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SUMMER
ISSUE

A *New*
BLACK
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MYSTERY
NOVEL
EVERY ISSUE!

A THRILLING
PUBLICATION



Death FOR CHARITY

A Complete Black Bat Mystery Novel
By G. WAYMAN JONES

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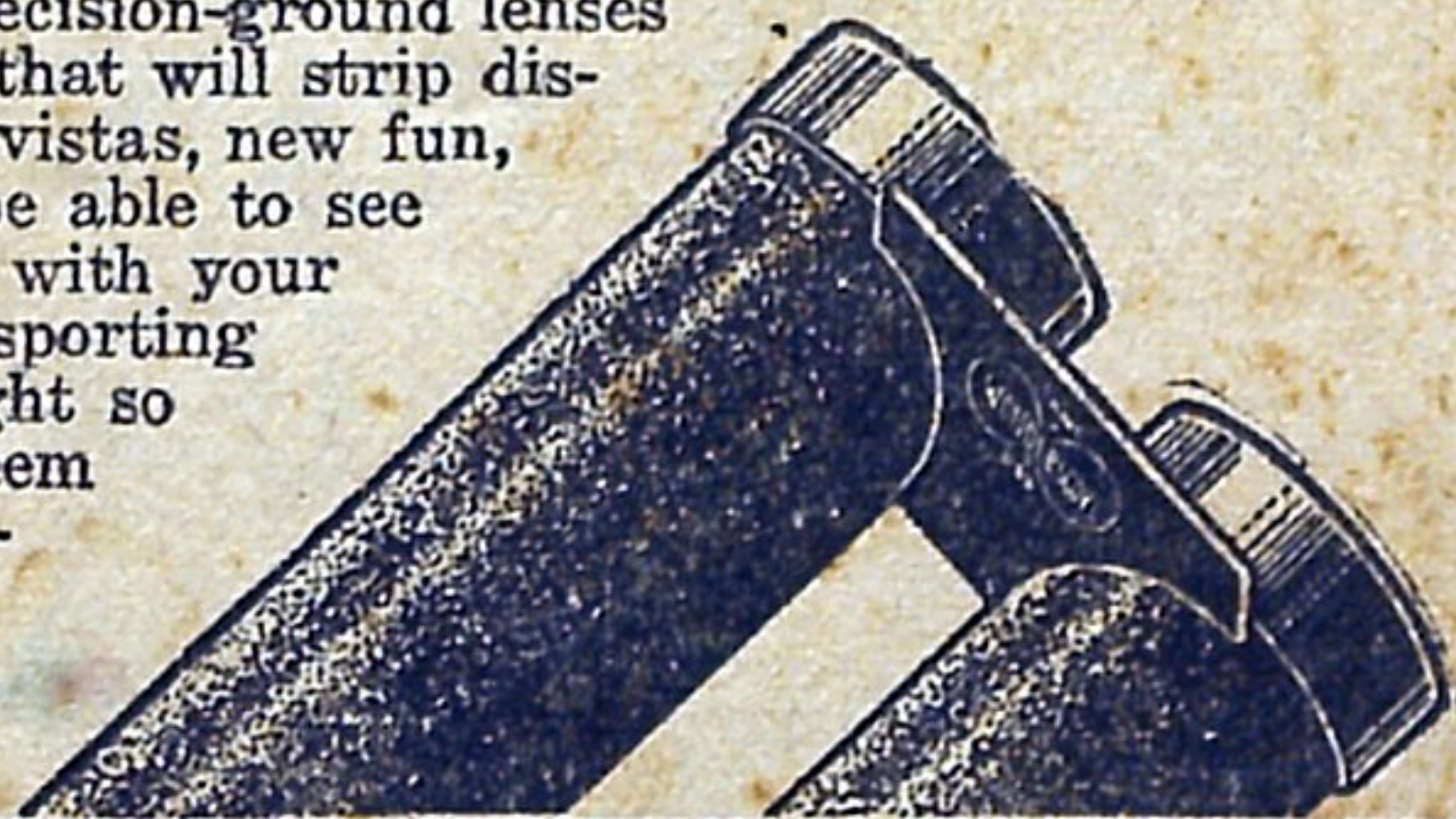
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BLACK BOOK DETECTIVE

Vol. 18, No. 3

EVERY STORY BRAND NEW

Summer Issue

A Complete Book-Length Black Bat Novel

DEATH FOR CHARITY

Featuring Tony Quinn,
Nemesis of Crime

By G. WAYMAN JONES



Hiding Under the Cloak of Mercy, a Murderous Band of Ruthless, Evil Conspirators Plans a Sinister Monumental Swindle that Challenges the Sleuthing Powers of the Black Bat!..... 11



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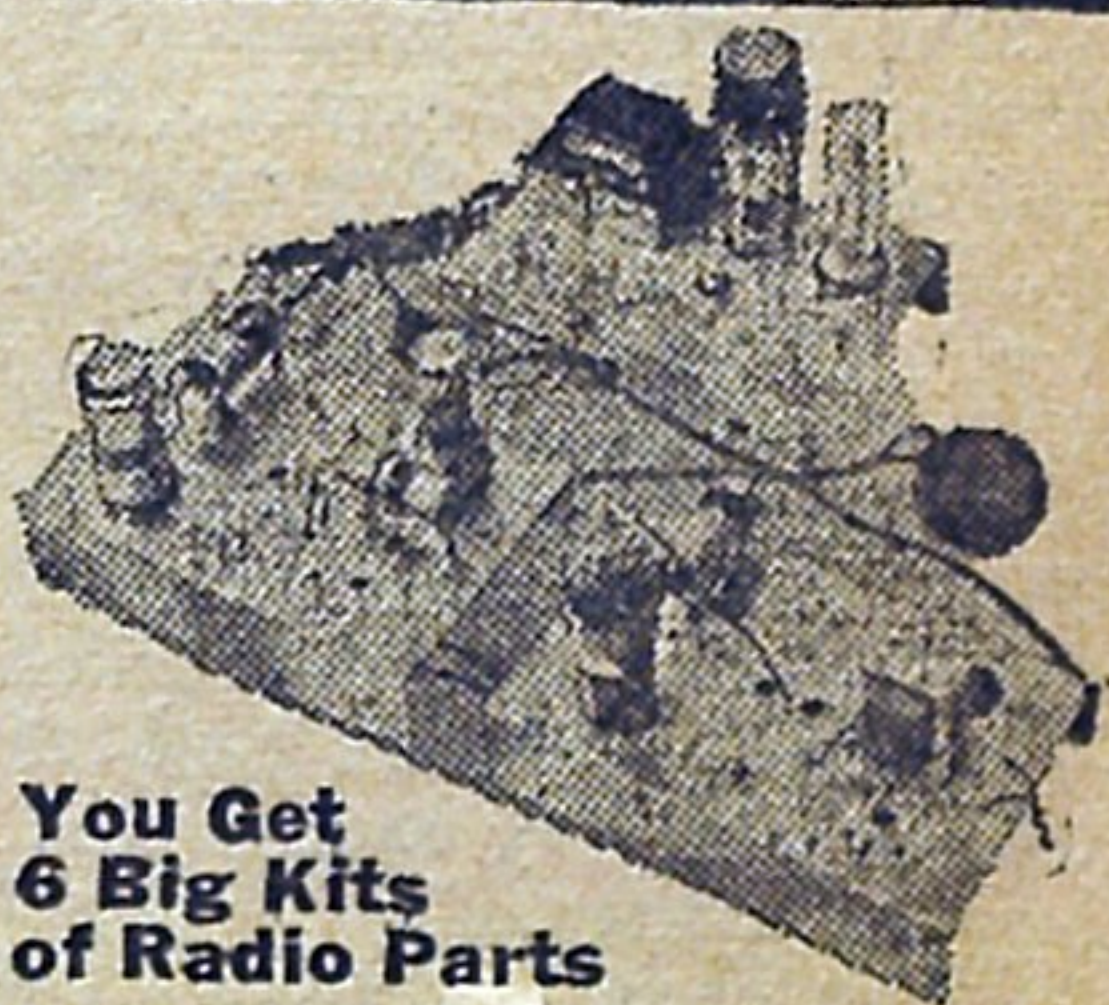
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OFF THE RECORD

A DEPARTMENT WHERE READERS
AND THE EDITOR MEET

THE stabbing of the old man in Central Park was at first merely a matter of routine to the Homicide Detail, but when the corpse's identity was discovered—there was plenty of excitement!

When Captain McGrath got the report from the fingerprint bureau his mustache actually bristled. He hung up, walked back into the morgue proper and surveyed the body on the slab. Detective Brady stood beside him.

"Fingerprints prove this man is John Wellington," McGrath said. "Remember him?"

"Holy smokes," Brady shoved his hat to the back of his head. "Wellington—the eccentric rich man who disappeared a couple of days after Pearl Harbor? He's the top name on the Missing Person Bureau list!"

McGrath phoned the home of the late John Wellington and informed his startled half-brother, Dan Taylor, about the murder.

Dan Taylor arrived at the morgue accompanied by Paul Vernon, the nephew of the murdered man. They identified the corpse, but no one could explain why John Wellington had kept out of sight for so long or where he had been.

After they left the police Dan Taylor and Paul Vernon were more elated than distressed over the murder of their relative. The estate wouldn't be held in escrow any longer and they each would receive quite a sum of money.

"You know, sometimes I got the idea you had a hand in his disappearance," Vernon said.

"Funny thing," Taylor grinned. "I had the same idea about you. No matter—it's finished now. I wonder how soon they'll let us have the money?"

They both were living in Wellington's big house, and they went inside and turned on the lights. Then they saw an intruder—a man sitting in the most comfortable chair in the room.

He was a weird looking person dressed completely in black, even to gloves of that somber hue. Drawn over his face was a jet black hood.

"Who are you?" Taylor said.

"They call me the Black Bat," said the man in the chair.

The Black Bat told them that he had heard

about the murder of John Wellington and had come to question them about it.

"Answer my questions," he warned them, "or I will know you have something to hide!"

Taylor and Vernon talked—and what they say sends the Black Bat into one of the most mysterious and perilous adventures of his crime-fighting life in **MURDER DEALS IN ERSATZ**, the exciting complete book-length novel by G. Wayman Jones coming next issue!

Filled with action and suspense on every page, **MURDER DEALS IN ERSATZ** will make you grip the sides of your chair tightly as you follow its baffling twists and turns of plot. It's a grand yarn—and brings you the Black Bat, Silk Kirby, Butch O'Leary and Carol Baldwin at their sleuthing best.

Remember—it's in the very next issue, along with several shorter detective stories that pack plenty of punch! A gala number from cover to cover.

LETTERS FROM READERS

WE ALWAYS enjoy having our readers write in to tell us their opinions of the magazine. We are eager to hear from all of you! Your opinions, comment and criticism help us improve the magazine.

Merle Franklin of Cleveland, Ohio, has some interesting things to say in his letter:

I have been following the Black Bat ever since your first story of him in the **BLACK BOOK DETECTIVE** Magazine. I do enjoy these stories very much. Each story is better than the last—they get better and better each issue.

Among the magazines you publish I read **THE PHANTOM DETECTIVE**, **THRILLING WONDER STORIES**, **STARTLING STORIES**, **EVERYDAY ASTROLOGY**, **WEST**, **CAPTAIN FUTURE**, **AIR WAR** and **G-MEN DETECTIVE** (naturally the **BLACK BOOK DETECTIVE** also). As you see I have a wide selection of subjects I like. I enjoy them all. But none are as good as **The Black Bat**.

Please improve your covers. Sometimes the cover scene isn't anywhere in the story.

Thanks for your letter, Merle—it is nice to know you like so many of our companion

(Continued on page 8)



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WAR BONDS
to Have and to Hold

The Treasury Department
acknowledges with appreciation the
publication of this message by

THE PUBLISHERS OF THIS MAGAZINE

OFF THE RECORD

(Continued from page 6)

magazines! As for the covers—we try our best to make them appropriate, interesting, and symbolic of the magazine's contents. Let us know more specifically which covers you found wanting! How'd you like the Spring issue cover?

Speaking of Spring—we have had so much chilly weather that we don't quite know whether Donald Boudeane down in Houma, Louisiana, is taking us for a sleigh-ride or not:

If you want my opinion, here it is. I was looking through my old copies of BLACK BOOK DETECTIVE Magazine. In the August, 1943, issue I read a letter sent to you by Robert Hartwell of New York. I disagree with Robert, who wants shorter novels. I think you should put more stuff in the Black Bat stories and have fewer short stories. As for your remark that Tony Quinn could not be able to fool the doctors about his eyes—well, Robert, I think that's treason. You want to discourage Mr. Jones so he can't write good stories?

Which seems to bring up the subject of the Black Bat's eyesight again. There was quite a bit of discussion about that in the last issue. Any more comments? Keep 'em rolling in.

Please address all your letters and postcards to The Editor, BLACK BOOK DETECTIVE, 10 East 40th Street, New York 16, N. Y.

Be seeing you in our next issue. So long!

—THE EDITOR.

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DEN I WISH I WAS IN DIXIE

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* Actual pupils' names on request. Pictures by professional models.

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A clubbed fist landed on the guard's forearm and the weapon dropped to the ground (CHAPTER V)

DEATH FOR CHARITY

By G. WAYMAN JONES

Hiding Under the Cloak of Mercy, a Murderous Band of Ruthless, Evil Schemers Plans a Sinister Coup that Challenges the Sleuthing Powers of Tony Quinn, Nemesis of Crime!

CHAPTER I

Court-room Murder

SPECIAL SESSIONS Number Eleven was ready to welcome its new judge. The drab court-room had been decorated with flowers, piled in mounds at the foot of the bench, but they only seemed to make the cold, formal room even more funereal.

They were there because Judge Jasper Bailey was a well-known and beloved man. He was one of those men who are easy

to like, calm, even-tempered, a man who as an attorney had devoted a great deal of his time to cases where there wasn't a penny of profit. Now he had been made a judge.

Many in the packed court-room were there to wish him well. One man, however, who sat between two guards, wasn't wishing anyone well. He was "Flashy" Hanks, on trial for his life, accused of murder. His was the first case the new judge would try.

One of the prominent attorneys who sat within the enclosure before the bench, was smiling warmly, but his eyes were blank—

A COMPLETE BOOK-LENGTH BLACK BAT NOVEL

THE BLACK BAT TACKLES THE GRIM MYSTERY OF A

the eyes of a blind man. Around them were deep, ugly scars.

Despite the scars and the blank eyes though, Tony Quinn was not bad looking. His face was lean, his chin aggressive and his black hair had a tendency to be curly.

Beside him sat a square-shouldered, square-faced man with a rather heavy mustache. The gold badge on the lapel of his coat showed that he was a Captain of Detectives. Officers like Captain McGrath had been ordered to display their badges in open court.

"What brings you here, Mr. Quinn?" McGrath was saying now. "I didn't think you were interested in Flashy Hank's trial."

"I'm not," Quinn chuckled. "Every time I show up around a murder case you think I have some intimate inside information about it. Captain, when are you going to be convinced that I am really blind and that I certainly cannot be the Black Bat?"

"Confidentially"—McGrath dropped his voice to a whisper—"I'll never believe you're not. Just the same I'm darn glad you aren't mixed up in this case. We've finally got Flashy headed for the chair. This time we have an eye-witness to the murder the rat pulled off."

Quinn's eyes did not change in the slightest, but he could see Flashy Hanks quite well, too, for Tony Quinn was not blind and, as Captain McGrath suspected, he was the Black Bat.

FLASHY was lean, unkempt, and his lips were curled in a perpetual sneer. His police record was not a sneering matter however. This was not the first time he had been charged with murder; but at other times odd things had happened to vital witnesses. Like sudden attacks of bullet or knife or poison trouble.

"Is it some kind of a secret?" Captain McGrath persisted, "why you're here?"

"Not at all," Quinn replied. "You keep forgetting that even though I'm not a district attorney any longer, I'm still a lawyer with a practise. I'm here to make a motion in another case upon which any judge can pass. I just thought I'd listen to the ceremonies and do my work at the same time."

"Oh," McGrath nodded. "Say, you are a D.A. though. Weren't you appointed a special state's attorney in connection with another mess a little while ago?"

Quinn nodded. "Yes. The appointment hasn't been withdrawn, so I suppose I do have some sort of powers. I won't use them though. My appointment was to handle only one case and it was satisfactorily completed."

A bailiff came out of a door beside the

bench, grasped a mallet and whacked the table.

"This court will now come to order. Mr. Justice Jasper Bailey presiding."

Everyone arose and the brand-new judge walked up onto the bench. He was a handsome man, white-haired, dignified. He smiled and nodded pleasantly to those he knew in the court-room—and that seemed to be about everyone.

McGrath was still harping on the same subject.

"It must have slipped the D.A.'s mind not to withdraw your commission, Quinn. He was pretty sore because you put one over on him. And that guy's scared you'll run for D.A. against him. Why don't you, huh?"

"Shh," Quinn cautioned. "Court is in session."

"Yeah, I know." McGrath nodded. "But like I said, that would be some combination. Tony Quinn the D.A., and Tony Quinn the Black Bat. You'd put stiffs like me out of business. With Tony Quinn being the Black Bat, what would Tony Quinn the D.A. do with detectives?"

"Captain," Quinn insisted, "I assure you I'm not the Black Bat. Please stop bringing the matter up. Sometimes it becomes most embarrassing. People think my eyes function, and they don't. Any number of specialists will attest to that. You've even had your own doctors examine me. I'm blind—permanently. I'm trying to make the best of it, and I'm not the Black Bat. Now shut up until they put you on the stand."

Judge Jasper Bailey bowed slightly at the assembled people.

"Please sit down," he said. "I merely wish to say how grateful I am for the interest you friends have taken in me. To be appointed a judge of this court is no small thing, but having so many friends is an even greater honor. I see many attorneys among you. I hope I shall never be compelled to lecture any of you in another way from the bench. I likewise notice many newspaper reporters. Please remain for a few moments. There is news in the making."

As Judge Bailey talked, all eyes were on him. Only a few people noticed the heavy swinging doors of the court-room open and a man of about fifty enter.

His thin face was paper-white, and he held a worn hat in his hands. He gave a quick look around, then trained his eyes on the judge. With steps that began as faltering paces and developed into the walk of a savagely determined man, he proceeded down the aisle to the gate which cut off the gallery from the court proper. He had this gate partly open when a startled bailiff saw him.

MONUMENTAL SWINDLE THAT SHOCKS HUMANITY!

Judge Bailey was somber of mien and speech as he went on.

"Therefore, it is not a gratifying thing, my good friends, that I must be compelled to—"

Judge Bailey stopped talking, for he had seen the stranger. There was absolutely no recognition on Judge Bailey's face, but there seemed to be plenty on the features of the stranger. Long before two bailiffs were close enough to interfere, the man hurled the hat away. Beneath it he had been gripping a heavy automatic.

He raised the gun, sighted it, and pressed the trigger. The big cartridges began to explode—seven in all. Five of them hit

Quinn. A blind man was not supposed even to guess what had happened. But Tony Quinn had seen every bit of the melodrama.

Almost automatically, but without moving his head his apparently sightless eyes flashed for a second to Flashy Hanks. Flashy looked so much like a man struck by utter surprise as to make him ludicrous. Then a slow grin spread over his face. Flashy was enjoying himself.

A bald-headed, sweat-covered man was battling his way to Tony Quinn's side.

"I—knew I shouldn't have—left you," he panted.

"It's all right, Silk."



THE BLACK BAT

Judge Bailey in the head, making a hideous blob of his face.

CAPTAIN McGRATH came out of his chair with a great leap as the two bailiffs reached the killer. Both had black-jacks and were using them. One blow hit the killer squarely on top of his bared head. He crumpled in a limp heap.

Stunned silence followed. It lasted about twenty seconds until amazed people realized what had happened. Then the court-room was turned into a fury of activity. Police were trying to push toward the killer. Reporters were trying to push their way out to telephones. Attorneys milled about.

Only one man remained seated. Tony

Quinn's eyes were now trained somewhat to the left of the bench behind which a grisly body in a black robe was slumped in the big chair.

Silk Kirby didn't quite know what had happened. As Quinn's personal attendant, he was worried about not being on hand when trouble started. Silk didn't fluster easily, but when there was any danger around Tony Quinn, Silk showed his concern.

"I heard the shots, sir. I didn't know—"

"They were not aimed at me, Silk," Quinn said softly. "Judge Bailey was murdered."

Instantly Silk's eyes shifted to Flashy Hanks, tightly gripped by two officers, and Silk also noticed the smirk on the killer's face.

"Good gosh!" Silk breathed. "How does that rat think he'll get away with this? He must have arranged it, sir."

"Surface evidence indicates that," Quinn admitted, "but sometimes evidence lies. Silk, take me into the Judge's chamber. It's empty now. If we're questioned later, you merely wanted to get me out of the way."

On Silk's arm, Quinn made his usual slow way into the private quarters of the Judge, his cane tapping nervously. But when the door of the Judge's chamber closed behind them, Quinn no longer displayed any nervousness.

He dropped the pose of a blind man. His blank, staring eyes became alive. Immediately he noticed several things. The Judge's fountain pen lay on his desk, with paper beside it.

"What was he writing?" Quinn asked. "The nib of the pen is wet. He'd just finished something, Silk. Where is it?"

Quinn began opening desk drawers, but found nothing of consequence. Then he picked up a small blotter near the fountain pen and the paper. It was brand new with only one blotting upon it. The letters were reversed, but Quinn made them out quickly.

"Whatever he wrote," Quinn told Silk, "was addressed to the Chief Justice."

"A judge writes notes to the Chief Justice, doesn't he?" Silk queried.

"Yes, of course, but I'd give a lot to know what Judge Bailey said in that note. Silk, I heard something in Judge Bailey's voice which I think slipped by everyone else. Not that I'm more intelligent, but when I really was blind, I made a habit of listening to inflections. Honestly, I believe Judge Bailey was about to make a most important announcement. He asked reporters to stay, saying news was about to be made. They figured he was just going to make a speech about his policies while on the bench. I believe Judge Bailey was about to make a far more important statement. One which someone didn't want him to make."

"Now look," Silk said, with a familiarity he did not exhibit in public, "Flashy Hanks was on trial for his life. It's well known he tried to stall the case and didn't succeed. So he got some droop to walk in and stop the case by murdering the presiding judge."

"Maybe," Quinn mused, with a furrowed forehead. "Maybe not, too. There are a lot of other judges to take Bailey's place."

"But, sir," Silk insisted, "they've got Judge Bailey's killer. He's sprawled out with his head bloody and plenty of cops around him. As soon as he wakes up, they'll make him talk."

SUDDENLY Quinn sat down, put his cane between his knees and those eyes became blank and staring once more. The door opened. Captain McGrath entered and

cast a highly suspicious look at Quinn.

"Who is it?" Quinn asked testily.

"McGrath," the detective grunted. "I wondered what happened to you."

"I took Mr. Quinn in here so he would not be in the way," Silk said. "You don't mind, Captain?"

"Why should I?"

McGrath leaned against the desk and as he chewed the butt of a cigar he didn't notice Quinn's hand dart out, seize the blotter and quickly stow it in his pocket.

"You sound worried, Captain," Quinn said placidly. "You must have an open-and-shut case out there from what I heard."

"Quinn," McGrath grunted, "there's the devil to pay. Of course, the punk who shot the judge was hired by Flashy, because Flashy had the only motive for the crime."

"So?" Quinn asked expectantly.

"So a couple of strong-arm bailiffs jumped the gunman and used blackjacks on him plenty. He woke up a few seconds ago. He claims he doesn't know who he is, where he is, or what happened. There's a doc out there who says the guy has a bad concussion and maybe he doesn't remember anything."

McGrath almost bit his cigar in half.

"Why," he demanded, exasperated, "do simple cases have to get so doggone complicated?"

"Perhaps," Quinn said softly, "it's because this one never was simple to begin with."

McGrath didn't hear him. He was on his way out to bat his head against the stone wall that was a murderer suffering from amnesia.

CHAPTER II

Hired Killer



QUINN QUINN went home for lunch, an unusual proceeding, for customarily Silk brought in lunch to Quinn's law offices. But now Quinn wanted a quiet place to think. In his mind he could still see Judge Bailey's bullet-smashed features, the strange killer, and the smirking criminal who had been delighted with the grisly events.

Silk served the lunch and hovered around, waiting for Quinn to speak. Silk didn't have to wait long.

"Do you still maintain that Flashy Hanks hired that man to murder Judge Bailey?" Quinn suddenly asked him.

"Sure—why not?" Silk said. "Bailey didn't have an enemy in the world. Seems to have been one of the best-liked men in the city. Honest, too. He'd never get mixed up in



Five cartridges hit Judge Bailey in the head, making a hideous blob of his face (CHAPTER I)

something that resulted in murder."

"Not of his own accord," Quinn agreed slowly. "But sometimes things happen over which no honest man has any control. I think Judge Bailey was involved in something like that and was just about to make a pronouncement of it when he was shot."

Silk shook his head. "I'm afraid this time, sir, I have to agree with Captain McGrath. Flashy Hanks is behind it all. True, there are other judges, but Flashy had motive for this and enough money to make a half-witted fool walk into court and shoot the judge."

Quinn sipped coffee, leaned back and rubbed his chin.

"The set-up is too perfect. As if someone profited by the fact that Flashy Hanks had an excellent motive and is the type who would not hesitate to order the murder of any man. Unlike you and Captain McGrath, I have an idea Hanks is a smoke screen to draw attention away from the truth. Did you know that Judge Bailey's family has a rather grim secret, Silk?"

Silk frowned and shook his head.

"Judge Bailey," Quinn explained, "comes of an old and much respected family. An odd bunch, too. His sister Adelaide used to be highly placed in society. No affair was complete until she waddled in—she's built along lines that call for waddling. But all dignity. Lately she has dropped out of affairs."

"A lady can get tired of putting on the dog," Silk reminded.

"True. Anyway, we also have Judge Bailey's brother, Sidney, who is as well or even better known than either the Judge or his sister. For many years Sidney has taken an active interest in philanthropic work that has kept him in the public eye, noted for the good he does."

As Silk poured another cup of coffee, a hopeful light was beginning to gleam in his eyes.

"Next we have a nephew, the son of a dead sister of the Judge," Quinn went on, "This nephew is regarded by the popular term 'queer.' That much I know of the present Bailey family."

"Where is the mystery, sir?"

Quinn looked up with a smile. "The mystery is the spice of this case. The thing that whets my appetite. Another brother named Rollins disappeared ten years ago today."

"Disappeared, sir? Still, many people vanish."

"But not quite like Rollin Bailey, Silk. He had no reason to vanish. None whatsoever. He had money, social position, friends, and seemed happy. Ten years ago this morning he was on his way to his job, a poorly paid position as active director of a big art gallery."

"Rollin was a methodical man, never varying his trip to the gallery. He bought a morning paper as usual, some cigars also as

usual, and nodded to a traffic cop at the corner of Walnut and Blaine Streets. Within thirty seconds after the traffic cop greeted him, Rollin walked down Walnut Street and was never seen again."

"Men get fed up," Silk observed.

"I'm not saying they don't, Silk. All I insist upon is that Judge Bailey's family has a dark secret. They never made much of an effort to locate Rollin. Some authorities even believed they knew where he was and why he had dropped from sight."

Silk picked up some plates and hesitated.

"Does this mean, sir, that the Black Bat is going to take an active interest in the case?"

"It does. The thing intrigues me. We have all the elements of a black mystery with us, one culminating in the savage murder of Judge Bailey by a man who claims he now suffers from amnesia. This afternoon, Silk, you and I shall pay this murderer a visit."

SILK pursed his lips in a soundless whistle.

"As an Assistant District Attorney, eh, sir? The D.A. hasn't withdrawn the appointment he gave you a few weeks ago to handle another job, so you have the authority to visit a murderer and talk to him. What will the D.A. think about it though?"

"Who cares?" Quinn shrugged. "I'm merely taking advantage of the fact that I am an assistant D.A. Some may claim I'm interfering because I intend to run for District Attorney. The present D.A. believes that. Yet if he withdraws my appointment, they'll say he did so out of spite, and fearing I'll crack this case before he does. We've got him just where we want him. Give me an hour, then roll out the car."

Quinn arose, used his cane to help make his way through the rooms and finally sat down in a well-worn chair beside the fireplace in the study. He filled a pipe, lighted it and leaned back.

Tony Quinn had once been District Attorney. He had been regarded then as one of the most promising attorneys in the city. Gangland had learned to fear him. So much so that drastic measures were resorted to, finally. One day, in open court, an attempt was made to destroy a piece of evidence by hurling acid upon it.

Quinn had flung himself at the crook with the acid and taken the contents of the bottle full in the face. He had been instantly blinded, and those deeply etched scars resulted also.

He had given up his career and retired to his home, fortunate only in the fact that he was independently wealthy.

Then had begun a tour of the world, wherever a famous eye surgeon was known. All had the same distressing news. Tony Quinn was blind for life. No surgery could ever cure his blindness.

He had given up, finally, and tried to make the best of things. Then Carol Baldwin had appeared in his life—Carol, trim, blond and highly efficient. She persuaded him to accompany her to a small Mid-western town, where her policeman father was dying from a crook's bullet. Sergeant Baldwin knew that and he also knew about Tony Quinn and the progress he had made in the eternal fight against crime.

Carol's father had arranged for an immediate operation by an obscure surgeon. When the operation was over, Carol's father had donated to Tony Quinn portions of his healthy eyes. Soon afterward Carol's father died.

On Tony Quinn's return home, no one except those actually involved in the proceedings, had the vaguest inkling that Quinn had submitted to an eye operation, nor that it had been highly successful. For not only could he see, but his sight was abnormally keen. He could see in the blackest darkness.

torney-at-Law. For Quinn had recently resumed his legal practise because it gave him contacts and, more often than not, helped him to solve crime.

Two people suspected his dual identity. One was Captain McGrath who had taken oath that he would bring in the Black Bat some day. McGrath admitted the Black Bat helped the police, but he used odd methods in doing so and broke the law. McGrath was the kind of detective who took his oath of office seriously and the Black Bat, in his opinion, was a criminal—benevolent or not.

POLICE Commissioner Warner likewise had a vague suspicion that Tony Quinn and the Black Bat were synonymous, but Commissioner Warner preferred not to consider the problem too deeply. He liked Tony Quinn, the blind man, and secretly approved the work of the Black Bat. And Commissioner Warner also knew that, once the Black Bat's identity became known, the value of the

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Colors and objects were as visible to his eyes as if powerful lights were trained on the subjects.

Furthermore, during his months of blindness, he had developed an acute sense of hearing and touch. He had learned how to live without the use of his eyes by developing his other senses. These remained just as acute after his sight was retored.

Quinn kept his recovery a strict secret because he wanted to combat crime in measures equal to its own stealth and cunning. So he had become the Black Bat, an anonymous figure in a closely fitting black hood which covered his features well. As this wholly independent investigator of crime, he was enabled to use unorthodox approaches to solving mysteries and driving criminals to their punishment.

Carol Baldwin had become one of his able assistants, although she had no open contact with Tony Quinn. Silk had joined Quinn before his blindness was cured. Silk had been a skilled confidence man with a glib tongue and smooth manners—which had resulted in his nickname. Once he had come to Quinn's home to rob him, but after listening to Quinn talk he had remained there, to become a devoted friend and ally—a thoroughly reformed man.

The third member of the little group was "Butch" Leary, a huge, hulking man with the strength of a giant. He once had battled in the prize ring; now he battled crime.

These three were the only persons who knew the Black Bat was Tony Quinn, At-

nemesis of the underworld would be gone. Also, he would become the prey of every crook who hated him, and elimination of the Black Bat was the underworld's one big unanimous project.

Tony Quinn had studied the art of fighting crime, but disguises were out with him, because of those deep scars. He resorted to no tricks, but he did bring down upon crooks and murderers the full weight of a clear-thinking mind and the full fighting strength of his little band.

Science aided him immeasurably and he maintained an elaborately equipped laboratory behind the book-lined wall of the study where he now sat. From this lab, a tunnel led to a garden house at the rear of the estate. Through this passage he could come and go in secret, and Carol and Butch could visit him without being seen. That underground passage was as deep a secret as the Black Bat's identity.

Tony Quinn never dropped his rôle of a blind man until he was certain no chance existed for someone to spy on him. His eyes now were blank and staring, and the cane between his knees beat a slow, steady tattoo on the floor.

Deep within him lurked the idea that behind Judge Bailey's murder was far more than the act of a desperate criminal on trial for his life. The case carried all the earmarks of being a mystery that might easily be one that would bring dire danger to whoever sought to lift its veil.

