, I just thought it was a good idea to have it. But why would Morden want Jane's portrait?"

"Swell alibi for you, Owl," mur-mured Tony. "Or even a better touch for extorting money from Rowland—"

**O**WL BRENNAN jumped across the room. Tony's apparently blind eyes looked on past him, ignor-ing the clenched fists, the swing Owl almost completed. Finally, the pho-tographer swore and dropped his hands.

"If you only could see!" Owl laughed uneasily. "Hang it all! I see your trick now. You were just goad-ing me. I crawled through a sewer getting out of a trap! I'm here be-cause I found a way out of a stinkin' warehouse. I came right to you for two reasons."

"What are they?" Tony inquired gently.

"First, Jane Longren! She wasn't in on that Morden murder. She couldn't talk, that's all! But most of all, there'll be another Prophet mur-der, and it has to happen within the next four or five hours! It will be an-other *Sentinel* murder scoop!"

"Who, Owl? Perhaps we can stop this one," said Tony, a strange eager-ness, roaring through him.

"You can't even try, Tony!" Owl

tore at his freckled skin as if it were burning. It was reddened in patches. "I don't know who the woman will be, but I heard the thugs who held me prisoner say the murder scoop would be in the Prophet's column in today's first edition."

**S**ILK KIRBY answered the buzz at the door. Commissioner Warner himself strode in, a newspaper folded in his hands.

"Tony, for heaven's sake! Look at this! You don't think this could be true?"

Tony smiled wanly.

"You forget, Commissioner," he said quietly. "I can't look. But I can listen. Read it."

"It's another murder prediction by the Prophet," said Commissioner Warner. "This is what it says:"

Lloyd Ramer, owner of the Red Feather Club, knows that Lela Ramer, his second wife, has been murdered and will die within the next three hours.

Mrs. Lela Ramer, No. 2, may be walking along Fifth Avenue at this moment. Yet, she was murdered about one hour ago.

Her death from burns cannot be pre-vented. Perhaps, it is but a part of the double murder, of which Nemoss, noted racketeer, was one victim the other night.

If ever a man seemed to be staring bleakly with sightless eyes, it was Tony Quinn.

His lips moved and uttered slow, re-flective words.

"Commissioner Warner, you had the report that Clifford Morden may have died of strophanthus poisoning because of traces shown in his stom-ach?" inquired Tony, apparently di-verging from the imperative subject at hand.

"Yes—yes, Tony!" exclaimed War-ner. "But for grief's sake, Tony, this Prophet says a woman is about to be —has been murdered—and you stop for an inane question."

Tony Quinn nodded his head, his features firm and implacable.

"I am simply trying to discover a medium by which death can be made



certain so swiftly that no one can prevent it," he stated calmly. "It appears that this crime is being laid at the door of Lloyd Ramer who has already sued the *Sentinel* for half a million."

"Forget all that!" blazed the commissioner. "We need action right now to stop this new killing—if it isn't too late already. The police have questioned almost everyone at the *Sentinel*, but we still don't know who wrote that Prophet column about Nemoss or how it got into print."

"Compton and Drake have threatened a complete shake-up in the stereotyping and makeup departments, trying to get to the bottom of the matter. Anyone finding type or proof for the column was to notify them at once. And yet, here's another column—as deadly as the other!"

**T**ONY didn't even seem to hear what Warner was saying. He insisted upon returning to his original subject.

"It wasn't poison in the stomach that killed Morden, Commissioner," he stated firmly. "It was cyanide in his blood, injected by a hypo. When the medical examiner examined Morden he was careless, being satisfied with the evidence of strophanthus in the paints smeared on Morden's mouth."

"But cyanide really did the job. You see, I had some of Morden's blood on canvas. The analysis showed the real cause of death. So it might be intended to strike at Lela Ramer in the same manner, even if she is on the street at the time. It makes it more dramatic and terrifying."

"Also, it would permit Lloyd Ramer to sue the *Sentinel* for all the millions he could find, providing his alibi is good, sir," suggested Silk Kirby, who had been an interested listener.

The door opened suddenly and Captain McGrath, his face flushed with anger, strode inside. In his heavy hand he held the same Prophet pre-

diction which Warner had just shown to Tony.

Quinn arose, groping suddenly toward Owl Brennan. He had been observing Owl's face and throat, the puffiness of his eyes.

"Stand still a moment, Owl," he directed. "I can't see you, but I have acquired a keen sense for the body temperature of those near me. Owl, are you ill? Are you suffering with a fever?"

"I don't know! I feel as if my face and hands are being scorched, if that's what you mean."

Tony was touching Owl Brennan's reddened, fiery skin.

"Owl, you heard that Lela Ramer was to be murdered," said Tony. "Or you heard there was a woman to be killed, and this Prophet column names the former wife of Lloyd Ramer. Where have you been a prisoner? Were you tortured and was there a woman at the place?"

Captain McGrath broke in upon Tony's questions.

"Commissioner Warner! What are we wasting time for here? We have a woman to save, or the whole department will be on the pan with the *Sentinel*!"

"One minute, McGrath," snapped Tony. "Owl, answer me. Were you tortured? Did you hear a woman at any time while you were prisoner? And if possible, where were you held?"

**O**WL BRENNAN groaned, his features twitching in agony.

"I was tortured," he admitted. "They tried to make me tell what I had on one of my camera plates. But the torture was like being poisoned, I guess. That's what's wrong with my face."

"First I was either knocked out or handed a Micky. When I woke up my face was burning fiercely, and they had my hands tied so I couldn't touch it."

"That nearly drove me crazy—but I



couldn't tell them what was on a plate I hadn't developed. I did hear a woman moaning—I was in a basement—I got through a sewer a long way to Central Park—”

“Tony!” Commissioner Warner was becoming desperate. “This is getting us nowhere! I’m acting now. First, I’m ordering every member of the *Sentinel* staff taken into custody. We will get this Prophet, whoever he is.”

**D**RIPPING his hands from Owl Brennan's face, Tony shook his head, and spoke in a fatalistic tone.

“I’m afraid the Prophet is even more sure of this murder than of Morden and Nemoss, Commissioner,” he said. “Note that the item says Lela Ramer has been murdered, was killed about an hour ago, and will die in about three hours.

“Wherever you find the woman, if you do, I fear nothing can be done. Gentlemen, this is a frightening crime, if my conjecture is right.”

“We have an alarm and a description out for Lela Ramer,” stated Warner. “What will we do, Tony, if we find her?”

“Quinn’s out of his mind!” exploded Captain McGrath. “He seems to have private information on this case. If he is the Black Bat—and I’d like to prove that—he may know more than he’s telling us.”

Tony smiled sadly. It was terrible to stand here, knowing that somewhere a beautiful woman was soon to die horribly. Perhaps, she was already dying.

Nothing on earth could prevent the murder.

“Gentlemen, go ahead and find Lela Ramer if you can,” stated Tony suddenly. “There is only one bit of advice I can give. Do everything to relieve her agony, for death may be slow. I say that, realizing that the first physician who sees her undoubtedly will know at once what has happened and will do all he can to prevent her suffering.”

Tony was moving, groping toward a table, ignoring the others.

“I’m asking two of you to leave,” he said. “Commissioner, if you will go with Captain McGrath, I would appreciate it. Owl Brennan will stay here a little while. You see, gentlemen, I’m afraid I have found the truth. Lela Ramer is already as good as dead. She has been murdered by the simplest of all means, complete sunburn.”

“He’s stark, raving crazy!” blurted Captain McGrath, unbelieving. “How could any person be—?”

“Owl here suffered the same treatment hours ago, while he was knocked out by a drug or physically,” Tony pointed out impatiently. “He was awakened four or five hours later with his hands bound so he would suffer and perhaps talk.”

“Tony!” exclaimed Commissioner Warner. “It’s unthinkable! That couldn’t be done! Why the worst savages wouldn’t contrive that sort of torture! It would be—”

“Worth all the millions the *Sentinel* or Arthur Rowland could produce,” stated Tony. “Don’t forget, the Prophet virtually accuses one man, Lloyd Ramer, of knowing this murder already has taken place.”

“We’ll round up every man on the *Sentinel*—”

Tony Quinn had never before seen Commissioner Warner come so near to losing his head.

“The worst move that could be made,” interjected Tony. “Again, if you can find this woman, do what—”

Silk Kirby touched Tony’s arm. Silk had been listening to the low muttering of the radio.

He turned a knob, increasing the volume.

A news flash came over the air.

Police searching for Lela Ramer, once the wife of Lloyd Ramer, have a report she was seen entering a taxicab on Fifth Avenue near the Public Library a few minutes ago.

An alarm is out for the hackman whose name and number have not been learned.



## CHAPTER XV

*Owl's Queer Escape*

“RUBBING a soothing lotion on Owl's burned skin, Tony Quinn studied his photographer friend closely behind the apparent blindness of his eyes. It was obvious the redhead was experiencing more than physical pain.

“I don't care what happens to me, Tony,” he said dismally. “I just want to get Jane Longren out of all this. Where is she, Tony?”

“I assure you, Owl, that she's safe. You can serve her best by staying right here. I'll give you a ring, and it will be you who will put the finger on the Prophet.”

“But there is no one Prophet, Tony,” protested Owl. “That column was contributed to by many of the staff, and by outsiders. In the office sometimes one man got it together, and sometimes another.”

“And the last one handling it, Owl?”

“It has been Carl Jackson's job recently,” Owl revealed. “The column was one of George Drake's pets. I think the managing editor originated it. It's about the only original idea he's ever had.”

“Drake started it?” mused Tony. “Okay, Owl. Stick here. I'll give you a ring as soon as I can use you. Don't get away from the phone. You got out of a sewer manhole in Central Park, Owl?”

“Yes, but I had made many turns getting there,” said Owl.

Less than five minutes had passed since the departure of Commissioner Warner and Captain McGrath. Bulletins continued to come in concerning the failure to find Lela Ramer, the living murdered woman, last seen getting into a taxicab on Fifth Avenue.

“You see, Owl,” had been Tony's logical explanation. “Your face was burned badly with a mercury sun-tan lamp while you were unconscious. Half an hour would do it. But there was no heat, and the burn did not take effect until four to six hours later.”

Even hard-bitten Owl Brennan was sick when he realized the implications in that last statement.

“You mean Lela Ramer was put under a mercury lamp and left there?” he gasped.

“I'm afraid that's what I mean, Owl,” replied Tony. “Possibly she had been with someone she knew and trusted. She was given a drugged drink. One hour would be enough. She might have recovered and found herself back where she started, imagining she was out for only a few minutes.”

Owl swore, rubbing his hand across his seared face. A strange, fathomless glitter crawled into his eyes. Grimly Tony continued.

“If her whole body was exposed to a mercury lamp, it would have no immediate effect, but by this time—”

“Tony,” cut in Owl. “There's another angle—something I don't even like to suggest—but Bunt Preddy, the news editor, has been going around with Lela—the former Mrs. Lloyd Ramer. “You said she might have been with someone she knew well.”

“And,” said Tony quickly, “Bunt Preddy gave the word that finally put through the Morden murder scoop. Owl, don't leave this place!”

The radio had brought no more word of the missing Lela Ramer. Tony issued quick instructions to Silk Kirby out of Owl Brennan's hearing.

“I'll have Carol get out of the *Sentinel* office and meet you, Silk,” said Tony. “Pick up Butch O'Leary. Have Arthur Rowland brought over to the same hotel with Jane Longren and have Carol stay there. See that no one from the *Sentinel* trails you, or discovers the whereabouts of Jane and Rowland.”



**F**OR three days now, Jane Longren and Arthur Rowland had been constantly guarded in two quiet hotels. In spite of the furore created by their absence from the *Sentinel* office, Tony had kept the girl reporter and the publisher under the care of nurses.

Now Tony added a few words that caused Silk Kirby to gasp.

"You may as well know now, Silk, that Jane Longren is really Martha Rowland, the daughter of Arthur Rowland. The girl had been at school since her mother died when she was a little girl.

"Rowland has set notions, and one of them was that he didn't want his daughter to become a newspaper woman. But Martha told me she was equally stubborn.

"She left Rowland flat in his Westchester home, sneaked down to the city and landed a job on her own father's paper under an assumed name. She's been living in the city, and has been fortunate in avoiding Rowland in the office.

"Also, Silk, it was perfectly all right for her to sit as a model for Clifford Morden. You see, Rowland's wife, the mother of the girl, had been a sweetheart of Morden's many years ago, and Rowland had won out. The girl was like her mother."

"But, sir, about this Michael Doran?" Silk didn't like working in the dark. "By analyzing that Morden blood, you've about proved he didn't poison Morden. Why won't he talk? And why has Jane Longren been so mysterious, running out on the Morden murder, and never saying a word?"

"You might add why has Arthur Rowland been dodging around, as if he were the killer, Silk?" said Tony. "I won't answer that now. But I have a photo plate that would rate the hot seat for Arthur Rowland. But there is another person who wants that plate, and wants it badly enough to commit another murder to get it.

"So when you have made sure Carol is with Jane Longren, and that Butch is helping look after Arthur Rowland, you will wait for me near the *Sentinel* office, Silk.

"The Big Town's greatest newspaper is about to have a visit from what Captain McGrath regards as the Big Town's most dangerous crook."

"The Black Bat intends to visit the *Sentinel*?"

"Perhaps in an hour," said Tony. "In the meantime, Silk, call this number. It is a Central Park West penthouse apartment. At this hour, I am fairly sure that the tenant is at home, and that he is making sure his presence cannot be disputed by continuing a party that's been going all night."

**T**ONY was clad in somber black with a dark, slouch hat when Silk joined him a few minutes later, entering their car outside.

"Lloyd Ramer is at home, sir, and it sounds as if his party is now going full blast," Silk informed him. "There is no further word, sir, of Lela Ramer."

Tony made quick phone contact with the news room of the *Sentinel*. Talking to Carol Baldwin, he gave her what would have sounded to a switchboard girl as a simple message. He had asked for Miss Sharpe.

"I am sending the interview you requested, Miss Sharpe," said Tony. "The messenger will be there in about twenty minutes. Would it be convenient for you to call me in three minutes from the booth of the drugstore downstairs? I'll wait here."

He gave her the number of the public phone he was using.

"Why, yes, I'll call you from outside," she said, a note of tense excitement in her voice.

Tony was not trusting any wire inside the *Sentinel* news room at this time. Then Carol was talking again.

"There are a number of policemen in our office just now on account of that Lela Ramer trouble. I'll prob-



ably have to get permission to leave. Just a minute—"

Then Carol was suddenly disobeying instructions in reference to talking openly by phone from inside the *Sentinel* office!

"Tony! William Black just walked into the office! The reception clerk is trying to stop him! Tony! Black's shot—!"

There was a smashing sound as if the phone had been knocked from Carol's hand. Tony jiggled the receiver vainly. Then he hung up and tried dialing the *Sentinel* switchboard again.

As the phone was apparently ripped from Carol's hand, Tony caught the sharp echoes of two distinct shots.

His hand was shaking when he dialed the *Sentinel* number again. But this time he was rewarded by only a busy signal from the switchboard.

He was to learn within the next few minutes the startling and tragic reason for the shots and Carol's being abruptly cut off from the telephone.

## CHAPTER XVI

### *A Politician Turns Killer*



**P**LUNGING wildly across Carol Baldwin's desk, a heavy body crashed into her, sending the telephone clattering to the floor and abruptly terminating her conversation with Tony Quinn.

Carol repressed a scream. She saw the moon-like face of Carl Jackson, the rewrite man, as Jackson rolled from the desk to the floor. Another shot cracked out, and a bloody furrow jumped across Jackson's forehead.

Scarlet fluid was already pumping from a mortal wound in Carl Jackson's thick neck. The rewrite man who had claimed he took the Clifford Morden murder scoop from the dead Frank

Lark was beyond speech when he struck the floor.

The dignified William Black, candidate for senator, stood just inside the news room railing.

An old-fashioned revolver smoked in his hand. His dignity was lost in crazy, bloodshot eyes and disheveled hair.

Blue smoke curled from the muzzle of the gun. Carol watched copy readers start from their places around their horseshoe desk. She saw Bunt Preddy, the grey-haired news editor, rise with a grim look on his face and hurl himself headlong toward the crazed politician.

"Drop that gun, Black!" he roared.

William Black laughed loudly, insanely. For a big man, he side-stepped lithely, striking Preddy's face with the barrel of his weapon. The news editor fell and lay still.

Carol saw that William Black was looking at Baldy Compton. The shrewd-eyed city editor had not moved from his chair. Then the door of George Drake's office across the newsroom snapped open. Carol saw the managing editor, his hands waving foolishly, step outside. She saw William Black's eyes turn upon George Drake.

Although there were police guards spotted here and there about the news room, the whole shooting took place so quickly that none of the guards in the busy room had been given a chance to determine where he was most needed.

William Black's deep voice, once unctuous and wholly political, was now like the roaring of a maddened bull.

"So you have the Prophet visit me, Drake! It wasn't enough that I paid all I could raise, but your Prophet, the scum I just killed, had to call in person on my wife! You think, Drake, I didn't know it was you—you who found out I had done time?"

Bunt Preddy lay on the floor where Black's gun had knocked him. For



the seconds that William Black's accusing words rang through the news room, everyone seemed paralyzed. Only George Drake cried out suddenly.

"No! Black! You're crazy! I don't know what you're talking about!"

The old-fashioned revolver exploded again. The glass in Drake's office door cracked and splintered. There was another sharper shot. William Black started to turn slowly, his gun hand dropping.

He kept on turning until his legs corkscrewed and let him down. His head struck a desk, but he felt no pain from that. There was a round hole a little above and back of one eye.

Baldy Compton had not moved from his desk. He sat there with a wisp of blue smoke coming from the automatic he had taken from a drawer. Carol saw George Drake, the managing editor, collapse. But she knew it was from shock and not from a bullet.

COMPTON rose from his chair.

One of the police guards rushed over at last. Compton extended his weapon to him. His voice was cold and steady.

"Sorry, but I had to do it," he said. "Who would have expected a cool politician like Black to go nutty? Here, fellows, let's get going on this one. If the *Sentinel* has to have all the murders in town, at least we won't let the opposition beat us on our own yarn."

Carol had been around newspapers. She thought she had met cool numbers.

But Baldy Compton was displaying about the coldest nerve she had ever seen. She watched him walk calmly across the room toward George Drake.

Carol realized that Baldy Compton could not be held for what he had done.

The Hon. William Black had virtually committed murder and suicide. She kept in the back of her mind what Black had said about Carl Jackson,

the rewrite man.

"He called him the Prophet," she whispered. "He said Jackson had called on his wife after he had paid all he could raise. I must reach Tony before someone thinks to detain me."

Carol succeeded in getting out of the news room. All attention was for the moment centered upon the two dead men, upon Bunt Preddy, who had been knocked out, and George Drake whose life had just been saved by the calm, straight-shooting Baldy Compton.

Shutting herself in a telephone booth of a drugstore downstairs, Carol called the number Tony had given her. Tony made no comment until after she had related the complete story.

"Okay, Carol," he said finally. "Get outside and walk up Broadway on the south side to the first corner. Wait there for Silk. So, William Black was being blackmailed, and he seemed sure of both Carl Jackson and George Drake? Be careful, Carol. Silk will be right along."

Carol stepped from the drugstore into Broadway.

Both men who walked up alongside her were smiling, well dressed, and polite. They might have been friends she had come there to meet.

"Don't scream, and don't try to move too quickly," said one in a low tone. "The needle just touching your arm won't make a sound. Neither will you if I give it one little jab. We have the car waiting, sister."

It could be a bluff. But then Carol had learned a great deal about the silent effectiveness of little needles, especially in the hands of cool, polite strangers.

She walked directly to the blue sedan waiting beyond the first corner.

Carol sent cautious glances about, hoping to see Butch O'Leary. Unfortunately, Butch had been among persons in the street who had heard the smashing of shots from the high windows of the *Sentinel* building.

He had immediately raced to the



building to investigate the disturbance. A moment later he had been ascending in one elevator as Carol had descended in another.

A sense of forlorn despair struck Carol when she realized she was hopelessly trapped. She yearned for a sight of Silk, yet it was almost too soon to expect him.

Inside the sedan, in the rear seat, the man beside Carol spoke suddenly. "It will be better this way."

His hand dropping over her mouth and nostrils, held a handkerchief or small square of cloth.

Carol's instinctive resistance was quieted before the car rolled out of the block and headed uptown.

## CHAPTER XVII

### *The Daylight Bat*



MOVING along the swanky avenue, Tony Quinn was a somber, black-clad figure. In five seconds, if he so desired, he could transform himself into the Black Bat. Having learned of the

latest tragedy in the *Sentinel* office, it became more important than ever that the Black Bat must strike quickly.

Through Silk Kirby he had confirmed his belief that an all-night party was still being continued in a penthouse apartment.

"A party worth possible millions to the host," murmured Tony, as he neared the ornate entrance to the big apartment building. "I wonder how the two killings at the *Sentinel* will fit into this?"

"It is certain that one vital witness has been removed, even if it was by chance. Then Baldy Compton stops William Black from more talking. That, too, might have been by chance or design."

He was thinking of Carl Jackson, the rewrite man, who had said Frank Lark had phoned him a story of the Clifford Morden murder. Bunt Preddy, the news editor, had admitted passing the story in a hurry to make the paper's five-star final that evening.

But it was Carl Jackson who could swear, truthfully or falsely, to having taken the Morden story from Frank Lark. Now Carl Jackson was dead, and by the hand of an apparent black-mail victim of the highest prominence. Jackson had been recently in charge of the Prophet column, according to Owl Brennan.

What was it Carol had repeated of William Black's words before Black was killed? Oh, yes, he recalled it now. Black had said that Carl Jackson had been sent personally to see his, Black's, wife.

"As neat a setup for getting rid of Jackson as could be, if it happened to be known that William Black was on the point of murder, which he undoubtedly was," mused Tony. "And then he tried to get George Drake? But Baldy Compton shot first. No. Carol said Compton shot and killed Black only after he had missed a first shot at George Drake."

Tony thought of Carol's account of Bunt Preddy's rash attempt to halt Black. On the face of it, there was nothing suspicious in that. Any man might have acted impulsively in the same manner.

Yet, Owl Brennan had informed him that Preddy had been going around with Lela Ramer, which might or might not be significant.

All over the Big Town radios, prowl cars and every possible police device were being employed to find Lela Ramer. Tony felt a little sick as he thought of what must be the truth.

Then he saw the blue taxicab come slowly from a driveway in Central Park. Tony was in the entrance of the big apartment building as the taxi came into view. He could just see the outline of a passenger inside the cab.



**T**HE hackman driving the blue taxicab was a short, swarthy fellow. He had black eyes, and now they were filled with worry. He turned, speaking over his shoulder, to the passenger.

"Have you made up your mind, lady?" he said. "You've got three bucks on the meter now. You said you'd pay me, and then you said your husband would pay—"

There was a queer, strangled cry from the shapely woman in the taxi. The swarthy hackman undoubtedly had been worried some over the mounting fare. His eyes jerked all the way around.

"Lady! Listen! What is this? You can't do that to me!"

The hackie narrowly missed bumping another car, and his brakes squealed as he tried to pull over to the curb. The nicely formed woman in the taxi was moaning terribly. She tore at the front of her thin dress, ripping it to shreds.

"Take me there!" The woman screamed. "Right over there! Oh! Do something! Hurry!"

"Lady! Honest! You can't do this to me!"

The worried hackman was shouting. The woman was ripping her dress from her neck. She was clawing at her own flesh and beginning to scream like some animal in pain.

Now the hackman could see that his woman fare was more than red-faced from drinking as he had at first imagined when he had picked her up on Fifth Avenue. Her small face was distorted and appeared to be enormously swollen.

She sprang up, her head striking the roof of the cab. Scream after scream came from her. The hackman reached back, sought to restrain the woman, thinking she must have gone suddenly crazy.

Traffic was speeding past at the usual clip on the open avenue along Central Park.

Before the hackie could push her

back into the seat, the woman shrieked wildly, jerked open the door and dived rather than jumped into the street.

A heavy car skidded as the driver attempted to miss the rolling, screaming woman. Then there came the solid thudding of the wheels over the whirling body.

The terrible cries ceased after that. Traffic piled up. The frightened hackman started calling upon everyone nearby to witness that the woman had jumped to her own death.

The Black Bat, alone of all the witnesses, knew that Lela Ramer had been given a merciful break just at the finish.

The tragedy and the screaming of traffic horns emptied the lower corridor of the big apartment house.

"She tried to come home to him at the very last," murmured the Bat. "Perhaps, in the interest of exact justice, it is to be regretted Lela Ramer couldn't make it."

**U**NNOTICED, the Black Bat was a silent, shadowy figure, ascending the back service stairs of the high apartment building. He discovered that reaching the roof was a simple problem. At least, some penthouse owners believed in fire escapes.

The wild party seemed to have been considerably tamed. Rather, the Bat noted that numerous guests had passed out in various rooms of the big penthouse. He flattened against one wall.

With his black, ribbed cloak, he was not unlike a claw-footed bird of the night, clinging inside its cave. Passing slowly around the penthouse, he heard some drunken guests shouting.

"Hey, Lloyd! You just lost her, Lloyd! It's on the radio! And right on Central Park West!"

The Bat reached a wide, screened window. He could hear a low-tuned radio inside a dimly lighted room. He saw a tall man, with a beaked nose, a long chin, and beady eyes that glowed like bits of jet.



This much the Bat could see of the man who was half-crouched over the low-tuned radio. Then the Bat's keen ears easily picked up the news bulletin:

... all efforts of the police had failed completely.

Then the Ramer woman, the second wife of Lloyd Ramer, jumped from a taxicab on Central Park West. She was killed by a passing car before which she fell.

First reports say the woman was frightfully burned all over her body. Thurston, the taxicab driver, is being held. He denies the woman was burned or injured in any way while in his cab.

He says she appeared to have been drinking and insisted on riding through Central Park so she could look at the Grayling Apartment house. Her former husband, Lloyd Ramer, owner of the Red Feather Club, resides with his fourth wife in a luxurious penthouse on the Grayling building.

It was announced more than three hours ago, in the Prophet column of the *Sentinel*, that Lela Ramer would be murdered, or had been murdered.

In the meantime, William Black, candidate for senator, has been discovered to be a former convict of the same name, convicted twenty years ago for forgery. He was killed by the city editor of the *Sentinel*, after Black had shot and killed Carl Jackson, and attempted to kill George Drake, the managing editor. The publisher, Arthur Rowland is missing . . .

At this juncture the hawk-nosed man turned the radio off. Some drunken guests came singing to an inside door.

"Get out of here, and shut the door!" rapped out Lloyd Ramer.

He walked over and clicked a bolt. He came back, rubbing beads of sweat from his forehead. Opening a drawer of a big desk, he took out a paper in a legal-appearing blue folder.

Lloyd Ramer had this open before him when a voice that was half-hissing spoke from behind him. The lights went out. The window drapes closed, throwing the room into utter darkness.

"Slip the paper to the desk, Ramer. Don't move. The Black Bat needs no light. Ah, yes, murderer, I read the paper from here—you have this libel suit prepared and waiting—"

## CHAPTER XVIII

### *Deadly Gun-trap*



LIKE the swift flitting of the winged bird of the night, the Black Bat swooped toward the nightclub man and snatched the legal paper from the desk.

Hawk-nosed Lloyd Ramer, caught in almost total darkness when the Bat had snapped the window drapes shut and the lights had winked out, stood motionless.

The very lack of defensive or startled effort on the part of the nightclub owner, virtually accused of the horrible murder of his former wife, Lela Ramer, warned the Bat.

Only Ramer's long fingers snapped. The Bat had an advantage of which Ramer could not know. He could see every detail of the dark room including, as he had said, the title of the legal paper he had snatched and quickly secreted in his clothes.

Instead of expressing fear, Ramer drawled out calmly.

"Even the great Bat should look before he pounces. Move and you'll die without a chance."

Then it was that Lloyd Ramer himself doubled, bending his long body below the level of his heavy desk. The Black Bat saw them appearing. From all sides of the room came men with guns ready in their hands.

Strangely enough, the Black Bat had been prepared for just this. He had been certain a trap had been set for him. And that trap confirmed the angle that he had wanted. It much more than proved Lloyd Ramer's implication in the slow-burning murder of his wife.

Knowing the trap should be here, if he had guessed right when he made arrangements to visit Lloyd Ramer, the Bat was ready.



His enemies, at least eight gunmen, were sure they had him cornered. They had known their boss would drop below shooting level.