CHAPTER III

No Memory of Murder

CAPTAIN McGRATH was in the hallway outside the hospital room to which the killer of Judge Bailey had been brought. Two husky cops were likewise on guard. McGrath grunted when Tony Quinn walked down the hall on Silk's guiding arm.

"So you decided to take a hand, eh?" McGrath growled. "I can't say I'm sorry. Mr. Amnesia, in there, is either the best actor in the world or something really did happen to his brain when those boobs conked him."

"What do the doctors say?" Quinn asked. McGrath shrugged. "Yes and no and maybe. There's no real test for amnesia and even if there was, this guy is too sick for experiments. Talk to him if you want to. Maybe you can make him open up."

"Take me in," Quinn ordered Silk. "And, Captain, will you arrange it so that I can examine the man's effects. His clothes and anything in his pockets. Now wait—I can hear you breathing hard. I want to see those articles with my fingertips, not my eyes."

"Okay," McGrath said. "There isn't a mark on his clothes and not a blasted thing was in his pockets. Not so much as a pack of matches. You can see them with your fingers all you like. Just find some way of tying him up with Flashy Hanks and I'll be your friend for life. Mind—I said your friend, not the Black Bat's."

Quinn laughed. "One thing about you, Captain, you hang on with bull-dog tenacity. Take me in, Silk."

The murderer lay against pillows that were no whiter than his face. Dark eyes burned in silent fury, but mixed with that anger was apprehension.

"Who are you?" he demanded. "Why, you're a blind man. Why did they send you? Don't they think I've been tortured enough?"

"Apparently not." Quinn's right hand fanned the air until he located a chair beside the bed. He sat down and when he spoke, those apparently sightless eyes were not turned directly at the murderer but upon the white wall to his left.

"My name is Quinn," he said. "I'm an assistant district attorney. They tell me you can't remember anything."

"I don't even know how I got into the court-room," the battered man groaned miserably. "Now they say I shot and killed the judge. How could I do such a thing? I never knew any judge. Why should I have killed him?"

"Ah," Quinn said gently, "but you did. Five hundred witnesses can swear to it. Besides, you did it quite deliberately, without making any mistake as to your victim. It was clear, premeditated murder."

"But why did I kill him? A man must have a reason for taking the life of someone."

"There is one," Quinn said, "tucked behind that veil over your brain. We don't think you are faking. We shall do everything in our power to help you recover your memory." The stranger winced. "Sure you will—so you can electrocute me. I don't get any solace out of that, Mr. Quinn."

"Just the same," Quinn said, "you had better keep trying hard to think who you are. Your former associates, your work. You'll be given good care. I won't harass you any more than I can help. In fact, I think you have talked enough as it is. So, I'll say good-by for now."

Quinn thrust his hand in the general direction of the man who grasped it weakly. In that handclasp Tony Quinn learned something.

Outside, Captain McGrath had the killer's clothes laid out on a table. Quinn gently passed his fingertips over them, missing no portion of the material. He examined the hat, shoes, shirt and underwear.

"Someone snipped laundry marks off these clothes," he said.

McGrath grunted in surprise. "You've got sensitive fingers all right. I wish they were sensitive enough to find out just what was snipped off. You know, Mr. Quinn, that as long as this guy maintains he suffers from amnesia, we'll never be able to find out who he is. His fingerprints are not on record, Missing Person's Bureau has no file."

"And," Quinn reminded McGrath, "as long as the amnesia persists, whether real or imaginary, we can't strap him in the chair either. Better post a man at his bedside. He might talk in his sleep."

"I arranged that already. Besides, as soon as he gets his strength back, we're going to let a hypnotist work on him. The D.A. put me in charge of this case and wants a tie-up with Flashy Hanks. He's going to get it, because I'm convinced that guy was in Flashy's pay."

"You might be right," Quinn said slowly.

SILK led him down the hospital corridor. Near the end they encountered Police Commissioner Warner. He was militarily erect, with iron-gray hair and clear blue eyes.

"Well, Tony," he greeted the blind man, "don't tell me you're interested in the murder of Judge Bailey?"

"I was present when it happened," Quinn reminded him. "Besides, the case has angles I don't like. McGrath and the D.A. have

Flashy Hanks as the main culprit, but the thing is too obvious. Flashy has more sense than to pull a job as openly as that."

Warner nodded. "One thing you perhaps don't know, Tony, is that there was a witness against Flashy whom his attorneys didn't know about. They were aware that we had an eyewitness to Flashy's crime but we hid the man's identity. He was in court today. They undoubtedly saw him and it won't be long before they identify him either."

Quinn exhaled sharply. This put a new light on the affair.

"Of course, Flashy would risk anything, pay anything, to find out who this witness was and at the same time effectively stall the case until his boys can get a crack at the witness. I'd guard that man well, Commissioner."

Warner chuckled. "He's frightened enough to do anything we say. We're putting him in jail, for safe keeping. Honestly, Tony, I doubt this case is anything for you to get mixed up in. You—or your alter ego—if you have one."

Silk and Quinn reached the car. Silk got behind the wheel.

"I think," Quinn said, "we'll pay a visit to the newly bereaved Bailey family. Just a hunch, perhaps. No, more than a hunch. Silk, that murderer in the hospital wasn't retained by Flashy Hanks. He isn't the type. His hands are solid and rough. He's worked for a living and none of the punks who hang around Flashy even know the meaning of the word. His clothes were cheap, but clean and neat. Furthermore, that man isn't putting on an act. He really doesn't know what happened or who he is."

"Maybe he's just crazy and took a few shots at the judge for luck." Silk maneuvered the car into traffic. "Things like that have happened before."

"Not this time. I watched that man as he came through the court-room gate. If I ever saw savage determination, it was written on his face. He meant to kill Judge Bailey and he did. A mug hired by Flashy would have been less direct. He'd have waylaid the judge, or had a gang of strong-arm thugs to help him to a get-away after the shooting if he'd had to do it in the court-room. I'm still following my hunch there's more than Flashy Hanks behind this."

Shortly Silk pulled up before a big home that seemed almost out of place between the apartment houses across the street and on one side of it. On the other side was another private home. Not so large, but the medium-sized house and yard with its iron fence obviously had once been the property of a wealthy person. There was a real estate agent's sign affixed to the gate indicating that the place was for rent, furnished.

The Bailey mansion was set about a hun-

dred yards back from the street. The lawn was smooth and velvety but there were no trees or shrubbery. The luxurious home was indicative of wealth and tradition, and it was easy to imagine the sedateness of the family occupying it.

On Silk's arm, Quinn walked to the front porch. A butler opened the door.

"Miss Bailey, Mr. Bailey and Mr. Gates are seeing no one," he informed.

"Except me." Quinn smiled. "I'm Tony Quinn of the District Attorney's office. I think Miss Bailey and Mr. Bailey and Mr. Gates will agree to see me, for they well know that the reporters will interview me."

"Wait," the butler murmured. He was gone for only seconds.

"Who is the—ah—person with you, please?"

"He's my valet and chauffeur," Quinn answered. "He is also my companion. I need him. I am blind."

"We do not permit servants in the house proper, sir. I shall lead you. My arm, sir."

Silk made a wry face, but took it stoically. He dropped into one of the high-backed, hand-carved chairs in the reception hall.

QUINN was escorted into the presence of the queen of this domicile. At least, she acted like a queen holding court. Adelaide Bailey was buxom and wore rather old-fashioned clothes. Her hair was pure white, her eyes blue and cold. She had thin, uncompromising lips and the manners of a member of an autocracy long dead in these United States.

To her right, like a crown prince, sat Sidney Bailey. There was a remarkable resemblance between Sidney Bailey and his murdered brother, the Judge.

Pasty-faced, slender Morton Gates, the nephew, seemed to be the court jester, although a more dour jester never existed. He was squatted on a hassock and looked uncomfortable. He was about thirty, with too-big shell-rimmed glasses and a habit of slowly blinking his eyes behind them as if he lived in constant wonderment of the world and its inhabitants.

"You have official business with me?" Adelaide Bailey asked coldly.

"Unpleasant business." Quinn turned his sightless eyes in the general direction of her voice. "First of all, you must understand that I am stone blind so if my actions surprise you, that may explain them. May I sit down?"

"Fetch him a chair, Higgins," Miss Bailey ordered the butler. "What kind of a city administration have we to keep a blind district attorney in office?"

"A blind assistant district attorney," Quinn corrected. "I'm sorry my blindness bothers you. It bothers me too. There are other people here. I can sense their

presence. May I ask who they are?"

"My dead sister's son, Morton Gates." Adelaide indicated her nephew with a jerk of her head and then flushed, remembering her visitor was blind. "The other man is my brother, Sidney."

"How do you do." Sidney got up and approached Quinn. "Forgive my sister. She is much upset over what happened. Honestly, Mr. Quinn, we're glad you are here. I've heard of you. I even know how you became blind. Blind people are a hobby of mine. I help to maintain an association for blind folks. All humanity's troubles are my troubles too."

"Thank you," Quinn said.

He watched Morton Gates as he spoke. Gates had issued no word of welcome, but just sat there with big eyes, staring at him although probably the glasses magnified them.

Quinn was rapidly getting the idea that Morton Gates was of the screwball type. The man's mouth hung open.

"Suppose you state your business, Mr. Quinn," Adelaide said tersely. "Sidney, please sit down."

He obeyed her meekly.

"It is about the murder of your brother, of course," Quinn said. "On the surface it seems likely that an underworld character named Flashy Hanks is behind it, that he paid the actual killer. We must be sure of that. Did your brother have any enemies?"

"There was no one who did not like Jasper," Adelaide said. Quinn wondered if it was his imagination which detected slight signs of nervousness in her voice.

"You're on the wrong track," Sidney Bailey put in, "if you're looking for a motive other than the one presented by this Flashy Hanks. Jasper had no enemies. He devoted his life to helping the unfortunate, as we all do."

There was a crunching sound from the hassock. Morton Gates had taken a huge carrot from his pocket and was munching on it.

"I hear an odd sound," Quinn said testily.

Sidney laughed apologetically. "That's just Morty. He's chewing on a carrot. He eats them all day long because they're supposed to be good for the eyes and make a man see in the dark."

"They do," Morton said suddenly. "Eat them every day. See in the dark like owls. Makes me able to see insects. Night insects. I'm interested in bugs. Got a big collection. Show them to you."

"Be quiet," Adelaide interrupted. "Mr. Quinn, please forgive my nephew. He has made an insect collection his hobby and talks to everyone about it. Please state what you really came here for."

"I was just wondering," Quinn said quietly. "if this murder and the disappear-

ance of another brother ten years ago is in any way connected."

Adelaide jumped to her feet. Sidney Bailey gave a start of what could have been excitement or fear or both. Morton just kept munching on the carrot and eyeing Quinn as though he were only fit to be stuck with a pin and mounted on a piece of cardboard under glass.

"Why must you bring that up?" Adelaide demanded. "It cannot have the slightest connection with the death of my brother. Why don't you execute his murderer? Why don't you take him out of that hospital and put him in a death cell? Why bother us? You have the murderer. I do not care to be interviewed further today. My brother is dead. We have funeral arrangements to make. Good day, Mr. Quinn."

Quinn arose and the butler promptly grasped his arm. As Quinn turned, those weird eyes of his were absorbing every detail of the huge living room. Its gilded, old-fashioned furniture was definitely worn out. The thick velvet drapes were ready to fall to pieces. There were multitudinous cracks in the window shades, some carefully patched. The rug was frayed. Everything spoke of lack of money to keep the place up.

That didn't seem to jibe with Adelaide's social standing and her overstuffed dignity. Quinn felt his hunch grow stronger. Something about this house and its haughty occupants concealed evil.

At the reception hall door, Silk took over and escorted Tony Quinn to the car.

"Can I," Silk begged, "bang that snooty butler right on the nose if and when we find out this bunch is mixed up with the murder somehow?"

CHAPTER IV

Intervention in Black



SOON after dark that night, Tony Quinn spoke softly to Silk who proceeded to lower all window shades in the study. Quinn arose from his chair near the fire-place and dumped ashes from his pipe. Then he tucked his cane under one arm and with long, firm strides he stepped up to what seemed to be a built-in book case and touched a spring. A door opened smoothly and he entered his lab.

Carol and Butch were there. Carol came forward immediately and Tony Quinn held her close for a moment. Butch chewed on a matchstick that seemed to be almost microscopic in his broad mouth, and he grinned broadly.

Neither Carol nor Quinn ever talked much about their affection for one another. As the Black Bat, Quinn's life was constantly in danger. Carol knew this; knew that their work took precedence over everything else.

"Silk phoned Butch and me," Carol said. "There's something up. I can tell by the gleam in your eyes, and I read the newspapers. It's the murder of Judge Bailey."

"That's it," Quinn smiled. "This time it's slightly different from our usual handling of a case. We may be following a trail that will melt away right in front of us. As you know, the Judge's murderer is under arrest. The question is, who or what caused him deliberately to murder Judge Bailey in such a manner as to give him no chance to escape."

"He's one of Flashy Hank's lugs," Butch opined. "Those guys are so dumb they never think of what'll happen after they do a job."

Quinn sat down on a leather davenport beside Carol.

"Captain McGrath's opinion exactly, Butch."

"Then let me change mine," Butch begged. "I don't even want to be caught thinking like that monkey."

"You and McGrath may be right," Quinn said. "Everything points to such a conclusion, but it points so unerringly I think something is wrong with the picture. Today I talked to Judge Bailey's sister, brother and nephew. The sister is as pompous as any ancient Roman empress. True, she has a high position in society. People who attend her annual party are made. The people she visits get their names in the Society Blue Book. Merely to know her is considered fortunate."

"I imagine she's a stuffed shirt," Carol offered.

"Indeed she is. The brother, Sidney, seems to be a hail-fellow-well-met. Besides, he is one of the most active philanthropic social workers I've ever heard of. Turns buildings into free hospitals, builds training schools for kids, creates playgrounds. Any big charitable project and Sidney Bailey are synonymous. He's always led an exemplary life."

"Sometimes," Carol mused, "those high-hat families have an awful lot of skeletons in the closet."

"I think I met one of those skeletons with flesh on his bones this afternoon," Quinn told them. "A nephew. His name is Morton Gates. His parents are dead and he acts somewhat simple-minded. Munches carrots all day to make his vision keener by night. That's because he likes to collect bugs."

Carol wrinkled her nose. "I don't want to meet him."

"They've got a butler I'm going to sock," Silk put in. "So hands off him, Butch."



Two heads came together with a thump that made other thugs retreat
(CHAPTER XII)

Butch just grinned and nodded.

"There's another skeleton," Quinn went on. "A brother named Rollin who vanished in broad daylight ten years ago. The Missing Persons Bureau has a file on him. He simply dropped out of sight one morning on his way to work. Never a word from him since."

"But, Tony," Carol said, "people disappear like that with no talk of scandal."

"Sure, but their folks usually exhaust every effort to find them. The Bailey family just forgot about him. The complaint to the police was made by Rollin's employers and his attorney. The family never even acknowledged he was gone."

"You want us to dig him up?" Butch inquired.

"It would help if you could," Quinn said. "The chances are too remote however. We'll concentrate on the Bailey family. Somehow I think there is something wrong there. Therefore, I arranged to lease a furnished house next door to theirs. Carol, you will move in tonight as lessee. Butch, you're a combination bodyguard and chauffeur. From that house you can observe the Bailey mansion easily. Check on all visitors, study the movements of the family if they leave the window shades up. My guess is, they will."

CAROL arose.

"We'd better get started, Butch. Tony, just why do you think the window shades won't be drawn?"

"They are so old and brittle I think they'd fall apart," Quinn said. "That's one of several things which puzzle me. The Bailey family is supposed to be wealthy. From the outside, that impression is carried out, but everything on the inside is worn out. I don't understand it, but I intend to. I'm going there tonight—wearing a black hood. This time someone is going to talk more freely."

"Where do I come in?" Silk demanded.

"Ah," Quinn told him, "I've an important job for you. Silk, you know how to disguise yourself effectively, in two or three ways. Also, you are known in the underworld as a confidence man. Patrol the gilt-edged cafes, where men like Flashy Hanks go. Make discreet inquiries about what the boys think of the murder. Keep out of trouble and be back by two A.M."

Quinn opened a steel locker and brought out the clothing he wore as the Black Bat. Everything was somber from the black crepe-soled shoes to a jet-black shirt. Carol and Butch departed, and Silk helped Quinn into the black clothing.

With the hood over his head, he studied himself in a mirror until satisfied there was no trace of Tony Quinn, scar-faced, blind man. He slid an automatic into a spring holster, tucked a compact kit of excellent burglar tools into a pocket, then removed the hood.

Traveling with this on would lead to quick detection so he substituted a wide-brimmed black hat which shadowed his features enough to hide the scars.

The Black Bat entered the tunnel, made his way to the garden house and took a quick look around before he emerged. It was pitch-dark, but his uncanny eyes swept away darkness easily. Certain no one lurked nearby, he walked toward the garden gate, let himself through and stepped up to a shabby coupé parked at the curb. Entering it, he drove to the Bailey home.

Parking the coupé conveniently nearby the Bailey house, the Black Bat exchanged the big hat for the closely fitting hood. He stepped from the coupé and was nothing more than a vague blur as he crossed the sidewalk and silently slipped through a tall hedge.

As he crossed the yard the rear of the big house, his abnormal eyesight served him well. He avoided clothes lines, several automatic lawn sprinkler units and a lawn mower. Things like these were vividly clear despite the darkness.

The Black Bat reached what he took to be a kitchen window. It was dark. He listened outside it a moment. If there had been any sound the Black Bat's keen ears would have heard it.

Opening the window was the work of only a couple of minutes with some of the burglar tools he carried. The Black Bat slipped through, closed and locked the window. Little details like that gave away an amateur.

Needing no illumination, he moved with absolute silence. Soon he heard voices. Proceeding closer to the room from which they emanated, he crouched behind a big chair and listened to some strange dialogue between Adelaide and Sidney Bailey.

"Whether you like it or not, Adelaide," Sidney said, somewhat harshly, "you must put on a good front at the funeral services."

"I shall manage, Sidney, and don't raise your voice to me. I don't like it. Neither do I like the prying of that blind assistant district attorney this afternoon. Above all, there must be no scandal."

"How could there be?" Sidney chided. "That happened ten years ago. There's no trace of Rollin and if Mr. Quinn becomes too inquisitive, I think I can manage to take care of him. We don't have to worry about a blind man."

"But I do and I shall continue to—"

She stopped talking very abruptly and Tony Quinn held his breath. Someone was walking rather noisily through the room where he was hidden.

THEN he heard a crunching sound. Morton Gates was chewing another carrot. He walked toward the room where his aunt

and uncle were talking.

"What do you want?" Sidney demanded angrily. "I told you to stay in your own rooms or go hunt those confounded bugs."

"Only wanted some money," Morton said in his odd staccato voice. "Twenty dollars to buy some equipment. I'll have it too—now."

"Here." Sidney apparently tossed him the money. "Keeping your mouth shut is an expensive business. Get out."

"Be back soon. Know where I can get the stuff I need. Let myself in. People moved next door tonight. Or going to. Saw servants fixing up the place."

"Morton," Adelaide said, though her voice was supposed to be soothing, it grated. "While you are hunting your terrible bugs, you might keep an eye on the place. We must know who our neighbors are."

"Scared of everybody, ain't you?" Morton seemed to gloat. "I'll peek in the windows. Depend on me. Can see like an owl at night."

Morton walked out the front door, his teeth closing on a fresh carrot as he passed by the Black Bat. This nephew had the actions of a simpleton and the shrewdness of a cunning brain. He had demanded twenty dollars and received it without much argument. Morton knew he could get money when he wanted it. Sidney Bailey knew it too. Somehow the nephew held an edge over the rest of the family. What Morton knew might prove interesting.

A moment after Morton departed, Sidney said:

"Adelaide, they're coming out tonight. Dr. Cooper and Melvin Nash."

"Why do they persist in visiting us?" Adelaide said angrily. "They don't belong in our class."

"But, Adelaide, they've been helpful," Sidney reminded her. "They took over all arrangements for poor Jasper, and the funeral will run smoothly. You've got to be nice to them."

There was no reply and a grimly strained silence settled over the mansion.

CHAPTER V

House of Secrets



IT HAD been the Black Bat's intention to show himself and demand some answers to a few questions, but now he was interested in the expected visitors. He took advantage of the time lapse to study the house at closer range.

He verified his first impressions. The furnishings were rich. At one

time this house must have been a veritable

show place. Now, however, the furnishings were so old and worn that almost everything needed to be replaced. Yet, with all their reputed wealth, the Baileys had made no attempt to renovate the place.

He made his stealthy way into what seemed to be a music room. There was a massive old-fashioned grand piano there, a faded gilt harp, and on the wall opposite the entrance was a heavily draped portrait.

The Black Bat reached up and gently pulled the drape cord. The velvet curtains parted to reveal an oil painting set in a recess in the wall. It was massive, and in an elaborately hand-carved frame.

Stepping close, the Black Bat saw the signature of a famous artist. This was a rare Rembrandt. He recalled then that the Bailey family were known to possess one of the world's greatest masterpieces. This was it. The painting was worth a fortune.

Then the Black Bat frowned and moved to one side. There was a bit of faint yellow light coming into the room from the hallway and it was thrown across the picture. Ordinary vision would never have noticed what the Black Bat's eyes saw. They detected imperfections in color harmony, slight irregularities that should be no part of a masterpiece.

This painting was a fraud. Good enough to fool many experts, but a bald fake for all of that. The Black Bat wondered if the family was aware that they no longer possessed the original painting. There was, of course, the rather remote possibility that the original was safely locked up somewhere and this clever fake hung in its place.

The Black Bat had no further time to consider this, for the doorbell rang and the butler was hurrying to answer it. The Black Bat slipped into the big living room and dropped behind one of the massive chairs.

The butler turned on some dim table and floor lamps. One stood close to the Black Bat's hiding place. Adelaide swept into the room, playing the grande dame. Sidney followed, smiling broadly and chatting with the two men who accompanied him.

"You will never know how much we appreciate your help, Doctor. And you too, Melvin. Taking all that unpleasantness out of our hands was a blessing. Neither Adelaide nor I could ever handle things half as smoothly."

The tall, slim man with a tiny goatee, the one who had been called "Doctor," smiled as he spoke.

"It's quite all right, Sidney. After all, we are more or less partners and have been for a long time."

"We're glad to help," the other man said. He was broad-shouldered, built like an athlete and his hair, cut Prussian style, stood up like harsh, new-mown grain stalks. He wore a gray sport suit and handled him-

self with the ease of a man in perfect physical trim. He, undoubtedly, was Melvin Nash. The sleek man with the professional manner would be Dr. Cooper.

The four sat down and plunged into a detailed discussion of the funeral services slated for the next day. Adelaide was insistent upon only one thing—proper decorum. Sidney seemed more worried about expenses.

The conversation took a fresh turn.

"Melvin," Sidney said, "the new hospital is coming along nicely. You picked a good spot. Convenient for the poor devils who will use the services. The equipment isn't bad either. Heaven knows the area needs a free hospital. Which reminds me—I've a phone call to make. Old Mrs. Griswold promised to set aside a not inconsiderable sum for us in her will. She said she would tell me the amount tonight."

Sidney passed within ten feet of the hidden Black Bat. Dr. Cooper picked up a book and skimmed through the pages. Adelaide just sat there, silent and aloof. Melvin Nash

hoarsely. "Get him!"

They began running forward. The Black Bat vaulted the porch rail and sprinted across the yard. Then another man, one with a gun, materialized from some shrubs and tried to cut off the Black Bat's retreat.

Other voices proclaimed that there must be half a dozen men here, and probably all were armed. Why, the Black Bat wondered, hadn't he spotted them on his way in? The only thing to do was run for it. Tangling with any one of these men might be disastrous, for there were enough others here to take him.

Apparently these men were guards and he had no wish to open fire at them, yet it seemed impossible to avoid a battle. They were closing in fast. He circled one who was trying to cut him off, realizing that his big advantage was that he could see where he was going and travel much faster than the guards. Only three of them held flashlights.

The man closest had a flash and while the Black Bat weaved crazily to avoid

The Phantom Detective at His Sleuthing Best in THE BOOBY TRAP MURDERS, Book-Length Mystery by Robert Wallace featured in the August issue of our Companion Magazine THE PHANTOM DETECTIVE—10c Everywhere!

arose and went wearily to one of the side windows, looking out into the darkness.

THE Black Bat was developing a severe cramp in the calves of both legs. He couldn't remain in this position much longer. He straightened up a trifle. As he did, out of the corner of his eye he detected a silvery gleam.

He was astounded to see a broad mirror on the wall tilted downward just enough for him to be visible in it. Only the fact that the room was in comparative gloom had saved him thus far. Any of the occupants of the room could have seen him if he had moved.

Adelaide's eyes were closed, as if she were utterly bored. Dr. Cooper was busy with the book and Nash had his back turned. Now was the Black Bat's opportunity. Silently he slipped from behind the chair, darted down the corridor and had reached a darkened room when Sidney returned from telephoning.

Keeping a wary eye out for the butler, the Black Bat reached the back door. He slid back a night bolt, turned the latch and stepped out onto the small back porch. Something moved in the darkness. He heard a gruff command and two big men started toward him. Both of these men had flashlights and instantly they were centered on the weird, black-hooded figure on the porch.

"The Black Bat!" one of the men barked

being spotted, now and then the beam caught him in its glare. Directly ahead was a high fence. If he could scale it before the guards closed in, he could run for the house he had leased for Carol and Butch.

The man behind him wasn't gaining, but neither was the Black Bat. The others were coming up rapidly. If the Black Bat attempted to climb the fence the man in the van would have him. There was nothing to do but stop that guard.

There was a big tree directly ahead. The Black Bat went past it, then circled it so fast that the guard's flash couldn't follow him. The next time that guard saw the Black Bat was at close range, with the Black Bat charging him full tilt, moving fast and almost soundlessly.

The guard made one attempt to lift his revolver, but a clubbed fist landed on his forearm, momentarily paralyzing it, and the weapon dropped to the ground. The guard let out a wild shriek for help. The Black Bat's fist pistoned straight into the guard's midsection, doubling him up. His chin was just as good a target. The Black Bat's fist crashed against it. The guard hurtled backward and landed with a crash.

In one minute more the Black Bat was over the fence and making a crouched run toward the back door of Carol's house. He didn't wait for someone to answer his knock. Instead, he applied a strip of flexible steel to one window and forced it open. He

climbed through, closed the window and called Carol's name softly.

Butch spoke just behind him.

"Gosh, boss, it was lucky you spoke just then on account of I was ready to smear you one. We heard a lot of yelling next door, but it's so dark—"

"Tony!"

Carol hurried into the room. She couldn't see the Black Bat, but he saw her easily and hurried in her direction.

"I'll explain later," the Black Bat said. "Right now I'm in a class with an ordinary sneak thief. The Baileys had guards planted around. I ran full tilt into a pair of them. They're bound to call the cops and I need a place of refuge. Please, kind lady, hide me from the cops."

"There's a storeroom upstairs," Carol said. "It leads off a clothes closet. Darnedest arrangement you ever saw, but handy at a time like this. Follow me, you black-hearted bandit."

"Better snap into it," Butch called from the front of the house. "I see the blinkers on police cars."

CAROL LED the Black Bat to the surprisingly well-hidden storeroom and he went inside. There, in the stuffy darkness, he sat on the floor with his back against the wall and frowned.

Sober reflection now told him that it was sheer impossibility for half a dozen guards to have been thrown around the Bailey place when he had made his entrance there. He would have seen or heard at least one of them. The possibility that they had come on duty after he entered the house was remote. Guards are for protection and it had been dark long before the Black Bat had made his stealthy visit.

Therefore, he reasoned, those men had been called in and had arrived only minutes before he exited. Someone in the house had contacted them. Sidney Bailey? He had gone to phone. Also the Black Bat recalled that Melvin Nash had stood looking out of a window. He could have signaled someone.

The Black Bat opened the door a crack. He could hear voices. He could hear Butch and picture him, in a monkey suit, bowing servilely to radio car patrolmen and probably two or more of the tough looking gentry who were guards next door.

He was right about that. And Dr. Cooper, Melvin Nash and Sidney Bailey were also present. Butch was patiently explaining that he had seen or heard no one and that it was impossible for anyone to slip into the house and hide.

Carol came down the wide staircase and Carol knew her rôle.

"May I be of help?" she asked.

"Well, lady," a patrolman said, "the Baileys next door had a burglar. The private detectives employed to guard the place almost landed him. We figure he might have slipped over the fence and is hiding right in the neighborhood. He ain't had time to go far and we've got the whole block covered."

"You may search my home if you think it is necessary," Carol told them. "What did your burglar look like?"

"Difficult to say, ma'am," one of the guards answered. "It was pretty dark. Big guy—six feet, I'd say, and hefty. He took a wallop at one of the boys and knocked him stiff."

"Oh, I'm so sorry," Carol sympathized. "Please search the house, Officer. I—I won't sleep unless you do."

They searched, and one cop even poked his head into the clothes closet behind which the Black Bat was hidden. Carol accompanied the searchers, and Sidney Bailey, beside her, became most attentive.

"We must have you over to dinner some evening," he said. "We're neighbors now, you know."

"Thank you, Mr. Bailey. First though, I must get settled. Moving into a house already furnished, in a strange city, has really taxed me tremendously. Will you tell me if you catch your burglar?"

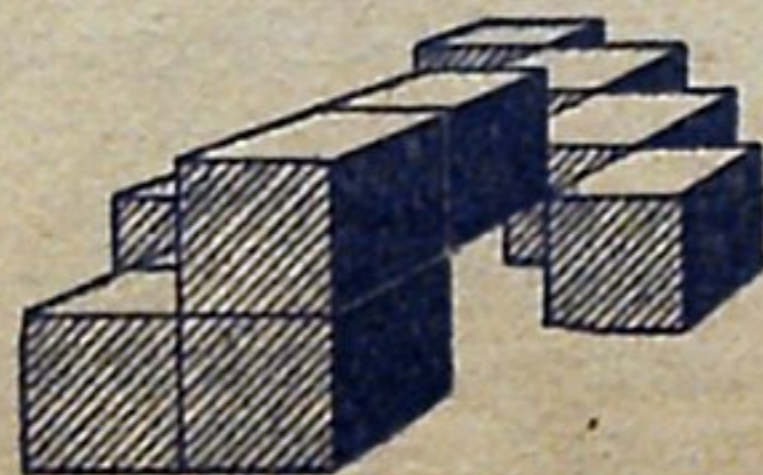
"I shall be delighted," Sidney said.

"Come on, Sid," Melvin Nash called. "We'd better continue the hunt before he gets clean away." [Turn page]

BRAIN TEASER

THIRST PLEASER

How many cubes in this figure?



ANSWER.
There are ten cubes in the figure.



CHAPTER VI

Murdered Witness

NOT until twenty minutes after the searchers cleared out, did the Black Bat emerge from his hiding place. He signaled Butch to pull down the window shades, then he stripped off the hood and wiped perspiration from his face.

"Hot in there," he commented. "Rather close call too. And it strikes

me as significant that those so-called private detectives didn't tell the police it was the Black Bat they spotted."

"Perhaps they didn't know," Carol said.

"They knew all right. One of 'em shouted the name to the others. Carol, that big house is a colossal fake. The Bailey family is broke. Otherwise, why wouldn't they re-furnish the place? And our friend Adelaide acts to me like a spider squatted plump in the middle of a web while she directs operations."

"Did you see the guy who was shining up to Carol?" Butch asked. "They called him 'Sid' so I figure he's the murdered Judge Bailey's brother. Anyhow I don't like him and I'm going to flatten him before this is over. What if he invites Carol to dinner and she has to go?"

Carol laughed. "I'd love to see the inside of that tomb next door and meet Adelaide."

The Black Bat sat down slowly and lighted a cigarette.

"Another odd thing," he commented, "is a fake Rembrandt hanging in the music room. It's an excellent fake—but a fake. The original Rembrandt has been supposed to be in the Bailey family for sixty or seventy years. It's gone now and I'd like to know where. I'd also like to know if the Baileys are aware that this one is a fake. I examined the portrait and frame closely. It's easy to see this particular canvas has been in the frame for years. It's a mystery—but everything about that family is mysterious."

"I hope," Carol said, "that Butch and I can get some kind of a line on them. From a back window upstairs you can look right into the house."

The Black Bat nodded. "Keep an eye on them. Watch out for Morton. He wears big specs and talks like a machine-gun, but his dominating characteristic is his love of raw carrots. He sounds like a machine-gun eating them too. Butch, see if the coast is clear. I've got to get out of here."

Butch made certain and soon the Black Bat carefully approached his coupé, glad he

had left it far enough from the house for it not to have aroused suspicion. He drove home at once, leaving the coupé in the side street and making his way, via the tunnel, into the house.

There he removed his Black Bat clothing, donned the more comfortable garb of Tony Quinn and while he switched clothes, he studied an ingenious system of tiny electric light bulbs in different colors which recorded any telephone call, doorbell rings or even anyone lurking outside windows. The board was clear.

Silk was absent, working in the underworld for clues as to the identity of the amnesia-afflicted murderer. With the house empty and Tony Quinn unable to establish the slightest trace of an alibi for himself, Captain McGrath could have had a field day had he known it. And there was always danger of McGrath dropping in with the hope of finding something like this.

Carol phoned twice, but had only one item of interest.

"We're supposed to be spying on the Bailey family," she complained good-humor-edly, "but that doesn't give the Bailey's leave to spy on us. Little Nephew Morton is studying our house through night-glasses. I had a good glimpse when someone switched on a light behind Morton while he was leaning out of the window."

"They're suspicious," Quinn told her, "and innocent people have nothing to hide."

Silk had even less to report when he returned in the early morning hours.

"I jogged around from one café to another, from dance halls to gambling houses. I listened a lot and talked little. From what I heard, the regular mugs are just as surprised as anybody else over the crude way Flashy Hanks pulled off his latest job. But they don't know the man who fired the shots. Some figure he's an imported torpedo."

QUINN, back in his pose of a blind man, tapped his cane for a moment.

"No, Silk. The man who shot Judge Bailey isn't a crook. He's a working man. No crook ever got himself a crop of callouses like those on his hands. I think that this man was honestly fired by some powerful motive and has no connection at all with Flashy Hanks. It was, of course, revenge for some wrong whether real or imagined, suffered by him or someone he loved. If we could only get that man's background!"

"His name would give us a good start," Silk commented drily. "This case has more angles than a geometrical figure."

"Too many," Quinn agreed quickly. "There's the amnesia victim and Flashy Hanks who has a good motive and the scummy brain to plot such a trick. There

are Adelaide and Sidney Bailey who act peculiarly. Finally—and perhaps the most important—Rollin Bailey who disappeared ten years ago.”

“What we’ve got,” Silk smiled, “is a four-in-one murder case. Any headway on either of these leads?”

“Very little. I’m not trying to run down Flash Hanks’ connection because I doubt it exists and anyway Captain McGrath is covering that from every possible approach. The man with amnesia is hopeless. If a hundred crack police detectives can’t trace him, neither can I. Adelaide and Sidney Bailey offer a little something. Also two of their friends whom I have to check on tomorrow. Rollin Bailey, the mysteriously missing, offers us the best immediate chance.”

“I don’t get it,” Silk said.

“Rollin Bailey,” Quinn told him, “vanished from sight on a busy downtown street. Men don’t disappear under circumstances like that unless they want to disappear. Everything points to the fact that Rollin went away voluntarily. Now tomorrow they’re holding services for Judge Bailey. If Rollin is alive and near enough he’ll be at the funeral services. So shall we, Silk. . . .”

After breakfast the next morning, Carol phoned again.

“Tony,” she said, “this is peculiar. Last night you were chased by men supposed to be private detective agency guards on duty at the Bailey house. But this morning Butch discovered, by some cautious inquiries, that the Baileys never had guards before and every detective agency in town denies sending anyone there.”

Quinn chortled. “How did Morton behave?”

“Right now he’s studying the house through glasses. A little while ago he caught up with Butch and pumped him for all he was worth. Butch handed him the line we agreed upon. And Sidney seems to have taken quite a shine to me.”

“Humph,” Quinn said. “Well, anyway keep up the good work, darling. See if a Dr. Cooper who wears a little Vandyke, and Melvin Nash, a burly, athlete addicted to sport clothes are frequent visitors.”

Silk had the car ready when Quinn left the house. He tapped his cane constantly and went down the front steps carefully, walking with the stiff erectness of the blind. Silk helped him into the car.

“First,” Quinn said, “we’re going to visit Sidney Bailey’s offices. I want to see the layout.”

“Does he actually work?” Silk asked, as the car rolled smoothly down the street.

“Indeed he does. For fifteen or twenty years Sidney Bailey has been active in important philanthropic work. He solicits

money from wealthy people and is amazingly successful. He arranges benefit parties, conducts newspaper campaigns for summer camps. The man does much good, Silk.”

Quinn sat erect, his eyes blank, his head immovable. Several times he heard traffic cops about a greeting and raised a hand and smiled warmly. Then Silk pulled to the curb before the big building where Sidney Bailey had his offices.

“I was just wondering,” Silk murmured, “if Sidney could be chiseling somehow. A lot of money must pass through his hands and sometimes his fingers might become sticky.”

“I doubt it,” Quinn replied. “This philanthropic organization is run by a board of which Sidney is active chairman. I suppose he gets expenses, but nothing else. The Baileys are supposed to be so wealthy they can afford to donate their time and effort to charity. But the books must be wide open. . . . Well, take me in. I’d like to spoil Sidney’s day if the funeral of his brother won’t do so. And from a couple of statements I overheard Sidney make, I don’t think the funeral alone will.”

THE philanthropic organization was handled like big business and maintained an entire floor of this large building. Inside, more than a score of stenographers and clerks were busy. Sidney had a private office, quite lavishly furnished, but in excellent taste.

“I wish there was some way I could deny you entrance,” Sidney greeted Quinn. “You being on the District Attorney’s staff, there simply isn’t so I have to make the best of it. What do you want?”

Despite his sarcasm, the fact that he was to attend his brother’s funeral shortly, and that his house had been visited by a burglar the night before, Sidney Bailey seemed to be in fine spirits. He acted like someone who has a secret, but won’t spring it until the proper time.

“It’s about your brother again,” Quinn said to him. “Rollin, I mean, who vanished ten year ago. His case is still on the police books and I intend to begin an intensive hunt for him. I may need your help.”

“Your brain is as blind as your eyes, Quinn. If my brother were alive, we would have found him before this. My sister and I exhausted every avenue to reach him. He is dead.”

“When I see his body or where he is buried,” Quinn said, with a shrug, “I’ll believe that. Look here, Mr. Bailey, your brother the Judge, was murdered under peculiar circumstances. Another brother disappeared without the slightest reason or trace of him from then on. The two events may be connected. You may be next.”

Sidney was getting set to spring his little

surprise. Quinn could sense it coming.

"Let me ask you this," Sidney said. "You refuse to believe that Flashy Hanks was responsible for the murder of my brother. Isn't that a fact?"

"Obviously," Quinn replied, and wondered what was coming next.

"Even though this Flashy Hanks has been known to have murdered witnesses against him before. Even though Hanks is the caliber of man who is capable of such a terrible deed. Even though everything points to Hanks, still you say there is something else."

"That's right," Quinn replied.

Sidney picked up a newspaper.

"This hit the stands about twenty minutes ago. I doubt whether you have had it read to you yet. Quinn, a blind man cannot act in the capacity of a detective. You ought to get wise to yourself and stop this nonsense. Have your man read an item in the paper to you."

Quinn hardly heard him. He was reading a brief news flash, neatly boxed on the front page. It stated that the eye-witness to the killing for which Flashy Hanks had been on trial had been found dead in his cell at City Jail—murdered.

All this Quinn saw in a flash, but Bailey didn't know it. Silk took the paper and read the item aloud. Quinn arose hastily. "Excuse me, Mr. Bailey. I'll see you later on. Silk, take me to the City Jail at once."

As the car headed downtown toward the jail, Quinn slumped in his seat.

"Sidney surely had the last laugh there," he commented. "Nailed my hide to the wall."

"Looks like Captain McGrath was right and we were wrong, sir," Silk offered dispiritedly.

Quinn gave a grunt. "So you're giving in already. Silk, I'm surprised at you. Even if McGrath gets a conviction against Hanks for this, I still won't believe it. Not entirely. Pull into the side entrance of the jail. I expect we'll find McGrath there and listen to some more gloating."

CHAPTER VII

Killer Car



A TURNKEY who knew Quinn well admitted him instantly. A guard piloted him to a private office where McGrath sat on the edge of a desk and beamed.

"Well, well," he said, "here comes the doubting Tony. So Flashy Hanks didn't knock off the judge by using that stooge who lost his memory. So

Flashy didn't do it to stall the case after we

dragged out our star witness for him to have identified. So Flashy didn't cause this witness to be murdered. Mr. Quinn, I'm surprised at you. In fact, I'm almost ready to change my ideas about you and a certain somebody else."

"Never mind the kidding." Quinn fumbled around for a chair. McGrath led him to one. "The least you can do is give me all the details."

"Brother," McGrath said, "they are some details too. Nobody except a rat with a mind like Flashy could have figured out this wrinkle. Somehow—we'll find out how pretty soon—the witness was passed a note written on very soft paper. The note told him that unless he insisted on being freed and then buried himself somewhere, his sister who lives in another city, would be killed.

"If he consented, there was fifty thousand dollars in it for him. The money would be paid twenty-four hours after he got out of the clink. He either got the note with his dinner tray or just before it was brought in. It told him if he agreed, to break the coffee cup and send the broken pieces out on the tray. That would be the signal. He was to chew up and swallow the note."

"If he swallowed it, how in the world did you read the thing?" Quinn asked.

"That soft paper was impregnated with a slow-acting poison," McGrath explained proudly. "I guessed it was something like that. Now the witness wasn't held here as a prisoner but only for safe-keeping so he was allowed to sleep as late as he wished. At mid-morning they tried to wake him up and found him dead. I had an autopsy done."

Quinn nodded. "And the doctors found remnants of the note in the dead man's stomach. Digestive action ceased upon death and it came early enough so the note wasn't destroyed. Remarkable work, Captain. My congratulations."

"Thanks," McGrath said. "The D.A. is having a nice laugh over the way you barged into the case. It's closed now, except to grab the monkeys who took Flashy's orders. We'll know who they are soon enough. A double warrant is being issued charging Flashy with a part in the murders of this witness and of Judge Bailey."

"Fine, Captain. I hope you can make Flashy talk, but I doubt it. But it seems to me that since all visitors to the jail are required to sign a register you should know who had a chance to slip the poisoned note to the witness."

"Oh, we didn't overlook that," said McGrath. "And since now we're all agreed that Flashy is behind the whole business, it won't make any difference if you know that Mrs. Adelaide Bailey was a visitor in the jail late yesterday afternoon."

Quinn exhibited none of the surprise he felt.

"Good heavens," he exclaimed. "What was a high society woman like her doing in this place?"

"It seems that her brother Sidney runs a lot of joints that are supposed to rehabilitate crooks and drunks and bums," McGrath explained smugly. "Well, one of the students—or whatever you call 'em—signed in yesterday noon charged with being drunk. As soon as he came out of it, he yelled for Sidney Bailey. I suppose Bailey was too busy to come so sent his sister who bailed out the rumpot and took him away."

"And I suppose Adelaide passed close by the cell where the latest murder victim was locked up?" Quinn said.

"Right by it, with a turnkey on her heels.

fooling around trying to pin the rap on somebody else while I had the right man locked up all the time. I wish . . . aw, why do I keep wishing the Black Bat had taken a hand, when he did? You're the Black Bat."

"Then why don't you give me the horse laugh?" Quinn asked good-naturedly. "Will I be seeing you at the funeral?"

"You will not. So far as I'm concerned, the case is all finished."

As Silk and Quinn passed down a corridor, Quinn spoke.

"Want to lay a little bet that Mac will be there, Silk?"

At two o'clock the church was jammed. People were lined up outside. Judge Bailey drew a considerable crowd in death. Most



CAROL

She didn't slip him that note, Quinn. Ain't you ever satisfied?"

"I just like to be sure." Quinn laughed. "Well, I guess that finished it so far as you are concerned. You and the D.A. I've got one more detail to take care of. This afternoon I mean to attend Judge Bailey's funeral."

"Why?" McGrath asked. "Don't you ever give up? Or maybe," McGrath dropped his voice—"it's a washout because so far the Black Bat hasn't stuck his oar in."

QUINN arose and instantly Silk was at his side to guide him.

"What the Black Bat does is not within my province, Captain," he said coldly. "I think he might have turned up some interesting facts in this case though."

"I wish he had. Yes, sir, this time he'd be

were people who knew and liked him, but there were the usual morbid throngs.

When the first of them had appeared, Silk had parked Tony Quinn's car at an advantageous spot. Silk lolled behind the wheel and Quinn sat rather rigidly beside him. His sightless eyes stared straight ahead—and missed nothing.

He constantly studied each new group, watched mourners who got out of expensive limousines. The services must have been half over when Quinn gave a sigh.

"It looks as if we've drawn a blank, Silk. Rollin Bailey would have come if possible. He is either dead or so far away that he hasn't learned of his brother's death or couldn't make the trip in time."

"Maybe it's all a bust," Silk offered without enthusiasm. "McGrath may be right. Flashy could have done the whole business."

"Sure he could have," Quinn agreed. "Perhaps he did, too, but that doesn't alter the fact that the surviving Baileys are hiding something. Silk, I heard them talking about their dead brother in a tone they'd have used in speaking of an utter stranger. I think both were glad the Judge is dead. Which reminds me—who swiped the letter Judge Bailey wrote just before opening court?"

"I guess there's no way of telling now, sir," Silk said morosely.

Quinn was thinking deeply. "And before court opened—I sat where I could watch the door to Judge Bailey's chambers. I must have seen all who went in or out. Somebody who did not emerge until after the Judge was on the bench could have done it. Now let's see—the bailiff came out first. Then Judge Bailey, followed by his clerk. That's it! The clerk! He seemed to be a bit slow in reaching the court-room. I'll have to—"

"Pardon, sir," Silk said gently, "but if you'll glance toward the hearse and then directly across the street to the opposite sidewalk, you'll see something funny."

Quinn looked. He saw a man pressed firmly against a branch library building across from the church. He was of medium height and build, but wore his hat brim pulled way down and he seemed to be shrinking within the collar of his coat. Only a small part of his features could be seen and from them it was impossible to make any identification.

"He just popped out of a taxi, sir," Silk said. "He told the driver to wait and the cab is parked about fifty feet this side of the man."

"If I could only think of some way to approach him," Quinn mumbled. "Just to get a close look. I've seen pictures of Rollin Bailey and if that man is the long-lost brother, he could be easily identified."

"I could drive past him slowly," Silk suggested.

"No—if that's Rollin, he'll scare like a rabbit. Anyway, I doubt we could see his face from the car. Be ready, when the services are over, to follow him if he goes off in that cab."

Adelaide and Sidney Bailey followed the casket from the church. Adelaide was heavily veiled and leaned on her brother's arm as if she expected to collapse from the strain of the ordeal.

"Silk," Quinn said, "will you look down the street and see what's pulled up? An ambulance no less—equipped with doctor and driver. Now I wonder what that's for?"

The funeral cortege was rapidly pulling away from the church. Oddly enough, the white ambulance fell into line also. The muffled-up man leaped into his taxi and this also fell in at the tail end of the cortege. Quinn watched all this in the rear view mirror which was specially adjusted to enable

a clear sweep of the rear.

"I'm going to find out whether or not that man is Rollin Bailey," Quinn said. "If he is, we'll follow him and later on the Black Bat can pay him a visit. When you get the chance, write down the numbers of the cab and a description of its driver."

The procession had a long way to travel, but finally it turned into the cemetery gates, rode to the top of a high hill and stopped.

The ambulance pulled in close to Quinn's car. The taxi stopped on the other side of the road and its occupant did not emerge.

A large crowd gathered around the open grave. Quinn's cane beat a soft tattoo on the floor of the car.

"We'll get out now," he told Silk. "Escort me toward the rear of the crowd, then walk away, as if searching for someone. I'll see if I can approach that taxi without making our mysterious friend suspicious. He probably won't pay much attention to an apparently blind man and I can get a good look at him."

Silk was a master at the art of deception, and when he left Quinn standing along at the fringe of the crowd, it seemed as though he really searched for someone at Quinn's orders.

Using his cane Quinn moved along the back of the crowd gathered around the grave. He brushed against a headstone and lost his balance. Arms and cane flew upward and he recovered himself, but when he started to walk again, he had accidentally reversed his course. Or so it seemed.

His pretense of being blind was a superb piece of acting, but actual blindness had been an efficient teacher. He almost fell down a slight embankment, but managed to stay on his feet, then start across the road. His cane felt the way as he headed directly toward the taxi. So far, the man inside had made no move to run for it.

Quinn thought he would accomplish this ticklish mission without much trouble. Then he heard the roar of a car motor. From the corner of his eye he saw a heavy car rolling fast, straight toward him. His first impulse was to jump, but he was supposed to be blind and shouldn't scare like that.

The car was gathering speed and seemed to be deliberately set to run him down. The services at the grave were over. Scores of pairs of eyes would be watching him. If he moved too fast, suspicion would grow that he wasn't blind and to keep up that illusion, Tony Quinn was willing to risk almost anything.

The car was close now, its radiator looking like the front of a sixty-ton tank. Behind the wheel Quinn glimpsed a face set in harsh lines, a strange face. And that driver meant to kill him!

Quinn wasn't even supposed to know the car was bearing down on him. He did in-

crease his pace a little, but to get across that road before the car hit him was impossible.

There was only one thing to do. Just before the car hit, when the watchers would be too excited to realize what happened, he might be able to throw himself forward and avoid the fender.

Someone screamed. The cry was taken up. There were shouts for him to jump. Quinn leaped at the precise instant when the car was so close as to confuse onlookers.

He felt the car brush his clothes. Some projecting part crashed against his side. A glancing blow, but it knocked him off his feet. He fell, arms and cane going out in all directions. Ordinarily, he could have taken that fall without injury, but luck was against him this time.

The cemetery road was bordered with white-painted rocks and when he fell, his head struck one of them. A private world of gyrating stars and planets spun madly through his brain, then he plunged into a complete blackout.

Even as he fell, the white ambulance was in motion. It slid to a stop beside him, long before the mourners reached his side. The white-coated doctor jumped out, bag in hand. He dropped to one knee beside Quinn, made a brief examination and reached into his bag. He drew out a hypodermic needle, thrust it home, then snapped an order to the driver.

A stretcher was rolled out. The doctor and the driver picked up Quinn and deposited him gently on the stretcher. The stretcher was rolled into the ambulance, the doctor climbed aboard and slammed the door.

CHAPTER VIII

Murder in the Making



IRBY found himself at the outer fringe of the excited crowd. He plunged headlong into it, fighting and pushing his way to the roadside. But long before he reached it, the ambulance was pulling away.

Silk wheeled, plowed back through the throng and streaked for his own car. Rather vaguely, he noticed that the taxi with the strange passenger had vanished, and the car which had run Quinn down had sped away at top speed.

Silk got behind the wheel, pushed the flat of his hand against the horn button and cleared a path. By now the ambulance

had disappeared too, but Silk travelled fast, using as much speed as he dared around the sharp bends in the cemetery road.

Half-way down, he saw the ambulance heading toward town. Silk flashed out onto the highway and prayed that nothing would block him. But there was quite a lot of commercial traffic. Trucks of all sizes got in his way.

The ambulance was using its siren, orders or no orders. Silk's face dripped perspiration. His lips kept moving in a prayer:

"Please let me catch them! It's a snatch. He may even be dead. That car hit him hard and even if he isn't dead they'll see to it he will die. I've got to catch up! I must!"

Ten minutes later Silk eased up on the gas. It was no use. The ambulance had easily outdistanced him and was nowhere in sight even though Silk could see along the ribbon of highway for two miles. He pulled over and stopped. He had to think. That Quinn had been deliberately run down and then kidnaped had, of course, not been apparent to anyone but Silk. He knew that, though, and it brought shudders to his slender body.

"Why was that ambulance with the funeral procession?" he asked himself. "The Baileys or whoever arranged the funeral ought to know. I've got to find that ambulance."

Silk drove back to the cemetery and found that the Baileys' had departed for home. He then proceeded to the nearest telephone booth, procured a handful of nickels and began calling all the hospitals in the phone book. If that ambulance had taken Quinn to a regular hospital, Silk would start tongues wagging by questioning the Baileys. People would want to know why he should show all this concern when he would naturally be notified where Quinn had been taken.

None of the hospitals knew a thing about it. Silk tried calling private ambulance concerns. There hadn't been any hospital name on the white vehicle. But here too, he met with no success.

Silk drove straight to the Bailey home then. He was tempted to try and contact Carol and Butch, but decided against it. The chances were too great and Carol would only worry.

The butler answered Silk's ring.

"I've got to see either Sidney Bailey or his sister—at once," Silk said.

"I beg your pardon." The butler looked down his nose. "The Baileys do not wish to see anyone. They just attended the funeral of their—"

"I know all about that," Silk snapped, "but if you don't want to take part in a funeral of your own—a star part—tell them I intend to see them."

The butler stepped back a pace. "I seem to recognize you. Yes—you are the servant

of that blind man who came yesterday. Sorry—the Baileys are never at home to servants. You may leave a message.”

Silk gave a forward jump to get his foot through the door. He wasn't quite fast enough. The heavy door slammed in his face. Silk swore, pushed the doorbell for five minutes, then realized it was no use. Yet the Baileys knew the answer to that ambulance and Silk meant to make them talk.

Against a set-up like this he felt helpless. Then Silk snapped his fingers, rushed back to the car and drove to a drug store. He telephoned Police Headquarters and got Commissioner Warner on the wire.

“This is Silk, Commissioner. Did you hear what happened to Mr. Quinn?”

“How is he?” Warner asked. “We had detectives planted in the crowd. They saw what happened.”

“I don't even know where he is. That was no accident. It was the most deliberate job of trying to murder a man I ever saw. A blind man at that, who couldn't help himself. Commissioner, I think he was snatched.”

Warner gasped. “But what gives you such an idea, Silk?”

“The car which ran him down was planted. So was the ambulance that carried him away. No hospital has any record of admitting him. I can't locate a trace of the ambulance. I tell you this was all fixed. The Baileys must know where the ambulance came from. It was part of the funeral procession. I tried to talk to them, but I can't get into the house.”

“Where are you now?” Warner asked sharply.

“At the corner of Malloy and Avenue B.”

“Wait there,” Warner said. “If the Baileys won't let us in, I'll use an axe on the door.”

“Hurry,” Silk begged. “They may go away. Mr. Quinn was getting too close to the truth of this case and somebody was afraid of him.”

“I'm leaving now,” Warner said.

WHILE Silk was madly running around in circles and getting nowhere, Tony Quinn recovered consciousness in the swaying, siren-shrieking ambulance.

He felt groggy. Not as a result of his fall, but a heavier feeling, as though he had been drugged.

The ambulance lurched around a corner and Quinn let himself roll half off the stretcher and made sure that he rolled on his arm. He felt a sore spot where a hypodermic needle had been thrust into the flesh. The doctor, seated beside him, gave him a rough push back onto the stretcher.

No physician, with the welfare of his patient in mind, would have been so rough. Quinn opened his eyes to slits. The doctor

was smoking a cigarette and paying little attention to him.

Quinn's eyelids closed. He was going to pass out. The full jolt of the narcotic hadn't hit him yet, but it was rapidly taking over. He battled against it but vainly. The jolting of the ambulance became a gentle rocking sensation. Things began to spin. With a long sigh, Quinn passed into a narcotic-induced coma.

He woke up again as he was being transferred from stretcher to a bed. The familiar odors of a hospital were prevalent and white-uniformed nurses and orderlies moved about. He was undressed and slipped into a hospital gown. Then someone was taking his pulse.

“He is totally blind,” the doctor who held his wrist said to the others in the room. To Quinn's ears he sounded miles away. “No, I don't know who he is. I gave him morphine—quarter grain. He'll come out of it soon and then we'll find out whom to contact.”

Quinn lapsed back into his semi-coma. Blissfully this time, for he realized that he must have been wrong about the doctor. He was being taken care of in a regular hospital. Perhaps he was hurt worse than he thought. It was best to rest anyhow, until the effects of the drug wore off. He hadn't been given a heavy shot.

He was dimly aware that someone raised his head and forced water between his lips. It tasted like nectar. After a time—Quinn had no idea how long—he opened his eyes wide. They stared at the ceiling blankly. Yet they saw everyone in the room although even the doctor who had been on the ambulance couldn't have noticed that.

“What—happened?” he asked hoarsely. “Who is near me?”

“Now just relax,” the doctor said in a soothing voice. “You were hit by a car.”

“I remember.” Quinn strained weakly against an arm that kept him from sitting up. “I heard the car. Someone shouted. I didn't know which way to jump. I'm blind. I—”

“Lay back and take it easy,” the doctor said. “We know all about that. In a little while we'll ask you some questions, then notify your people. Right now I want to make an examination. There are some contusions I don't like. My stethoscope, nurse, and we'll take his pressure.”

Quinn felt the canvas band being wrapped around his arm. At least he was in good hands, and yet it did seem odd. Certainly the car which struck him had been part of a murder arrangement. The ambulance had been almost too convenient. And when he had been alone in the ambulance with the doctor, Quinn hadn't received gentle care. Only a rough shove and complete disdain.

“Pressure not too good,” the doctor said softly. “Pulse low. Nurse, order an intravenous prepared. Glucose.”

Then the doctor was alone in the room

with him. The nurse and orderly had hurried away. Through slitted eyes Quinn saw the doctor walk to a window and stare out of it. He seemed to be nervous and Quinn began to feel the same way. He didn't trust this doctor. The man's eyes were too small, too beady. There was a perpetual downward curve to his mouth. He was also far too agitated, as if he had a task to do and didn't like it.

Quinn carefully moved so that he could grasp his left wrist with his right hand and take his own pulse. It seemed to be normal. He was certain that doctor had lied. He worked muscles all over his body. There was no undue soreness. What was the doctor worried about? Internal injuries which might demand the use of a glucose intravenous created pain.

Quinn tried to sit up.

Instantly, the doctor rushed over and pushed him back.

"Either you'll relax, old fellow, or I'll give you another shot in the arm."

"Am I hurt badly?" Quinn asked.

"We don't know yet. Later on, we'll take X-rays. There are probably internal injuries. I saw the accident. You were knocked down pretty hard and your head struck a stone. There may be a concussion. If so, you might experience a certain amount of shock so we're going to take no chances. I've ordered some glucose which I'll inject into your veins to prevent shock."

"Thank you," Quinn said in a petulant voice, still acting the part of a blind man. "It won't hurt me, will it?"

"Just the prick of a needle. Now be quiet, will you? There will be plenty of time to talk later on. Don't you realize you had a narrow escape?"

QUINN relaxed and wondered if he were a fool for suspecting this doctor. Most certainly he was on the staff of this hospital. How could he take steps to silence the inquisitive brain of Tony Quinn permanently? It was absurd to think of such a thing. This was a regular hospital. His sudden demise would start an immediate investigation and doctors aren't fooled—not even by rare poisons.

An orderly brought in a large glass jar containing the sterile glucose solution. The nurse went to work also, as soon as she entered.

The bottle was suspended above Quinn's head. A rubber tube led from it and the tube ended in a large, hollow needle.

"All right," the doctor said. "You both may go now. I'll take care of this man. See to the case in one-o-six."

"Yes, Dr. Malloy," the nurse answered. She and the orderly departed.

Dr. Malloy lifted the glucose bottle from its perch and took the thing out of the room

for a moment. He returned and after setting it up again, prepared to give Quinn the injection.

He swabbed alcohol on his arm.

"One can't be too careful with glucose," he explained. "I thought I noticed a bit of sediment in the bottle so I exchanged it for another. Now, in just a minute, we'll make you feel better."

Quinn was rapidly reaching the point of desperation. This doctor was up to something. When he removed that bottle of glucose solution from the room, he could have poisoned it.

Quinn wondered why Silk hadn't arrived. That also made him sweat. If Silk couldn't find him, then he had been rushed to this hospital and the fact kept secret. Nothing short of that would have kept Silk away. Then too, the doctor had been in a strange rush to take Quinn away from the scene of the crime, giving Silk no opportunity to accompany the ambulance. All in all, Tony Quinn thought he had something to worry about.

"Doctor," he said, "don't you think I should get my own physician here? After all, serious cases demand a consultation. Not questioning your skill, of course, but—"

Dr. Malloy went on with his preparations. "What I intend to do is a simple emergency procedure to avoid shock from injuries such as yours. Later I'll send for your own doctor and any number of specialists you care to call. Frankly though, unless X-rays show anything, you'll be discharged tomorrow or the next day.

"But I don't like injections," Quinn declared. "I refuse to let you administer one. That's what you intend doing. I felt the alcohol swab on my arm."

"Be quiet," the doctor chided. "Anybody would think this was a major operation. Here comes the needle. It won't hurt . . . ah . . . it's done. Now I'll start the flow of the solution. It will take about half an hour before you get enough. Just lie still and stop worrying."

Quinn couldn't stop worrying. This was murder in the making and he was the victim. He was certain of it. If this solution about to flow into his veins contained poison, Tony Quinn was doomed.

Quinn couldn't afford to risk it. He got ready to put up a battle, even if it meant he had to reveal that he wasn't blind. Tony Quinn didn't mind dying. He expected to take risks when he had taken up his Black Bat career. But to lie here and patiently allow a murderer to operate was more than he could stand.

His right hand doubled into a fist. Dr. Malloy was reaching for the valve just below the glass bottle.

If anything was to be done, the next second or two would decide things.

CHAPTER IX

Intravenous Death

WITH Police Commissioner Warner beside him, Silk ran up on the porch of the Bailey house and put his finger firmly against the bell button and held it there. Hurrying feet approached and the door opened. The butler's haughty manners switched to plain aggression.

"I told you stay away from here," he barked.

Warner stepped up. One hand shot out and grasped the butler by his vest. He shook the man until his teeth rattled.

"Take us in to see Adelaide or Sidney Bailey and be quick about it or you'll land in a jail cell. I'm the Police Commissioner."

The butler glared at Silk and Warner, but led the way into the house.

"If this stalling means any danger to Mr. Quinn," Silk said, "so help me, I'm going to put that snooty butler on a morgue slab."

"Just what is the meaning of this?" Adelaide Bailey came out of a room and blocked the way. "I instructed my butler to allow no one to enter. My brother was buried this afternoon. I—"

"I know all about that," Warner said. "I'm the Police Commissioner. I want to know why an ambulance was necessary to the funeral cortege this afternoon? Your honest answer to that question is vitally important."

"Why, my brother Sidney thought I might not be able to stand the strain. I'm not well. He thought if the ambulance was there and anything happened I would get immediate attention."

"Where did the ambulance come from? What hospital or ambulance service?"

"It came from one of my brother's charity hospitals. In fact, it is named after my family. The Bailey Hospital on Orchard Street. It caters only to the needy."

"Let's go," Warner snapped, and with Silk beside him they ran out of the house.

Warner held the siren wide open. Rules against this meant nothing now. Warner was as apprehensive as Silk. They made the long ride downtown in record time. Warner barged into the hospital.

To a clerk in the office, he showed his credentials.

"A blind man, struck by a car, was brought in a short time ago. Have me taken to him at once."

The clerk, propelled by Warner and Silk, each of whom gripped one of his arms, led them up a flight of stairs, along a corridor and as they approached a closed door, they heard Tony Quinn's voice and recognized

the note of worry in it.

Warner grasped the doorknob and turned it. The door was locked. He pounded on the panels.

"Open up in there! This is the police."

Silk heard a gasp of astonishment. The door was unlocked and swung open. A white-uniformed doctor stared at them. Silk brushed him aside and rushed to the bedside.

"Mr. Quinn," he cried, "are you all right? Are you hurt badly?"

"Silk," Quinn whispered, "pull that needle out of my arm. Careful now. I don't want any of the solution to enter my veins. One more minute and I would have been a dead man—I think."

Silk removed the needle with a single jerk that made Quinn wince. He sat up, swung legs over the side of the bed and stood up. There were sore spots on his body, a lump on his head, but otherwise he seemed to be whole.

"Whew!" Silk sat down on the bed and felt like reclining on it. "I thought they'd finished you off."

Warner took Quinn's arm. "We certainly did a rush job of it. If you were taken here against your will or mistreated, I'll have the place closed up. Just say the word."

Quinn turned his sightless eyes in Warner's general direction.

"I was taken here unconscious. I was considerably frightened, but I don't see how this is a matter for the police. Unless you want some information about the car which struck me. Did it crash?"

"It kept right on going," Warner grumbled. "Hit-and-run stuff. Silk seemed to think you were in danger."