Only they did not know the Black Bat could see them plainly. And they did not see the Bat glide soundlessly away from the desk and pass directly between two of them. The Bat was over by one wall before he spoke.

The ambushing gunmen had almost reached the big desk, alert to encounter their victim. Then the Bat's hissing voice seemed to come from all corners at once.

"Don't turn any of you, or I'll kill your boss first! I'll get all of you with this!"

Sudden fire streamed from a rapid-fire automatic held low in the Bat's hand. Its slugs peppered the floor and the feet of several thugs who started hopping and groaning.

"Blast him down!" yelled Ramer. "He's over there!"

"I wouldn't try it," warned the Bat, his voice coming from a different spot than had the muzzle flare of his pistol.

At least two gunmen lost their heads. Their rods flamed at the sound of the Bat's voice. But the Bat was close to a door and about to go through. He cut down on the two men shooting. Both fell.

"Hold it!" rasped out Ramer. "The girl! Bat! Look!"

**T**HE beam of a flashlight leaped out. Its circle revealed an open door. Her face white and strained, her young body tense, Carol Baldwin was held rigidly in the doorway by several hard-eyed men.

But it was the gleaming, silvery hypodermic held poised with its point touching Carol's neck that drew the Bat's fascinated gaze.

"Okay, Bat!" said Ramer. "You see, we knew and were prepared for your visit! We were told that Tony Quinn was sending you! So, if you don't want to see the little lady die suddenly, you will drop your guns, and

return that paper to my desk! You will live and the girl will be freed, if you tell what we want to know!"

The Bat was set back sharply by the appearance of Carol. He had been prepared for the trap he was sure had been baited for him. But this sudden presence of Carol appeared to checkmate his play.

Yet in a split-second he had debated all of the chances. He knew exactly what was wanted. Two men had been sent to Clifford Morden's studio to secure something they had been told would be hidden in Morden's old desk.

That something was a note against Arthur Rowland for two million dollars. In a battle, the studio had been destroyed by fire. And the killers believed the Black Bat had taken that two-million note.

They were correct. The Bat had taken the note Arthur Rowland had renewed from year to year with Clifford Morden. Only he had not known at the time that he had it in his possession.

This went through the Bat's mind in a flash. And he knew that he might live until the note was found, but that Carol and he had to die. That was unalterable.

"Well, Bat?" Ramer was impatient. "You will be unmolested if you start walking over here with the paper you took from my desk!"

"You hold the winning hand," said the Bat, his vague winged black figure appearing, as if moving toward the center of the room. "Let the girl go—"

The automatic at his side cracked in the middle of his slow sentence. A man behind Carol screamed.

The gleaming, silvery hypodermic disappeared as if by magic. A man's head bobbed into view as one of Carol's captors cursed wildly and jerked back his bloody hand.

The automatic cracked again, so quickly it seemed as if the two shots had been fired together.



This time the flashlight glass was smashed. And in that sudden total darkness, the Bat was speaking again, with cold menace:

"Tell them, Ramer, to let the girl go or I'll split your spine so you'll never walk again. Tell them, Ramer!"

A choked sound came from Ramer's throat. The Bat spoke sharply.

"Down, Carol! Flat on the floor!"

The Bat's command was accompanied by the cracking of guns in both of his hands. He was down behind Ramer's desk. The stream of slugs was circling the dark room, and none were missing the suddenly screaming, shooting gunmen.

CAROL had obeyed the Bat's order and thrown herself flat on the floor. Now the Bat saw another door opening. Men with rods spilled into the room.

It appeared that most of Ramer's party guests were members of his own mob, or the mob that the Bat now realized had been combined under a double leadership.

Then there came a roaring voice, and a sharper one.

"Bat! Where are you? We'll take 'em!"

That was big Butch O'Leary. Silk Kirby was first to appear with a gun in each hand. Both were belching fire. Outside where O'Leary had shouted, there were smashing blows. A number of Lloyd Ramer's party guests may have been outside of his little mob of killers. But Butch O'Leary's swinging fists were not particular about whom they cut down.

Lloyd Ramer made a desperate move to twist away from the Bat. His head clunked under the metal of one of the Bat's guns, and Ramer lay still.

Then bedlam broke loose outside the penthouse. The Bat heard the harsh voice of Captain McGrath.

"The Black Bat's in there! Don't let him get away this time!"

Sounds of assault upon outside

doors and windows were followed by daylight beginning to stream into the room.

The Black Bat whirled swiftly, gesturing to Carol, Butch and Silk. They followed him to the window opening upon the fire escape. He slid through and came face to face with a policeman.

It was no time for politeness. The Black Bat did not fight the police, but he had no choice now. His right arm shot out like a striking snake, and his knuckled fist found its mark on the other's jaw.

Catching the policeman as he sagged, the Bat placed him on the platform, then moved down the steps at a hurried pace. Two floors below Ramer's apartment, the Bat found a vacant suite.

He forced the window catch, slid it open and dropped into an empty room.



The others followed. Quickly then, Silk explained how he had been fortunate enough to spot Carol's captors as they were getting away, and had trailed them.

"Butch," said the Bat crisply. "You and Carol stay here until the coast is clear, then get out as best you can." While he spoke the Bat was removing his cloak and once more becoming the personality of blind Tony Quinn. "Take my cloak along, Butch. Silk and I will now visit Ramer's place again."

The lock on the apartment door gave Tony Quinn no trouble. In a few moments Silk led him into the Ramer apartment where Captain



McGrath's homicide detail was conducting a frantic search for the Black Bat.

"Where is the Bat?" yelled McGrath. "Search every place. He was in here. I heard someone shout his name." The captain whirled when he saw Quinn. "Tony Quinn! How did you—?"

"Hello, Captain," said Tony with a smile. "It seems I am a little late. I can smell gunpowder, and I heard shots from the street. There was trouble here."

"Heck, boss, the place is a sham-bles," said Silk. "Several dead mobsters. Chairs and a table overturned. If the Black Bat was really here as we heard Captain McGrath say, he certainly must have put up a scrap. You should see how this apartment looks."

McGrath was angry, and his face was full of harsh bitterness.

"**B**LAST you, Tony, the Black Bat was here, and I've a hunch it was you. You certainly showed up opportunely."

"Not at all. When that Prophet column came out and later radio bulletins announced the police hadn't been able to locate Lela Ramer, I thought it might prove enlightening to speak with Mr. Lloyd Ramer. Is he—?"

"He's got a slight bullet wound in the side, but he'll live," rasped McGrath. "My men are holding him in another room." McGrath scowled as a policeman with a lump on his jaw staggered into the front room. "Riley, what happened to you?"

The policeman rubbed his chin and anger had its way with him.

"It was the Black Bat. He came out the window. There was someone else behind him. I tried to pull my gun. Before I could get it out, he slugged me. When I came to I was lying on the fire escape and he was gone."

McGrath swore violently and

flashed a suspicious glance in Tony's direction.

"Let me see your hand, Tony," he requested quietly.

Tony Quinn extended it, all at once thankful that the skin on his knuckles was hard and firm, and had not been skinned by the blow he had been forced to strike the policeman.

McGrath let Tony's hand drop. Tony was without his customary cane, but the captain was too overwrought to notice its absence.

Homicide men were moving all about. Several mobsters had been captured before they could flee. Others who had been killed were dragged out of the room.

"Captain," said Tony suddenly. "I'd like to ask a favor."

"A favor?" McGrath's tone was truculent. "You pick a bad time. I still think you were in this room right before we came. Some day I'm going to trap the Black Bat." He broke off and added thoughtfully: "I was called. Somebody warned us that there would be trouble here."

"I had a hunch that you'd be called," responded Tony quietly, an odd eagerness singing through his blood. "The favor is that I want Lloyd Ramer brought to the *Sentinel* office at once. I will personally accuse him of killing his former wife. But in the meantime I wish to have him talk with some editors, especially the Murder Prophet."

Captain McGrath was about to voice a protest when the tall figure of Commissioner Warner entered the room. He nodded his head to the captain, signifying that Tony's request should be granted.

"All right, you win," admitted the captain. "To the *Sentinel* he goes."

Tony turned and spoke in a very low tone to Silk Kirby.

"Bring the others to the newspaper as quickly as possible. I'll call Owl Brennan. He'll want to be in at the finish especially with Jane Longren, or Martha Rowland, safe."



## CHAPTER XIX

*Amazing Revelations*

IN THE big news room of the *Sentinel* typewriters clacked steadily. Veteran reporters carried on, although their faces were grim and tired. Aging copy readers with green shades over their eyes pencilled copy and built headlines, hurrying to make the next edition, even though they expected the newspaper might be kicked out from under them before another edition could be begun.

A cynical copy reader passed a suggested headline over to Bunt Preddy, the news editor. Preddy tugged at his heavy grey hair and nodded.

"Might as well be that as any," he said. "It's getting to be a habit."

The headline was:

## MURDER IN SENTINEL OFFICE

Another old copy reader concocted a drop head to go under the banner line. He passed this to Preddy.

WILLIAM BLACK KILLS  
PROPHET; IS SHOT FA-  
TALLY BY CITY EDITOR

Preddy pushed the headline over to Baldy Compton.

"Okay with you, Baldy?" he said.

"It's the news, and we still print the truth," said Baldy Compton. "About this Lela Ramer death, and that item in our column, I expect to get a new lead on it.

"According to our assistant make-up editor who has now vanished, no one but Carl Jackson seems to have checked proof on that Prophet column this time. But Jackson is like Frank Lark. He can't talk."

George Drake, the managing editor, came across the room with a sheet of copy in his hand. He was white-faced and his hands trembled.

"We'll run this in a box, a turn-rule box on the first page of this edition," said Drake. "It announces that the Prophet column will no longer appear in the *Sentinel*. If Mr. Rowland would only—"

George Drake's eyes bugged. Arthur Rowland, his bony face like a hard mask, headed a little procession coming from two elevators. Behind Rowland came Tony Quinn, holding his cane, being piloted by Silk Kirby.

Pretty, blue-eyed Jane Longren was next, with red-headed Owl Brennan holding one arm protectively around her shoulders.

With a wrist handcuffed to a homicide man and closely followed by scowling Captain McGrath and Commissioner Warner, hawk-nosed Lloyd Ramer, night club owner, shuffled in with his head down.

"Drake!" The voice of Arthur Rowland was sharp. "I will see you, with Preddy and Compton, in my office."

The publisher's deep-set eyes went slowly over the big news room. The typewriters had hushed suddenly. The only sound was a copy tube bouncing into the desk basket from the brass piping.

"All right, boys," said Rowland with hard calmness. "This edition will go out on time. Carry on. Tell the composing room to be ready for a fast replate."

No one would have thought that for two days the oldest stockholders of the *Sentinel* had been dumping their holdings, or that the value of the stock had slumped twenty points.

None would have guessed that Arthur Rowland believed himself through as a publisher, just as the conservative *Sentinel* was washed up with fifty per cent of its old line circulation.



**T**ONY QUINN remained standing beside Silk Kirby in Arthur Rowland's office. The others were grouped about Rowland's desk. Jane Longren's pretty face was stained by tears. Owl Brennan stood beside her chair, and she gripped his hand tightly.

Tony Quinn's apparently sightless eyes looked at an outside window. Captain McGrath fumed, waiting.

"Well, let's get on with it," said McGrath. "The Black Bat paid a visit to Lloyd Ramer and escaped, or so it seems. But I'm not so sure."

Tony Quinn smiled slightly.

"I'm afraid he escaped, captain," he said. "Silk, read the paper you found under Ramer's desk during the confusion while the police were hunting the Black Bat."

Ramer started to speak, but clicked his teeth shut.

"I'm not up on all these legal terms, sir," murmured Silk Kirby. "But as I get it, this paper was all ready to be filed in a new libel suit against the *Sentinel*."

"It says the Prophet falsely and maliciously accused one Lloyd Ramer of having guilty knowledge of the murder of Lela Ramer, his former wife. And it asks a cold million in damages. Think of that! Ready for her to die!"

Bunt Preddy, the news editor, was staring at Lloyd Ramer, and digging at his grey hair.

"Preddy," said Tony Quinn tersely. "I understand you've been seen around with the former Mrs. Ramer? Is that true?"

Captain McGrath moved closer to the news editor.

"Yeah, it's true," Preddy admitted slowly, his eyes shifting to Arthur Rowland. "I was with her twice since Lloyd Ramer sued the *Sentinel* for half a million on account of the Nemoss murder. I thought Lela—that is Mrs. Ramer might know something—and—"

"Let it go," snapped Tony quickly. "It is interesting to note that Ramer is conveniently supplied by the

Prophet with libel items that enables Ramer to sue for a million and a half, at the same time Curt Grannan, stepson of Clifford Morden, is suing for half a million.

"It is still more interesting when I tell you I have discovered that Ramer has been picking up odd blocks of *Sentinel* stock for some time."

"That's a lie!" yelled Ramer, his eyes feverish.

"A mere matter of record, Ramer," stated Tony. "Now perhaps you will explain how you were working with someone on the inside of the *Sentinel* office to bring about these disastrous damage suits? This at a time when Clifford Morden, holder of a note for two millions for his lifelong friend, Arthur Rowland, was about to be murdered?"

Lloyd Ramer ground his teeth. Baldy Compton started up from a chair, changed his mind and sat down again.

Tony Quinn seemed to spot the movement.

"Compton, did you happen to know that Jane Longren was really Martha Rowland?" shot out Tony. "And that she was posing for Morden, who was painting a portrait of her? And that a Michael Doran was apparently a friend of Jane's and of Morden's, and often visited the studio."

**B**ALDY COMPTON'S eyes were small and hard, as if his thoughts were gimlets, boring into those about him.

"Yes," he replied slowly. "I knew about Jane's identity. And I knew she was having a portrait painted by Morden, because of her resemblance to her mother with whom Morden was in love years ago. But I knew nothing about Michael Doran."

"Compton," said Tony so quietly that none suspected how he would finish. "Did you kill William Black because he was about to name the real murder Prophet? And did you know



that Carl Jackson was in on the scheme? We have proof of that from Black's own statement that Jackson had been the one collecting the black-mail from him.

"It's my guess Jackson was paid for the story of the Morden murder which he claimed he took over the telephone from Frank Lark."

Baldy Compton reared to his feet, his fists clenched.

"You can voice your theories, Quinn," he rasped, "but don't try to make it appear that I'm in on the deal, too."

Commissioner Warner gripped Compton's shoulder. Tony smiled.