Quinn frowned. "Why, I seemed to be in good hands except that I was scared, as I told you. After all, I can't see. I had no one here whom I knew."

"Then this business had nothing to do with the fact that you were investigating the murder of Judge Bailey?"

"Of course not," Quinn replied, with a show of surprise. "Call in Dr. Malloy. He attended me. He was on the ambulance. Perhaps he can give you the extent of my injuries."

"I'll get him," Warner said and hurried out the door.

"Silk," Quinn said softly, "take down that bottle over the bed. Pour some of it into anything you can find. I want a sample of the stuff. Hurry, before Warner gets back."

"Then you were snatched?" Silk whispered.

"You bet I was snatched," Quinn replied. "Hurry with that bottle."

WARNER returned wearing a puzzled expression. Silk had already taken a sample of the glucose solution.

"That's odd," Warner said. "Dr. Malloy is

an interne here. As soon as we entered the room, he hurried to his quarters, threw part of his possessions in a valise and now he's vanished."

"That's too bad," Quinn remarked. "He treated me very kindly. Commissioner, did you actually believe one of the Bailey family arranged all this because I was trying to prove that Judge Bailey was murdered—but not by Flashy Hanks' orders?"

"I did," Warner grunted. "Silk was so frightened. Tony, you must realize the Bailey family had nothing to do with the death of the Judge. The witness against Flashy was murdered so it is quite evident that Flashy had the Judge killed to gain time enough to dispose of the witness."

"Captain McGrath told me all about it. Maybe you're right too. Anyway I don't feel much like investigating mysteries. Not now. My head hurts like blazes. Do you mind if Silk takes me home, Commissioner?"

"I'll take you both home," Warner said. "I wish I knew why that doctor ran away."

Back in the security of his own house Quinn gratefully took the drink which Silk mixed and proffered.

"If I sweated all that blood for nothing," he said, "I'm going to be pretty sore at myself."

"They were going to kill you," Silk said confidently. "Otherwise, why did that doctor beat it?"

"It does seem logical to assume he didn't

want to be questioned. But if we find no trace of any poison in the sample of solution, we have nothing to base any such ideas upon, Silk. I was struck by a car, the ambulance was handy, and with a logical reason for being there. I was unconscious. The doctor did what he thought best. Maybe we'll never know if he had homicidal intentions."

"That hospital," Silk said pointedly, "is run by Sidney Bailey."

Quinn whistled. "It must be one of those charity places he's interested in. I thought the furnishings were rather cheap and plain. Draw the shades, Silk, and then stay on guard. I'm going into the lab for about an hour's work."

That intended hour was drawn out to four. It was dark when Quinn emerged and his lips were tightly set. He called to Silk.

"I ran the sample of glucose solution through every test for poisons. There were none. Not the slightest trace."

"Then we were wrong," Silk sighed.

"Wait! I said there was no poison, but if that solution had ever entered my veins, I'd have been dead by morning. On nothing more than a hunch, I removed the sugar from the solution and tested the balance for purity. Water used in glucose intravenous injections must be triple distilled. As free of foreign matter as water can be. The solutions must be prepared under highly sanitary conditions also. The water used in the solution I was

[Turn page]

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supposed to get was nothing but common, ordinary tap water."

"Is that bad?" Silk asked.

"As bad as if it were loaded with arsenic. Impure water in the veins causes a condition resembling shock from surgery or violent accident. In my case Dr. Malloy would have certified I had died as a result of the accident. Any reputable physician would have agreed. This insidious manner of killing a man leaves no trace. Even autopsy would do little good in detecting it. The surgeon who performed it would have to suspect murder and the means used in accomplishing it."

"And they were going to do that to a man they thought was stone blind," Silk said between his teeth. "You were very lucky, sir."

"In more ways than one," Quinn said grimly. "I'm grateful that you saved my life and yet I'm also glad it all happened."

"You're glad they tried to murder you?" Silk asked in amazement.

"I am. If this attempt hadn't been made, I might have believed as everyone else does—that Flashy Hanks was responsible for the whole business just as the evidence indicates. Now I know that someone—and that may include the Baileys—is afraid of me. Afraid of Tony Quinn, who stuck his nose too deeply into a well-concealed murder. They tipped their hand and we're going after them, Silk. This time it won't be as Tony Quinn, but as the Black Bat."

CHAPTER X

Dead Man's Letter



EDWARD JACKSON lived alone in an apartment that seemed rather expensive for a court clerk. But Jackson liked the good things of life even if he was not smart enough—and was much too lazy—to get them.

He wasn't sleeping well these nights. Not since Judge Bailey had been shot to death. Tonight

he found himself even more nervous than usual. Once he was certain he had heard a creaking sound somewhere in the living room.

It required all the courage he could summon to open the bedroom door and look around. He switched on a light. Nothing was disturbed. No further sounds reached him. He shrugged and went back to bed.

Calling himself an idiot, he closed his eyes and tried to sleep. He had no idea how much time had gone by when someone touched him lightly on the shoulder. With a smothered scream, Jackson sat bolt upright.

"I wouldn't yell for help," a quiet voice informed him. "Because if the screech you'd like to let out doesn't hurt your vocal cords, my hands will. Prop that pillow up and sit back. We've something to talk about."

Jackson strained his eyes in the darkness. All he could see was a dim, weird form seated in an easy chair about ten feet from the bedside. The form moved and a night lamp flashed on. Jackson gave another strangled scream.

"You—you're the Black Bat!"

"We'll dispense with formalities," the Black Bat said. "Jackson, you're an odd sort of person. You have discovered a way to live like a king on the salary of a court clerk."

"Wh-what do you mean?"

"Well, this apartment costs a hundred and a quarter a month. You eat where the dinner check comes to around five dollars. You bought four suits of clothes six weeks ago. Four suits, four hundred dollars. How do you accomplish it, Jackson, on a salary of thirty-eight dollars a week? A salary which is little more than you've been getting for nearly eleven years now."

"I—I've had a little luck. In—ah—playing the horses. Is that a crime?"

The Black Bat held a small red-covered book in his hand and he idly flipped the pages.

"This is your bank book, Jackson. It's pretty solid evidence that you're a liar. Three months ago your balance was less than two hundred dollars. Then it rose to five hundred, to seven hundred and fifty, to nine. It kept on rising until it is now considerably over a thousand. Thirty-eight dollars a week doesn't compound that fast. Neither do the horses. Not with such amazing regularity."

"That's my book." Jackson reached for it. "You can't take that."

"But suppose this book got into the hands of, say, the Chief Court Clerk. He might ask questions."

"What do you want?" Jackson demanded.

"Just a trifling bit of information. What did you have on Judge Bailey, Mr. Jackson? Why did he pay you blackmail?"

"I don't know what you're talking about!"

"Now, now," the Black Bat chided. "Remember the bank book."

Jackson slumped back against the pillow.

"I didn't have anything on him. I don't expect you to believe that, but it's the truth."

"And do you expect me to believe that he paid you blackmail for nothing?"

"He—thought I knew his secret, but I swear I didn't. I was assigned to Judge Bailey weeks before he took office. Hardly more than a week passed after I met him when he told me I wouldn't be needed any longer. That he wasn't going to become a judge at all. I—figured he was in trouble

and I told him he'd better not resign or I'd spill the beans."

"Ah—sheer bluff," the Black Bat grunted. "Then what?"

"Judge Bailey made me promise to keep quiet. He must have figured I knew everything about him, probably had read a lot of personal papers that were around. He paid me—several hundred dollars. I held him up for more and I got it."

THE Black Bat's eyes burned through the slits of his hood. "So far," he said, "you've told a good story. I believe it's the truth, up to a certain point. Two more things. You made the largest deposit of all this morning. Judge Bailey didn't give you that money. Who did?"

"I don't know!" Jackson wrung his hands. "I can't see any reason for talking to you. You're no policeman. You have no authority. Why, the police have been after you for months! I won't talk any more. You can't make me."

"Oh, can't I?" The Black Bat idly tossed the little bankbook into the air and caught it deftly. "I could get rough with you, Jackson, but I'm not inclined to exert myself over small fry. But if I phoned the Chief Court Clerk—"

"All right," Jackson interrupted resignedly. "Someone contacted me a week ago. By phone. He said if I'd cooperate, there was a lot of money in it for me. He told me if I didn't, certain parties would hear that I'd been taking cash from Judge Bailey."

The Black Bat showed none of the elation that surged through him. Whoever had contacted Jackson had been in the confidence of Judge Bailey! The Judge would hardly be apt to broadcast the fact that he was paying blackmail to anyone except close friends—or relatives.

"My orders were to watch what the Judge wrote, whom he called, and where he went. Just before Judge Bailey was to open court he wrote a letter and told me to see that it was delivered."

"A letter to the Chief Justice." The Black Bat nodded. "Yes, I know he wrote such a letter. Well, what did it say?"

"Judge Bailey resigned. I—I picked up the letter and stuck it in my pocket. Every night I'd receive a phone call from this certain party. The night of the murder I told him I had the letter and I wanted to be paid off. So he gave me money for the letter."

"And this certain party—what did he look like? The truth, Jackson, or so help me, you'll be the sorriest man on the face of the earth."

"I never saw him," Jackson groaned. "I swear I didn't! We met in a public park at one in the morning. The spot where I was told to wait was as dark as pitch. This

man came up. He talked like his mouth was full of mush. I just handed over the letter and got my money. Then I went home."

"A petty little grifter, aren't you?" The Black Bat said. "However, I think you have told the truth. You assumed Judge Bailey was going to resign because something would come up to ruin him. You guessed that from the way the Judge acted and talked. You obtained your blackmail by convincing him you knew his secret. In reality, you knew nothing at all. You're positive of that?"

"Honest, when he came through with cash, I was more surprised than I'd ever been before in my life. I—was in debt. And when money was offered to me like that . . . Black Bat, what are you going to do about this?"

"I'll give you back your bankbook." The Black Bat flipped the book onto Jackson's bed. "Tomorrow you will tender your resignation. If you ever enter upon a job involving personal integrity, I'll see to it this whole story is made known. Now go back to sleep—if you can."

The Black Bat drove to the neighborhood where he had leased the house next door to the Bailey home. He removed the hood, donned the wide-brimmed hat and walked along the deserted street to Carol's house. He was instantly admitted.

"Am I glad to see you!"

Carol took his arm and led him into one of the small rooms where curtains were drawn and heavy drapes affixed so that it was impossible for a peeping Tom to see a thing.

"Has something happened?" the Black Bat queried.

"Sidney Bailey came over to see me tonight. I'm invited to dinner, Tony. Tomorrow night. What am I going to do?"

"Go, by all means," the Black Bat said. "Butch can keep an eye open in case there's any trouble. In fact, I could think of nothing that works in with my plans quite so well. While Sidney entertains you, I'll entertain myself in his offices. Somehow, I think his bookkeeping will be quite interesting."

CAROL smiled meaningly.

"I'll keep him away from the office. Tony, what else has happened?"

"I found out about the note which Judge Bailey wrote just before he got onto the bench. It was his resignation, effective at once."

"But what does that mean?"

"Judge Bailey was not a judge when he mounted the bench. He was a plain civilian about to denounce someone. He must have waited until he was very sure, and the denunciation was going to be as painful to him as to the people he was about to expose."

"Then you no longer even suspect that Flashy Hanks was behind the murder?"

"I never have believed it. The thing wasn't handled as one of Flashy's men would have done the job. Not even when the star witness against Flashy was killed, was I inclined to change my mind. That murder was committed to throw more suspicion upon Flashy."

"Do you know what the Judge was about to reveal?"

"No, I haven't even a glimmer of an idea. His family may or may not be involved. I think they are because of his delay in making the exposé. Still, when you call a family like the Baileys crooks and murderers, you stick your neck too far out. Sid Bailey has a couple of friends I'd be more inclined to give those tags. I checked up on them earlier this evening."

"You mean that doctor and the man who looks like a professional football player?"

Carol leaned forward and took a light from the Black Bat's match. Both puffed on their cigarettes contemplatively for a moment.

"Dr. Allen Cooper is the one with the Vandyke," the Black Bat explained. "He graduated by the skin of his teeth and must have realized that if he went into regular practise, he might fumble. Therefore, he attested himself a psychoanalyst."

"In other words," Carol said judiciously, "he selected a field where fumbles don't show up quite as badly as a patient dead from improper treatment."

"Precisely. For a time Cooper did well, too—on sheer bluff. But bluff works only so long, and he began to slip. He still has a lucrative practise, however, but devotes a great deal of his time to Sid Bailey's enterprises."

"The philanthropic organization Sidney runs?"

"That's it. Dr. Cooper supervises Sidney's charity hospitals. Melvin Nash is an architect, and a rather well-known polo player. He is supposed to have money, but his bank accounts don't show anything exceptional. The man lives high. So does Dr. Cooper. Nash plans new institutions, buys old places, turns them into hospitals, nurseries, rehabilitation centers and things of that nature. Still and all, it's hard to believe that they could be pulling anything in Sidney's hospitals or other charitable institutions that would fool the Board of Visitors. Unless—there was graft involved where they were concerned."

"Tony," Carol said, "do you suspect these men of planning the murder of Judge Bailey?"

"Someone planned it." The Black Bat shrugged. "Not Mr. Amnesia, who actually pulled the trigger. He was just a cog in the works. An interesting cog however. I

mean to delve into his subconscious within the next couple of hours . . . Say, where is Butch?"

"Parked in back somewhere watching for my devoted little friend Morton Gates. Morty is an unwholesome pest. Under pretense of looking for bugs, he keeps doing his best to peek in the windows. Butch has sworn to teach him a lesson if he tries it again."

The Black Bat arose. "See to it that Butch is around when you visit the Baileys. I can't see how they'd suspect you, but we can't take chances. I'll get in touch with you in the morning."

"And you'll be busy the rest of the night?" Carol asked.

"Yes, but not as the Black Bat. I've an appointment to meet a psychiatrist in an hour. We're going to try and snap Mr. Amnesia out of his mental fog by using hypnotism. Captain McGrath thought of that, too, but I suppose he figured there was so much evidence against Flashy Hanks, that it was not worth bothering with."

Carol accompanied him to a side door.

"Good luck, darling. I hope you get something on Sidney before tomorrow night. I've a feeling I won't enjoy having dinner at the Bailey house."

CHAPTER XI

Who Is Ina?



QUINN, on Silk's arm, walked down the corridor of the hospital where the murderer with amnesia was a prisoner. A noted specialist was waiting. He greeted Quinn affably. They started toward a room guarded by a policeman.

Tony Quinn's eyes were straightforward, but as he turned to enter the

room, they saw a rather startling thing. Dr. Malloy, the interne at Bailey's charity hospital—the man who had tried to murder Tony Quinn—was ambling up the corridor.

Dr. Malloy suddenly came to an abrupt halt and half turned as if to run for it. Then he shrugged. After all, a blind man wouldn't see him. He kept approaching, but warily.

He didn't seem sure about Silk.

Quinn gave no evidence of his excitement, but before he stepped up to the bed where the prisoner lay, he whispered to Silk:

"Outside—Dr. Malloy—you saw him at the other hospital. He's here in his white uniform. Get Carol to send Butch over. I want Malloy trailed when he leaves."

"Yes, sir," Silk said casually. "I'll attend

to the matter at once. A little to the left. There's a chair . . . That's it. Now you may sit down, sir."

Quinn fumbled around, found the chair, pulled it forward, and sat down.

"Will the patient please speak?" he implored.

"Patient?" the man in bed growled. "Prisoner, you mean. They don't care whether I live or die. They've asked me a million questions. They said they didn't believe I couldn't remember anything. They brought in some man named Flashy Hanks and told me to identify him. How could I? I don't even know who I am. Maybe Flashy Hanks is a friend of mine, but I don't know. All I do know is that I'm being tortured."

"It isn't pleasant," Quinn told him in a soothing voice. "However, if you really want to remember the past and give us cooperation, we may solve the mystery of who you are."

The patient-prisoner sat up. "I'll do anything you say. I . . . No! Why should I? They say I murdered a man. A judge, no less. Maybe I don't want to know why I did it. Maybe I am afraid of the past."

"We can't help you without cooperation," Quinn said patiently. "Yes, you murdered Judge Bailey. No one can deny that. If you don't recover from this amnesia, it will mean a life term in an insane asylum. If you do recover, it may mean the electric chair but, amnesia or not, I believe a man knows whether or not he has the instincts of a murderer."

"What are you trying to tell me?" the patient exclaimed.

"That there may have been extenuating circumstances. Something which may lead a jury to realize you were mentally befogged at the time of the killing. They may recommend mercy and you might get off with a light sentence. Especially if you were egged into this murder by someone else and you testify honestly. To do that you must remember the past."

The man in bed twisted his lips. "Quite a gamble, isn't it? As long as I can't remember anything, I'm in no danger of losing my life. If I agree to something which may restore my memory, I might get the electric chair. Why don't you just go ahead and give me that treatment whether I consent or not?"

"First," Quinn said, "let me give you my opinion. You are not a killer. You did shoot Judge Bailey, but there must have been some important reason why. Something which drove you out of your mind temporarily. The fact that you pumped seven shots at him indicates a rage beyond the control of common sense. Yes, it is a gamble. I promise nothing. To accomplish this, it is necessary that you freely agree to the treatment. It is hypnotism. This

other man in the room is an eminent doctor."

"Hypnotism!" The patient exhaled sharply. "You mean while I'm hypnotized I'll talk? Answer questions about my past and my identity?"

The doctor stepped up to the bedside.

"Precisely. It may be that I can permanently remove the mental fog. When you awaken, you may know everything. However, unless you want to be hypnotized, I cannot treat you. It is impossible to put a man under who does not trust the operator or who had reasons for not wanting to be treated. It is up to you."

THE patient sat erect. Little drops of sweat stood out on his forehead.

"I'll do anything you wish. Anything! I can't stand this endless questioning. Police and doctors. More doctors and more detectives. You're right—I wouldn't kill just for the sake of killing. They tell me I did it for money. That's a lie! I want to prove it. Go ahead—I'm ready."

"Lie back, please," the psychiatrist suggested gently. "There is nothing to fear."

"What if—if something should happen to you while I'm under?" the amnesia victim asked nervously.

"You would wake up of your own accord. There must be no doubts. If you do not trust me, if you do not wish to be hypnotized, the greatest hypnotist in the world couldn't put you under. Relax now."

The psychiatrist had set up a small but rather powerful light above his patient's head. He turned this on. There were no hand passes, nothing but a soothing voice which instilled confidence.

"You are going into a deep sleep," the psychiatrist said. "A very deep sleep, but you may awake when you wish. Don't be afraid. Hear only my voice. Nothing else exists in this room—only my voice. You are sleepy. You will hear only what I say. You will obey only me. Relax . . . sleep . . ."

Tony Quinn's apparently sightless eyes watched the weird procedure. This was hypnotism shorn of its old glamour and terrors. It was merely the suggestion of a strong will that the patient fall asleep.

"He is under, Mr. Quinn." The doctor looked up with a smile. "Remember, I am a physician. Whatever this man says will remain a secret so far as I am concerned. Now, what did you wish me to ask him?"

"His name—his identity."

"I'm sorry. In a case of amnesia, I don't believe he will respond. It must be something which has preyed on his mind. Some great worry. But I'll try if you insist."

"No—find out what has been worrying him. What made him angry beyond all reasoning. Go into his past. I want to find out why he shot Judge Bailey."

The psychiatrist turned to the sleeping man.

"We are going back into the past. You can remember things. Someone you loved. Someone you hated."

"Ina," the sleeping man mumbled and Quinn leaned forward quickly. "Ina, what have they done to you? She's dead! Ina is dead. They've killed her. It's murder. Cold-blooded murder."

Perspiration stood out on the sleeping man's face in great beads. His hands curled and uncurled, his whole body twitched in subconscious excitement.

"Ina . . . dead. Murdered. They killed her just as if they'd used a knife."

"Is Ina your wife?" the psychiatrist asked gently.

"No—no . . . my wife died . . . long ago. Ina is . . . Ina . . ."

"Your sister?"

"Have no sister. Have nobody now. Ina is dead. They killed her. Beasts. Beasts in white, that's what they are. Killers . . ."

The sleeping man had been unnaturally tense. Suddenly his body grew limp and his breathing changed from rapid gasps of mental agitation to slow, hardly discernable breaths.

The psychiatrist shrugged and straightened up.

"He seems to have fallen into a natural sleep. The man is, of course, exhausted. We didn't help his condition any, but I'm sure there will be no serious effects. Did you get what you wanted, Mr. Quinn?"

"I don't know," Quinn confessed frankly. "I'd hoped for a great deal more, but it may help. This girl named Ina—it's not a common name. Yes, it might help considerably."

The psychiatrist was packing his lamp. He bent and studied the sleeping man's face.

"He'll be all right. Sometimes these mental cases respond far beyond expectation. I've cured several amnesia cases with hypnotism, but each subject is an individual governed by his own laws. Perhaps in a day or two I'll try to put him under again, give him a suggestion that when he awakens, he will recall who he is. That works in numerous cases."

Silk entered the room and Quinn spoke to him softly. Silk nodded energetically. On Silk's arm Quinn walked out of the room, followed by the doctor. The police guard in front of the door saluted.

IN HIS car, with Silk driving straight home, Quinn's brain worked furiously.

"Did that hypnotism stuff do any good?" Silk asked.

"Yes. Hypnotism, in the hands of a trained psychiatrist or physio-therapist can be a wonderful thing, Silk. Our subject went off to sleep, but I presume his amnesia was so complete that only the most recent out-

standing event in his life came into his mind. It was a girl or woman named Ina. Apparently she died and that man believes she was murdered."

Silk sighed. "Then you didn't get enough, I suppose."

"I may have," Quinn said gently. "Ina is dead. Therefore we'll be bound to locate a fairly recent death certificate. All those made out with the name of Ina must be investigated. In that way we can find out who Ina was, trace her, and probably run across the trail of Mr. Amnesia. It's a definite lead, Silk. The best thing we've found yet."

"Say," Silk exulted, "that really is something . . . Oh yes, I got Butch, gave him a full description of this Dr. Malloy and he promised to keep an eye on the employees' entrance and follow Malloy if he comes out. I wonder how that guy ever got into that hospital—working there, too, it looks like. And how about having him pinched, sir? For attempted murder?"

"How can we?" Quinn derided gently. "In the first place I'm supposed to be blind and therefore I didn't see him at all in this hospital. I was likewise blind at the charity hospital to which I was taken, so how could I recognize him? And if we bring up that dangerous glucose solution, certain people will think I was pretty clever for a blind man. No, we'll let it go temporarily. Dr. Malloy may even lead us a few steps along this still dark trail."

CHAPTER XII

Sudden Death



BUTCH, upon receipt of Quinn's orders, took a taxi to the hospital and parked himself outside. Butch wasn't the brainiest man alive, but he was persistent and would have remained on watch for days if necessary. As it happened, he wasn't there more than fifteen minutes when he saw a man emerge who answered Silk's description of Dr. Malloy.

Furthermore the man wore a topcoat over what seemed to be a white uniform such as doctors wear. Also, he was in a hurry and looked around furtively as he raced to a small car parked across the street. He got in and drove north.

Butch had retained his cab by the hour, and had a rather unbusinesslike arrangement with the driver. If he didn't lose the car he was to follow he would get a substantial reward. If he did, he would get a punch on the nose. The driver had looked at

Butch's fist and would have climbed buildings to keep that car in sight.

Dr. Malloy was headed for the downtown waterfront section where brass knuckles and blackjacks flourished. He stopped in front of a gaudy café, got out and ran into the building.

"Okay," Butch told his driver. "You did swell, and I'm not renegeing. Stick around. Maybe you can earn some more dough."

"I hope it's honest money," the driver said in a worried voice. "Us hackies get into an awful lot of trouble if we help crooks."

"Look," Butch said, "I'm going into that dive. If nothing happens, then everything is okay."

"But what if it don't stay so quiet?"

There was a crash. Two heads came together with a thump that made other thugs closing in gulp and retreat. Butch wiped his hands, looked down at the pair who had intercepted him and suddenly realized they had probably been successful. Dr. Malloy had obtained the advantage of two or three minutes. He could travel far during that time.

Butch no longer made any pretense of hiding his intentions. He barged across the room, gave a warning growl at a bartender who ducked fast, and Butch tried to open the door through which Malloy had escaped. It was locked.

Butch merely drew back, hunched his shoulders and lunged. The door went down



SILK

"You count the monkeys as they come out of the window," Butch said, and grinned.

Butch opened the door and stepped into a noisy, crowded room so filled with tobacco smoke that it seemed as though the Army had passed through with one of their smoke-screen pots. Butch barely made out the white trousered legs of Dr. Malloy as the doctor rounded the end of the bar and all but sprinted toward a door.

Butch took a hitch in his pants and started after him. He expected trouble and it came—much to Butch's gratification. Two men collided with him violently. One of them shoved his chin up as far as possible. It came slightly below Butch's Adam's apple.

"Big guy!" this man shouted. "Tough guy. Yeah, big and tough. I'll cut you down to size."

under that single attack. He ripped away chunks of wood, squeezed through and went down a long, dark corridor. It ended in a door leading into an alley. There were no other doors, no other possible exits—and the alley was empty. Dr. Malloy had made good his escape.

For a moment Butch considered going back and cleaning up the place until he found someone who would talk. Without specific orders from the Black Bat, though, he decided against it, much to his own sorrow. Butch hurried along the alley and discovered his cab was still waiting.

"Uptown," he ordered the driver vaguely. "That was a tame joint."

As the cab pulled away Butch noticed that Dr. Malloy's car was gone. The doctor must have driven away in a big hurry.

Butch did not, however, notice one other significant thing. A man stood in the doorway of the café and mentally sized Butch up, storing into his crafty mind a full description of him.

Tony Quinn was at home when Butch called to make his report. Quinn hung up and drummed a nervous tattoo on the top of the desk.

"Dr. Malloy gave Butch the slip," he said to Silk. "With the help of some friends. Malloy must suspect that somehow you spotted him and recognized him, Silk. He probably believes you transmitted this information to me and that I set Butch on his trail. All I hope is that he also is convinced that Butch is a police detective under the orders of Tony Quinn, Assistant D. A."

"I wonder why Malloy left that hospital so quick?" Silk said.

"That worries me too," Quinn admitted. "He didn't just drift into that hospital. He went there for a purpose and at considerable risk. If a thorough investigation had been made of the circumstances of my treatment at his hands, he would know the police would be after him. I'm going to phone the hospital, just to satisfy myself that Mr. Amnesia is still all right."

QUINN dialed the number and contacted the policeman on duty. The officer promised to take a look and make an immediate report.

"He seems to be asleep, sir," the patrolman said after a few minutes. "Want me to wake him up, Mr. Quinn?"

"No. As long as he is all right, let him rest. Just be on your guard, Officer. That man is most important to our case. There may be people who would like to see him eliminated."

Quinn hung up, went into the library and took his accustomed chair before the fire place. Silk bustled around the room, carrying on a conversation in a low voice.

"Perhaps you were worried too much about Dr. Malloy," he said. "Perhaps he didn't get a chance to do his dirty work, but got scared when he spotted you and scrambled."

"That's possible," Quinn admitted. "Yet he made so darned certain to evade Butch. It has me worried. Tomorrow, Silk, you're going to the Bureau of Vital Statistics and search through every death certificate from the present right back until you find the Ina we're hunting for. It's a clue that can't fail unless the body was hidden and no doctor was ever in attendance."

"I'll find the death certificate if it exists," Silk vowed. "Do you think, sir, that this Ina was murdered?"

"The amnesia victim talked as though Ina died through carelessness," Quinn said. "He mentioned that she was killed as surely as if by a knife. And by beasts in white. That

suggests a hospital. This fact was in his subconscious and it came out through hypnosis. If he doesn't snap out of it in the next couple of days, and we get nowhere with this Ina clue, I'm going to bring the psychiatrist back and give the man another treatment. One fact is clear—the predominating factor in Mr. Amnesia's sick brain was the death of this person. Everything he did was motivated by it."

Silk turned around slowly and looked at Quinn.

"Are you thinking the same thoughts that are running through my brain, sir? That Judge Bailey had something to do with Ina's death and that Mr. Amnesia went after him in a blind, murderous fury?"

Quinn nodded. "Yes, and only one thing stands in the way of such an assumption. Judge Bailey was the type of man who would never knowingly hurt anyone. If, through his negligence, something happened to this mysterious Ina, Judge Bailey would have done everything in his power to atone. There could have been no reason for anything so drastic as murder. I'm sure now, Silk, that Flashy Hanks had nothing to do with it but was just a convenient pawn for the actual killers. I . . . Silk, someone is coming along the path."

Quinn faced the fire-place and his eyes became dead and staring. Silk kept on with his work until the doorbell rang. He straightened his coat, walked to the door and opened it.

Captain McGrath barged in, brushing Silk aside. With long, angry strides, he invaded the library and stood looking down at Quinn.

"Captain," Quinn said, "there is something wrong. I recognized your footsteps, but I'd almost say you are boiling mad."

"For a blind man you certainly know a lot," McGrath snapped. "Listen, Quinn, you're an assistant D. A. by nothing but a fluke. You want to be elected the regular D. A. and put the present incumbent out of office by showing him up as a dope. I never figured you for an ambitious or selfish guy before, but now I realize you'll go to any extremes to make the grade."

"What are you talking about?" Quinn asked in genuine consternation.

"You refused to believe the facts—all the evidence me and the D. A. dug up to prove that Flashy Hanks was responsible for the murder of Judge Bailey. You wouldn't even recognize the truth when Flashy had the State's star witness killed in his jail cell. No, you had to be the wise guy and go after someone else."

"Captain," Quinn said sharply, "I don't have to listen to this tirade. Come down to earth. Forget our personal differences and tell me what in blazes has happened."

"Yeah—yeah, I sure will," McGrath said slowly. "Tonight you visited the gun artist

who pumped five slugs into Judge Bailey's head. The guy who was slugged and lost his memory. You brought some quack doctor with you and did tricks with the sick man. You even got so scared about the consequences that you phoned the cop on duty at the sick room to look at the guy. The cop said he seemed to be sleeping, but later on that same cop figured the guy seemed to be almost too fast asleep so he took another look. Well—the killer of Judge Bailey is dead!”

TONY QUINN half arose, then slowly relaxed.

“I was afraid of that,” he said. “Captain, what I did tonight couldn't possibly have killed him. The doctor with me was one of our most eminent psychiatrists. He put Mr. Amnesia under hypnosis and tried to make him talk. Tried to bring back his memory. We failed. But I insist that the patient was alive and sleeping peacefully when we left him.”

“I can imagine,” McGrath grunted. “Frankly, Quinn, I got certain orders from the D. A. He doesn't want to yank you off the case because people would say it was sour grapes and that he was afraid of you, but now that this guy has died—because of something you did—things are different. My orders are to put you under arrest.”

“Ah,” Quinn said softly. “So that's it. I suppose you're rather elated at the idea, Captain.”

McGrath shifted uneasily from one foot to the other.

“No, I'm not. Doggone it, Quinn, we've had our arguments. I'll never stop thinking that your eyesight is better than mine and that you prowl around in a mask as the Black Bat. I was convinced of it long ago and I made a promise to run the Black Bat down and lock him up.”

“Then this is the climax,” Quinn shrugged. “You must still have your firm belief that I'm the Black Bat and you are going to throw me into a cell.”

“Only because I've got orders,” McGrath retorted. “Heck, if there was a way out, I'd break a leg to find it. It's always like this. I manage, by luck, to get you in a corner and then all my desire to lock you up fades away. I'm supposed to be a tough guy, but... Oh, what's the use talking. Look, we'll just take a ride downtown. You can get out in ten minutes. I'll vouch for you. I'll even offer to stand guard if they want me to.”

“You've got a lot of friends, Quinn. The Commissioner would do anything to help and plenty of judges and lawyers feel the same way. It's just that the D. A. is sore and sees a way out for his own dirty neck.”

Silk, showing none of the horror that was in his heart, tapped McGrath on the shoulder.

“Pardon me, sir, but you are wanted on

the telephone. It's most urgent.”

McGrath walked briskly to the phone. He grunted a greeting, did a lot of listening, then grunted again. He returned to Quinn's side.

“Whatever I just said was off the record, understand? I made a sweet sap out of myself. The war between us is on again and I'll run you in the first chance I can find. All I hope is that when it happens, you're wearing a black hood. And, believe me, you won't hear a lot of malarky like the stuff I just poured out.”

Quinn sank back into his chair with a weary sigh.

“That must mean the D. A. has changed his mind. What was the phone call about, Captain?”

“They just found out that the amnesia killer was given a capsule containing a violent poison. The capsule took more than two hours to melt in his stomach, so that let's you out. I guess I overstepped myself a little bit.”

Quinn arose and proffered his hand rather vaguely in McGrath's direction.

“I'm glad to know just how you feel about things, Mac. You're a pretty good guy. A smart cop, too—one of the best. Your main trouble is temper. I don't mind that either, because I like you.”

“Thanks,” McGrath grumbled. “I guess it goes that way for me too.”

“Just remember that,” Quinn said, “and don't blow your top when I have the real murderer of Judge Bailey, of the State's witness and now the amnesia victim brought in by the scruff of the neck. And it won't be Flashy Hanks, Mac.”

CHAPTER XIII

Somebody Slipped



MID-DAY the next day found Tony Quinn at his office poring over a complete dossier on Dr. Malloy. It indicated that Malloy had managed to survive his college medical course by a hair's breadth, had spent two years interning and then failed to pass his State's examinations.

That had been five years ago. He was still an intern, still trying to pass his exams, and apparently the whole thing had embittered him, making the man easy prey for the crooks and killer behind this scheme.

Also, Dr. Malloy seemed to have vanished off the face of the earth. Quinn had requested the Police Department to look for him, but there had been no results. He was single and in the place where he boarded

no one had any information. He hadn't turned up at any other hospitals.

Apparently when he had fled from the charity hospital he had promptly obtained work at the hospital where Mr. Amnesia had been murdered. The acute shortage of physicians could account for that. In these days when so many were gone, hospital staffs were not apt to ask too many questions of any applicant.

There was no doubt in Quinn's mind but that Malloy had administered the fatal capsule. He had visited the victim twice, the last time about two hours prior to his death—which corresponded closely with the melting time of the capsule.

Quinn was seeing no one. He left orders to that effect with his employees in the outer office. He needed time and quiet in which to think. Slowly, some of the angles to the strange case were straightening out, but there were still several which needed a great deal of hard work on them.

The identity of Mr. Amnesia and his motive for murder was Quinn's first consideration. There would be a direct clue. Right now Silk was delving through death certificates at the Bureau of Vital Statistics.

Then there was the problem of the missing Bailey brother, together with the odd activities of Adelaide and Sidney Bailey. More and more, grim suspicion pointed their way. Dr. Cooper and Melvin Nash seemed to be an essential part of the mystery also, although so far they had taken no great direct action. As for Morton Gates, the carrot-munching, insect-hunting nephew, he was a complete mystery. He had something on the Baileys though. That was evident in the way Gates had demanded money and promptly obtained it.

So far Carol had nothing to report. The Baileys seemed to have retired within the house and remained there, presumably in mourning for the judge. Gates was still snooping around, but Dr. Cooper and Nash hadn't been near the place.

Quinn fully realized now that all clues pointing toward Flashy Hanks could have been manufactured and that whoever was behind this certainly didn't mind resorting to another murder or two in order that the trail would be cut off abruptly, or suspicion switch to someone else.

Quinn sent out for lunch and was eating it when Silk entered. Silk had considerable difficulty in hiding his excitement. He closed the office door and slipped the latch.

"Got it!" he exclaimed triumphantly, and laid a piece of paper on Quinn's desk. "The death certificate of the only Ina who died in the last sixty days. We're lucky she had a name that wasn't too common."

Quinn read the copy of the death certificate:

"Ina Lambert, primary cause of death peritonitis, secondary cause acute appendicitis. Father, Paul Lambert. Mother, deceased."

"Looks like this is all right, Silk," Quinn said.

"Sure it is—and I did a little extra work. The doctor who signed that death certificate is on the staff of one of Bailey's charity hospitals. Not the one where you were taken, but another. Little place, converted from an old movie theatre."

"Peritonitis," Quinn mused and leaned back. "Not an unusual complication of acute appendicitis, especially when the appendix is allowed to break. Still, if they got her in time, with the modern miracle drugs she should not have died."

"Somebody, or something slipped," Silk opined. "We can easily prove whether or not this Ina Lambert was the daughter of Mr. Amnesia. If she was, you can bet there was something odd about the death of the girl."

Quinn nodded emphatically. "It does jibe. Mr. Amnesia, under hypnosis, talked about beasts in white. He meant doctors, of course. He said Ina had been as good as murdered, which indicates either carelessness on the part of the physicians who treated Ina, or a general breakdown of the whole hospital set-up. Bring the car to the front of the building. We'll go to the address listed on this death certificate."

"As the Black Bat?" Silk hesitated. "Or will you handle it as an assistant D.A.?"

Quinn smiled. "I still have that title and authority. The thing is best handled in the open. Step on it, Silk. With luck we'll wind up this mess soon now."

THE neighborhood of Ina Lambert's last address proved to be a squalid section of row upon row of tenement houses, each exactly like its neighbor. They were all owned by some corporation and the houses had no such luxuries as building superintendents, but Tony Quinn found housewives eager to talk.

Ina, they declared, had been taken suddenly ill. Her father had not been well. He had been in a hospital for a long time. Some State institution, they said. When Ina had become ill, there was nothing to do but get whatever help was nearby. So she had been taken to the Bailey Hospital, just half a dozen blocks away.

They had operated at once and, according to her father, she had come along quite well until several days later, when she died.

Quinn gave a complete description of Paul Lambert which was received by eager nods on the part of the women. Mr. Amnesia was Paul Lambert all right. He had vanished the night of the day when Ina had been buried. They had never heard of him again.

The fact that Paul Lambert's picture had been printed in every newspaper, urging anyone who recognized it to communicate with the police, meant little in this section.

In the first place Lambert had not been generally known throughout the neighborhood. He had lived there only a few weeks previous to the murder. Prior to that he had been in a sanitarium.

"Crazy in the head," as one woman described him, Lambert almost shunned the company of others and lived only for his daughter. A pretty, tow-headed child of about ten.

On their way from the neighborhood, Silk drove the car past the hospital that funds, accumulated by Sidney Bailey, had caused to be erected. It didn't have exactly a prepossessing appearance from the outside.

"I'd like to see the inside of that place," Silk grunted.

Quinn laughed grimly. "You're going to. Tonight, in one of your disguises, I want you to become mysteriously ill. Complain of severe pains around the right shoulder-blade. They will be bad enough to demand attention. You'll be dressed like a down-and-outer. You'll enter this hospital and ask for help."

Silk gulped. "Suppose they decide to operate or something?"

"They won't," Quinn chuckled. "Not in the short time you'll be there. When you get a chance, examine the equipment, operating room, drug supply and everything else. See what the personnel looks like."

"What happens if Dr. Malloy shows up?"

"He won't recognize you," Quinn said. "Don't make him suspicious but the first opportunity you find, phone me. In fact, try to phone every hour or so. We may be getting close to the vicious elements behind this case and they might decide to take drastic action."

"I'll phone somehow," Silk declared. "Don't worry about that."

Back at his office, Quinn discovered that he had three visitors. Sidney Bailey, Dr. Allen Cooper and Melvin Nash were waiting. They filed into his private office and Nash assumed the role of spokesman.

"Dr. Cooper and I," he said half angrily, "have no particular or direct interest in this mess you have created, Mr. Quinn, but we are friends and associates of Sidney Bailey and, as such, we find it necessary to protect his reputation."

"What have I done to damage it?" Quinn asked.

"Enough. In the first place, you do not follow the sensible line of reasoning adopted by the District Attorney. We've talked to him also. You have questioned Sidney and his sister, made them worry and fret. As if the loss of their brother wasn't enough to suffer. By insinuation, you have indi-

cated that perhaps a missing brother of the Bailey family is somehow involved."

"Have you any evidence that he isn't?" Quinn demanded.

"We-ell, no. Except that we are convinced Rollin Bailey has been dead for a long time. His disappearance was voluntary. No great attempts were made to track him down. There was never any demand for blackmail and he had no enemies."

"Just what are you getting at?" Quinn asked.

"Precisely this, Mr. Quinn. You are inspired by political motives to do your best to solve this case in a manner which the District Attorney has refused to follow. Every shred of evidence points to this crook named Flashy—"

"Flashy Hanks," Dr. Cooper put in. "A confirmed paranoic. A natural killer and a type who would plot and murder to get himself out of a jam."

"That's it exactly," Nash agreed. "The witness against Hanks was murdered. The actual killer of Judge Bailey was murdered. It's simple to understand Flashy Hanks' motives for these two crimes, just as the death of Judge Bailey was necessary to Hanks' safety. He had to delay the case."

"I see," Quinn said noncommittally. "Where does the political angle come in?"

NASH wrinkled his nose.

"Now don't start pulling stuff like that. You're blind and I don't want to—well—get tough. However, it's common knowledge that you'd like to become District Attorney. If you could show up the present holder of that office as a sad failure, it would practically insure you the election."

"Yes." Sidney Bailey jumped up. "But neither my sister nor I wish to become pawns for your ambitions, Mr. Quinn. Let dead men stay dead. Stop searching for my missing brother. He is dead, I tell you! He must be. Rollin has been gone more than ten years and he never was one to have ability enough to make a living during that length of time. All he ever did was stick his nose into a lot of old books. He was a dreamer, a theorist. There wasn't a practical idea in his brain."

Dr. Cooper arose languidly and pulled on his gloves.

"We're getting nowhere. Quinn is obstinate and we can't do anything about it."

"Quinn," Sidney Bailey begged, "can't you see what is happening? If it leaks out that you suspect something wrong in my family, our good name will be ruined. A name which has been held in the highest esteem for generations. My work among the poor will suffer. People have faith in me. That's why they donate large sums, leave us money in their wills. It's because of their faith that the Baileys will put that money to the

best possible use. Destroy that faith and you destroy everything."

"I'll promise you that your reputation will not suffer if you are not involved," Quinn said. "I don't believe that Flashy Hanks is behind this. I do believe the murder of your brother, the Judge, was motivated by something far bigger than Hanks or any of his enterprises. If I am wrong, I'll quietly pull in my neck. That's all I can promise."

"Let's get out of here," Cooper urged again.

Nash scowled darkly. "The only way to convince a stubborn man is to beat his brains out, but when that stubborn man is blind, we are stumped. Come on, Sid. When he bumps against the inevitable stone wall, we'll laugh at him."

Nash slammed the door with considerable vigor as he went out. Quinn didn't move for a minute or two. Then he lighted a cigarette.

"They came here to talk me out of interfering further, but in reality they did me a great favor, Silk," he said thoughtfully. "I've learned something about the missing Rollin Bailey I didn't know before. There may be other things. Run down to the newspaper offices and get me clips out of the old files about Rollin's disappearance."

"Right away," Silk answered. "But I don't quite understand—"

"Rollin Bailey voluntarily disappeared—that's clear," Quinn told him. "Therefore Rollin must have been fed up. Satiated with Adelaide's superiority and Sidney's pompousness. Now a man who disappears like that makes plans and preparations. There is something to induce him to go away. A hobby to be developed into a paying proposition, for instance. A hobby, like old books."

"You mean he just went away so he could read and study?"

"Perhaps. But it's more likely he built up his hobby to a point where he could make a livelihood out of it. Find me those clips, Silk. I want to know everything possible about Rollin Bailey."

That afternoon a steady procession of men came to see Tony Quinn. He asked them a few questions and dismissed them. Among these men was the taxi driver who had driven the mysterious individual to the funeral of Judge Bailey.

"Do I remember the guy?" the taxi driver grunted. "I'll say I do. In the first place he gave me a twenty-buck tip and that makes you remember pretty well. Then he was so doggone mysterious. Said he wanted to attend the funeral, but didn't want anybody to see him."

"And where did you pick him up and drop him later on?"

"He hailed me in front of the Rossi Restaurant on Delaney Street. I dropped him

a block north of there and he stood on the curb until after I drove away."

"I'm very grateful," Quinn said. "I shall tell my secretary to give you another twenty dollars on your way out. Frankly, I sent for you under my authority as an assistant district attorney, but the information you just imparted may be for purely personal reasons so you ought to be paid. Just keep it quiet."

When Silk returned with only meager clippings from old newspapers, Quinn studied them intently for a little while.

"We're making headway," he said. "It's after hours. We'll go home now. Later you'll arrange to become a patient at that charity hospital. I'll spend the evening searching for Rollin Bailey. I know he's alive, and I think I know where he is."

CHAPTER XIV

Surgery



AIRLY early — by nine that night — Silk Kirby had gained admittance to the Bailey Charity Hospital, one of a chain of such institutions. It looked a little better on the inside than the front gave promise of its being. Nurses seemed eager to help him. A young intern was properly sympathetic and expert in his examination.

"It looks to me like bladder trouble," he told Silk. "May take a couple of days for complete diagnoses. If you're broke, we'll give you the best care possible."

"Doc," Silk whined, "I—I haven't seen a dollar in so long I've forgot what George Washington looked like. There's lots of jobs, but I ain't been feeling so well and I ain't so young any more either."

"We'll fix you up," the intern promised. "Before we discharge you, the organization which runs this hospital will see to it that you have a good job waiting. Now you'd better climb into a bed. The wards are filled up, so you're lucky. You'll have a room to yourself, though a little one. It used to be a storeroom. Tomorrow we'll start taking X-rays."

Silk slipped into the hospital gown and obeyed. He pulled up the sheets and a single thin blanket over him. The sheets were rough, not too well laundered. The blanket was much too short for the bed and on a cold night would have been a broad stepping stone to pneumonia. The bed obviously was second-hand and so was the rest of the equipment.

Silk waited until the hospital quieted down. He opened the door a crack, saw that the

corridor was empty and slipped along it to the far end where there was a telephone booth. He dialed Tony Quinn's number.

"Everything okay so far," he reported. "It's a cinch too. They're so short-handed I practically have the run of the place."

"Size up the place," Quinn told him. "Notice small details. And if you can get into the drug supply rooms, take a few samples of various drugs. Talk to other patients if you get a chance. And phone again in two hours. Not before. I'm going out—through the tunnel."

"Two hours it is, sir," Silk answered. "Have you heard from Carol or Butch?"

"Carol phoned at seven," Quinn told him. "She was getting ready to attend a dinner at the Bailey house. Butch is going to stand by though, so I expect periodic reports if anything breaks. Good luck, Silk, and be sure that disguise of yours is good enough to stand up under the eyes of the doctors and nurses."

Silk hung up and slipped back to his room. He glanced in a cracked mirror. The reflection he saw was certainly not that of Silk Kirby. His features had changed radically. He wore a cleverly and firmly fitted wig of straw-colored hair. His face was lightly freckled and not too intelligent-looking.

Silk had picked up this disguise when he had been a confidence man. It was a character meant to suggest a man of meekness, docility and a simple mind. More than one avaricious victim had taken the bait this characterization inspired and then discovered a man can be smarter than he looks. Silk knew how to act this part too. In fact his acting meant more than the disguise.

After half an hour he visited the drug supply room. It was locked, but in his nondescript clothing he had carried tools to open most locks, and this one proved easy. Inside he accumulated several old bottles, cleansed them and took the samples which Quinn had indicated. He labeled each one accurately, carried them all back to his room and secreted them.

Shortly after he looked for a bell with which to summon a nurse, but the room was not equipped with such luxuries. He walked into the hall and prowled around until he found an orderly, a bleary-eyed old man.

"I'm hungry," Silk said. "How about something to eat?"

The old man just nodded, and tottered away. A short time later a nurse brought him a tray. It contained some almost stale bread, marmalade which was watery enough to be poured and weak coffee. Silk ate, however, with pretended gusto. The type of man he represented shouldn't know the difference between good and poor food.

An hour later he left his room again. He glanced into a ward where a dozen men slept on cots—convalescents, most of them.

No nurse or orderly was in attendance. He went upstairs to surgery, opened a plain wooden door and stepped into a poorly equipped room with an ancient operating table, some outmoded lamps and several cabinets, on the shelves of which reposed surgical instruments. Obviously they had been used a great deal.

SILK was not quite certain what he was after, but if the Black Bat had sent him to check on the quality of the articles in Sidney Bailey's hospitals, he was certainly getting an eyeful.

Silk turned to leave the room and stopped short. A man in a white uniform was facing him. He wore soft-soled shoes, as doctors do on hospital night duty, and these had enabled him to approach noiselessly. But the most forcible thing about him was the gleaming revolver which he gripped in his right hand. And his identity! He was Dr. Malloy!

Silk at once went into his act.

"I guess I don't belong here, huh? Comes of being too nosy. You don't need to point that gun at me, mister."

"You've been prowling quite a bit," Malloy snapped. "In fact I've been watching you the greater part of the evening. Climb onto that operating table and lie down flat."

Silk looked for a chance to rush that gun and saw none. Malloy displayed all the caginess of a desperate man. Silk shrugged and got onto the operating table. Malloy came closer, warily, and with the gun always leveled. A heavy strap was whipped across Silk's abdomen and quickly fastened beneath the table. Another pinned his arms down and a third lashed his legs firmly to the table.

Malloy stepped back, with a crooked smirk on his face.

"Now we can talk and I'll feel safer. Let me begin by saying I don't believe you're just some bum here for free treatment. I heard you had checked in so I went to have a look at you. As I turned the corner, you came out of your room so I ducked. You phoned someone. Who?"

"My mother," Silk snapped. "She worries about me when I'm in a hospital. Lots of people are funny that way."

"But you are not. I tried to hear what you said, but the booth is sound-proofed. Why did you steal various chemicals from the drug room?"

Silk brought his lips tightly together. Malloy reached up and switched on an overhead operating light. Its brilliance all but blinded Silk. Malloy grunted and shut the light off.

"If you're disguised, the job is pretty good. Now let's stop all this nonsense. I'm going to ask one more question. Your life depends upon a truthful answer. Do you work for the Black Bat or for that snooping

assistant D.A., Tony Quinn?"

Silk decided to try once more.

"Look, Mister, I don't know what you're talking about. I'm just a poor guy who is sick. Sure, I swiped some of the stuff out of them bottles. I figured it could be sold for a pretty good price. Before I took it, I called a pal of mine and asked him what to take. He told me, so there it is. Kick me out of here if you want, but don't ask riddles. I ain't got the answers."

Malloy laughed. "You almost make it sound like the truth. In fact, I'm beginning to wonder if you aren't the Black Bat in the flesh. Well, it really makes little difference. Did you ever see me before?"

"Once is enough, thanks," Silk replied. "Is this an asylum, and are you one of the boarders on the loose?"

Malloy slapped him across the mouth. His dark eyes were glistening, but the worried crease across his forehead had deepened. He walked over to one of the cabinets and removed a hypodermic needle and a small alcohol lamp with which to heat and melt a tablet of morphine. He placed this on a table beside Silk's head.

Without speaking further, he lighted the lamp, prepared the morphine and drew the solution into the hypodermic. Holding this, he reached for a pair of surgical scissors and slit Silk's hospital gown from elbow to shoulder.

"I have neither time nor patience to ask questions and receive evasive answers," he said then. "I believe you phoned the Black Bat or Quinn. I believe you were sent here to check up. We've been expecting something like this, so I've toured our four hospitals in town, looking in on new patients. In the first place I don't believe you're a bum. You're too clean."

"There are clean bums," Silk said.

He was determined to stall for time as long as possible. It seemed hopeless, for the Black Bat expected no call from him for at least an hour and Silk saw no way to delay Dr. Malloy that long.

"We'll concede that," Malloy said. "But you were checking up on us. You demanded food at an unreasonable hour, and I watched you examine the linen and blankets. I know the drugs you stole from the drug room were representative medicines, most of them the expensive ones. Now you can save your life by talking. If you lie, I'll know it and your last chance will be gone."

"What if I don't talk?" Silk asked.

MALLOY stepped back a pace, smiling slightly and Silk didn't like that smile.

"I glanced at your chart," Malloy said. "It indicates vague pains around the right shoulder blade. Now that could be gall bladder trouble. It must be, in fact. Well, I heard you screaming in pain. Naturally,

being a doctor, I went in and discovered high fever, jaundice and tension. I can create a reasonable good imitation of jaundice with a chemical that works fast."

"Doc," Silk pleaded, "you got this all wrong. Gosh, you sound like you're going to kill me."

"I am," Malloy said frankly. "That's just what I'm planning to do. Murder you quite legally. With these symptoms I can order an operation. In fact we are so short-handed here I could have brought you to the operating-room myself and prepared you for surgery just as you are now. Then I'll call in the anesthesiologist and a nurse. Neither of them know too much. Meanwhile, you'll be drugged. We always drug patients before surgery. Maybe you can easily guess the rest."

"Yeah," Silk growled. "Maybe I can see them leading you toward a room with a little green door and a chair that gets awful warm."

"Oh, no. You'll be operated upon. I'll excise the bladder so no autopsy will show there was nothing wrong with it. My knife won't slip either. I'm not as stupid as that. But the knife won't be exactly clean. Perhaps, by sheer accident of course, it will come into contact with bacteria of an especially virulent nature. A type which acts so fast that when you come out of the ether, you'll be in delirium. Sounds interesting, doesn't it?"

"Doc," Silk cried, "you're crazy! Let me out of here."

"Come now," Malloy urged, "tell the truth. Talk freely and start at once. If you don't, I'll inject enough narcotic to keep you quiet until the ether takes over. I'll give you a minute."

Silk bit his lip. He couldn't talk. Each member of the Black Bat's little band realized that some day he might be faced with a situation like this. They played a dangerous game and the results were not always according to the best-laid plans. This looked like the finish.

SILK closed his eyes. He had already tested the leather straps. They were meant to hold down powerful men in delirium. Silk could not budge them.

He was in the hands of a man who already had committed one murder. Another would hardly bother his conscience. Silk prayed that if he did go into delirium, he wouldn't begin shouting the fact that Tony Quinn was the Black Bat. He feared that more than death.

The needle pricked his arm fairly hard. Malloy asked him the same questions and received no answer. The needle went deep into the arm and without much surgical skill behind it. Malloy meant it to hurt. It did.

CHAPTER XV

Plans for Death

PERFUME applied to her hair as a finishing touch to her preparations for the evening, Carol Baldwin stepped back and looked at herself in the full length mirror. Butch lounging against the door jamb, whistled in appreciation. Carol wore a white evening gown and her feet were encased in golden slippers.

She glanced at Butch with a smile.

"I hope I look as good as your whistle indicates, Butch. I've got to dazzle Sidney tonight and make him talk a bit. I wish I knew what Tony wanted of him."

"Anything you can dig up, I guess," Butch said. "I just called him. He told me to go over with you and come after you later. He sounded a little worried. Silk is out some place looking for dope on Bailey's hospitals. Tony says he's going out himself but expects you'll phone as soon as you get home. I'll call again at ten."

Carol threw a cape over her shoulders.

"I'm worried too, Butch. That pest Morton Gates has been sizing us up all day. I think they have him spying on us."

"Unless he's part of the mob," Butch shrugged. "I'll be around though. Ready now?"

They left the house and then turned into the path which led to the Bailey mansion, well hidden behind trees and shrubbery. As they climbed the porch steps, a light flashed on and the door opened.

Sidney Bailey came out, smiling broadly. Behind him, in the doorway stood Melvin Nash. His eyes suddenly narrowed, but he came forward to meet Carol and take her proffered hand.

"Is that all, Miss?" Butch asked respectfully.

"Quite," Carol nodded. "Thank you."

Butch walked down the steps and ambled along the path. He heard the snap of brush, but didn't even glance in that direction. Morton Gates would be prowling as usual.

In the Bailey mansion Carol was escorted to dinner on Sidney's arm. Dr. Cooper was there too. Adelaide ruled the ménage, however, now and then addressing Carol. The dinner progressed smoothly enough and there were liquors and demi-tasse in the living room afterward.

Sidney was attentive enough to appear ludicrous and Carol caught Adelaide's frequent frowns of disapproval. Sidney saw nothing but a lovely girl. Dr. Cooper and Nash joined in the conversation energetically.

They seemed to have the run of the house, being in and out of the room frequently.

Then the doorbell rang. The butler came in with a message.

"A gentleman wishes to see you, sir," he told Sidney. "It is most important."

Sidney came back in a few moments, showing signs of agitation.

"I'm terribly sorry. Something has happened at one of my hospitals. Demands my personal attention. But I'll make up for it later. Another dinner. Maybe I'm lucky this happened because it gives me an excuse to see you again, my dear."

"Nonsense," Adelaide said testily. "Because you have to leave is no reason why our guest must go too. We are quite capable of entertaining her. Run along, Sidney."

But the conversation dulled after he left. Finally Carol arose and pleaded a slight headache.

"It's nothing, really," she said. "Just the excitement of moving such a long distance and there is so much for me to do. . . ."

"We understand perfectly," Adelaide said, and Carol wondered if she was happy that the party had broken up.

Carol was escorted to the door by Nash.

"I'll accompany you home if you are afraid," he offered.

"Of course not," she told him. "It's only to the next house. Thank you again."

Carol started along the driveway, conscious that the evening had been a dismal failure. Sidney had just been getting warmed up when he received that message. Carol found herself wondering about it. The messenger seemed to have arrived almost too conveniently.

The driveway was dark. Dimmed-out street lights couldn't reach it and the Bailey's porch light had winked out as soon as she was a hundred feet away from the house. She saw something directly in her path. It looked like a truck, but it was white. She gasped. This was an ambulance.

INSTANTLY Carol turned to begin a fast retreat, but she was too late. Someone stepped behind her. A blanket was raised and came down with a swish. It enveloped her head. An arm wound it tight and held it there. Someone else grasped her ankles and she was lifted off the ground. She was thrown into the back of the ambulance and one man climbed in with her. As the vehicle moved away, the blanket was unwound and for about ten seconds she glimpsed the face of a sinister-looking man in a white uniform.

Then a wide strip of plaster was slapped over her eyes, another across her lips. She struggled, but it was no use. In a moment her wrists and ankles were securely tied.

She heard the window behind the driver slide back. The man who sat beside her spoke.

"Okay, Mike—everything ship-shape. All I hope is she knows that fellow I've still got strapped on the operating table. Whether she does or not, he's going out—horizontally. Make it snappy. There's a lot to do before morning."

Butch, watching from the house next door, saw the porch lights go on, then quickly snapped off again. He figured that if Carol had been leaving they would have remained on much longer. Anyway, she wasn't due to leave for another hour. Butch turned back to his newspaper.

After thirty minutes he decided to get on the job. Not that he was afraid anything might have happened to Carol. No one connected with this case knew either of them. Even Morton Gates' prowling had developed no information because Butch and Carol were planted here merely to observe.

Butch intended to meet Carol somewhere along the dark driveway and path leading from the Bailey mansion. He took up a post there, smoking cigarettes chain fashion and growing more nervous with every passing minute. Finally he walked to the house and rang the bell. Adelaide came to the door.

"The young lady left for home almost an hour ago," she said, in answer to his inquiry. "Of course she may have been bored here and departed to go somewhere else where there is more excitement."

"Thanks," Butch said. "She did have an errand, but she thought it would wait until morning."

Butch barely restrained his impulse to run back to the house which had been leased for Carol. She was missing and that meant she had been taken prisoner. There was no answer to it, for Carol was bound to have come straight home. None of the Black Bat's little band made independent moves when they were working together.

Butch hurried to the telephone and dialed the number of Quinn's home. He took a long breath and held it. Quinn was going out as the Black Bat. The chances were good that he would still be on the loose somewhere and Butch didn't know what to do. It seemed incredible that Carol had disappeared. How could anyone know she worked with the Black Bat? Or against the crooks in any form?

He heard the buzz indicating that Quinn's phone was ringing. Butch heard something else too. The squeak of a floorboard in the next room or in the corridor. He was being watched and ears were listening. Butch thought remarkably fast for his usually slow brain. There was no response from Quinn's end of the line, but Butch knew he had to account for that phone call somewhat.

"Hello, Mac! Say, how'd my nag do? Humph—good-by to ten bucks. Don't you ever pick a horse that can run? Yeah... Okay, I'll drop by in time for tomorrow."

Butch hung up. Humming softly, he wandered out of the room. The corridor was dark. He maneuvered close to the light switch, snapped it on unexpectedly and saw a thin figure detach itself from what had been a dark corner and run wildly toward the rear of the house.

In a dozen huge leaps, Butch caught up with the figure. His right hand flashed out and descended upon the frantic man's collar. Feet skidded to a halt. There was a strangled yell and Butch turned his dangling prisoner around. With a grunt of disgust he saw it was Morton Gates.

"The bug-hunter," Butch grumbled. "The little man who peeks in windows and sticks pins into bugs. I think I'll flatten you."

Morton tried to scream, but his collar was gripped too firmly and as his feet were off the floor, his own weight added to the tightness of the collar. Butch set him down, maneuvered him into a corner.

"Who told you to spy on us? Come on, you little pip-squeak—talk."

"My—my aunt and my—my uncle. They told me to—to watch you. They were afraid of you."

"Afraid of us, and the lady I work for gets invited to their house? What kind of a story is that?"

"They only wanted to size her up. They made me do this. I saw you leave and I came in. I thought you'd be gone a long time. Honest, I wasn't going to hurt you—just look around."

"Just look around," Butch repeated. "Say, you missed something. See that door down there? We've got a secret. Regular skeleton in the closet. I'm going to let you look."

"But I don't want to!" Morton began struggling.

Butch picked him up by the scruff of his neck, carried him to the empty supply closet and tossed him inside. He closed and locked the door. That was all he had time for. Butch's greatest worry was contacting the Bat. Something had to be done quickly.

CHAPTER XVI

Missing Man's Secret



JUST at the usual time the bearded, stooped man who ran the Argonaut bookshop closed up, put out the lights, and retired to his combination living quarters and workshop. He sat down at a desk littered with old books.

"That is a most interesting Chaucer original," a voice said softly. "Don't you think so, Mr. Rollin Bailey?"

The bookseller swiveled around in his

chair. His mild eyes showed traces of a haunting fear. The rear of his room was quite dark. He couldn't see the man who spoke until that individual moved into the ring of light cast by the desk lamp. The bookseller gasped then, for his visitor was dressed completely in black and wore a hood over his head.

"You know then?" the bookseller asked, for he realized it would be senseless to try and deceive this weird intruder.

"Obviously," the Black Bat said. "However, your secret is safe with me. You are Rollin Bailey, who disappeared ten years ago. All I want from you is the story of why you vanished. You have nothing to fear. I know you're a harmless person with a strong liking for old books. That fact gave you away. That and the taxi driver you hired to take you to Judge Bailey's funeral."

Rollin Bailey heaved a great sigh.

"I knew it would happen some day. It also came to me just now that you are the Black Bat. I've heard a great deal about you. I know that you work on the side of law and order. I have committed no crime, so I'm not afraid. What do you wish to know?"

"Why did you disappear?"

"Because I could not stand poverty nor dishonesty. I couldn't stand Adelaide's stuffed-shirt attitude. The big front she put on with no money to back it. The Bailey family has been living on bluff for years. Did you know that? Bluff—and thievery."

"I guessed that," the Black Bat said. "Tell me more."

"In return for your word that my identity won't leak out," Rollin countered. "I suppose I'm a thief too, in a manner of speaking."

"The Rembrandt, eh? You lifted it, sold it long before the war and used the profits to start this business."

"Yes, but there were extenuating circumstances. Adelaide went through our money. Mine as well as Sidney's and Jasper's. Jasper could get along. He had a profession. I didn't, so I took the picture. I knew Adelaide would never make a complaint. I

wanted to get away from them, with their high and mighty ways.

"Sidney founded that charitable organization. A fine thing I thought, until I learned he did so that he would have access to the cash donated by others. He helped himself—not too much. Just enough to maintain Adelaide in something resembling her former position. Sidney considered what he took as recompense for his work, but of course it was plain stealing."

"Do you think the Judge was wise and that Sidney had him murdered?"

"You're blunt." Rollin squirmed slightly. "However, I'll answer it. I do think the Judge found out about Sidney's petty stealing. I firmly do not believe Sidney had Jasper killed. After all, we three were brothers. Furthermore, Sidney didn't have the nerve to plan a murder. Under that highly polished surface, he's a rank coward."

"Thank you," the Black Bat said. "I suspected many of the things you've told me, but now that you have confirmed them, I think certain matters are cleared up. Live your life, Rollin. The secret is safe with me."

"I couldn't go back." Rollin looked down at his clasped hands. "I couldn't stand it. Even Morton knows what is going on. He has lived there so long that he has become like Sidney—demanding money and getting it, on a threat of exposing Sidney. They all live on the name and reputation of a family. That's why Sidney has been so successful in getting money from wealthy people who want to help him do good with it.