"It's this way, gentlemen," he murmured quietly. "Ramer and one *Sentinel* man were conspiring to accomplish one of two things. By discrediting the paper and having it broken by libel suits, its control could have been taken over—especially with Arthur Rowland crowded out as publisher because of a two-million note.

"With control of the *Sentinel* and its morgue, a great wealth of material would have been seized—material that could be used as an almost endless means for extorting huge sums of money from prominent people with shady pasts. Once in control of the *Sentinel*, these men would have used the paper as a front, not caring what happened to the circulation, for carrying on their blackmail activities.

"As far as Curt Grannan is concerned, my investigation has convinced me his libel suit was instituted in good faith and out of righteous anger, though it did help the killers.

"The blackmailing of William Black was only the first in what no doubt would have been a chain of extortions. And while some of the murders appear to be incidental, not even linked with the grand scheme, they really do have a definite connection."

Tony Quinn turned in the direction of Jane Longren, looking over her

head with his apparently sightless eyes.

"Jane, tell us why you took William Black to the morgue."

The girl's face was set, but her voice was calm.

"Because he proved to me that someone in our office was blackmailing him, and I hoped to find out who was guilty, for my father's sake," said Jane. "But I was knocked out and taken away.

"Then I was released, and came to my senses on a side street. I had heard one of the men say the next trouble would be with Nemoss at the Four Owls Club, so I went there."

"But Jane, why did you run away when Clifford Morden was murdered?" queried Tony suddenly. "Did you see who killed him?"

THE girl's face reddened, and she shook her head.

"I didn't see who killed Mr. Morden, but I can't tell why I ran away," the girl declared firmly.

Arthur Rowland spoke then.

"Did you know I visited Morden's studio and ran into the murder? That I saw the murder scoop in my own paper, and naturally rushed over to the studio only to see Morden alive and well? And that I heard the outcry and went back to walk right into a dark studio, as the police were arriving? Did you know that, Martha?"

"No, Dad, not until Tony Quinn showed me a photograph of you leaving by the fire escape," answered the girl. "I can't tell why I ran away. I was—well, I was badly frightened." She paused and added, "I hope you'll forgive me for going off from home to get a newspaper job against your wishes."

"Yes, Martha," was the gentle reply. "I'm just glad to know you're alive and safe."

"I presume you stayed away from the *Sentinel*, trying to get an outside lead on what was happening," said Tony to Arthur Rowland. "And that



took you to the Four Owls Club."

"Yes, it took me there," replied Rowland quietly. "In fact, I thought I saw one of my own men go there, after I had read the Prophet item about possible harm to Nemoss. However, I didn't see him after I entered. Later, Nemoss was killed, and I was seized and taken away."

"That's right," said Tony. "And Silk Kirby here rescued you from the men who took you away, Mr. Rowland."

Tony halted and lifted his voice.

"Now, gentlemen, I have told one angle of this. I think there is a double motive. Compton, knowing Jane Longren was the daughter of the publisher, did you have an idea of marrying her?"

"Why, you—"

"Let it go," said Tony quickly. "I judge that Owl Brennan had the inside track, or so it appears."

His face turned toward Owl Brennan and the girl, but his eyes were vacant.

"Owl, you did have some hope, didn't you?" he said.

"Putting it that way, Tony, sure I had hope," admitted Owl, a smile on his puffed and swollen face. "I told you that at first."

"That's right, Owl, you did," stated Tony. "And that brings us to the managing editor. Drake, why did William Black try to kill you, saying you were behind the Prophet?"

"You're accusing me, Tony?" he gulped. "I swear I know nothing—"

"Black accused you," broke in Tony sharply. "It would have been a nice set-up, too, if Curt Grannan, who has already sued the *Sentinel*, had wanted to crack down with that two-million-dollar note, and you or some other person happened to have gained possession of the note.

"Grannan might have been made to split the value of the note or possibly even blackmailed into helping gain control of the *Sentinel*. And any threat on Grannan's part to go to the

police might have resulted in his being taken care of in the same way Morden or Nemoss were gotten out of the way. Can you see it, Drake?"

## CHAPTER XX

### *The Murder Prophet*



UNTIL this moment George Drake had never displayed spirit amounting to anger. He flashed it now, showing it in his narrowed eyes and sharply-pitched voice.

"Certainly I see it!" he shouted. "This murder Prophet could have benefited in two ways. One was to use Lloyd Ramer's mob to get control of the *Sentinel*—valuable in itself despite lost prestige and the decreasing value of its stock.

"If that angle didn't work, the Prophet might have figured on marrying Rowland's daughter. But the biggest motive, as you mentioned, must have been to use the inexhaustible data in the morgue for blackmailing prominent people."

"That's exactly the way the real Prophet saw the chances," said Tony, an ominous note in his quiet, yet incisive voice. "However, he failed to secure Rowland's note. Also, he didn't know that Jane Longren, whom he had learned was Rowland's daughter, was already married to a young chemist named Michael Doran!"

Tony half-turned, his blank eyes appearing to gaze out past the window. He was facing the red-headed cameraman when he resumed suddenly.

"You didn't know Doran was Jane's husband when you tried to frame him for the murder of Morden, did you, Owl?"

The question hit the photographer with the impact of a physical blow. He started to whirl toward the outer doorway. Tony did not change the



direction of his blank gaze.

But now he took one swift step forward, stuck out one foot, tripping Owl Brennan to his knees. Silk Kirby then leaped in and got the cameraman in a firm grip before he could rise to his feet again.

"There's your murder Prophet, gentlemen!" intoned Quinn. "Owl Brennan, probably the first killer to learn the value of infra-red light for taking pictures that would incriminate others and clear himself."

"Is it true you're really married to Doran?" demanded Rowland, his face scowling with displeasure, heedless of the astonished gasps which followed Quinn's accusation.

"Yes, Dad," the girl replied stoutly. Then she shot a puzzled glance toward Tony. "You knew all the time that Michael Doran was my husband?"

"There seemed no other logical reason for both you and Michael being so stubborn about talking," responded Tony with a smile. "I followed it up and found a record of your marriage in a small Connecticut town."

"It's true," she admitted. "Dad objected to my seeing Michael. He—"

"I'm afraid I was a fool, Tony," said Rowland, smiling now. "I wanted Martha to marry a wealthy man in her own social circle. She defied me in that and in the business of her becoming a reporter. But now it doesn't matter so long as she is happy."

Owl Brennan was struggling furiously in Silk Kirby's grip. His harsh voice lashed at Quinn.

"Tony, you've gone completely crazy!" he raged. "Tell this fool, Kirby, to let me go."

**COMMISSIONER WARNER**, his features troubled, broke into the conversation.

"Tony, are you sure you're not making a mistake in accusing Owl? You left him at your house today."

"Yes, I left him there, after making it clear I might possibly visit Lloyd Ramer's alibi party in the murder of

Lela Ramer. Owl Brennan heard Silk tell me of a call made to the Lloyd Ramer penthouse.

"He also heard of another call which resulted in a girl being seized as she left the *Sentinel* building.

"Owl had Ramer all set to trap me, but it seems the Black Bat got there first. Owl even tipped off the police, probably hoping there'd be a shoot-out and the Ramer might be killed, leaving Owl at the helm of the shady deal."

"It's crazy," blustered Owl. "I was a prisoner myself until this morning. I was burned by the same mercury lamp that caused the death of Lela—of Mrs. Ramer. You can see my face—"

"I could also see your hands, Owl," interjected Tony. "At least half an hour was required to burn your face like that. You said your hands were tied.

"You were careful to burn all of your face and the back of your neck, but you kept your hands out of that light instinctively. Also, you claimed to have just come out of a sewer, and you had your burned face covered with ointment to ease the pain.

"Then, when you tried to put suspicion upon Bunt Preddy today, you spoke of the murdered woman suddenly as Lela, proving you had been more or less intimate with her. You said you climbed out of a sewer manhole in Central Park. There are no sewer manholes in Central Park."

"I don't know what it all means—why I warned you that Jane Longren's life was in danger!" raged Owl Brennan.

"That's right, you did," agreed Tony. "But when Jane Longren was in the hands of your men and she might easily have been killed, you saw to it that she was released unhurt. You still had an idea that if you couldn't find that two-million-dollar note, or otherwise work out a scheme to get control of the *Sentinel* you might still be able to marry Jane or Martha Rowland.



"You know something about chemicals. When Michael Doran tried some new paints, you planted poison in them, fed Michael Doran a knockout and left him with some of the paint on his hands.

"However, the poison that killed Morden was injected into his blood, and was a cyanide used in photography."

"Captain McGrath!" fumed Owl Brennan, a desperate glint in his eyes. "I demand to be released. Quinn here can't prove a word he's saying."

"Can't I?" snapped Tony before McGrath could answer. "You always did have a weakness for gambling and

eled slyly around to Lloyd Ramer, looking dark and uneasy in the opposite corner of the room.

"That's a lie!" snapped the photographer.

"What do you say, Ramer?" demanded Tony. "You'll fry for killing Lela and having that second libel suit all drawn up before she even died. Are you taking the rap for all those killings, including Morden's?"

"I didn't kill Morden. It was Brennan!" Ramer yelled frantically.

"You dirty skunk—after I gave—" Owl broke off, cursing.

"You owed me plenty," said Ramer to Owl. "I told you I wanted the

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for hanging out with shady characters. Silk Kirby, who has some underworld acquaintances, found out you've been gambling heavily at the Four Owls for weeks.

"You owed Ramer more than ten thousand dollars, and Jackson who went along with you sometimes, was also in the red. Ramer began to press you for the dough. That's when you got the bright idea of interesting Ramer in grabbing the *Sentinel* and using the morgue for blackmail purposes, to save your hide."

Brennan snorted, and his eyes trav-

dled off to your proposition about grabbing the *Sentinel*, killing Morden and framing Doran. You handled that yourself. It was you who picked out William Black as our first extortion victim."

**O**WL BRENNAN said nothing now, but his face was a black tide of insane fury.

"Sure," said Tony. "And because Carl Jackson also owed you money, Ramer, Owl dragged Jackson into it. Jackson did the actual writing of the



Prophet column under Owl's orders, and he was the contact man in handling Black.

"I found out Jackson was overdrawn on his salary several weeks. Yet, an examination of his bank account—in the bank where most *Sentinel* people have their savings—two days after the Morden killing showed a deposit of a thousand dollars. A nice fee for handling the Morden murder extra edition of the *Sentinel*."

"And Jackson, in turn, bribed the make-up editor to see that the first Prophet column went through. I checked on the make-up man and found he'd left town without leaving a forwarding address. His closed-out bank account showed a deposit of two hundred dollars for the same date Jackson deposited a thousand."

Commissioner Warner glanced sharply at Tony Quinn as the latter paused, and asked a blunt question.

"How do you explain Barry Nemoss' death?"

"It's my bet Nemoss found out about the deal between Owl and Ramer, and tried to muscle in just as he attempted to buy into the Red Feather," said Tony. "Am I right, Ramer?"

"Yeah," snapped Ramer, resigned to his fate. "He had a killing coming to him. Lela must have spilled the beans to him."

"And how did she find out?" demanded Captain McGrath suddenly.

"From Owl Brennan!" raged Ramer. "The blasted fool was never any good with liquor or cards. He got plastered one night and told her. I know because she visited me, and threatened to tip off the cops if I didn't come across with a big hunk of dough."

"So you and Owl killed her—had her burned with a mercury sun lamp, and used the murder as another scoop for the Prophet in the *Sentinel*—a scoop which would just about ruin the paper," Tony concluded tartly.

There was a strained silence in the room for a moment. Only Owl's disturbed breathing broke the stillness.

Then Police Commissioner Warner spoke up.

"Tony, with all this talk about a two-million-dollar note, what ever became of it? You say two men were trying to find it when the Morden studio burned?"

Tony took an old photograph wrapped in silk from his pocket. The face was almost identical with Jane Longren's.

"My wife!" Arthur Rowland exclaimed. "Taken on our wedding day!"

Tony thumbed the thick paper of the photograph. It separated into two sheets. A small paper lay between these sheets. It carried a brief message written in a scrawling hand.

In memory of one I loved, and of a lifelong friendship, I hereby cancel any and all indebtedness to me, my heirs or my assigns, owed by Arthur K. Rowland.

I have had a good life and have but one person to whom I feel I owe a debt. I, therefore, bequeath half of all my estate to Michael Doran, husband of Martha Rowland. To a stepson, Curtis Grannan, I leave the rest of my estate.

**T**HE brief will was signed by Clifford Morden. It was informal, but it had been regularly attested by two witnesses and bore a notary seal.

"What about the death of Margaret Ripple, and the attempts on Jane Longren's life?" queried Baldy Compton.

"Margaret Ripple was killed by mistake—the murderers mistaking her for Jane," Tony informed him. "That was some of Ramer's own work. He evidently didn't trust Owl's tongue when it got well lubricated, and was afraid the girl knew what was going on, especially when she was spotted with William Black."

"Of course, when Owl found out about Jane's capture he had her released. That attack upon himself, his disappearance and sunburning were part of an elaborate alibi."

"And Lark was killed to keep him from airing his suspicions about the Morden job. Old Mac was undoubt-



edly killed by Ramer's mobsters who kidnapped Jane from the morgue."

Captain McGrath growled. He was glad that this baffling case was broken, but the fact that the Black Bat had once more eluded his clutches, filled him with displeasure.

"I suppose all I can do is turn Michael Doran loose," he said. "I just wish I knew where the Black Bat went after he got away from Ramer's pent-house apartment."

Martha Rowland's blue eyes were suddenly shining. The door had opened and tall, dark-haired Michael Doran stood there.

"Maybe the Black Bat called at headquarters and had Doran freed," said Silk Kirby with a sly, amused grin.

"No, Silk, you're wrong," said the commissioner. "It was merely on Tony's advice that I instructed that Doran should be brought over here. I had no idea Tony's revelations would result in Doran going scot-free as he is entitled to do."

Silk grinned and turned to Tony. Slowly he led his employer to the door of the news room.

Typewriters were clacking there and the tall figure of Baldy Compton brushed past them.

The city editor's voice boomed across the room.

"Come on, you guys! We've got a replate coming up! Get Martha Rowland's own story. Do you think we want to be beaten on our own murder yarn?"

FURTHER EXPLOITS OF TONY QUINN, MASKED NEMESIS OF CRIME, IN

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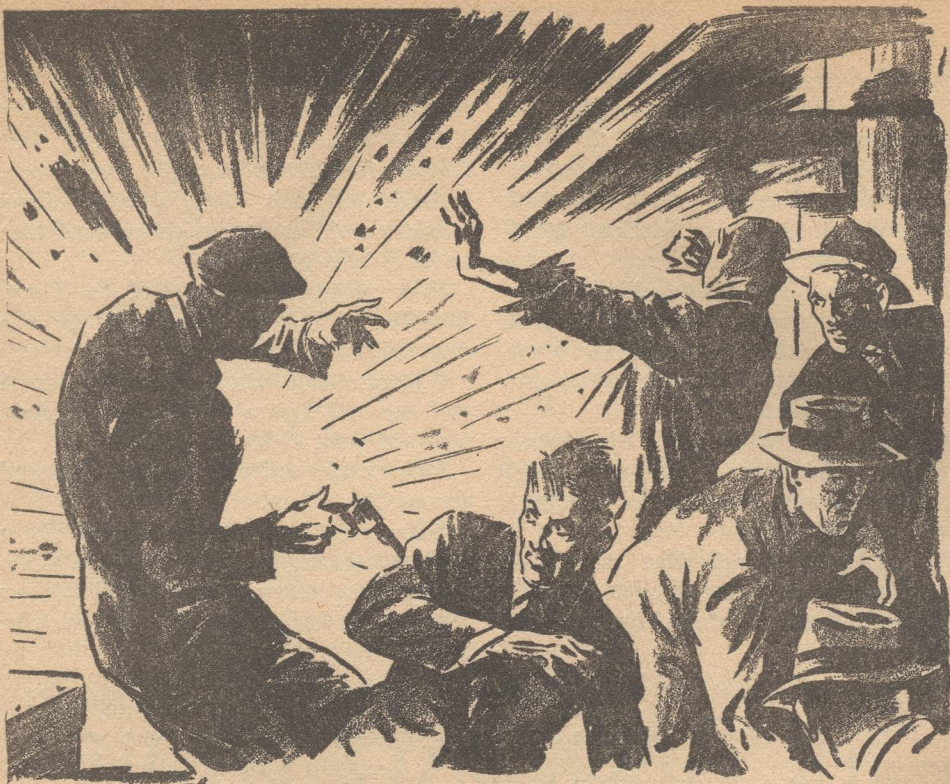


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The fire was burning fiercely when the cops and guards ran up

# WHERE THERE'S SMOKE

By FREDRIC BROWN

*Finding Himself Without Matches, Harry Wilkins Starts from Scratch on the Hottest Case in His Fiery Career!*

I CUPPED the match in my hands, but the howling wind blew the flame into oblivion before I got the end of my cigarette even near it.

My last match, too. I threw it down so hard, it probably bounced—it was pitch-dark there under the tree, so I can't say for sure—and threw the cigarette after it.

Again I turned my eyes across the street and resumed that long and useless vigil, staring up at the one lighted window. I wanted a smoke badly. But if I walked three blocks to the all-

night drug store, it would be just like the boss to drive by to see if I was on the job.

I glanced at the luminous dial of my watch. Twelve o'clock, six hours before Westphal would relieve me. Six hours standing here, cursing myself because I hadn't checked my match supply before going on duty.

I heard footsteps coming along the sidewalk toward me and saw it was Corrigan, the beat cop. I'd showed him my credentials as a Jayvee operative two nights ago, so that part was all right. But Corrigan didn't smoke.



There ought to be a law making everyone carry matches.

"Hullo, gumshoe," he said. "Anything doing?"

"Not much," I admitted. "Some bombing planes flew over and dropped a few ash-cans. Outside of that, it's been quiet."

He stepped into the dark shadow of the tree that formed my own protective coloring.

"Bombing planes ain't nothing to joke about," he said.

"The English do and they ought to know. Say, I read in the paper about a slight fire they put out yesterday out at the Murrison Powder Works, right in the ash-can department, too. What was the inside on that, Corrigan?"

"It was an accident. This sabotage talk is mostly scare stuff. With the precautions they take out there, nobody could pull anything if they wanted."

"Don't be too sure, pal," I answered. "There is a lot of loose spy talk, maybe, but where there's smoke there's fire. Which reminds me, have you by any miracle got a match? Or were you a Boy Scout and learned how to make fire by rubbing two sticks together?"

**H**E grunted. "I'll bring you some next time around. Couple hours. When are you going to loosen up and tell me what you're watching 7243 for? I keep my mouth shut."

"Even when you eat? Honest, Corrigan, I don't know myself. The boss is funny like that about some jobs, and this is one of them. Just like I told you, I gotta watch the house and report what goes on. I don't follow anybody. I just stand here all night and wish I was a mailman."

"It's a respectable house," he said. "The Willems have lived there only a couple months, but he's a nice guy. Sells insurance."

"He must be. Nobody's gone in or out of that house between ten P. M.

and six A. M. for two nights now. I can write my reports on a cigarette paper, but if I rolled a cigarette out of it, I still wouldn't have a match. Don't forget them, will you?"

"All right! All right!"

He strolled on.

Across the street another light went on upstairs. Probably Willem, whoever he was, was going to bed. I wished I could, too. I tried to keep my mind off wanting a smoke, began to wish the door of 7243 would fly open and a few gangsters with tommy-guns would come out and start shooting at me, just to break the monotony. If they killed me, I wouldn't want a cigarette any more. If I killed them, at least one would have matches in his pocket. Or maybe the house would catch fire and the firemen would come and one of them would—

The door opened. A man in a dark suit and thick-lensed, tinted glasses and a little, black goatee came out. I'd never seen him before. From the description that had been given me, though, I knew it was Mr. Willem. I glanced hastily at my watch to time his departure for my report. It was 12:21.

He came briskly down the walk and got into the gray coupé parked at the curb. The license number was already in my notebook, so I stepped farther back behind the tree to be sure I'd be out of sight. The coupé slid away from the curb, gathered speed and shot around the corner like he was going some place in a hurry.

I leaned back against the tree and watched the house again. Business was picking up. A surveillance job isn't so bad if there's something to watch, time and report. It's watching nothing all night long that gives you the screaming meemies.

At 12:50 an orange cab slid to a stop in front of 7243 and a guy got out. He was bareheaded and bald and there was a long, red gash across his forehead, running up into where his hair should have been. It was still bleed-



ing. He handed the cabby a bill and started up the walk to the house. I saw then that he was limping.

It was lucky I'd taken the number of the cab as it drove up. I was so startled, I'd never have remembered it otherwise. When the guy had got out of the cab, the light had shone square on his face. I'd have recognized him anywhere.

It was Murrison himself, owner and manager of the biggest industry in our town, the Murrison Powder Works, the Jayvee Agency's client on almost half of all the work we did. What could he be doing at this time of night at the house of the mysterious Mr. Willem?

As he reached the porch steps, the door of 7243 opened and I saw a short, heavy-set man peer out. He said something I couldn't hear, then held the door open. Murrison went in.

**M**Y mind started to go in circles. I took a cigarette out of my package and put it in my mouth. Then I reached for a match, remembered and threw the butt down.

It didn't make sense. Why should he be coming here alone in the middle of the night to see the guy he was paying to have watched? And injured, besides. That cut across his forehead hadn't been from shaving, and it was fresh. He'd limped, too.

For just a moment I began to wonder. Then I dismissed the doubt. You might as well start suspecting J. Edgar as Roger Murrison. His plant rated third in the country in the manufacture of munitions. He watched every detail of it, knew almost every worker by name. Aside from all that, he was making more money out of making munitions than he could spend in seven lifetimes and he gave most of it away.

But the heavy-set mug who'd let him in the door had seemed to know him. Well, all that was no skin off my nose. It'd go into my report and others would know what it meant.

Murrison certainly must have known he'd been seen going in there by a Jayvee operative. Come to think of it, he'd even know it was me. He'd have read my reports for the past couple of nights, signed with my name. Besides, I'd reported to him personally on half a dozen cases.

Yet I couldn't conceive of any investigation that Murrison himself would be taking a hand in. He wouldn't take a foolish risk like that. He wouldn't have to. The F. B. I. was his first line of defense, the Jayvee Agency his second. He used us for stuff the F. B. I. didn't have time or men enough to handle. He didn't overlook any bets when it came to playing safe, and you couldn't blame him. His plant was literally dynamite.

Just in case, I took my police positive out of my pocket, looked to the priming and put it back at an angle where I could get at it quickest. With Murrison himself in there, anything might happen. But nothing at all happened until 1:45. Then the lights went out. First the downstairs light, finally the one upstairs, a couple minutes later.

The more I thought about it, the less I liked it. Murrison had gone in there. He'd gone, as far as I could tell, voluntarily. But he'd been injured. Now the house was dark. Maybe he'd called to see Willem on business of some sort, not knowing Willem himself wasn't there. But the kind of business Murrison would be mixed up in isn't conducted in the dark.

I'd been told not to go away from the house, but I hadn't been told not to go into it. The Jayvee always expects its ops to use a reasonable amount of initiative. If something had happened to Murrison it was my business to find out, now, not tomorrow, when it might be too late.

I walked half a block south, so I wouldn't be seen crossing over if anyone was watching from a window. I sneaked back between two houses and



climbed over the back fence. The moonlight was pretty bright in the yard and against the side of the house, but I took a chance that the neighborhood was asleep.

I crossed over and tried a couple of windows. They were locked, but I saw that the door at the side was fastened with an old lock that my maiden aunt could have picked with a hairpin. A minute later I was inside the house.

**I** STOOD listening for a minute. There wasn't a sound. I took out my vest-pocket flashlight and ran its beam around the room. It was a perfectly ordinary kitchen. I moved the flashlight over to my left hand. With my right on the butt of the gun, I tiptoed from room to room through the whole first floor. It was a plain house with plain furniture.

In the hallway there was one flight of steps leading to the cellar and another leading up. I hesitated. There had been no light in the cellar since I'd been on duty, but there had been one upstairs. If Murrison was being held against his will, that was where he'd be.

The steps were carpeted and they didn't creak. I drew a blank on the first bedroom I tried. The moment I eased open the door of the second, I heard the sound of breathing.

I'd turned off my flash before opening the door. Now I slid into the room and partly closed the door behind me. I could make out a bed, but that was all. I held my flashlight with my fingers masking the lens, so that only a faint, dim radiance would show through my fingers. I turned it on.

For a moment I felt foolish. Dim as the light was, I could see it was Mr. Murrison, sound asleep. There was a strip of adhesive tape across his forehead, where I'd seen the cut. A woman, also asleep, lay on the other side of the bed.

I snapped off the flash and started to retreat. Then I stopped. Murrison wouldn't have hired us for this.

And if not Murrison, who? The Jayvee Agency didn't handle marital relations cases and we certainly wouldn't have undertaken to run down our best client to enable his wife to divorce him. Without Murrison's business, the Jayvee would be out of existence when the first of the month rolled around.

There was another thing wrong with the picture, too. I'd got just a glimpse of the woman while the flashlight had been on. Her hair was coarse and stringy, the body under the covers fat and unwieldy. She fitted the description I'd been given of Mrs. Willem and that made less sense than ever.

Murrison's hands began moving against the covers. His head lifted off the pillow. He was awake. I couldn't get out of the house before he'd raise an alarm. My only chance of staying out of trouble was to identify myself before he yelled burglar. Then, if his being there was on the up and up—

I switched on the light again. He was leaning on one elbow. With his other hand he was snaking a revolver out from under his pillow.

"Drop it!" I snapped, holding my police positive forward in the light so he could see it. When he found out who I was, he wouldn't shoot, of course. But until I explained, I'd have to take advantage of having the drop. I spoke softly but swiftly, not wanting to awaken the woman. "Murrison, it's me, Harry Wilkins of Jayvee. I saw you come in here, hurt. When you didn't come out, I came in to see if you were all right."

I flipped the flashlight so its beam shone full up in my own face, then back again. His hand was still on that gun, even if it wasn't lifted, and I wasn't taking any chances.

"But what —" His voice was a hoarse whisper. He looked at me intently, dropped the revolver and swung his feet to the floor. "Come downstairs. I'll tell you about it.



Don't want to wake her."

I stepped back as he stood up, slid my gun into my coat pocket and kept my hand in there with it. With the flashlight I motioned him to lead the way.

Just outside the door he paused, as though trying to orient himself, or to decide where to take me. I remembered seeing, as I had come upstairs, that the switch for the hall light was right beside the door. I reached out quickly and flipped the switch. The hall light went on suddenly.

That quick hunch of mine had been right. The man in front of me wasn't Murrison!

His head was bald, as was Murrison's, but in that bright glare of light I could see that it was bald because it had been shaved. In his face there were minute differences that could have been covered by make-up. Fully awake and with his hat on, his resemblance to Murrison would have been practically perfect.

But I'd called him by Murrison's name. He'd told me to come downstairs and he'd explain. He'd pretended to know me when I'd told him who I was and flashed the light in my own face. I'd just begun to smell a rat when it jumped me from behind.

My gun was out in my hand. I must have jerked it from my pocket in that startled instant after I'd flicked on the light. Suddenly the arm that held the gun seemed to weigh a thousand pounds. The woman, Mrs. Willem, had all her weight on that arm, dragging it down.

The gun wasn't pointing at anything, yet. I tried to pull the trigger, just to make a noise. I didn't know what I'd walked into, but I'd be better off if some neighbor heard shots and called copper. I pulled hard. Nothing happened but a muffled squawk from Mrs. Willem. She had a finger inside the trigger guard, back of the trigger.

I saw the man's fist swinging up for my jaw. It was a roundhouse wallop

I could have ducked easily under ordinary circumstances. But having two hundred pounds of ungentele femininity dragging on one's right arm isn't ordinary circumstances.

I saw stars when that fist landed, but I'd turned my head and taken it on the side of the jaw instead of on the button. And I let go of the police positive, not having time to do anything else, and jerked my right arm free of Mrs. Willem.

I heard a door jerk open farther down the corridor. Another man came running. It was the short, heavy-set man who had opened the door for the man who looked like Murrison. Apparently he'd been sleeping in just the trousers of his pajamas. He was naked from the waist up and his muscles bulged like a wrestler's.

He came charging in without stopping to ask questions, his arms out. He looked strong enough to handle a dozen like me, but I didn't have time to think about that. Mrs. Willem was bringing up my revolver. I batted it out of her hand before she could aim. Then I started a swing at Murrison's double, knowing that whatever chance I had against the other guy depended on reducing the odds before he got there.