"Sidney gives the impression that much of the funds he uses is his own money. I wanted nothing but peace and my books. I had to get a start. I took the picture, but it was mine anyway—mine, because Adelaide had used up my money and there was nothing left. I knew she would cover up the loss somehow. Perhaps by substituting a good copy. I—"

Rollin stopped short. He was alone in the dimly lighted room. From the rear a
[Turn page]

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curtain flapped dismally. He got up and closed the window, returned to his desk and went to work.

THE Black Bat reached his car, pulled the wide-brimmed hat down further over his features and made certain the black hood was safely tucked in his pocket. He drove straight home, parked the car and slipped through the tunnel to his lab. The ingenious arrangement of lights showed that he'd had a phone call on the private lab wire.

He dialed the number connecting him with the house which Carol and Butch had leased. The bellow that greeted him indicated trouble. Butch was so excited he could hardly talk.

"It's Carol—she's disappeared! She left the dinner party early. That little rat

alley. While he passed down this, he replaced the big hat with the black hood.

Through the intense darkness, which was no handicap at all for his strange eyes, he saw another bulky man, in a soiled white uniform, sitting on the back steps of the hospital. And the Black Bat, realizing that the place was practically under guard, knew that sinister proceedings must be going on within.

He slipped closer to the man in the white uniform. Drawing a gun he maneuvered to the corner of the building, poised there for a second, then leaped. The guard jumped up, but a brawny arm was wound around his throat and a knee was driven into his back. He was held in that position until he went limp.

The Black Bat opened the rear door of

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Morton was prowling and I've got him locked in the closet. He just told me that Sidney Bailey went away in a big rush about ten minutes before Carol started for home. I think that guy grabbed her."

"Do exactly this," the Black Bat said quickly. "Go to the Bailey house. No one there is to leave. No matter what the excuse, they are all to remain and if anyone else comes, that person is likewise to remain. Don't offer any explanations. Rip out the phone wire if you can."

"Oh, boy!" Butch enthused. "That's my meat. Them two pals of the Baileys are there. The doc and that other guy. Did you hear from Silk?"

"No, and I'm worried about it. Silk would have called on the house wire and it shows no indication of a call. I've an idea he and Carol are in the same spot. Take care of the people in the Bailey house. I'll try to get there as soon as possible."

Twenty minutes later the Black Bat drove his coupé past the little hospital far downtown. He saw a beefy man lounging in the doorway. The place was dark except for a few dim night lights. He drove around the block, parked the car and darted into an

the little hospital, stepped in and started prowling. He found nothing of interest on the first floor. An orderly ambled past. A man groaned somewhere behind a closed door and the Black Bat streaked in that direction, but it proved to be only a patient.

He went upstairs and the odor of ether greeted him. Moving fast now, he headed for the door labeled "SURGERY." It wasn't locked and he opened it a crack. The odor of the anesthetic was stronger than ever and he could hear voices. First a man's, sharp with rage. Then a woman's—Carol's, and what she said made the Black Bat go into fast action.

"I tell you again I never saw this man before," Carol said. "I don't know why I was kidnapped."

Dr. Malloy, ether mask poised above Silk's head, scalpel in the other hand, twisted his head and scowled at Carol.

"You are both liars. You either work for that Assistant D.A. Quinn or for the Black Bat. Yes, I know he's been getting inquisitive. One of the rats who helped us out had a visit from the Black Bat and it scared the guy into the next state. I brought you here because you're as bad as this man

on the table. He was investigating the hospital and I'll bet he got an eyeful too.

"You were letting Sid Bailey pay too much attention to you, but you're a fool, young lady, because Sid Bailey only wanted to find out what you were up to. He couldn't, but I will because as long as you keep silent, I'll keep carving. It won't be nice. I can guarantee—"

Malloy stopped talking. There was a huge shadow on the wall opposite him. His scalpel darted toward Silk Kirby's throat.

"I'll kill him if you don't drop that gun!" Malloy screamed. "I can do it with one jab."

"Put that knife down," the Black Bat said calmly.

But Malloy was primed with desperation. His muscles tensed to drive the scalpel home. As the victim screamed, Malloy hoped he could get the gun out of his back pocket.

The Black Bat's automatic blared once. The knife hurtled out of Malloy's smashed hand. With a yell of hatred, Malloy went for his revolver with his other hand. He got it, started to bring the weapon up.

CAROL'S short scream was cut off by a single shot. Malloy's gun sagged. So did his jaw, then his whole body. He crumpled to the floor.

The Black Bat hurried over to the chair into which Carol had been lashed. He cut her free, then leaped to the operating table. He removed the leather straps and Silk sat up, a little groggy but smiling a trifle.

"I did my best," he said. "Not such a good job. Malloy spotted me right away. Got me in here. Jabbed me with a hypo loaded with morphine. I passed out for a while and when I woke up, Carol was here. Malloy tried to make us talk."

"We've got to get you out of here," the Black Bat said. "That morphine may take effect again."

"Not that dope." Silk swung his legs off the table. "Malloy talked his head off while he thought I was going under. The medicines they use here are cut. Especially expensive and useful ones like morphine. Malloy forgot that the stuff he gave me was weak too. I'm okay and I've got plenty of news."

Apparently the operating room was sound-proofed enough so that the shots had not been heard, for the hospital was quiet.

"Malloy won't die—yet." The Black Bat looked up from his kneeling position beside the doctor. "Not until he gets an overdose of electricity. Carol, you and I are leaving. Give us five minutes, Silk. Then telephone Captain McGrath, say you're the Black Bat and tell him you've got Malloy, the man who killed Mr. Amnesia. Slip out of here and get back to the house. Are you sure you can make it now?"

"I'm okay," Silk insisted. "Just a little

dizzy from the dope."

Carol and the Black Bat made their way out of the place undetected. The guard at the rear was coming out of it. Carol glanced at him.

"He drove the ambulance that carted me away. I'd like to slug him myself."

Carol drove the Black Bat's car. Several blocks away at a quiet corner where the lights of a drug store gleamed dimly, the Black Bat told her to stop.

"Go in and phone the Bailey home," he said. "Butch will answer. Tell him to lock up Adelaide and flatten Dr. Cooper, Nash and Sid Bailey, if he has returned. Flatten them good."

"Butch will like that," Carol prophesied. "Tony, Sidney Bailey had me kidnaped. He left the house mysteriously and set the trap. I'm sure of it."

"And I'm just as sure he did not," the Black Bat told her. "It's now two-twenty in the morning. Inform Butch that at two-thirty he is to phone Police Headquarters, identify himself as the Black Bat and ask the desk lieutenant to contact McGrath who will be at the hospital by then. McGrath is to arrest Nash, Dr. Cooper and Sid Bailey. Hurry now!"

CHAPTER XVII

Blind Man's Victory



LOUNGING in a big chair in the Black Bat's workshop and laboratory, Butch Leary looked like a cat full of cream. Tony Quinn and Carol sat on the davenport while Silk stood near the secret door, his eyes on the series of little light bulbs, one of which would announce the arrival of Captain McGrath.

"McGrath will be here any minute," Quinn told them. "Meanwhile, there are a few things to explain which the redoubtable Captain has no business hearing. First of all, Dr. Cooper and Melvin Nash had a perfect racket and they wanted to protect it. Hence the murder of Judge Bailey. He knew too much. Then, to keep suspicion away, they did their best to frame Flashy Hanks. If everything else failed, they still had Sidney Bailey to fall back on and they took every opportunity to throw suspicion his way. Also, the court clerk was in their pay. He saw a way to get more graft by blackmailing the judge."

"You should see Cooper and Nash now," Butch declared. "Nash figured he was a pretty good scrapper. I changed his mind. Sidney came in about the time I had the others tied up, so I fixed him too."

Quinn nodded. "Whatever you did to Cooper and Nash was only too meager punishment. They deserve all the law can give them. So also do the members of the Visiting Board who have kept their eyes closed to what has been going on in those hospitals—and being paid for being blind. They also have been apprehended, I may tell you, and they'll do the paying now, in another way. There'll be a general clean-up of investigators of charity hospitals.

"All right—as I told you, Sidney Bailey and his sister were broke. They had been broke for years, but Sidney hit upon the idea of helping himself to funds which he collected for the poor. He was careful not to take too much, but an examination of his books would have shown up the shortages and made of him a perfect stooge to accept all the blame.

"It was Nash who saw me in the Bailey house as the Black Bat. Apparently Nash and Cooper were usually accompanied by crooks who served as strong-armed men. Nash signaled these men. They did their best to stop me. Later, Nash informed the police that these strong-arm men were private detective guards retained by the Baileys. He took care not to mention the Black Bat. He arranged it so that either Sidney or Adelaide would be lured to the City Jail and be suspected of the murder of that State witness against Flashy Hanks."

"But, Tony," Carol said, "I don't quite understand how Cooper and Nash profited to such an extent as to make these murders necessary."

"It was because they—"

"Signal, sir," Silk broke in. "Must be McGrath."

Silk straightened his coat and tie, opened the secret door and before McGrath had his finger on the bell, Silk was ready to greet him.

"I'll have to finish explaining later," Quinn said quickly. "You two stay here while I talk to McGrath and inform him just why Nash and Cooper should be booked for murder."

When McGrath entered the study, Tony Quinn was comfortably seated in his chair. Both hands rested on his cane and he puffed contentedly on a pipe.

"Sit down, Captain," he said, "I'm delighted you came. You will not, however, remain long because when I finish talking, you'll hurry away to arrest two killers who may be at the Bailey residence. And I hope you will also pick up a doctor who murdered the amnesia victim."

"If you mean Doc Malloy, he's already in the jail hospital and talking his head off," McGrath said. "Dr. Cooper and that guy Nash are locked up too. So is an assortment of mugs we landed."

Quinn brightened. "I was afraid you

might have difficulty in locating them. . . . Wait a minute. Captain, how did you happen to arrest those men?"

"The Black Bat plugged Malloy," McGrath said grimly. "He called me to the hospital and while I was on my way, he must have flown to the Bailey house and cornered the rest of the mob."

Quinn pursed his lips. "Malloy talked about the Black Bat. Anyway, you have them, but do you have the story, Captain?"

"Malloy admitted giving poison to the amnesia victim."

"Ah—good. Well, I'll tell you just what happened. I played detective, Captain, and a good job too for a blind man. You will find that Sidney Bailey obtained for charitable purposes to maintain himself and his sister. However, his part is minor.

"Dr. Cooper and Nash were the real profiteers. You will discover that they were associated with Sidney in his charitable work. Nash, an architect, would buy property to be used as playgrounds, hospitals, recreation centers. But Nash first purchased this property himself, using a false name. Then he bought the property again for the charitable organization and at a considerable profit. Many pieces of property were handled and the net profits must have been tremendous."

MCGRATH chewed on his cigar for a moment.

"You're flirting with trouble, Quinn. You can't prove that stuff without bringing in the Black Bat."

"Oh, but the Black Bat had nothing to do with my investigation," Quinn smiled. "I sent for people with whom Nash did business and they talked. Now let's go to Doc Cooper. He fitted up the hospitals, staffed them, bought drugs and equipment. He likewise equipped the other places. He purchased the cheapest possible things, diluted drugs to make it seem he had bought his money's worth. He hired inferior help, claimed second-hand articles as new and billed them that way. His profits were also tremendous because of the volume."

"It will be easy to check on that," McGrath admitted. "Now what about this amnesia victim and the actual murder of Judge Bailey?"

"The Judge," Quinn said, "discovered just how the charitable organization was being cheated, but thought his brother was responsible. Judge Bailey was an honest man. He couldn't accept his appointment with his own brother a crook. So Judge Bailey told Sidney he would expose him.

"Cooper and Nash knew this and realized the resulting investigation would sweep them, so they took advantage of a golden opportunity. The actual killer's name was Paul Lambert. A short time before he had

been released from a mental institution as cured. I think he was quite sane until his only child became ill and was taken to one of the Bailey hospitals. There she died of complications resulting from lack of good medicine and inferior treatment. Lambert believed she'd been as good as murdered, went berserk and tried to find Sidney Bailey. Instead, he came upon Cooper and Nash.

"They found it easy to convince him that Jasper Bailey should be made to pay for the crime. Sidney and his brother, the Judge, resembled one another closely. Lambert didn't know the difference. He was a natural to do the job. I suppose they told him to feign insanity and with his record he would just be put back into an institution. Dr. Cooper probably promised to get him out later on. So Lambert did the killing in a blind rage just as Judge Bailey was about to denounce his own brother.

"The murder of your witness against Flashy Hanks was accomplished by Dr. Cooper. All visitors to the city jail must sign a register except doctors. Cooper could get in and leave no record and as a physician he was able to obtain poison."

McGrath shook his head. "Malloy backs up about everything you say. He's trying to make a deal with the D. A. Which reminds me—this sort of puts the D. A. on a terrific spot. Me too, but I was just taking his orders. You came out on top, Quinn. I suppose now you'll keep going until you're back in the saddle at the D. A.'s office?"

Quinn shook his head "No, Captain. The district attorney's office must be headed by a man whose eyes can help him. I'm afraid I'd only be in the way, but frankly the present district attorney is more of a politician and when he leaves, the office won't suffer."

McGrath offered his hand. "You know, if you had taken the job, I might have stopped suspecting you were the Black Bat. As D. A. you'd be required to take an oath of office which a guy like you would never violate. And it would be a tough life if I didn't have the Black Bat to contend with all the time."

"And a tough life because you do have to contend with him, Captain," Quinn grinned. "You're in a trap."

"Yeah," McGrath held a match to his cigar and looked down the length of the cheroot. "But you know, I like it—kind of."



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YANKEE DOODLE FELINE

By HAL K. WELLS

*Cats May Look Japanese but
Larry Reed and Anne Taylor,
Government Operatives,
Discover That Toby Has
a Dual Personality!*

LARRY REED stood in the dark shadow of a tall oleander bush and stared at a large yellowish cat crouched beside a gopher hole across the moonlit lawn.

It was a very fine situation indeed, Larry assured himself disgustedly, when a G-3 operative, otherwise known as Army Intelligence, had to prowl the lawns of an exclusive Southern California suburb at two o'clock in the morning, trying to kidnap somebody's cat. It might have been funny, had it not been for the fact that a girl's life could very easily depend upon the success of this feline quest.

Larry eyed the cat. It looked to be about the right size—big enough and husky enough to pack a gun, and yet not too big.

He left the bush and started across the lawn, silently as a drifting shadow. But the cat apparently had ears sensitive enough to shame an aircraft detector. Larry had advanced only a couple of steps when the cat whirled around, raising a bristling tail of blimp-like proportions, and eyes like slanting balls of fire glared malevolently at him.

"Nice pussy," Larry said soothingly.

The cat arched its back and let out a hiss of startling volume and quite obvious hostility. The hiss, plus the slanting eyes and the brownish yel-



With a hurtling lunge Larry was on the major

low color of the animal, gave it an oddly Japanese aspect.

"All right, you Nipponese-looking rat-trap!" Larry muttered. "If you want to play rough, that's the way we'll play."

He closed in warily as the cat stared. When he was within reach he took a dive and grabbed. The cat wasn't quite fast enough in getting away and Larry's fingers closed firmly around the handiest section of the animal, which happened to be the tip of his enormously dilated tail.

IT gave out with a yowl that was a full ten decibels louder than an air raid siren, and went into action with the largest and sharpest collection of claws that Larry had ever encountered. Thirty seconds and sixty scratches later he finally got his squirming captive sufficiently under control to take a closer look at it.

A fancy leather collar around the yellow-maned neck bore a silver nameplate on which was inscribed the name, "Tobias."

"Tobias, my eye!" Larry commented caustically. "The name should be *TNT*, out of *Cactus*, and sired by *Buzz-Saw*. I only hope you can pack a gun as well as you fight, Toby!"

Tucking Tobias firmly under one arm Larry Reed headed for the hedge through which he had entered the grounds. The estate was one of many along this suburban ridge. Stately, luxurious homes dotted the hills for miles around.

When he reached the street he increased his pace to a lithe, swinging trot. His search for a cat had already taken a full twenty minutes. In that time many unpleasant things could have happened to Anne Taylor.

It would be too bad to have anything happen to as swell a person as Anne. Larry had worked with G-3's famous woman operative before. The girl had the courage and brains to match her looks, and when it came to looks she could hold her own with anything that Hollywood had to offer.

The night air was chill and damp as he swung easily along. Fog was com-

ing in from the distant Pacific. There were only a few vagrant streamers of mist here on the hilltops, but the valley below was completely blotted out beneath a dense blanket of milky vapor.

The only light from the miles of city streets shrouded beneath the smothering fog was the vague glow that marked the location of the giant Columbia Aircraft plant, some three miles away.

Even at that distance, Larry could hear the faint sound of humming machinery and tapping rivet-guns. Several thousand graveyard shift workers labored on the big plant's continuous production of burly bombers and wasp-like pursuit planes for America's far-flung fighting forces.

He reached one of the few streetlights, and swung off into a narrow street that led steeply upward toward a hill summit that in turn rose several hundred feet above the rest of the ridge. It had been in the middle of this street that Anne Taylor's badge had been found shortly before midnight by one of the private patrolmen maintained by the wealthy home owners of the district.

As Larry approached the hill estate, the place seemed as dark and silent as when he had left it. The locale was a marvelous site for a murder, he reflected grimly, or for a dozen murders, for that matter. With the entire hilltop hidden behind high masonry walls, and located a full quarter of a mile from its nearest neighbor, anything short of a full-grown riot could occur there without any sign of it reaching the outside world.

HE came to a stop in the dark shadow of a high retaining wall whose concrete face rose sheer for thirty feet overhead. Just around the corner, as he had previously found out, the narrow roadway ended at a massive set of iron-work gates which were strong enough to stop anything short of a General Lee tank.

"End of the line, Toby," he announced. "Let's see if the girl friend is still in shape to use a gun if we get one in to her."

Projecting from the base of the

wall a foot above the level of the street was the open end of a ten-inch tile pipe, apparently an auxiliary drain for the estate grounds. It was from somewhere within this pipe that Larry, prowling the circuit of the walls, had heard the methodically repeated G-3 code signal for SOS, tapped inside the tile.

He had answered and established contact with Anne Taylor. She had warned him against trying to get in by climbing the walls, and had told him that she could easily clear things for him inside the walls if he could only get a gun in to her.

The pipe served well enough as a speaking-tube, but its tilt and twisting curves made it impossible to get a gun through. He had tried many times with tree branches and other things. As a last resort, he had had the bright idea that a cat might be sent through the pipe.

Larry knelt and called softly into the open end of the tile. He drew a breath of relief when Anne answered.

"I'm sending a cat in with a gun," he said.

"Go ahead," Anne answered. "Everything's okay at this end."

Larry proceeded to work out a plan to get his gun through. It was a .45 caliber service automatic and the only gun he had with him.

He knotted a twisted handkerchief to his necktie, thus making several feet of makeshift rope. Then tying one end to the gun and the other to the cat's leather collar he was all set.

Tobias refused flatly to cooperate in any way, and his resistance was not of the passive variety. When Larry finally got the squirming cat stuffed into the pipe he had a dozen fresh scratches.

The inside of the tile was a close fit, but that had its advantage. After Tobias was once in, he couldn't possibly turn around. His only exit was to go on through the pipe, dragging the gun along close behind his heels.

Larry poked the cat with a long twig to speed its reluctant progress. But when it got out of reach, there was nothing for him to do but wait and listen. Would the cat just stand there, back down again, or continue

on forward? Larry could only hope.

It seemed longer than the few minutes it actually took before Anne's voice came through exultantly.

"All right, I've got it," she said. "Stand by."

The wait after that was a far longer one. Once Larry thought he heard the faint sound of voices and a scuffling as of a struggle. Then finally Anne's voice came again, a bit breathless.

"Everything's under control, Larry. Go around to the gates and I'll let you in."

He went around the corner to the massive metal gates. There was a clicking sound, and they swung open. He slipped inside.

ANNE turned from the gate-switch to meet him. The moonlight did no harm whatever to her slender, red-headed beauty. She had Larry's gun in her hand and another heavy pistol crammed into the pocket of her sports jacket.

"What, no tommy-guns?" Larry said.

Anne smiled. "I borrowed this Luger just a few minutes ago. Here's your gun. But, Larry, what on earth happened to your face? You look like you'd had a necking party with a clump of cactus."

"That confounded cat!" Larry answered. "I think the brute is half Japanese. But what gives here anyway, Anne? All I know is that you were tailing some bird named Miller when your badge turned up under that street-light."

"The gentleman's real name is probably Mueller," Anne said. "He outsmarted me, herded me into his car at the point of a gun, and headed for the hills. He got my gun, of course, but my badge was in a place where no mere male would ever find it. I managed to drop it out the window at that street corner."

"So this is a Heinie hangout," Larry commented.

"No, it's Jap. And Jap in a way that'll knock your eyes out. Which reminds me! There's a little Slant Eyes around the corner who needs to be taken care of."

At the left of the gates there was a small building that looked like a groundkeeper's lodge. Anne led the way to a flight of steps around the corner of the building. They went down and there in an areaway Larry dimly saw the figure of a man lying huddled in the shadow.

"That was my private dungeon," Anne said, indicating an iron-barred door. "There's a basement room in there. It was probably a laundry-room at one time, because there's a floor drain. The grating was loose and I got it out and began tapping the SOS inside the pipe on the chance that it might lead outside the wall where the signals could be heard. It didn't seem like much of a chance, but it was the only one I had."

"And the slumbering gentleman there was your guard, I suppose," Larry said as he walked over to the man.

"Just partly mine. His regular job was to guard the gate. When I got the gun I called him down to the door and had the muzzle against his tummy before he knew what was happening. He unlocked the door, then tried to pull a fast one. It wasn't quite fast enough. I hope I didn't bend your gun. He had a very hard head."

Larry dragged the short, stocky figure of the unconscious Nipponese into the moonlit part of the areaway, then gave a low whistle of amazement.

"Why, this bird is in the full uniform of a noncommissioned officer of the Imperial Japanese Army!" he exclaimed.

"There are four or five more of them up at the house," Anne said, "and one of them is in the uniform of a major in the Imperial Jap Army."

Larry shook his head. "It doesn't make sense. This is a military district where it's as much as a Jap's life is worth to be found, even in civilian clothes. And here's a full squad of them all dressed up in battle uniform!"

"There's something about it that makes sense to the weirdly warped mental processes of a Jap," Anne said tautly, "and it's something mighty big and due to happen right here tonight. I got that much before I was hustled

out of the house."

"High time we got up there then," Larry said. "We'll have to take care of this bimbo first. He might wake up too soon."

A utensil closet in the corner of the areaway yielded clothes-line to tie the man, and a piece of burlap sack for a gag. Larry rolled the trussed figure into the basement room and locked the door.

THEY hurried back up the steps and started through the grounds towards the central hill summit. Oak trees and evergreens abounded and might provide enough cover for an army of men.

The house on the summit was a structure of the Swiss chalet type, and surprisingly small for the size of the estate. The coupe that had brought Anne and her captor was in the driveway, but there was no sign of life from within the house.

They turned and started around toward the rear. As they rounded a clump of evergreens Larry nearly tripped over the body of a man sprawled face down in the lush grass. Larry reached down and turned the body over. Anne caught her breath in a sharp gasp.

"That's Miller!" she whispered tensely.

The man was obviously dead. His unbuttoned coat showed a shirt front whose left side was a solid smear of darkly clotted blood.

"I thought Miller was supposed to be a pal of the little brown rats," Larry whispered.

"He was," Anne answered. "I think he lived here, acting as front for them and also serving as their contact with the outside."

"He's through serving now," Larry said. "And the fact that they were through with him gives strong backing to your belief that the big blow-off is to be tonight. Come on, chum. Time's a-wastin'!"

He led the way through a thicket of oak trees, then cut sharply in toward the house. Hugging the wall closely, they rounded the corner, then froze abruptly as the night silence was broken by a spitting hiss of startling

volume and virulent menace.

Larry whirled, with his gun swinging swiftly into line. Then he stopped.

There was a square area of clear lawn here at this side of the house. In the center of the clearing, and looming as large in the moonlight as a small mountain lion, was the hissing figure of Tobias, with his tail dilated and his back arched high in hostile challenge.

Larry grinned sheepishly and relaxed the pressure of his finger on the trigger. His grin was short-lived.

There was a sudden trembling of the ground beneath their feet. For a moment Larry thought it was an earthquake.

Then, with an abrupt swiftness that gave even Tobias no time to leap clear, the surface of the lawn split apart in a yawning crack that ran straight out from the house wall for a distance of some twenty-five feet. A section of lawn on each side of the crack dropped inward like a pair of giant trap-doors swinging on concealed hinges.

Larry found himself sliding helplessly down a slope whose pitch swiftly became still deeper. He heard Anne's choked cry from somewhere close behind him as he clutched desperately at the grass in a vain effort to check his descent. Then the ground dropped completely from beneath him, and he hurtled downward.

He plunged through dimly lighted darkness with the smell of raw earthen walls damp and pungent in his nostrils. His fall ended upon a hard dirt floor. His knees buckled, and his head slammed against the floor with a violence that momentarily stunned him.

IT was several minutes before consciousness returned. For a moment longer he lay there staring in blank amazement at the ponderous black bulk of the object that towered above him. There was no possible mistaking the nature of the thing.

It was a field-piece, and a big one. Larry had been an artillery officer before he was transferred to G-3, and he could estimate caliber with reasonable accuracy. This gun was at least

a 6-inch piece.

He was lying in a darkly shadowed corner in front of the gun. Above him the barrel loomed huge and black against the square of sky seen through the opening in the lawn. Beyond the relatively narrow chamber into which the gun projected there was apparently a larger subterranean room. He could hear voices and see reflected light, but the big metal shield on the fieldpiece blocked direct vision.

He got to his feet and peered cautiously around the edge of the shield. There were two people visible through the narrow space between the gun and the earthen wall. One was Anne. The other was a short, powerfully built Nipponese in the uniform of an artillery major in the Imperial Japanese Army.

Tobias had apparently at last found a friend. He was on the floor at the major's feet, rubbing his yellow-furred back against the officer's highly polished boots.

"You must have trick Omato, your guard, to have escape," the Japanese said sibilantly. "What did you do with him? And from where did this cat come?"

"It's a specially trained cat," Anne answered calmly. "It follows me around and rescues me whenever I need it. Something like the St. Bernard dogs, you know, only without the jug of bourbon around the neck."

Larry's eyes narrowed. By some lucky chance, his fall through the lawn trap had not been noticed by the Japanese. He had been lying motionless in the darkly shadowed corner when they captured Anne, and had been completely overlooked. It was an advantage that could mean plenty, if he could only find the pistol that had been knocked from his hand during the fall.

He stepped from behind the shield to take a look at the floor between the gun and the wall. He took one cautious step in the deeply shadowed space, then froze as a familiar and hateful sound erupted in the room beyond.

The sound came from Tobias, and it was a splitting hiss whose volume and intensity surpassed all his previ-

ous efforts. It was dark there in the narrow space beside the gun, but not too dark for Tobias' slanting yellow eyes to see the figure of the man who had yanked him from his happy home, tied a heavy object to his tail, and thrust him into the stifling confines of a drain pipe.

Tobias stood with arched back and dilated tail, and with his nose pointing as rigidly toward Larry as that of a pointer on a covey of quail. The Japanese major acted with hair-trigger speed. He snatched a Luger pistol from his belt-holster with his right hand, and with his left grabbed up a flashlight from a table beside him.

BEFORE Larry could move, the beam of light struck blindingly into his eyes.

"Sso," the Japanese hissed, "we have sstill another visitor. You will come out, pleass, and quickly!"

There was nothing to do but obey. Larry raised his hands and stepped forward into the room. A gesture from the major's pistol sent him over against the wall beside Anne.

The officer spoke a curt order in Japanese and a stolid soldier in the uniform of a non-com came over and swiftly ran expert hands over Larry in search of weapons. He found none, and was promptly sent back to his work of stacking shells for the gun. Tobias resumed his contented rubbing against the major's legs as though satisfied with a good job well done.

"I told you that slant-eyed rat-trap was half Japanese!" Larry commented bitterly to Anne.

The major's mouth opened in a buck-toothed grin.

"Perhapss it iss Japanese," he said. "Anyway, it iss a quite remarkable pussy."

He stooped and picked up the big yellow-brown cat, cradled it in his left arm and playfully scratched behind its ears with the muzzle of the pistol in his right hand. Tobias showed very little enthusiasm over the petting, but he at least tolerated it.

Larry's eyes roved swiftly over the

room. The subterranean chambers had obviously been excavated for the sole purpose of housing and servicing the big gun. In addition to the major, there were four other Japanese soldiers in the place, all of them in the full uniform of non-commissioned officers.

It was a small crew to handle a field-piece of that size, but things had been so cleverly and efficiently arranged that the quartet should be able to keep the big gun blazing away with clockwork regularity when once it opened fire. Shells were being racked ready on small wheeled carts so that they could be brought up to the breech in the minimum of time.

There was no doubt as to the target of the big gun. Its tapering barrel pointed through the hole in the lawn directly at the spot where the giant Columbia Aircraft plant sprawled beneath the fog in the valley below.

The whole set-up was another example of the bland audacity and superlative cunning with which the little brown horde of the Far Pacific had prepared for the war that they had so painstakingly planned.

The gun could have been brought into the country any time before December 7, 1941. With a huge fleet of powerful fishing boats prowling the coastal waters at will, and hundreds of miles of lonely beach available, the landing of the field-piece would have offered no difficulty. And, with the gun dismantled and packed in concealing crates, it would have been a simple matter to haul it to this isolated hill-top estate.

The men who manned it had probably been in California for months, or even years, before the war. When all Japanese had been barred from the district, they had merely retired to the safe seclusion of the walled-in grounds, and had patiently gone ahead with their work of getting the big gun ready for action. Military planes flew over the hill-top every day, but the trees around the chalet made a perfect camouflage for anything beneath them.

The whole setup showed an ingenuity and cunning that was almost unbelievable.

THE major's voice sibilantly broke in upon Larry's thoughts.

"You and the girl are government agents, I suppose," he said. "You might have more friends near—but I do not think sso. Anyway, no matter. Five minutes more, and it iss too late for interference."

"Strange that you waited so long to start your fireworks," Anne said curiously, "and then picked a night when there's too much fog to even see what you're shooting at."

"We wait until tooling iss complete for big new bomber," the major answered. "Planes and workers not too hard to replace. But half a million dollar worth of machine tools? Not sso easy."

"As for the fog, what matter? Every detail of range worked out to lasst foot months ago. Shell-fuses already cut to fraction of inch. Fog iss no handicap. It will help create confusion."

The Jap was right about the fog, Larry reflected grimly. It would be far more help than hindrance. In the many months that the gun crew had been hiding out up here they had had plenty of time to calculate every detail of distance to the various sections of the big aircraft plant. Now it was simply a matter of setting the controls and pulling the lanyard.

There were squadrons of bombers and fighters based at the plant, and batteries of anti-aircraft artillery with ample range to blast the hilltop gun out of action when once they had located it. But precious minutes were bound to elapse before they did locate it, and in that time the plant could be raked from end to end with a devastating rain of high explosive.

Hundreds of partly-assembled planes would be destroyed. Machinery so precious that it was almost irreplaceable would be blasted into junk. And even more precious lives would be ruthlessly blotted out when the several thousand men and women of the graveyard shift were caught in that murderous rain of crashing death.

Larry's muscles tensed. He fought back an overpowering impulse to hurl himself at the smirking little Japanese major.

The Nipponese seemed to sense his thoughts. The muzzle of the Luger lifted in a brief gesture of warning.

"Do not do foolish things," the major purred. "Would like to keep you alive until everything all over. It would ssave difficult explanations. But not really necessary. Can always ssay you died from bomb or shell of your own sside."

"You certainly don't expect to pull this stunt and live!" Anne exclaimed.

The major shrugged his shoulders. "Why not?" he said. "Plenty protection overhead. Soon as ammunition gone or gun put out of action, we surrender."

"And face a firing squad," Anne said.

"I think not," the major said confidently. "We are not sspies or ssaboteurs. We are ssoldiers in uniform, firing upon military target. To execute uss might not be good idea."

"Probably not," Larry conceded grimly.

WITH thousands of American soldiers and sailors in Japanese hands, these men knew that the American government could not very well take chances on reprisal atrocities. At the worst the gun crew could expect a military prison for the duration—and they knew this.

"And that was why you murdered Miller," Anne said. "He knew that a Jap uniform wouldn't save him from a firing squad, so he wanted to get clear after he brought you the go-ahead message tonight. You didn't dare let him go."

The major smiled mockingly.