**H**E side-stepped and swung. We both missed. My momentum took me toward the railing by the staircase. An unexpected and unladylike kick from Mrs. Willem shot me through the railing.

I crashed to the hall below, but I gritted my teeth and hung onto the shreds of consciousness. I tried to move and couldn't. My right arm was doubled back under me. My legs didn't seem to move when I told them to. But I could still see and hear, though everything seemed to dance around strangely and the sounds came from a long way off.

"Karl!" yelled Mrs. Willem. "He was a detective, watching the house here? Then—"



"Tonight!" His voice, tight and clipped, didn't sound at all now like Roger Murrison's slow, friendly drawl. "We must do it tonight. Tomorrow this man will be missed. It will be too late. Gott!"

Something that I finally decided was Mrs. Willem's face was leaning out over the broken railing.

"Is he dead, Karl? Better go be sure."

"You go, Killer," Murrison's double growled. "Finish him. We get dressed."

I heard the heavy tread of bare feet coming down the stairs, a door slamming upstairs and drawers being pulled out hurriedly. A half-naked, hairy figure came obliquely into my range of vision. He didn't carry any weapons. With hands like those, he didn't need them. The man upstairs had called him "Killer," but had there been a touch of amused contempt in his voice?

The hands were reaching for my throat. My vocal cords were tight.

"Spy!" I snarled.

The hands touched my throat, but hesitated.

"Huh?" he said. "Where'd you get that?"

"They're spies," I blurted hopefully. "They're going to blow up the Murrison Powder Works tonight. They've been stringing you along to strong-arm for them."

His eyes glared. "You're a liar. It's a bank job."

"He was sent because he looks like Murrison. He and Willem—"

"You're nuts. That is Willem."

Again the hands reached for my throat. I saw a whole lot in an awfully short time. The man I'd seen leave in the coupé and the man I'd seen come back in the taxi had both been Willem. He'd had an accident in the coupé, lost the goatee and glasses he used as Willem and had to come back without them. He must have had the coupé towed in somewhere.

Murrison had learned that there was a new resident in town who, except for glasses and a goatee, looked enough like him to be his twin brother. And Murrison, with his usual thoroughness, had put us on Willem on the off-chance that the resemblance wasn't purely coincidental.

We'd run down a thousand off-chances like that for Roger Murrison. One thing about suspecting everybody and everything is that once in awhile you're right. And when you're running a place like Murrison's, you can't overlook even the long-odd bets.

"Wait!" I said.

"Haven't they ever talked in another language so you couldn't understand?"

IT was a silly argument, of course. Millions of people in the United States speak another language besides English, but I wasn't dealing with a keen analyst. He straightened up.

"I'll see. If you're lying—"

I didn't know what he was going to do, except that for the moment he wasn't going to strangle me. I heard him going up the stairs—just as Willem's door opened.

"Finish him off, Killer?" Willem asked. Again there was that faintly ironical twist to the pronunciation of the nickname.

"Sure. Say, do I get dressed and go along, or—"

He never finished the question. From the hallway above came three puffs of a silenced pistol. The thud of the falling body seemed to shake the house as Killer rolled down the stairs to within arm's-length of where I lay. The hair on his chest almost concealed the three round holes spaced two inches apart. He opened his mouth, but blood came out instead of words. He jerked convulsively, then stiffened.

I cursed myself bitterly. I'd found what could have been a way to get word to Murrison, and I'd let him get killed uselessly.



The Willems were hurrying to get ready and leave. I had only one ace in the hole. The thug had told them he'd killed me, so they thought I was dead. But they were so near right that I didn't know what good it was going to do me. I could move my left arm now, and that was all. My right arm, bent behind me, I knew was broken.

I had a vague notion that I'd probably been injured internally and was dying. What seemed worst of all—so hazy was my mind at that moment—was that I was going to die without getting the cigarette I'd been wanting for hours.

I had the cigarette, too, if I could only find a match.

Painfully I lifted my head and found that my neck still worked. I looked around, saw something that made me forget even that smoke. My legs weren't broken. When I'd fallen, I must have landed on a heavy sofa standing in the hall. I'd knocked it over and the whole weight of it lay across my legs, just above the knees.

Experimentally I flexed my toe and ankle muscles. It hurt, but they worked. I could move my knees only a millimeter or so, yet I could move them. It was only the weight of that heavy sofa that had made me think, before I'd looked, that my legs were useless.

Given time, I knew I could work my legs out from under it, or shove it off. But the Willems, I could tell from the sounds above, were nearly ready and that sofa would tip back with a crash.

"Hurry, Velma!" I heard Karl Willem call. "I'm ready!"

I knew there wasn't time for me to do anything but play dead. Then maybe I could phone the powder works in time to head them off.

I heard high heels click into the upstairs hallway. They'd be coming down in a moment. But what if Willem gave me a slug from that silenced pistol, just to be sure? Hastily I reached across with my good hand,

rubbed my fingers in the pool of fresh blood that had formed beside the body of the man they'd killed. I smeared it across my face and scalp.

THAT was all I had time to do before the footsteps started down the stairs. But it was enough. From the landing, Willem must have played a flashlight on my face. I heard a muttered "*Gott!*" Then the light, blinding even with my eyelids closed, moved away and the footsteps followed it.

They went toward the back of the house. I heard a low conversation about something that I judged was an incendiary bomb in the garage. Then the back door slammed.

When I sat up, my head throbbed so hard, I nearly lost consciousness. The pain in my right arm convinced me it was really broken. But I braced my good hand against the sofa and pushed, gritting my teeth against the pain. With the bulk of the weight off my legs, I wriggled them free. I stumbled to my feet and stood clutching the knob of the banister.

After a moment I opened my eyes again. My flashlight was lying on the stairs. Miraculously it still worked. Holding it in my left hand, I staggered through the house, hunting for the telephone.

My fruitless search ended in the kitchen and left me so discouraged that I leaned weakly against the wall. I knew I'd have to scare some neighbor half out of his wits by waking him up, and use his telephone. I didn't have the strength to do it, but whether I had the strength or not, it had to be done.

I pushed off from the wall, did some fancy footwork, found myself draped across the kitchen range and slid to the floor. My hand had instinctively clutched at something on the stove. It was a box of matches.

I tried to resist the temptation, but I was so dizzy that it didn't work. Maybe a puff or two of a cigarette would give me strength to get out of



that door. The fresh night air ought to do the rest.

I put the matchbox down carefully where I could find it again, got the package of cigarettes out of my pocket, pulled out a cigarette, put it between my lips and slipped the package into my pocket again. Then I groped for the matchbox, found it and clamped it between my knees while I slid it open.

It was empty!

I was so mad, I got up off that floor and walked right out of the door. I was mad enough to have walked through the wall, if the door hadn't been there.

I got down off the porch and took a step toward the house across the way, intending to wake them up by gently heaving a rock through the window. Then I heard a sound that made me freeze in my tracks.

A car was starting up in the garage behind the Willems' house. It had never occurred to me, while I'd been hunting for a phone and trying to light a cigarette, that maybe they hadn't left yet.

I remembered that fragment of conversation about "it" being in the garage. If "it" was, as I guessed, an incendiary bomb, then it hadn't been quite finished. While I'd staggered around the house, Karl Willem had put the finishing touches on whatever he intended to take into the powder works under cover of his resemblance to Murrison.

**I** DARTED back, crouched by the porch steps as the car rolled slowly around the curve in the narrow driveway. It wasn't going over five miles an hour when it passed me. There was an empty luggage rack that stuck out beyond the spare tire. I wondered swiftly whether I should stay behind and head them off by phone. Climbing on seemed better.

I hooked my good arm through the spare, got a death-grip on the front of my own coat lapels with my left hand.

We hadn't gone a block before I realized what a fool I'd been to try it. I didn't fall off, but I bounced around with a broken wing and an assortment of bruises. There are several gaps in my recollection of that ride. I think I must have fainted from the pain, but I hung on, anyhow.

We took a roundabout way, probably because they had not fully talked out their plans for the getaway and they wanted that settled first. My barging into the house had forced their hand before they were ready.

We pulled in at a little all-night gas station at the edge of town.

"Fill it up," I heard Willem say.

When the attendant came around the back of the car, I was ready for him. There wasn't enough light for him to see the blood I'd smeared on my face, or he might have yelled. I clapped my hand over his mouth, whispered who I was. Then I released him and flashed my badge, motioning him to start working.

"They're going to blow up Murrison Works," I explained as he unscrewed the gas tank cap with shaky hands. "Another Black Tom. Phone the cops the second we pull out. Then call John Varney of Jayvee Detective Agency and Roger Murrison. But get the cops first."

I thought he had it all, but I couldn't be sure. I had to risk it and stay with the car in case we got there before the cops did, as we probably would. Though what I could do, one-handed and without a weapon, I didn't know.

He hooked the nozzle back on the gas pump and came back to screw down the cap. His face looked white. I hoped Willem wouldn't notice it.

"Got a gun here?" I whispered.

He shook his head, then slipped a wrench out of his overall pocket and handed it to me. It was comfortably heavy. I slid it quickly into my own pocket, hooked my arm through the spare and got ready for more agony when the car started again.

That wrench was comforting in



more ways than one. His giving it to me showed that he'd taken my badge at face value and accepted my story. He'd call the cops the minute we went on.

The car slid out into the road. Willem still drove slowly. I could hear him and the woman talking heatedly. But slow or fast, we weren't doing any more undecided driving. We were heading directly for the Murrison plant.

**F**IFTEEN minutes later we were riding along the barbed wire fence that marked its boundaries, then slowing down for the main gate. Slowing down was all. We didn't stop.

An armed guard stood on either side of that gate, but they'd think it was Roger Murrison in the car. As we turned in the drive, I heard Willem call out something about being in a hurry. "Okay, Boss," I heard one of them sing out.

Then we were through the gate and driving back toward the group of buildings where the explosives were made. We must have been about twenty yards back from the gate when one of the guards saw me on the back. He shouted and fired his pistol over the car, as a signal to the man he thought was Murrison to stop.

But Willem, of course, didn't know I was hitching a ride, so he didn't guess why the guard had fired that shot and why both of them had left their posts at the gate and were running back toward him. Naturally he doped it out wrong. He could have kept the car rolling, but he probably thought they'd shoot a tire and stop him, anyway.

No matter how he figured, he jammed on the brakes. A second later I heard a *ping* and there was a little round hole in the back window of the car, over my head. One of the running guards stumbled and then fell headlong.

The other one must have thought the bullet came from me, for he

stopped short, sighted his pistol carefully in my direction. Then there was another *ping* from inside the car. The pistol dropped from his hand and he grabbed at his arm. I saw the startled look on his face. He'd been sighting on me and knew I hadn't fired that shot.

Willem, not knowing I was there, couldn't have realized that his marksmanship had saved my life. He'd stalled the motor in stopping so suddenly. I heard him step on the starter. As he did, I heard the welcome wail of police sirens. I didn't know whether I really had, or it was a hallucination from wishful thinking, and a touch of delirium.

But Willem heard them, too. I heard him curse when the stalled engine didn't respond right away. We were perhaps a hundred yards from the building. I heard him jerk the door of the car open, shout excitedly to the woman to start the car and turn around while he took "it" over and threw it through a window.

My heel was wedged tightly between the bars of the luggage carrier. It took me seconds to pull it loose. When I got around the corner of the car, Willem was almost halfway to the building. He carried a black valise which, from the way he handled it, must have been quite heavy. But despite its weight, he was running.

I yelled and started after him. He was armed and I wasn't, but I knew that somehow I had to stop him from reaching that building. I'd been in there and knew what it contained. A fire in there meant millions. It also meant a staggering loss to my country in terms of delay, which couldn't be measured in money at all.

**T**HE sirens were swinging nearer, shrilling through the night, but they'd be too late. I had to stop Willem. Even at the cost of my life, I had to gain the precious seconds that would enable help to get here in time.

(Continued on page 103)



# MOULAGE

By ARTHUR J. BURKS

*The First Money Was Hot but the Second Batch Was—Bloody*

**F**OR weeks Jake Darter had been like an animal, hiding in the thicket near the old man's shack. He had come out at night to steal food from cars in the freight yard, and to find out just what was going on in the world—and to curse himself when he found out.

That bank-knockover job had been well done, no doubt about that. But his usual bad luck had stayed with him. He'd picked up new money, and they had the numbers of the bills. He couldn't spend it anywhere, not for years, maybe. And there were forty thousand dollars' worth of it. If he could get away to Chicago and make the right connections he might get two thousand dollars for it. But Chicago was a thousand miles away. It might as well be a million.

So, he couldn't spend the money, he couldn't replace those tell-tale shoes of his, and he couldn't very well go barefoot—not at his age. And if they ever caught him with these shoes on!

Yes, he'd left a footprint in a muddy place near the curb when he'd run out of the bank. He'd known about moulage, and that footprints could be checked on as well as fingerprints. But he hadn't noticed that film of silt, left by a recent rain, when he'd gone into the bank. Hadn't given it a thought when he'd run out, got into

the stolen car, and got away with the money. He'd left the car and doubled back in his tracks, keeping to the hard concrete of the road.

Then he had gone into the woods to hole up. He had grinned when he had first read the newspaper account about the fellow who had sworn he had been held up by the bandit and forced at pistol's point to take him a hundred miles away from Janisville. Jake Darter hadn't held up anybody. He had just crawled into the brush and hidden, like a sick animal. And he had held onto his hot money for dear life. He hadn't killed anybody to get it, but he had a record and they'd give him life, anyway.

But not if he

could really get away.

And he had that figured out, too. This old man in the shack in the clearing, at the edge of the lake. The old guy was a miser. He hid his dough under the floor of his shack. He took it out every night and riffled it through his fingers. Had some jewels, too. And he started at every sound, and clutched at his money as though it had been his heart's blood, which maybe it was.

Jake Darter knew, because he had looked through the window one night and seen him playing with the money and the jewels. But Jake hadn't been interested then. That was before he





knew the dough he had stolen was listed, and the police had a cast of his right foot.

He'd simply slunk down to the shack to see if there were any food to be had.

But when he saw the miser he knew there wasn't. The old man starved himself to save his money. Darter didn't know how he got the money, and he didn't really care.

Darter knew all about the series numbers and the moulage, for he had managed every night to get the local newspaper. Someone threw it into the trash cans at the end of the street-car line. He'd seen the enlarged photograph of the moulage. Also his last picture, taken when he had been in stir.

Tonight, he decided, would be a good night for it. The sky looked threatening. If he knew anything about weather there would be plenty of rain and it wouldn't be a nice night to be out in the weather. But rain would wash out footprints. He was, he realized, getting an obsession about footprints.

Darkness came, with flurries of wind, rattling the leaves. Jake Darter had made up his mind to get the old man's dough and get away to some big city where he could handle the hot money, and have something to live on while he was at it. There wasn't much that the old miser had—probably not more than a couple of grand, at the outside. And the jewels were likely family heirlooms that weren't worth anything.

One nice thing about it, nobody ever came to see the old guy—nobody. And if he had any friends he didn't go to see them, either. The set-up was perfect. Maybe it would be a week before—but no, the old man would probably go for the cops right away. He wouldn't telephone, for he didn't have a telephone.

Darkness came down, and Jake Darter set out for the shack. Rain was beginning to fall, and the wind had

risen almost to the intensity of a gale. It would be soft tonight. There'd be nobody around, anywhere. People would stick close to their homes.

The light was on in the old shack. Bentham Rice, the faded letters said on the mail-box at the end of the trail, though he doubted if the old man ever got any mail. He'd never seen him even look in the box.

Jake Darter didn't have a knife or a pistol. But of course he could handle an old man easily. It would be a cinch.

**I**T WAS pouring down rain when Jake Darter reached the shack. He would have to fix it so he could spend the night in the shack. The old gent could stand being tied up that long. And Jake Darter wouldn't be spending the whole night out in the rain. He circled one end of the lake, and wondered as he did so why Bentham Rice had built his shack practically on the beach.

He looked through the window. The old man had his dough out of the hole in the floor. His face was a grinning, bewhiskered mask. He looked like a nut of some sort. And his lips moved, as though he were talking to himself.

Jake Darter didn't see any sense in wasting time. He shoved the door open and went in, kicking it shut behind him. The rain came down harder. It literally roared on the shingled roof, as though it had just waited for him to get inside.

"Never mind putting the dough back in the hole, Pop," said Jake Darter. "I'm going to borrow it. I may even pay you interest!"

That was a good joke, but the old man didn't see it. The old man, he was sure, never went anywhere, so it made a cold chill run down his spine when the old man spoke in a kind of whistling, frightened voice.

"Jake Darter! The man they're lookin' fer! And gittin' set to murder *me*! Well, go right ahead and



murder, Jake Darter! I'd rather be dead than lose the money I've spent my life slavin' fer! Didn't ya git enough outa Janisville County Bank?"

"Yeah, Pop, but it's hot money." Jake felt better. After all, it didn't really matter that the old man knew.

Jake felt he must have realized from the beginning that he was going to have to kill the old codger to get away with this. He had accepted it now as inevitable. And old Bentham Rice gave him no choice, practically. He flung the canvas sack with the money and jewels in it, back down the hole. He was surprisingly fast in his movements. He grabbed up a poker in his hand and rushed Darter.

"No hoodlum is going to rob *me*, Jake Darter!" he screamed. "I've slaved too many years!"

The old man swung the poker. Jake Darter ducked, but the old man had good coordination. Even as Jake ducked, he shifted the arc of the blow with the poker, and it struck Jake Darter alongside the head. Jake saw stars. A cold, savage anger burned in him. He caught the poker in his big right fist and yanked it away from Rice. It slipped from his own hand and flew through the dirty window. The sound of the rain and wind came in, louder than before.

The old man attacked him frenziedly with fists and feet and teeth. Jake Darter, blood streaming down his neck where the poker had broken the skin, tried to reason with him.

"Take it easy, Pop! I'll give you twice the amount in hot money. The bank will fix you up, sure."

"Won't do it! You mean to kill me! I can see it in your eyes!"

**H**IS nails were scoring Jake Darter's face, ripping, tearing. Jake drove a left to the old man's nose. Rice went skittering back, trying to get his heels on the floor, and came up hard against the far wall. For a moment it looked as though he were

out. But Darter hadn't got the money bag out of the hole before the old man was right back at him.

Jake noticed that water was seeping into the hole where the sack was. The money would get wet if left in there. He tossed it into a corner as the old man came on. The old guy wasn't much more than half Darter's size, but he was surprisingly strong. He tried for Jake's eyes with his thumbs. He got his heel behind Darter's knee and spilled him.

Mad clear through, Jake slugged him again, harder this time, with a left and a savage right. The old man, seeing the blows coming, got his hands about Darter's neck and hung on. And Darter couldn't shake or slug him loose. He tried, savage, drumming blows. The old man's ribs were like a washboard, and they gave with every blow of Darter's fists.

Darter's eyes began to dim. Of course, it may have been the kerosene lamp. Realizing he couldn't break the old man's desperate grasp on his neck, Jake shot his own hands to Rice's neck, locked his fingers behind the old fellow's head, and started squeezing. But Rice didn't let go, not yet. Instead he seemed to clutch even tighter. Darter began to shake the thin old body, like a terrier shaking a rat.

Still the frail body hung. Darter concentrated on choking, choking, until the old man should simply fold up, go limp. He tightened his grip, kept on shaking—and wondering why the light should keep on getting dim. Probably the old guy didn't put more than enough kerosene in it to keep the wick wet. And then, the light went out entirely, and things got pretty hazy for Jake Darter. So hazy that he didn't know even that he kept right on squeezing and shaking.

When Jake Darter regained consciousness the roaring of the rain was of cloudburst proportions. It hammered on the roof, a deluge. The wind shrieked about the eaves. And the skin of the old man's neck, still



tightly gripped in his two hands, was cold. It was difficult for Darter to release his stiffened fingers from about the scrawny neck.

He got up in the dark, fumbled in his own pocket for his waterproof matchbox. He could hear water, incidentally, gurgling under the floor of the shack.

He lighted the lamp. It flickered and smoked, but when he found a small kerosene can, its spout stopped by a potato jammed over the end, he filled the lamp, and the light burned higher. No need worry about light through the windows. A man a dozen feet away couldn't see the light through the rain. Perfect weather for a getaway.

**J**AKE DARTER looked down at the old man's face, holding the lamp so that the light was right on him. The old boy was grinning, as though the last thing he had done in life was to chuckle over some joke—some joke on Jake Darter. Jake got the money and counted it. Five grand, a lot more than he had expected. Good, usable money. He wouldn't get that much out of his hot dough.

The stones were small diamonds, he thought, though he didn't know much about rocks. If he were smart he'd throw away the hot stuff, and go on with what he had now.

But he didn't. He'd already robbed, and he might as well get what he could out of it. Whatever it was, added to the old man's cash and stones, he could keep going for a long time on it. Give people time to forget about that moulage business, that footprint he had left in front of the bank.

He opened the door, cupping the top of the chimney with his left hand. The wind almost blew him backward across the floor. The lamp almost went out. But he had seen enough. Black water swirled about the house. The house was up on rocks, but the water must be within a couple of

inches of the floor. It looked as though the night itself were one big lake.

Of course the water wouldn't be deep, and he could wade through it. But could he? He knew this territory, these lowlands. With water over it, that ground in front of the door would be quicksand. He'd sink out of sight if it grabbed him. He didn't dare risk it.

He shut the door, went to the other side of the house, held the lamp high and looked out the window. Back water there, too. Moreover, the shack was jittering a bit, as though the ground under it were being eaten away. Not that that would matter much. The floorboards were solid enough. Even atop quicksand they would stay up, hold him safe.

But he couldn't go out—not until the rain stopped and the water from the lake went down. That shouldn't be long. It had a good outlet, and when the rain stopped the lake would drain fast enough.

Save for personal discomfort—and he had found himself able to stand a lot of that, these last few weeks—he could wait until the coast was clear. He couldn't leave, but by the same token nobody could come to him.

Meantime, he could start figuring things out. He took a look at the old man's shoes. If he could exchange . . . but no sooner had he looked than he knew it useless. The old man had small feet. Nothing here to help him. He had to stick to his own shoes. He blew out the light and sat down in the only chair. He wasn't very nervous, but there was no sense in looking at the white-whiskered face of the man he had killed unless it were necessary.

**T**HEY'D be after him, the law would, when Rice was found. But who would they be after? They already had figured Jake Darter a thousand miles away from here. He could travel a mere fifty miles away and be



safe as in a church. With five grand to use until he could fence the hot money.

The hot money! He took that out of his clothes and riffled it in the dark. It felt good. He could take his time while he spent the five grand. Chances were nobody in the world knew that Bentham Rice had all that money. There'd be no description of *Rice's* dough broadcast. Cops and dicks had to know about money and sparklers

The creaking of the chair was dismal. Then water began falling somewhere else, with a sound that made him think it must be hitting Bentham Rice in the face.

Hours it went on. There was something monotonous about the rain, something soporific. But the trembling of the house and the swirling of black water about the foundations kept him awake a long time. But the wind and the rain spelled safety

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before they could send out descriptions.

Everything was going to work out all right. His conscience didn't bother him in the least. After all hadn't the old man attacked *him*?

Gosh, how the rain hammered. It smashed against roof and the surface of the lake—the lake was all around the house now—making a terrific racket. Water leaked through the roof and spattered on the floor. Warm rain went down the back of his neck, and he moved away from the leak.

for Jake Darter while they lasted. So, he slept.

He slept hard. Maybe he wouldn't have if he hadn't slept so badly for the last week or two, on the ground, or on pine needles, when every sound had snapped him awake.

It was the cessation of the rain that wakened him. And it was still dark. But he began to get himself together. Made sure of the money. He listened for sounds of water. None gurgled about the shack now. The lake's draining stream was tak-



ing off the surplus fast enough. It would soon be time to go.

Had he left any fingerprints anywhere? He was sure he hadn't, except maybe on the old man's neck, but he had squeezed him with his fingers outside the shirt collar. The canvas bag wouldn't retain prints. The poker had gone out the window, had probably sunk through to China by now.

**A**LL he had to do was wait until dawn began to come through the sky from the east. Then he'd be on his way, through the woods and across roads, traveling fast to get far enough away that he could take a chance on showing himself, and with money enough that he wouldn't have to touch the hot stuff.

He could scarcely wait. Now that it was time for him to be going he realized how tough it had really been, even while sleeping, to be spending time there with the man he had killed. He'd probably feel, for a few weeks, as though Bentham Rice were chasing him, calling for the cops with every step, trying to give him up to justice.

Lighter and lighter the world became. He could now see the face of the murdered man, there on the floor. Jake Darter opened the door when he could see the lake, and that the shore of it was now fifteen or twenty feet away. Then a horrible realization dawned on him.

For a long time he stared out, his heart turned to stone. Far away he could hear voices of people coming this way. Not that it mattered when they caught him, so it might as well

be now or a year from now. For catch him they certainly would!

Fury at the trick fate had played on him made him a little crazy. He cursed as he scattered the hot money all over the murder room, throwing it wildly everywhere. Some of it fell on the old man's face. Rice seemed to be peering at him, with horrible coquetry, from below a ten-dollar bill—one of those ten dollar bills with the publicized serial number.

What had happened was something he should have foreseen. Anybody should have foreseen it. Especially after what had already happened to him—the moulage of that one footprint.

He was trapped!

Time had nothing to do with it. The sun coming up, drying the ground, would merely set the evidence as solid as concrete. Sooner or later they would find him.

He couldn't throw his shoes away. They'd find them if he left them in the shack, or in the hole whence the money had come. If he went barefoot they'd run him down through the first person who saw him barefoot.

He read his own doom just outside, all around the shack. No matter what he did, he doomed himself with the first step he took. And yet, there was nothing outside, really, that he hadn't expected to see.

*Except, all around the shack, and extending out from it for many yards, there was a two-inch layer of silt, as though spread there for the sole purpose of recording the footprints of a murderer whose right foot was, in moulage, part of his police record!*

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**HENRY S. LEWIS**

*Dave Palmer Worked  
for the Law—but He Had  
to Break a Law When  
His Life Was at Stake!*



DAVE PALMER

**I** FOUND myself a seat at the bar, parked my cigar in an ash-tray and ordered a Scotch and soda.

I was sitting there sipping my drink when I noticed a lean, gangling fellow, who had followed me into the tavern. He'd taken the seat next to mine. There was an odd look on his face, and he seemed to be sniffing at something. Presently he got around to what was on his mind.

"Pardon me, pal. Ain't you Mr. Dave Palmer, of the D. A.'s office?"

I looked the fellow up and down. I didn't particularly care for his close-set eyes, the unhealthy pallor of his face.

"That's right," I told him. "Anything I can do for you?"

He began to grin, slowly. His lips turned up at the corners—in a sneer, I thought. But he saw the sudden question in my eyes and broke into a humorless laugh.

"You sure can, Mr. Palmer. You sure can."

He edged closer to me. His harsh voice dropped to a whisper. We were seated at the end of the bar, near the door. His right hand was in his coat pocket, and I detected a suspicious bulge.

"That's right, 'pal," the pale man smirked. "I've got a gun aimed at your guts. A thirty-caliber pistol—

with a silencer. You don't remember me, eh? But I never forgot you!

"You've grown a little stouter in eight years. You wear better clothes. But you're still the Dave Palmer that sent me up the river!"

I remembered then, as my heart began to pound. This was Roy Sherman, a nasty little punk from the East Side, a gangsters' errand boy who'd been arrested eight years before on a robbery charge.

The evidence hadn't been too strong. But I'd looked into his record, made a thorough investigation. It was one of my first prosecution cases, and I didn't mean to lose it.

I'd had Sherman sent up for twelve years. Thinking back now, I remembered the way he'd cursed me out in open court when sentence was pronounced.

"You can't get away with this!" he'd shouted. "I'll get even with you!"

All of that seemed ages ago. Now here he was again. Sweat came out on my forehead, and I glanced about covertly for help.

"No funny stuff, pal! Or I'll let you have it, right here. Come on—let's scram!"

In a daze, I left a bill on the bar



and went out the door, Sherman directly behind. He nudged me hard with the gun, and I had to fall into step beside him.

"Eight years, I've been waitin' for this day!" he snarled. "I finally got out last week, for good behavior. So now we have a little date, pal. I bought a car—it's parked up in the Bronx. Then I took the subway into town, and waited for you outside your building.

"I wasn't dead certain it was you, pal, until I smelled that punk cigar in the saloon. That's your trademark all over. You smoked it eight years ago, you smoke it today. It smells!"

**I** FORCED a short laugh, but inside I was hot with apprehension. Humor this killer, I told myself. Play along with him. He's got a silenced gun, and he'll use it. Play the game his way—and maybe you'll find an out.