"Very hard to prove Miller did not kill himself," he hissed. "Perhaps in remorse over terrible thing he had done to adopted country. He wass naturalize American citizen."

One of the non-coms broke in with a brief report in Japanese. The major answered curtly, then turned back to Anne and Larry.

"And now we sstart," he said. "It iss a great privilege you have, front row sseat at firsst Japanese artillery bombardment of aircraft plant on American mainland."

Three of the non-coms wheeled a

shell into position on one of the small carts, slid it into the open breech of the big gun, and slammed the breech-block shut. The fourth soldier bent over the elevation and horizontal movement controls, carefully centering their bubbles in a final adjustment.

Larry watched the proceedings, half sick with his utter helplessness to do anything to halt them. The smiling little major stood barely ten feet away, with Tobias still cradled in his left arm, and the Luger held with seeming carelessness in his right

the gun's tail-piece, was a large rat, driven from its subterranean haunts when the gunners began stacking the shells. The rat took one look at Tobias and then flashed on under the gun.

Tobias exploded into action like a bursting land-mine. The major impatiently held on to him, and the big tawny cat went wild, raking his face with a slashing flurry of murderous claws.

It was the break for which Larry had been silently praying. He covered the distance in a single hurtling

"You're the Black Bat—and It's My Duty to Kill You Right Now!"

THE MUZZLE of Ed Kirk's gun was pointed right at Tony Quinn—and there was grim purpose in the eyes of the Black Bat's assailant. But—Kirk didn't reckon on Quinn's speed. In a flash, the Nemesis of Crime struck his foe a smashing wallop, and wrenched the menacing gun out of his hand.

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COMING IN THE NEXT ISSUE

hand as he absent-mindedly stroked the cat's head.

There was an overwhelming temptation to stake everything on a desperate dive across the intervening distance, but Larry knew the odds were a thousand to one against success. The heavy pistol would blast him down before he had taken more than the first step.

The soldier at the gun finished his last adjustments and stepped to the left side of the breech with the weighted lanyard cord in his hand. It was at that moment that Tobias abruptly took things into his own well-sharpened claws.

With a sudden hiss the cat had stiffened in the major's arms. Its back was arched and bristling. Larry's eyes flashed just in time to see what had aroused the cat's belligerent attitude.

There, crouching in the shadow of

lunge. The major managed to fling the wildly clawing cat away from his face, but too late. Larry was already upon him.

LARRY'S right hand wrenched the pistol from the Jap's grasp. His left arm swung the little officer in front of him as a shield just as the first of the soldiers fired.

The major's body stiffened convulsively, then twisted from Larry's grasp and fell writhing to the floor. Larry fired, and the soldier at the gun slumped with a bullet in his brain.

The twenty seconds that followed were a chaotic blur of crashing gunfire and whistling slugs. The Japanese threw lead with the aimless frenzy of wild men. Larry fired carefully, and a second Nipponese collapsed with a bullet-hole in his forehead.

Tobias, driven completely berserk by the pistol reports, zig-zagged across the room with the speed of a stray comet. He collided with one of the two remaining soldiers. Promptly obeying the natural feline instinct to climb when in danger, Tobias went up the man as though he were a sycamore. The soldier struck at the cat with a clubbed gun, then pitched headlong with two of Larry's slugs in his belly.

Larry and the remaining soldier blasted away at each other at the same instant. The man spun crazily and fell, but his shot sent pain searing through Larry's right side. The gun dropped from Larry's hand. His knees buckled and he fell close to the left side of the field-piece.

Anne's sharp cry of warning brought back his momentarily fading senses. He caught hold of the gun's left wheel and pulled himself dizzily to his feet just as the badly wounded major appeared across the tail-piece of the gun.

The Japanese had a pistol in his hand, apparently taken from one of the dead soldiers. He swung the muzzle of the weapon into line with Larry's head.

Anne, too far away to get there in time, snatched up a pair of binoculars from the table and flung them at the major. She missed, but the hurtling missile distracted the officer's attention for a fractional second.

Larry spun the wheel that controlled the big gun's elevation. With the same movement, he snatched the lanyard cord and pulled.

The field-piece crashed thunderously and the heavy barrel lashed

back in savage recoil. The breech-block struck the major's head with a smashing force that literally pulped his skull.

Anne raced across the room.

"Larry, you're hurt!" she exclaimed.

"Nothing but a couple of grazed ribs, I guess," was Larry's reply.

Her face was white as she looked at the field-piece.

"You had to fire that shot, of course, Larry. But what it must have done to the aircraft plant!"

"The only damage it did was to shower some metal fragments on the roof," he said reassuringly. "I kicked the elevation away up. If those shell-fuses were cut as accurately as I think they were, the shell exploded high in the air and plenty short of the plant."

Then for the first time he noticed that Anne had Tobias in her arms. There was no trace of either hostility or belligerence in the big tawny cat now.

The climatic thunder of the field-piece had reduced Tobias to a very subdued pet who craved only the solace of someone's comforting caress.

Larry grinned. "Nice going, Toby," he said. "You got away to a bum start, but you sure came through in the pinch!"

Larry stroked the cat's head. Tobias relaxed contentedly, with a rumbling purr from deep within his throat. When his eyes half closed as they did now, all trace of the slant-eyed Japanese malevolence vanished.

Instead his broad sleepy smile looked as thoroughly American as Yankee Doodle.

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Joe was hit smack over the right temple

BLACK EYE FOR SUSAN

By JOHN X. BROWN

The Kidnapers Wanted a Hundred-Thousand-Dollar Ransom for Susan de Peyster Belmont—Until They Started Feeding Her Canned Tuna Fish!

THE thin little girl in the back seat sat demurely, hands folded in her lap, as the big car sped away from the city. Pete, the hatchet-faced man at her side, who sported a three-day growth of beard and a pair of cold, cunning, close-set eyes, studied her carefully.

Susan de Peyster Belmont, he reflected, was a pretty scrawny package to come with a hundred-thousand-dollar price tag stamped invisibly on the sailor collar of her middy blouse. Her legs, which were long for a girl of thirteen, hinted at knobs in her knees when she stood erect.

Thanks to the simplicity of the uniform worn by boarding students at Miss Holiger's ultra-exclusive school for girls, she might have been any kid taken from the slum block in which Pete had been raised. The only features in any way remarkable about the child was the determined jut of her chin—and her eyes.

The eye that was open was alert, maliciously dark and a bit too large for her face. The other showed only a slit in the center of as pretty a shiner as Pete had ever seen

around a fighters' gymnasium. The black eye intrigued Tony, the plump mobster sitting in the front seat beside Joe, who was driving.

"Hey, kid," he said, turning around to get a better look at the prize they had snatched by means of a fake telegram from her father, the millionaire corporation magnate. "Where'd you get the mouse?"

"Who, me?" asked the girl, apparently not at all abashed at being kidnaped.

"Yes, you," replied Tony. "I didn't think rich kids was allowed to play rough games."

"I forgot to duck," explained Susan, flashing a wide grin that revealed a full set of gold bands on her upper teeth. "If you read your sports pages," she said, not boastfully, but as one stating a fact, "you'll see I'm on the All-City team."

"You look kind of light for football, kid," said Tony, thinking it a rib,

"It's hockey—field hockey to you, nosy," corrected the girl.

"Shut up, Tony," Pete ordered with such quiet authority that the other hunched his shoulders and turned around again.

They reached the hideout, a good mile off the state road, twenty minutes later. A small ramshackle house, built at what had been the end of a long-abandoned street-car line, it was an ideal spot for a kidnaper's needed seclusion. Inside, it was dim and dirty, but it had the advantage of having boarded-up windows. Furthermore, it had been well-stocked for the task at hand. Pete, the leader, knew how to plan a caper.

"Well," said Susan when they were all inside, "when are you going to tie me up?" She stood perfectly straight in the middle of what had been the living-room, more curious and excited than afraid. "Or are you bad hombres like the ones I read about in 'Thrilling True Crime Stories?'"

"Not bad," observed Tony, looking her over. "In a couple of years the kid won't be bad at all—when she fills out and gets—"

"Shut up, Tony," said Pete ominously. Tony shut. Pete turned to the girl.

"I want you to write a note to your father," he said. "Tell him you're all right and will be, unless he tries to put the law on us or fails to cough up."

"Do you want me to write it in my own blood or anything?" Susan asked.

Pete shuddered visibly.

"There's paper and pencils on the table over there," he said, nodding to a decrepit piece of furniture across the room.

OBEDIENTLY, Susan went to it and began writing. Halfway through, she looked up at the mob leader, who was leaning over her shoulder, squinting to see what she was writing in the dim light.

"How big is the nut?" she asked politely.

"The what?" Pete said, slightly incredulous.

"The nut," she replied. "For Pete's sake, aren't you gangsters? I mean, how much ransom do you want?"

"Just a hundred thousand dollars," declared Pete.

"We're going easy on account of the war effort," volunteered Tony.

Susan forestalled Pete with a withering glance.

"All Daddy's cash is in War Bonds," she said. "It'll take him days to raise it. And if I'm not out of here by Saturday—"

"If you're not out of here by Saturday, what?" Pete asked quietly.

"I'll miss the All-City hockey match against Philadelphia," blurted Susan. Unexpectedly, her lips trembled. "I know he can't get it before then."

"Your pappy's a rich man," reminded Pete, almost gently. "Maybe a banker pal will let him have it, since it's an emergency."

Susan stared at him intently, then went back to her writing. When the note was finished, Pete took it and beckoned to Tony.

"You come with me," he said. "I may need protection just in case. Joe"—this to the low-browed, broken-nosed hulk who had driven them out—"you stay here and keep the kid in line. And don't try to use your goon head. Get it?"

"Gotcha, boss," acknowledged Joe, a bit droopily.

It was easy to see that his immense strength did not extend to the space between his ears.

He tugged at his cap brim in nervous, frustrated habit.

"I'll bet," began Susan, standing on the outer edges of her saddle shoes, after she and Joe were alone, "that you're a good shot with that roscoe."

Joe, who had been regarding her gloomily, started.

"The gat, the heater," Susan explained patiently. "Don't you men know anything? I'll bet you can hit the bull's-eye right on the button."

"Oh, sure," confirmed Joe.

A horrible grimace that passed for a grin spread over his scrambled features.

"Watch this."

He pulled a heavy automatic from his shoulder holster, looked around for a target, and selected a whisky bottle with a guttered candle-stub in it, diagonally across the room.

The gun roared, but the bullet spanged into the wall back of the target. He tried again and this time the bottle shattered to fragments. Susan sneered.

"You smell," she observed, holding her nose. "I'd have plunked off the candle on the first try."

"Oh, yeah?" mocked Joe. "Let's see you do it."

He started to put his weapon into her outstretched and not overclean hand, then withdrew it with a swift gesture.

"Think you're smart, don'tcha?" he said.

He put the gun back in its holster.

"Smarter than you, Joe," taunted Susan, then switched the subject deftly.

"Were you ever in the ring?"

When Pete and Tony returned from the city, Joe was busily showing her how to throw a left hook. Pete looked at his henchman in disgust.

"Get busy and cook some supper," he snapped. "We've had a tough day."

Supper was strictly from tin cans cooked over a fireless heater. The accent, in this and in succeeding meals, was on tuna fish, the "chicken of the sea," cans of which reposed in stacks on the kitchen table.

They settled into a routine after that. It was not unpleasant for Susan, who slept on a cot in a windowless room, but it was confining and deadly dull. Pete and Tony came and went on mysterious errands. It

was not until Friday night that the storm broke.

"You were right about your old man being a slow touch," Pete remarked coming in after a trip to town. "Looks like you're with us till Sunday, anyway."

That was when Susan bawled like a baby for the first time. Joe, whose face was slightly puffy from the left hooks she had been landing on it in sparring practice, sniffed suspiciously and headed for the kitchen, where he rattled tin cans around preparing something to cheer her up. Tony gave her a pat on the shoulder. Pete just shook his head.

"Of all the soft-headed bunches of human mothballs!" he exclaimed. "Getting sloppy over the kid. Don't you guys realize that—"

"But if I don't play, Philadelphia will beat us!" Susan wailed. She looked up, sniveling and sobbing. Her black eyes was now a dirty yellow. "Can't you let me loose just for the game? I'll come back—I promise."

"Take it easy, kid," comforted Tony. "It's one of those things. We'd take your word, sure—but if your pappy saw you playing, he'd have the cops on us in a minute. Even if we got away, we'd have done all this for nothing."

"I understand," mumbled the girl.

Still sniffing, she went to her room with as much dignity as she could muster. When Joe came in and tried to make her eat some canned beef, she spurned his offering. He worried about it all evening.

THE next day was a restless one. Susan talked as little as possible to any of her captors. It was evident that she was mad clear through. She moved restlessly from kitchen to living-room and back again. Finally, when what passed for lunch was finished, she announced she was going to clean the kitchen.

"If I've got to spend the rest of my life here," she decided, "I'm not going to do it in filth. I know there's a mop in the kitchen."

"Go ahead, kid," urged Pete, looking up from the table where he and Tony were playing gin rummy. "Joe, you keep an eye on her."

Susan got busy in the kitchen while Joe lounged in the doorway. She found the mop, exclaimed at its foul condition and promptly removed the end from the metal crosspiece that held it. The mop handle was almost as tall as she. At the same time she managed to spill a stack of the ever-present cans of tuna fish from the shelf. Then, stooping to pick them up, she let out a squawk and leaped onto a chair, still grasping the mop handle.

"Cockroaches!" she cried.

"Huh?" said Joe, pivoting a little toward

her and stopping to peer at the floor. "I don't see none."

"They're all over the place!" Susan shrieked. And as she spoke, her apparently aimless series of actions focused into a well-thought-out plan. Standing on the chair, she had acquired just the extra height needed to wield the mop handle like a hockey stick.

With a short, controlled wind-up, she caught one of the cans of tuna fish cleanly like a puck and sent it sizzling across the room. It hit Joe smack over the right temple and bounded against the wall. He pitched forward on his face without a sound.

"I had to do it, Joe," she whispered as she plucked the automatic from his holster.

Seconds later, she was standing in the living-room door.

"Reach," she ordered to the startled Pete and Tony.

Tony gulped, Pete made a move toward the gun on his shoulder.

Susan's pistol roared and bucked, and the gang leader went over backward in his chair, spouting blood from a tipless finger.

"I'll shoot the others off you in turn if you make a move, I'm junior pistol champ at camp!" Her thin, high young voice had not a trace of tremor in it. "Now toss those guns to me across the floor."

Five minutes later, she had the three of them tightly tied together in a length of stout clothesline.

"I'm bleeding to death!" said Pete through clenched teeth.

He was suffering from more than his wound, Susan noted. With deft fingers she applied a tourniquet on him.

"That will do till the cops get here," she observed. "I took first aid at school. And don't try to get out of those ropes or you'll strangle yourselves. I sail a boat in the summertime."

She paused, looked at them gravely.

"I was willing to play ball to skip school for a few days," she told them. "But the hockey game is more important. So long, men."

She closed the door quietly behind her as she left. Susan was a well-brought up girl.

When the sound of the car faded, Tony tried to turn his head, checked the move as the rope about his neck tightened ominously.

"I thought you said rich girls was soft, Pete," he snarled. "I never met anything like this one where I was raised—and that was a tough district."

Pete closed his eyes and faked a faint that was not far from the truth.

"What a goil!" murmured Joe softly. "Two to one she scores in the game. I got a double sawbuck in the sole of my shoe that's talking."

There were no takers.

MURDER RIDES BEHIND THE SIREN

By
PRESCOTT CHAPLIN

*When a Man's on the Hunt for
a Killer, Says Mike Dolan,
Dames Are Dangerous!*

I'D NEVER seen the dame before and that's how I got jammed the night Zeke Manners died with five bullets in his chest. I'd brought Zeke in to the Atlanta Street Hospital, and when I'd been helping the doc snake the stretcher dolly out of the ambulance hack, Zeke had opened his eyes.

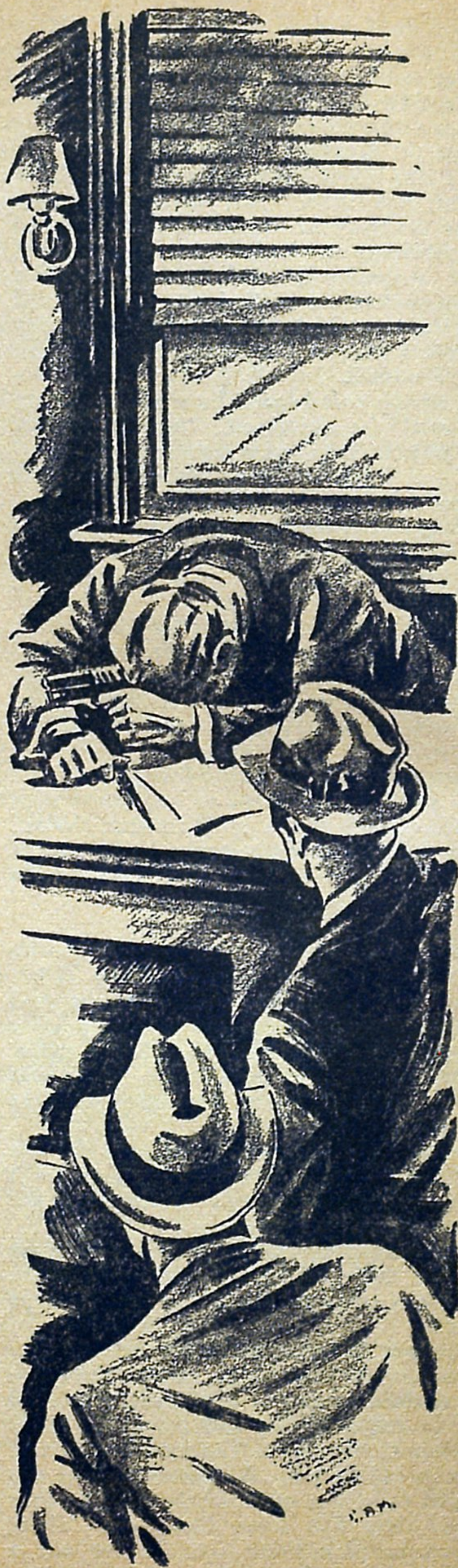
"Thanks for the ride, Dolan," he'd muttered. A faint friendly smile shone through the grayness of pain on his face. "Squares us, Dolan."

And that was the last thing he ever said to anybody.

"Squares us, Dolan."

I didn't agree. I could never pay Zeke Manners back for what he'd done for me. Ten years ago I'd been a cocky kid with more dough than a kid my age should have—twenty-five grand, Irish lottery winnings. It was all that was left out of a hundred and fifty grand. I'd gone to Zeke's place with the gang, wild crazy kids who loved spending dough, my dough. I was going to show-off. Break Zeke's bank like the guy is supposed to have broken the bank at Monte Carlo.

Only I lost. Had only two hundred bucks left, and no control of my temper when a drunk started riding me. Yeah, we fought. I was too wild with my punches to hurt him, and he was too fizzled to be accurate. He swung.



Young Galloway saw Manners slump forward, the gun clutched in his hand

I ducked. He whirled off-balance, went down, his head striking the edge of a table. It was his last fight.

I faced a twenty year rap, but Zeke Manners, gambler — but the squarest guy in town, kicked my fairweather friends out, let them know what would happen if they ever opened their mouths, and took me into his office and talked to me.

"Look, kid," he'd said, "I know you didn't kill him. I can make the police see it that way too. They won't like it but they'll see it if I—"

He didn't go on with that. He took a new tack.

"I had a kid brother just like you. He went to the chair in another state because I didn't get there in time to save him. I'm squaring myself with him by saving you. And by jingo," he'd snapped, "if you don't stay on your feet you won't answer to the cops. You'll answer to me!"

No, he didn't give me a lot of dough, his dough or what I'd lost. He took my last two hundred bucks, said it was time I saw how people suffered and what two hundred bucks could mean to them. He had a guy coach me for the Civil Service exams, then got me a job driving an ambulance. A year later he gave me back my two hundred bucks. My eyes had been opened—I'd seen plenty.

Zeke would never let me do anything to try to repay him. But when I'd helped carry him into the hospital ten years later, he'd said: "Squares us, Dolan."

Like fun it did!

I was wishing he'd made me a cop, instead of an ambulance hack driver. Then maybe I'd know how to go about finding the guy that pumped five slugs into his chest. I'd really be able to do something about squaring myself with Zeke.

Those things were going through my head when the dame came into the picture.

I WAS sitting in the hack, with the radio tuned to a newscast. The announcer was saying: "No trace has been found yet of Robert Galloway, whom police declare is allegedly guilty of the ruthless shooting of Zeke

Manners."

It was then the dame came rushing to the hack, her starched white skirts rustling, her blue cape flaunting behind her.

"Seven forty-five South State, driver," she commanded breathlessly.

I stared at her as she climbed in quickly, swinging her kit into the rear of the hack beside the seat the interne usually rode on. She was beautiful—the soft fluff of her hair above her smooth features making me think of golden honey poured over ripe peaches. But it wasn't just her looks that made me stare. It was something else.

Her blue eyes met mine sharply, briefly.

"Seven forty-five South State," she repeated, and again she sounded breathless, nervous.

"I've seen you somewhere before," I began, frowning.

"Around the hospital," she said quickly, giving me a keen look. "I'm the new interne."

"Doctor Brown?" I questioned.

She looked impatient.

"How many new women internes are there? Are you going to sit here and question me all night? Either start driving or go inside and check up on me. But for pity's sake stop wasting time. *Do something!*"

I kicked the starter and rolled the hack. Just as we approached the street and I moved my knee toward the siren control she spoke again.

"Never mind the siren, we're not in that much of a hurry."

I obeyed. I didn't say anything, but I was thinking there was something queer here. She seemed nervous, contradicting herself: first I must hurry, then I mustn't use the siren.

I remained silent until I got the hack past Seventh and Willoughby, a bad corner, and a tough one to take without the help of the siren when traffic is heavy just before theatre curtain-time.

"This your first case?" I asked her. "That why you're so nervous?"

"Yes," she declared.

"Nuts!" I snapped, stepping on the brake. "Doc Brown's been out on three calls that I know of even though

she's never ridden in my hack. If you ask me, I don't think you are Doc Brown. Now what goes on here?"

I heard her kit snap open and I looked around. She pulled out a little gun and pointed it at me. Her eyes were desperate.

"Keep driving," she ordered. "Don't use the siren. Don't do anything to attract attention. Do you understand?"

I took my foot off the brake.

"Aren't there any taxies left in the city?" I growled. "People are sick, in accidents, dying. This hack is needed. If you'll pile out quietly, I won't tip off the cops to you or—"

"I need an ambulance," she declared. "And you're not going to tip . . . to tip . . ."

Her voice faded.

I glanced around carefully. She'd been looking back. Her head whipped toward me as I turned, and she steadied the gun. Her face was white, scared, desperate.

"Is that car back there following us?" she gasped. "I just saw it jump a signal light."

I looked into the mirror.

"Hurry," she said. "Don't let it catch us."

"Maybe it's a prowler car," I suggested. "Ambulance follow-up."

But as soon as I said it, I knew it couldn't be the cops. She wasn't a doc. She'd cooked up a phony call to make me leave the hospital. That's why she hadn't had me use the siren. She didn't want the hospital to know I was leaving and become suspicious.

"Don't let them catch us," she said, and this time she wasn't commanding. It was more like pleading.

"We don't know they are following us," I answered. "But we'll soon find out."

I TURNED right at the next corner. The car, a sedan, appeared around the corner when we were in the middle of the block. I turned left on the next corner. The car followed.

"Lose them—please try," the girl pleaded.

I looked quickly at her and she tightened her hand on the gun.

"Why should I?" I retorted. "They

don't want me, whoever they are. They want you. Why should I help you? I got things of my own to do. The swellest guy I ever knew is dead in the hospital and—"

"Zeke Manners?" she asked. "You brought him in, didn't you?"

"Yeah," I said wonderingly.

"He was a friend of yours, you want to find out who killed him?"

"Yeah," I frowned. "How did you guess—"

"I'm trying to do something that will catch his murderer too," she declared.

I stared briefly at her. Her eyes met mine, and I felt she was telling the truth.

I nodded my head toward the rear.

"What about that car shagging us? Know who's in it?"

"Yes," she said earnestly. "They're friends of the murderer. They know I—I'm trying to find him, and they don't want me to. Now will you help me?"

"I'll take a chance for Zeke Manners any day," I muttered. "Hang on."

I crushed the gas to the floor and the hack leaped ahead. I whipped around a corner, jammed the brakes, spun the wheel, hit the gas again and lurched the hack into an alley. We roared through the narrow drive, dusted a guy's shoes, another guy's fender as we shot out onto the next street. Just before we cleared the alley I saw the pursuing car back up past the alley, then come charging in after us.

I raced the hack across an intersection and swung into another alley before the sedan appeared behind us. For two minutes I snaked through alleys, lurched around corners, before I barged out on MacArthur Boulevard and rolled the hack south.

I grinned at the girl. She smiled faintly. She was plenty scared but game.

"That's that," I said. "Now, where do you think we can find this rat Galloway? Seven forty-five South State?"

"Galloway is not the man we are looking for," she declared uneasily.

"He is for my money," I declared. "What makes you think he—"

"He didn't do it," she insisted. "I know."

I looked sharply at her.

"Are you trying to pull a game on me?" I demanded. "Because if you are—"

I jerked my gaze from the traffic again as something about her features clicked in my brain. I'd seen Galloway a few times recently when I stopped in to say hello to Zeke. He'd been gambling desperately, and Zeke had had an argument with him about the money he owed. I remembered Galloway's face now. It was a lot like the face of this girl in the hack with me.

"That's it," I snapped, glaring at her. "You're Galloway's sister I'll bet."

She nodded silently, her eyes pleading with me.

"So that's the game?" I declared. "He's in hiding. Every cop looking for him. No chance to get out of town, but an ambulance might get him out. You picked the wrong guy, sister. If you think I'm going to help Zeke Manners' murderer you're—"

"Have you already forgotten that car that was following us?" she demanded. "They don't want my brother to be found by the police. They want to find him themselves because they're afraid he might put the police on the right track."

I SWUNG the ambulance around a truck and slipped between it and a street car.

"If your brother's innocent," I retorted, "why doesn't he give himself up and put the police on that track?"

"Do you think he would stand a chance?"

"If he's as innocent as you want me to think, which I don't," I began.

"Please listen to me," she interrupted. "My brother phoned me tonight after—after it happened. I knew he was going to see Manners because he'd told me how much he was in debt. But I wasn't the only one he told this afternoon. He told his boss at the bank where he works. Told him he'd been gambling, that he'd have to quit his job because he couldn't fight the temptation any longer to take the bank's money to pay his debts.

"Bob's boss checked his books, and when he discovered that as desperate as Bob's situation was he hadn't taken any money, he said not to quit the job. He appreciated my brother's honesty, gave him the money as a personal loan to pay Zeke Manners."

I started to slow up to swing over toward State Street.

"Keep going straight ahead," said the girl.

I looked at her.

"My brother's not hiding on State Street," she said.

"I'm still listening," I declared. "You haven't told me yet why he can't go to the police if he's innocent."

"He is," she insisted. "He phoned me. He said he saw Zeke Manners alone. He was just paying the money when the door opened behind him. Someone knocked him sprawling. He saw Manners reach into his desk drawer and get a gun. Then there were shots. Manners slumped forward with the gun in his hand!

"Then my brother got up again, and he was punched on the back of the head. As he lay dazed, he felt his fingers pressed about a gun, then heard someone running. He tried to give chase. People who worked for Manners saw my brother, and thought he had done the killing.

"He knew he had to get away, and he managed it somehow. Then he phoned me. I went to the hospital, hoping Manners would regain consciousness sufficiently to name his murderer. But when I heard Manners was dead, I realized I had to help my brother somehow. You believe me, don't you? And you'll help?"

I didn't answer her. I kept the hack rolling while I thought it over. I wanted to help her, but I couldn't forget Zeke Manners.

"What about those guys in the sedan?" I asked. "Who do you think they are?"

"I told you," she replied. "Friends of the real murderer!"

"Hoods?"

"What?"

"Gangsters?"

"Yes," she said.

"Nuts," I snapped. "I knew Zeke Manners. He didn't have an enemy in

what you'd call the underworld. His enemies, if any, came from the upper crust. Supposedly nice guys, model citizens, who gambled on the sly like kids sneaking a smoke in the woodshed. They didn't know how to be good losers or pay their debts without squawking and threatening Zeke."

"I saw those men in the hospital." Her voice rose. "They were watching me. They're as—as ruthless as men can be. I saw their eyes. If you could have seen—"

The way her voice sounded I knew she was telling the truth then. After driving an ambulance hack for ten years I knew genuine near-hysteria when I heard it.

"All right," I growled, frowning. "Where's your brother?"

"You believe me? You'll help us?"

"Where is he?" I demanded. "I want to hear the story from him. Maybe he can give me a lead."

She didn't answer. I got clear of a jam of taxies, then turned my head. She was studying me dubiously.

"If you don't believe his story," she suggested, "if he can't give you a lead—"

"You've still got the gun."

"And I'll use it to protect my brother. He's at Four-sixty Hillside Terrace. No one would think of looking for him there. It's an apartment rented by a friend who is away on vacation. He gave Bob the key to keep an eye on the place."

ON the way to 460 Hillside Terrace I watched the mirror carefully. That carful of hoods I'd ditched bothered me. I wondered if an out-of-town gang had been trying to move in on Zeke. I knew all the local boys, knew they wouldn't have killed him, but out-of-towners . . . why, I might walk right into their arms sometime. They'd find me easily because of the ambulance. In fact, I might ride to the morgue sometime in my own hack, but I wouldn't be driving.

I knew I was crazy to believe this girl. I should dump her somehow. Get to the cops and clear myself, put them on her trail and her brother's.

But I wanted to get the real killer of Zeke Manners, whether it was this

girl's brother or someone else. Zeke had taken a chance on me once, and I had to take a chance now. And besides that, I had a strange sense of wanting to believe this girl. That's why I played ball with her and got three strikes on myself. . . .

The usual crowd of gawkers began to sprout from nowhere when the hack pulled up silently in front of 460 Hillside Terrace. I followed the girl in, admiring her trimness as I walked behind her, and I thought of a fresh package of crisp cookies.

We rode up alone in the self-service elevator. She held the gun under her cape and looked at me. I looked down at her soft lips—then the elevator stopped.

I banged open the doors, mad at myself for being a chump over a dame. Dames always get a guy into some kind of a jam. If it ain't with the law it's with in-laws or O. B. wards and loan sharks. A guy's a chump to fall for a pretty little package.

I held the door open for her and liked the smell of her as she passed me. I should have let the doors close, gone down, piled in the hack and gotten out of there. But this dame must have had a ring through my nose or something. I followed her down the hall and kidded myself that I was doing it just because of Zeke Manners.

At the apartment door she knocked, then whispered through the door before it opened.

Bob Galloway's thin white face tightened when he saw me.

"It's all right, Bob," she whispered. "Close the door."

He did, staring suspiciously at me through his horn-rimmed glasses.

"He's a friend of Zeke Manners," the girl nodded toward me. "He's going to help us. He wants to hear your story."