"You're the second guy tonight who's made cracks about my cigars," I said. "A boy as smart as you should be more original."

That tickled his ego. He broke into a crooked grin, as he prodded me toward the Eighth Avenue subway, several blocks west.

"You're not such a bad guy after all, Palmer," he smirked. "Maybe I'll let you off easy. Maybe I'll just blow your brains out after we get up to Westchester."

He meant it, too—every word. My brain was racing with frantic plans, as we got on the Bronx subway. My brows must have knit in concentration, for Sherman's voice rasped suddenly in my ears.

"Don't think so hard, pal. You're a gone goose. One break from you, and I squeeze the trigger! Just one break!"

That was the second time he'd said *that*. I sat frozen in my seat, sweating, fighting the fear within me, forcing my wits to get to work.

And all at once, as my eyes swept up and down the car, I had the answer. There was a sign on the opposite window. I glanced at it for the smallest moment, and then I prayed. It was a desperate gag, but—it might work!

When the train reached the Bronx and braked to a halt, I reached for my cigar and stuck it in my mouth.

"That smelly thing!" Sherman glared at me.

"Aw, come on! Be a sport," I kidded, heart in my mouth.

We left the train, and I forced myself to halt and light up. Then anxiously, as casually as possible, I raised my eyes. No, it wouldn't work. It was too much in the laps of the gods. No luck.

There he was—a cop, buying a paper at the platform newsstand. He turned around as Sherman forced me over toward an exit. The cop's eyes grew round. He came striding up almost instantly.

"No smoking in the subway!" he barked. "Can't you read?"

"Nuts!" I said it very slowly, very deliberately—and with a fervent prayer.

"Oh—wise guy, eh?" The cop grew red in the face and laid a heavy hand on my arm. "You come along to the station!"

This was it! Desperately I shook his grip free, whirled on the open-mouthed, astounded Sherman and let him have it, flush on the jaw.

He went down like a pole-axed steer, his trigger finger contracting with reflex action. There was a muffled *click!* and a bullet sliced the policeman's trouser cuff.

"What the—!" he yelled, jumping back.

I bent down, yanked the pistol from the little punk's pocket and handed it to the cop.

"Okay," I said. I took out my handkerchief, mopped my steaming brow. "Let's *all* go to the station. That's the only place I'll feel safe tonight!"



## WHERE THERE'S SMOKE

(Continued from page 94)

I shouted again and ran, pulling the wrench out of my pocket. I was too far to use it even as a missile, especially with my left arm. I figured, though, that at that distance he'd take it for a gun and stop to shoot it out with me.

The sirens were swinging in at the gateway. I saw him jerk his head around and look back over his shoulder. I stopped short and leveled the wrench, as though it were a pistol.

He whipped up his own gun and tried to fire back at me without stopping. It was a fatal error. He stumbled and went down. I saw him swing the black valise upward, trying to shield its fall with his own body. But it slipped from his grasp and thudded against the hard-packed ground two yards from where he had fallen.

I staggered backward, dropping the wrench to shield my eyes from the fountain of white-hot fire that sprang up as the valise struck. Bits of in-

candescent metal geysered into the air. Some fell just short of where I stood, which meant that, since he'd been less than halfway between me and the building, the munitions plant was safe.

I heard the skidding tires of automobiles. Headlights bracketed me as I turned to face away from that fury of heat and fire. The bomb was burning fiercely when the cops and guards ran up.

Then things must have caught up with me. The next thing I knew, I was lying flat on the ground, staring up into a ring of faces that were looking down.

I must have been out for quite some time. The incendiary bomb wasn't blazing any more and there was a fire apparatus spraying the side of the main building. But the men were working leisurely, so obviously the danger was over.

I recognized my boss, John Varney,  
[Turn page]

# PROVES MAN IS GOD

A strange method of mind and body control, that leads to immense powers never before experienced, is announced by Edwin J. Dingle, F.R.G.S., well-known explorer and geographer. It is said to bring about almost unbelievable improvement in power of mind. Many report improvement in health. Others acquire superb bodily strength, secure better positions, turn failure into success. Often, with surprising speed, talents, ability and a more magnetic personality are developed.

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and the real Roger Murrison. Varney was talking and slowly his words began to register.

"That was swell work, Harry. Don't try to talk yet. We can get the story later. The ambulance is coming. That busted arm gets you a three months' vacation, son."

"Vacation?" Murrison cut in. "It gets him anything he wants. Just name it, Wilkins, now or when you're feeling better."

I remembered then. I got my left hand into my pocket and brought out the pack of cigarettes. There was one left. I put it between my lips.

"Mr. Murrison," I said, "I'll settle right now for a match."

NEXT ISSUE'S NOVEL

## THE BLACK BAT'S BATTLE



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# OFF THE RECORD

## A DEPARTMENT FOR READERS

**F**OR years Tony Quinn, known to a few of his friends as the Black Bat, has been fighting crime in all its forms. Crooks and gangsters have learned to fear his very name, and the more superstitious among them are inclined to credit him with supernatural powers.

With the United States in the World War, it was only natural that Quinn should feel the urge to put his powers to work for his country. But since everyone thought him blind, he could not volunteer his own services. So it was that the Black Bat entered the war against enemy espionage and saboteurs.

### Greater Than Crime

And the Black Bat was fighting something greater than crime. He was fighting men who sought to dominate the world. Ruthless, murdering hordes of shouting, heiling robots who were sent to their deaths so that others might live and conquer. Tony Quinn, alias the Black Bat, swore it would be a fight to the finish.

Months after the treacherous attack on Pearl Harbor had plunged this country into war, the law-enforcement authorities were puzzled. They *knew* that hundreds—possibly even thousands—of enemy agents were in the country, working cleverly and tirelessly to bring about our ruin. Yet

[Turn page]

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nothing had happened—nothing big—and that fact interested the law—and the Black Bat.

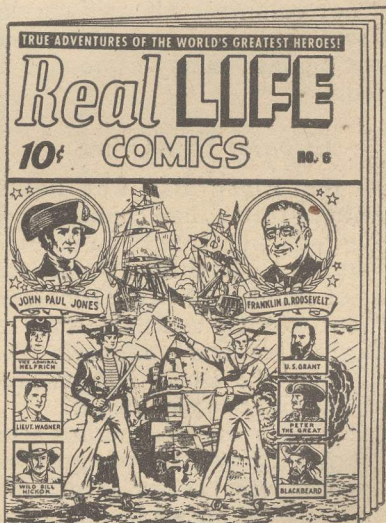
What was the enemy waiting for? What were the really big shots in his organization doing? There had been many minor bits of sabotage, but nothing worthy of the fiendish resources of the men who *must be* in the country—men whose only desire it was to strike a powerful blow for the lunatic of Berlin.

Tony Quinn knew there was an answer, somewhere—an answer that it was vital for America to discover. With his three trusted allies—Carol Baldwin, Silk Kirby, and Butch O'Leary—the Black Bat set himself the task of finding it.

## A Mighty Battle

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It is the greatest battle of his career. He fights for a great cause and is pitted against a ruthless, cunning enemy whose slimy scheming taxes even the Bat's uncanny powers. But with the entire future of his country at stake, Tony Quinn fights on.

We don't want to spoil the story for you by telling you just what happens. But if you have enjoyed other stories of the Black Bat and his three friends we know that you will agree with us when we say that this is the best of them all.

Remember — **THE NAZI SPY MURDERS** in the next issue of **BLACK BOOK DETECTIVE!**

In the same issue, of course, there will be the usual fine selection of fast-action short stories.

### The Mailbag

We want to thank all you readers who have sent us so many fine letters  
[Turn page]

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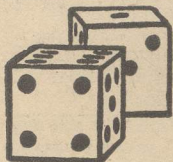


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since our last get-together. As we've said before, getting your opinions on the stories that appear in **BLACK BOOK DETECTIVE** helps a lot in our job of giving you the kind of magazine you want. Here's hoping that we continue to hear from you. Address your letters to The Editor, **BLACK BOOK DETECTIVE**, 10 East 40th Street, New York, N. Y.

Obviously, we can't print all the letters we receive. But we try to pick a few representative missives to publish in every issue.

Here's one from Leonard E. Holley, of Draper, N. C.:

I live in a peaceful neighborhood, but but when I bring home the latest issue of **BLACK BOOK DETECTIVE** there's a regular Blitzkrieg over who is going to read it first. After a hard fight, I usually turn out to be the victor and get first crack at reading about the Black Bat's hair-raising, blood-tingling adventures.

I think **THE BLACKOUT MURDERS** was the best of all the Black Bat's adventures so far. I couldn't put the book down until all the words of that great story disappeared before my eyes. Keep up the good work and make the stories more exciting than ever. That's what I like!

Thanks a lot for these kind words, Leonard. We thought **THE BLACK-**



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OUT MURDERS was a darned good story, too.

And here is one from Carl Sander-son, of Great Falls, Minnesota:

I have just finished THE FACELESS SATAN in the July issue. Believe me, that was one of the best Black Bat stories you have ever published. There was plenty of action in it, but what is more important there was a real mystery, too. It sure had me guessing, and was I surprised at the end.

I'll sure be looking forward to THE MURDER PROPHET which you say will appear in the next issue. From now on, Mr. Editor, you can count on me as a steady reader and a real Black Bat fan.

The Faceless Satan story, published some time ago, proved popular with most of our readers—but here's a dis-senting voice, that of Daniel Curwood, of Trenton, N. J.:

Sorry, but I do not think THE FACE-LESS SATAN, by G. Wayman Jones, was quite up to standard.

The Faceless Satan himself was implau-sible enough. But when the Black Bat began running around in the nightmare costume of his, seeing perfectly in the dark and all that sort of stuff, I was really fed up.

I like good detective stories and I don't object to a bit of wildness in the plots, now and then. But why not keep them

[Turn page]

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somewhere near the realm of possibility? THE FACELESS SATAN went beyond bounds.

The short stories in your July issue weren't bad. I believe you should print more of them every issue.

Sorry, Curwood. Here's hoping the current story pleases you!

Now, a note that takes authors to task for committing errors of grammar. Unfortunately, the writer himself is guilty of a slight error, too. He completely forgot, or deliberately refused, to sign his name.

It would seem that writers should know English well before daring to put forward their clumsy efforts. A study of elementary grammar would be good for most of them.

For instance one of the common errors is their use of "the other alternative" or "he faced two alternatives" and "the terrible alternative." An alternative is one of two, as every writer should know.

To which we are tempted to add: Of course. Why not? An alternative is one of two, and one or both may be terrible. Or are we crazy? Anyway, we wish the writer of that letter had chosen the alternative of signing his name.

We have just about time enough for one more, this time, so let's see what Paul Evans, of Los Angeles, Calif., has to say:

I am working in a war factory and have a long ride on the train twice a day. I

(Concluded on page 112)

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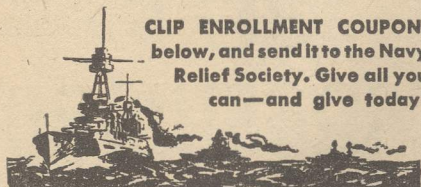
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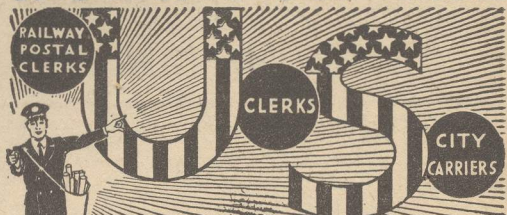
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## OFF THE RECORD

(Concluded from page 110)

read the newspapers at home, so on the train I concentrate on detective stories. I guess I have read about every one on the newsstands, and you probably know how many there are. Well, after trying them all, I still think that your BLACK BOOK DETECTIVE is tops. There is something about Tony Quinn, the Black Bat, that sets him apart from the other characters of the same type. He is different, somehow.

His friends are a good bunch too. Like Silk and Butch, but Carol Baldwin is my idea of a real girl. I only wish that they would have more to do in the stories. Carol and Silk, working together, would be almost as smart as the Black Bat. Butch isn't very smart, but he sure can fight. I like it when he bumps heads together. That sure is his specialty.

I'm looking forward to the next issue and have told my newsstand man to save me a copy. He says it goes fast.

Before we say so long until next time, we want to remind you again to keep on buying United States War Savings Stamps and Bonds. Buy as many as you can—and then a few more just to make it stick.

We'll be seeing you next issue.

—THE EDITOR.

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Those who graduate successfully, be they civilians or Army men, will be given at least staff sergeant's rating with full flight pay. And, as it is a new service, commissions are going to come more easily than in other services at least until officer ranks are filled.

As we just said, it's a man's job and a great privilege—a chance to get in the first whacks at the Axis—and the rewards are great. Let's go, fellows. Keep 'em gliding!

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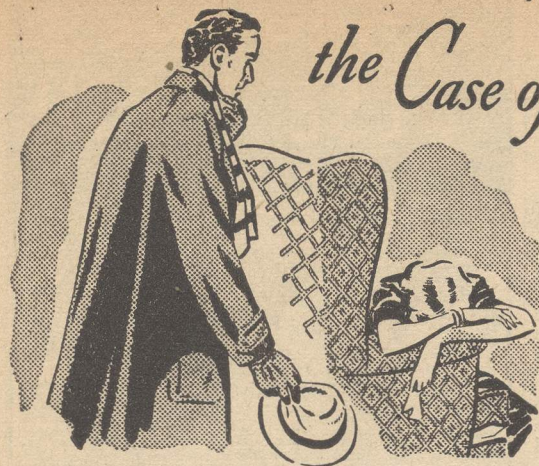
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# the Case of the Crying Wife



1 Ann doesn't cry easily—but that night I found her in tears! "I can't help it," she sobbed. "All the things we were going to do—buy a car, build a home—remember? And here we are—married three years, and just barely making ends meet! I thought our dreams might come true—but it's no use." I made up my mind right then to "have it out" with the boss.



2 "Look here!" he said. "I can't pay you more unless you're worth more! And frankly, John, you lack the training a bigger job needs. Ever hear of the International Correspondence Schools?"



3 When I learned the boss was a former I.C.S. student, I signed up quick! And what a difference it made in my work! I'd never realized until then how little I knew about the business.



4 I'm happy, and Ann's happy, and I guess the boss is happy. (At least I've had two "raises" in the last year!) And here's the very same coupon that I mailed, staring you in the face!

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