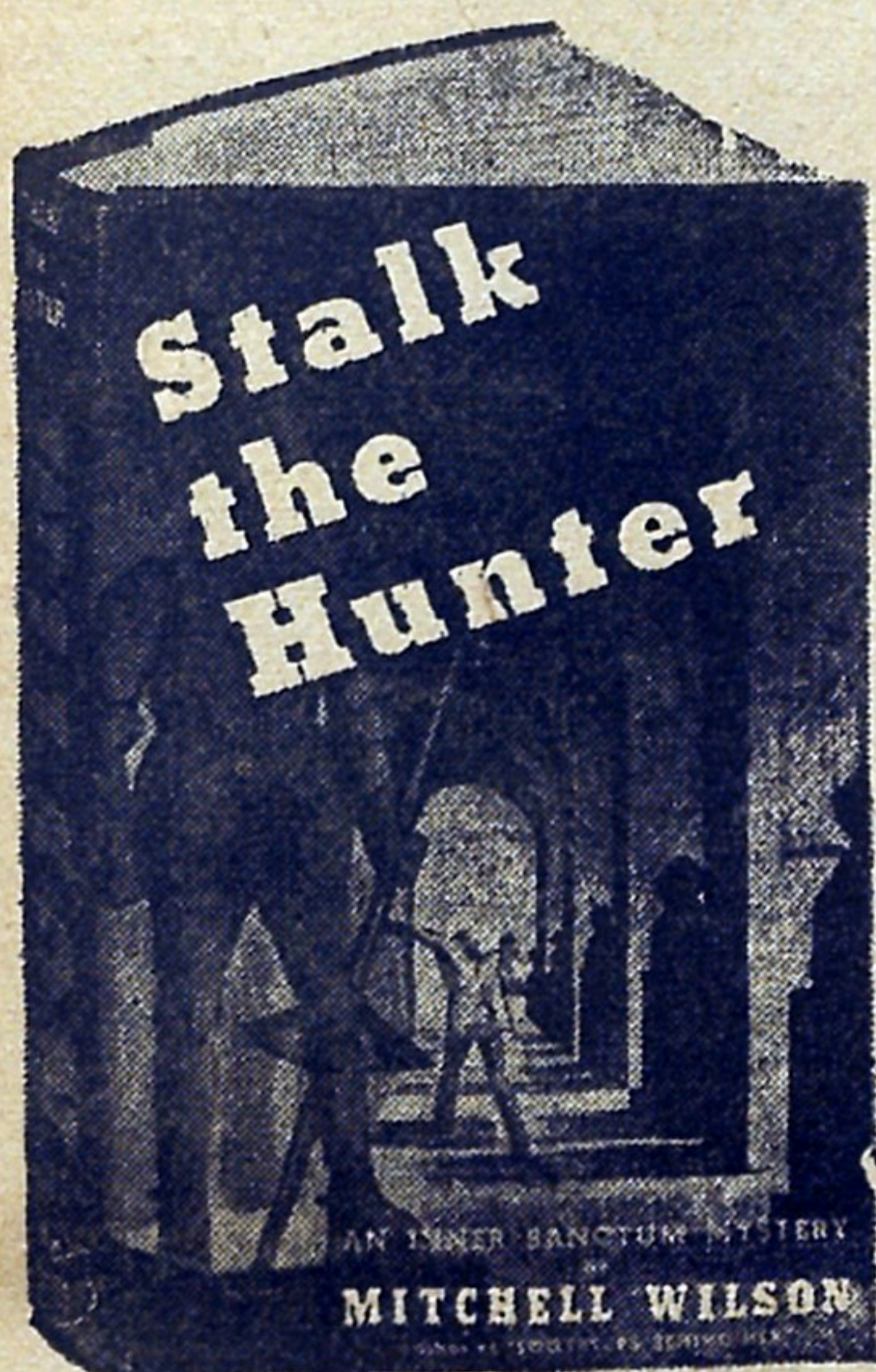
Galloway told it. It was the same as the one the girl had told me. There was nothing more to go on, and I knew then I'd been a chump.

Joan, that was her name, went to the kitchen and mixed some drinks. Galloway turned on the radio while I questioned him.

"No," he said, almost irritably as

[Turn to page 74]

"Deliver Anna Mahler to Me in Twenty-four Hours—or Else—"



PAUL CAMPBELL'S threatening voice stabbed through Kit Gruenholtz. Her pale cheek was still numb where he had slapped her, knocking her to the floor of his office.

SUDDENLY, ALL THE TERROR that Kit believed she had put far behind her had rushed back with a horrible, stifling force. She knew now what she should have known before—that Paul Campbell was a Nazi agent who sought to destroy Anna Mahler and the entire Czech Underground movement!

THERE WAS ONLY one escape for Kit—an escape she contemplated with dread. It meant violence—flaming guns—

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though he'd been all over it in his own mind, "I have no clue to the identity of the killer. I didn't see him, and he didn't speak. All I saw was his shoe when he stepped on the scattered money beside me and pressed my fingers around the gun as I lay dazed on the floor. It looked like any other rubber-soled shoe."

Joan appeared in the doorway with a tray of drinks. It was easy to imagine her like that—in a kitchen doorway with a tray, a neat dress, a dainty house-apron . . .

The radio interrupted my chump thoughts.

" . . . still seeking Robert Galloway, the alleged killer of Zeke Manners. And police are puzzled by a new turn in the murder case. Galloway's sister was seen at the Atlanta Street Hospital. Now she has disappeared and a nurse's outfit and doctor's kit have been reported stolen. One of the ambulances, driven by Michael Dolan, a close friend of Zeke Manners, is also strangely missing. Police are seeking to locate it and are also wondering if there is any relation between the latter two incidents and the murder."

"Well," I said, "that finishes that."

JOAN set the tray down. She reached for the pocket of her cape, and I started toward her. Bob Galloway grabbed me. We grappled until Joan got her gun and covered me.

"Okay," I growled, "what now?"

"We're going to take him in the ambulance," she declared.

"Where?"

"That's not important now."

"Okay, you're giving the orders," I said. "I'm waiting. How are you going to get him out?"

She looked dismayed, angry with herself and me.

"You don't believe me anymore, is that it?" she demanded.

"I haven't any choice," I said curtly, "when that gun is pointed at me every time something doubtful comes up."

Her eyes locked with mine after she slowly looked at her brother. Then she tossed the gun at my feet!

Her brother looked as startled as I felt. He rushed toward the gun.

"Bob!" she stopped him. Her eyes still held mine.

I stood there, the gun touching my shoe. I could almost feel it with my toes. Then I moved to the door.

"Wait here," I said. "I'll get the stretcher dolly."

I turned and looked at her, then stepped out and closed the door quickly so the gawkers in the hall couldn't look into the apartment. I ignored their questions and started down in the elevator.

"Dames!" I snapped, thinking of Joan. "Chump."

I brought up the stretcher dolly, had Galloway lie on it, covered him and pulled the sheet over his face. He pulled it down.

"What are we doing this for?" he demanded, sitting up. "Why can't I stay here?"

"Because we came in an ambulance," I snapped, "because people saw us come to this apartment, and because sooner or later the cops are going to put two and two together and it will add up to eight—eightball for all of us."

I shoved him down hard and yanked the sheet over him again.

"Open the door," I snapped to Joan.

There was something wrong about her. I knew it as we rode down in the elevator, but I couldn't figure what it was. Each time I looked at her to figure it out, the grateful kissable look on her face made me start figuring the wrong things.

She couldn't lift an end of the dolly alone to snake it into the hack. So I started to lift one end by myself and Galloway nearly slid off. That would have been swell—with a guy standing on the curb watching and holding a newspaper that had Galloway's picture.

Two fellows gave me a hand to snake the dolly in. One of them grinned at me and spoke softly.

"A woman doc, huh?"

"Yeah," I growled.

I helped Joan in, none too gently, slammed the doors and beat it around to the wheel. As we rolled I spotted a police car coming around the corner behind us. I turned the next corner and stepped on the gas.

IT WAS about five minutes later when I heard the report of the hack's radio—I'd tuned it back to the police and ambulance wavelength.

"Attention all cars. Pick up Ambulance Number Ten, driven by Michael Dolan. This ambulance is carrying Robert Galloway, the murderer of Zeke Manners, and Galloway's sister. Arrest all occupants of the ambulance, and be careful. They may be armed and are undoubtedly desperate. Galloway's sister, assisted by Dolan, is posing as a woman interne and she—"

"That's it," I exclaimed. "Now I know what was wrong. You left your kit in the apartment. That's how they've been able to tie this together."

She looked apologetic.

"You've got to help us now to save yourself," she said.

I didn't answer.

I was driving myself straight for the Big House all because of a dame. Me, the chump, dreaming of a dame. Yeah, we'd go to court together, to the pen together, and we'd be hitched all right. Hitched in a hangman's noose.

Not me!

Dames are a dime a dozen. Why should I become a cellmate just because I think some dame is my soulmate? I had an out from this mess. She forced me into it at gunpoint, didn't she?

I looked around, glared at her. She still looked apologetic.

"Well," I snapped, "why don't you point the gun at me again?"

She stared at me before she spoke, and then her voice was weak.

"I—I left that at the apartment too."

I nearly ran the hack into a bus. My alibi was gone.

"That's swell," I said through my teeth. "We got a murderer we're trying to keep from the cops and a carful of hoods, and you forget the rod we'd need to protect him."

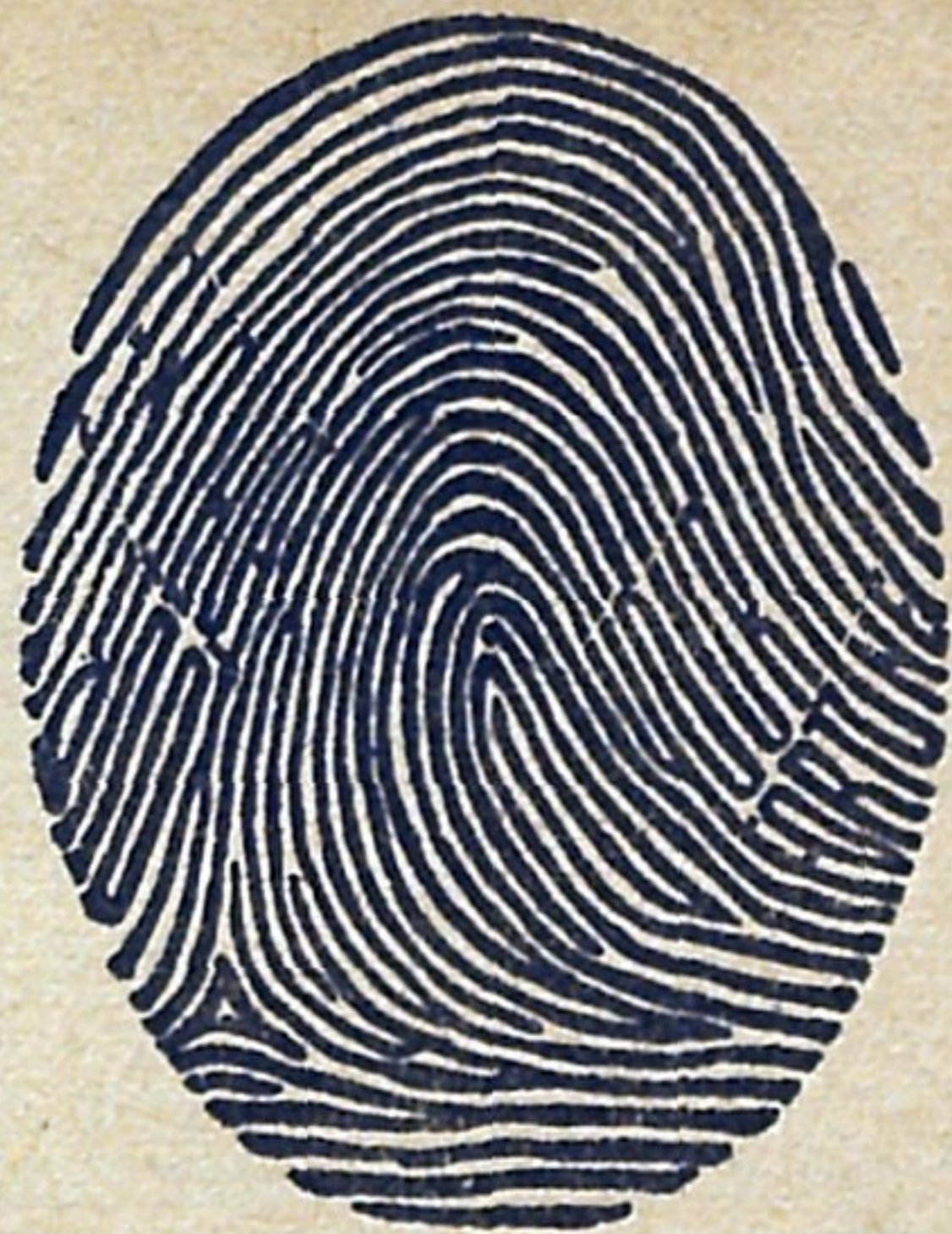
Her eyes were bright as she looked at me.

"Then you are going to help us?" she asked.

"I'm going to dump you," I retorted.

[Turn page]

What Can You Read In This



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Study it carefully. There is a secret hidden in it, just as there is in every finger print. For 28 years we have been training men to become Finger Print experts. Over 53% of all American Identification Bureaus employ I.A.S. trained men. Get into this steady-employment, good pay profession. Learn at home. Small cost. Fine opportunities.

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We rode silently three blocks, then I asked:

"Galloway, where's your boss live? I'll dump you there, and he'll probably help you. I'll give you a half-hour after I leave you there. At least I'll try to steer clear of the cops that long or stall them. That's all I'll promise you."

"Well, I suppose it can't be any other way, Dolan," he spoke heavily. "Thanks for what you done."

"Thanks, Mike," Joan said softly.

Her voice could have done things to me if I'd let it.

"If the guy won't help you in a getaway," I growled, "at least he'll be able to get you a good lawyer and—"

A prowler car growled its siren, shot from the curb after us. I swore, hit the gas hard, and the hack leaped ahead. The prowler car screamed. I snapped on the red spotlights.

Traffic was thick. The prowler car's siren cleared the way a bit for me, but not enough. I had to use my own siren.

As we howled through the night traffic, I called back to Galloway.

"Where's your boss live?"

He told me. The radio sounded off. The prowler car reporting to Telegraph they were chasing us. Telegraph came back on ordering cars ahead to close in and intercept us.

I snaked the hack desperately through traffic. I did it automatically, my mind studying the layout of the city streets I knew so well.

I swung right on Haines Avenue to avoid two cars I had spotted ahead and to the left across the lots, racing to trap me at the corner. My eyes watched the streets, my ears listened to the police calls, my mind blended the two and I got the picture of what was happening.

THE police were herding me into a pocket—into Gammontown Island, a section of the city almost surrounded by the river, and there was no bridge out of there but the railroad bridge.

There was a parade of police cars after me. More were closing in ahead. I couldn't hope to avoid them. I cut hard right at the next corner.

Galloway shouted.

"You shouldn't have turned. We'll be trapped now in Gammontown Island."

"Not if I can make it to the railroad bridge," I said tensely. "It's our only chance."

I cut off the siren and the lights. Raced through the darkness of Gammontown. Twisted through streets. Shook off the police cars on my trail. Their radio reports showed they weren't too disappointed over losing sight of me—they thought they had me trapped.

I raced on. Joan came beside me.

"You'll need another pair of eyes, driving without lights," she said. Her voice was filled with confidence.

I didn't answer.

I swung onto the railroad tracks. Drove fast to keep the wheels from bouncing on the ties. Went across the trestle.

The police radio did not report our escape—not yet.

Joan looked gratefully at me, but I ignored the look.

"Tell your brother to be ready to pile out when we reach his boss's place," I told her curtly.

A few minutes later, still without lights or siren, I sped into a dark residential district. Joan suddenly stiffened beside me. I saw her looking back.

"Mike, there was a car in that side street. It looked like the car the gangsters—it's coming after us!" She all but screamed.

I whipped the hack around the next corner, careened it into a tree-screened driveway and gunned it up the incline under the porte-cochere. Below us the sedan raced by on the street.

JOAN and her brother piled out of the hack, but not before Joan leaned suddenly toward me and gave me a warm little kiss.

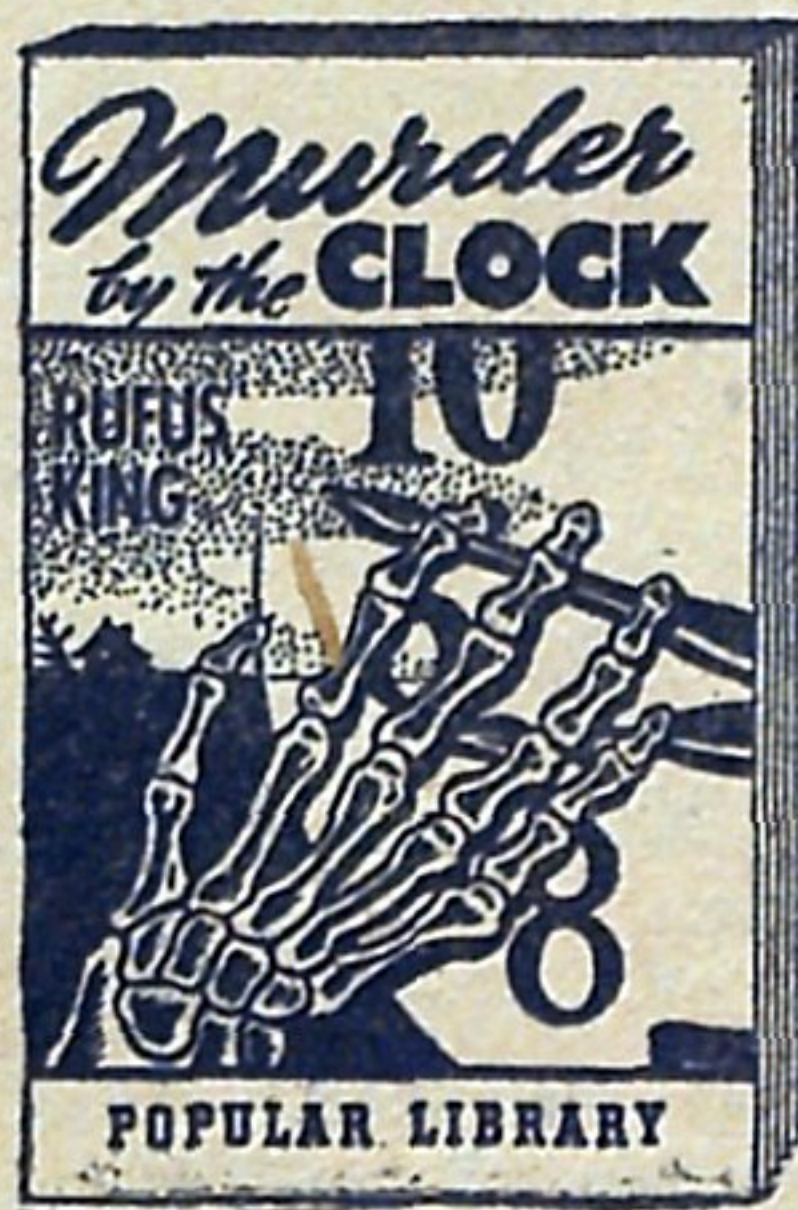
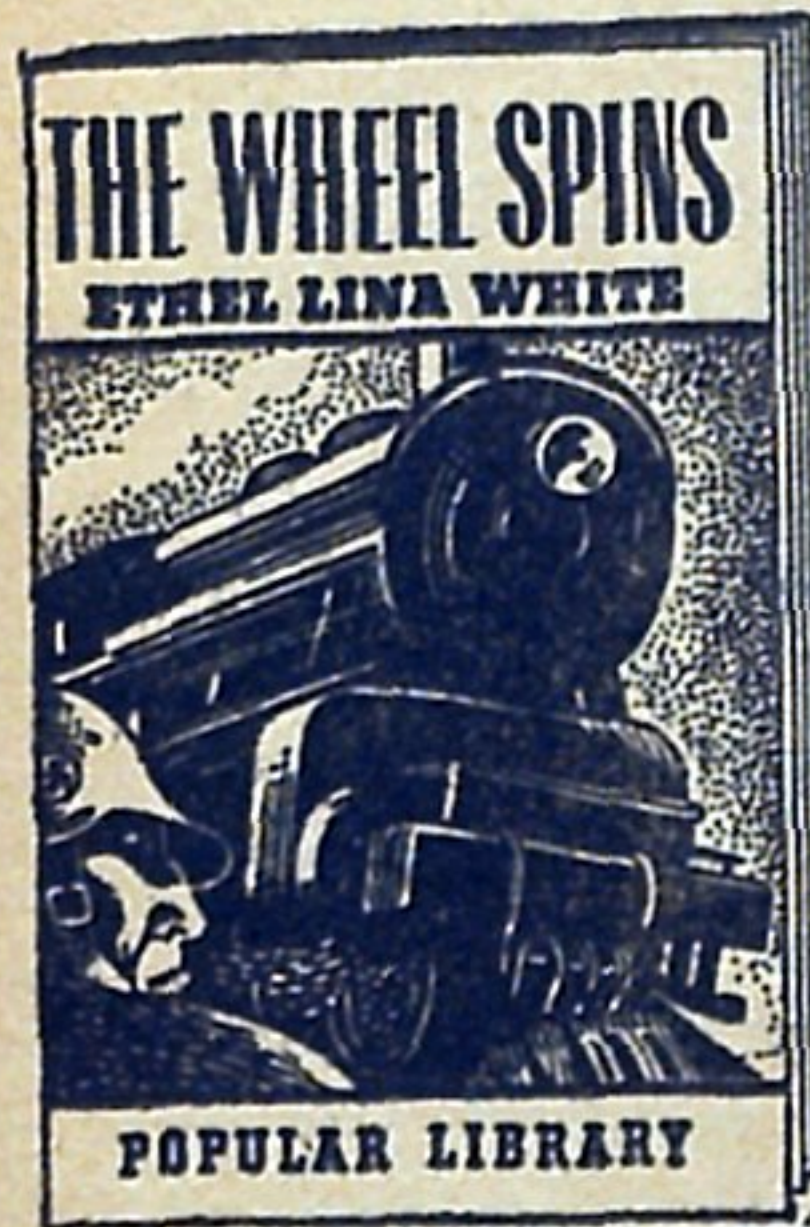
"Thanks, Mike, for all you've done. You'd better hurry now. Save yourself."

I sat there, staring after her as she ran up the steps with her brother. Before they reached the top a short

[Turn to page 78]

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heavy-set guy opened the door and came out.

"Galloway," he exclaimed, "what are you doing—"

"I need your help, Mr. Madden," Galloway said to his boss. "I hope you'll listen to me, believe me, and—"

Madden came silently to the edge of the steps, his feet on a level with my eyes, and frowned down at me.

I swung the door of the hack open.

"You've got to believe him, Mr. Madden," I said, mounting the steps. "He's innocent."

They all looked at me. Joan especially. Down on the street I heard the sedan racing back. Police sirens sounded in the distance.

Madden's sharp brown eyes studied me.

"I can't help him, much as I'd like to," he said. "He's wanted by the police. I can't risk my reputation. If he'll give himself up, of course I'll do all I can then, legal counsel and—"

"But he won't stand a chance if he gives himself up," Joan protested.

I was listening to those sirens, and to the sedan turning around again down the street. The hoods knew we were hidden somewhere in that block.

Madden moved silently back to the door. I followed, my feet grating on the cement porch.

"Listen, Mr. Madden," I said quickly, desperately, "you've got to hide Galloway, protect him, until it's safe for him to make a getaway."

"I can't do that," he retorted impatiently, "the police and everyone else believe him guilty of murder."

"And embezzling the bank's funds," I stabbed in the dark.

Madden nodded. "Yes, and—"

He looked sharply at me. I smiled grimly.

"I thought you checked his records today and found nothing missing," I rapped out.

MADDEN stared. Joan gasped, looked quickly from me to Madden. Galloway looked startled.

"Madden," I snapped, "I think you've worked a neat little frame on Galloway."

"Do you know what you're saying?" he demanded angrily.

"Yeah. I think you murdered Zeke

Manners. You knew Galloway was going there. You gave him the money. You probably owed Manners plenty yourself—bank money you'd gambled away. You're one of these model citizens when you're in the public eye."

"This is slander!" Madden barked self-righteously. "I don't know Zeke Manners."

"You were there today," I countered. "And how do I know? I was there myself to pick up the bullet-riddled body of the squarest guy I ever knew. I saw the dough scattered on the floor and one of the bills had been stepped on by a guy wearing rubber-soled shoes."

"Madden," I snapped, "let's see the pattern of those rubber soles you're wearing!"

He jumped back and his hand plunged into his pocket. I hit him. He went back. I hit him again, grabbed his wrist. He rammed his knee to my groin and my muscles turned to butter.

He flung me aside. Galloway was closing in. Madden fired and Galloway spun, clutching his shoulder. Joan screamed and ran at Madden.

[Turn page]

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He swung the gun toward her.

I bellowed something at him and charged. I knocked his shot wild just as he fired at Joan. Then I hit him with all I had. He went head-long down the steps, cracked his head against the hack and lay still.

Joan grabbed my arm as guys came running out of the shadows of the driveway.

"Mike, the gangsters."

My heart died until I looked closely at them. They were guys who'd worked for Zeke Manners.

"Easy, boys," I called. "We got Zeke's killer. You'd better fade so the cops don't think you did it."

They looked at Madden, then at Galloway, then at me.

"You're sure of that, Dolan?" one of them asked.

"If I'm wrong, you always know where you can find me," I said. "You know Zeke was a good friend of mine."

The guy who'd spoken nodded.

"Okay, Mike." He grinned, looking at Joan. "Give us a buzz when you're gonna be hitched. We'll send you a present like Zeke would have."

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I looked at Joan, and the little siren's lips signalled the go-ahead.

"Save it," I growled. "Don't make a chump out of me with the cops coming. I've got to meet them, tell them to search all the dough at Zeke's place to find a bill with the imprint of Madden's shoes. You be the doc you're pretending to be and do what you can for your brother's shoulder.

"And get this," I snapped, "if you give that kiss to anybody else you'll ride in the back, not the front seat of the hack."

"Yes, Mike," she promised.

It sounded kind of good. I guess there are a lot of chumps and simple guys like me. But it's kind of nice at that, being a chump. After you get used to it I suppose.

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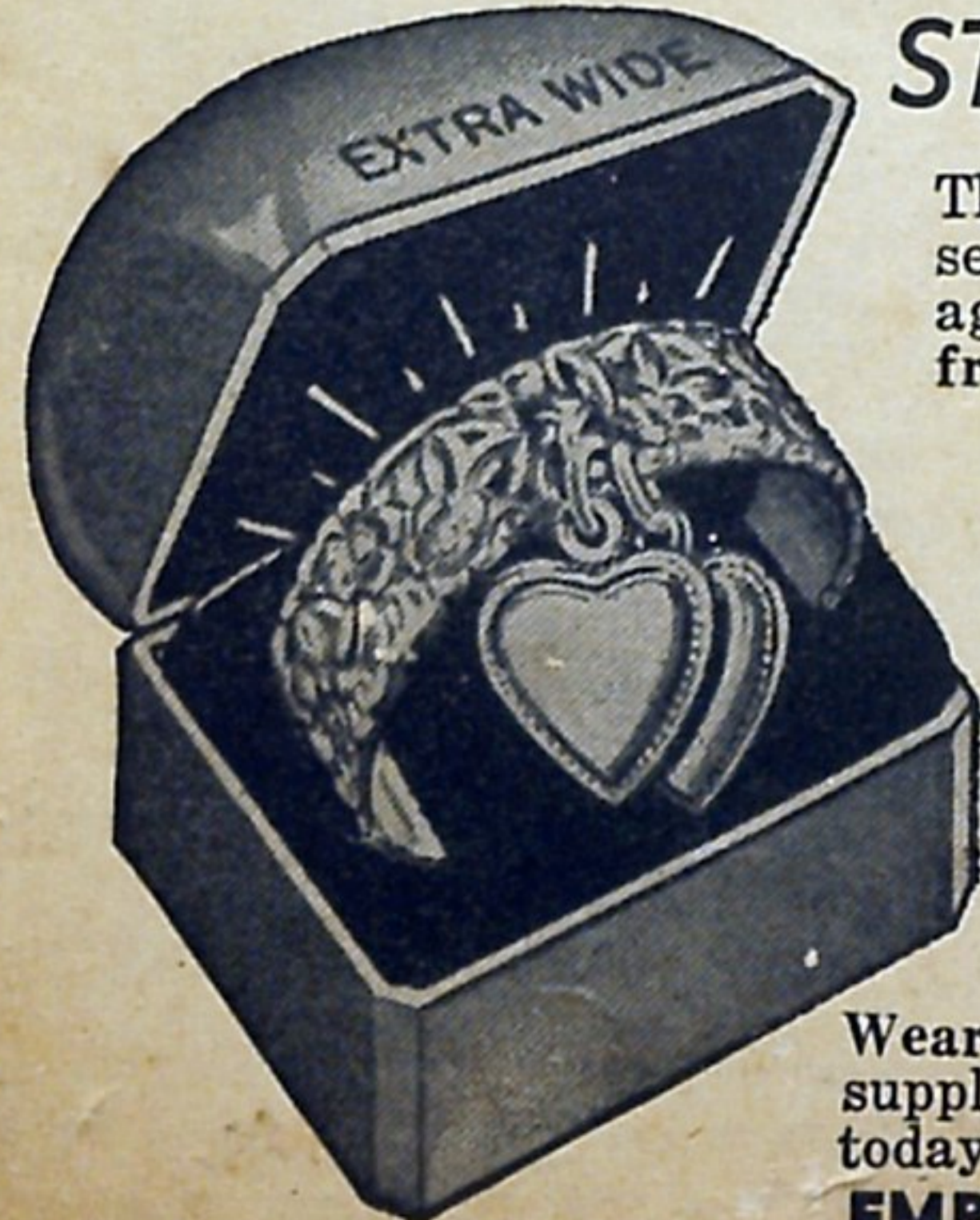
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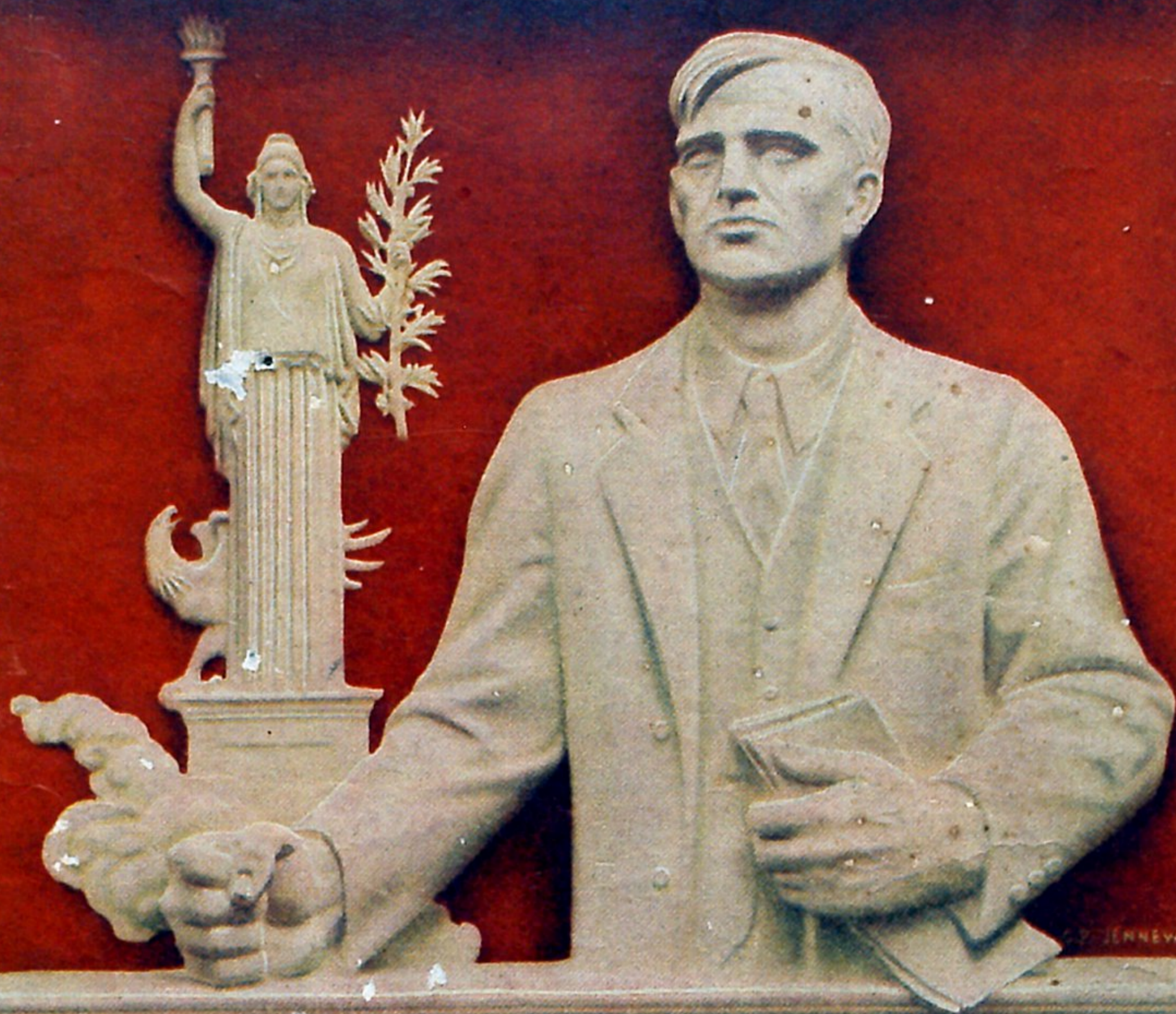
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