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BLACK BOOK DETECTIVE

Vol. XXII, No. 3

A THRILLING PUBLICATION

June, 1947

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by **G. Wayman Jones**

When the strange death predictions of a jittery little man prove uncannily accurate, Tony Quinn begins an investigation which pits him against a diabolical, elusive master of crime! A doctor of devilry is among the suspects in a grim case! 11

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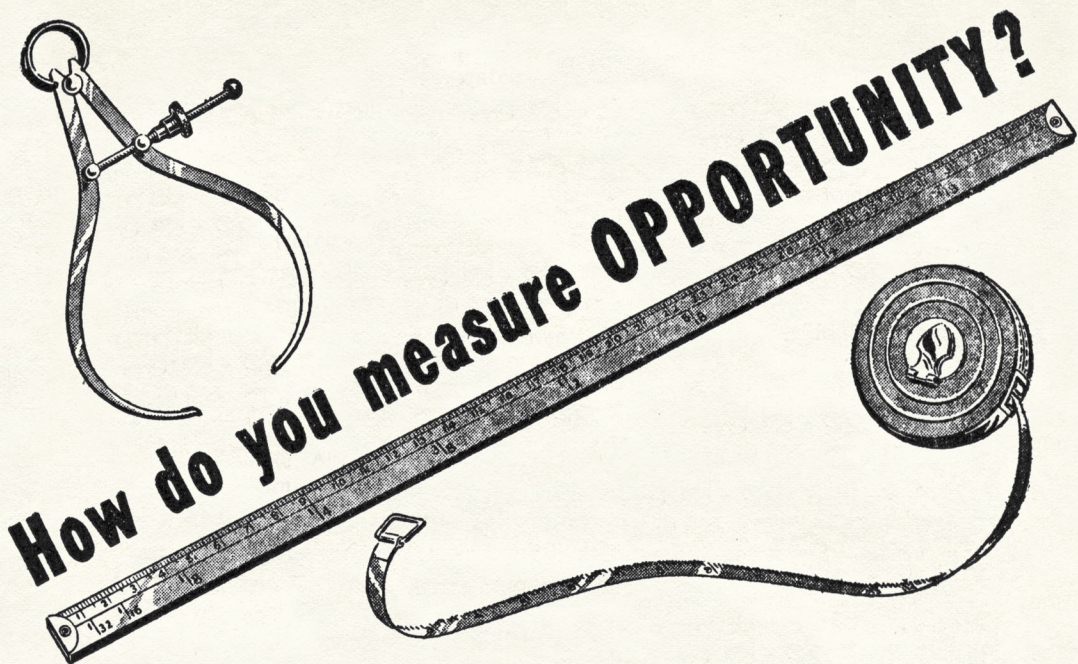
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OFF THE RECORD

A DEPARTMENT WHERE READERS AND THE EDITOR MEET

THE murder of a beautiful blonde girl sets Tony Quinn off on a new trail of excitement and adventure in the next issue of **BLACK BOOK DETECTIVE**. The featured novel is called **DEAD MAN'S PLUNDER**, and was written by G. Wayman Jones. It's one of the most amazing and spectacular Black Bat novels to date!

Special District Attorney Tony Quinn is on the spot right from the start, and it isn't long before the Black Bat, Carol Baldwin, Silk, and Butch are plunged into danger along with him.

It all started when a pop-eyed little man heard a woman scream in the apartment next door and called the police. Two officers of the Radio Patrol responded to the call, and they had to smash down the door of the apartment before they could gain admittance. On the floor they found the body of a young, beautiful blonde. The brutally inflicted marks on her very lovely throat left no doubt about how she had died.

Crime's Aftermath

Hardboiled Captain McGrath of homicide studied her for three long minutes when he arrived on the scene. Then turned to one of the radio policemen.

"Know her?" he asked. "Probably not, because she made sure lately that she got little publicity. But think back and you'll recall pictures of her pretty face in all the newspapers. She was the widow of Joe Titus."

"Joe Titus!" the radio policeman exclaimed. "No wonder I thought I'd seen her somewhere before."

"Don't get things wrong," McGrath said. "Phyllis Titus never had the faintest idea her husband was a racketeer, killer and all-around crook—not until I nailed him and sent him to the chair. He died in the death house at Sing Sing a little better than three years ago. Now, it seems, we have an aftermath."

McGrath began his investigation. He soon learned a man had been seen accompanying Phyllis Titus home shortly before her death. Through a half smoked cigar butt found in

the apartment, and aided by a description furnished by a taxi driver, McGrath was able to identify the dead woman's escort.

The cigar was of very expensive make, sold exclusively by a tobacco stand in the lobby of the Fidelity Building. The man who had purchased the cigar was an export executive named Theodore Slater who maintained an office on the nineteenth floor of that building.

McGrath posted his men around the building. It was after midnight, but McGrath intended seeing what he could find in Slater's office. If Slater was the murderer there might be some evidence of it here. McGrath was about to break into the office when word was flashed to him that Slater had just entered the lobby. McGrath immediately took over the operation of the one elevator that was running.

Slater regarded McGrath somewhat suspiciously as he stepped into the elevator, but made no fuss. At the nineteenth floor, the man got out and walked rapidly toward the offices of Theodore Slater. He let himself in with a key, lights flicked on and the door slammed shut. McGrath hunted up the regular elevator operator and got a pass key.

Guns Roar!

McGrath followed Slater in then. Slater was busy in an office marked private. McGrath stepped into its doorway. Slater had a briefcase open and was jamming papers into it. A medium-sized safe stood wide.

Slater looked up and turned deathly pale. One hand was inside the briefcase. Suddenly it came out clutching an automatic. He fired twice, very wild. McGrath fired once. His bullet ripped through Slater's right arm and the man dropped the weapon.

It wasn't long before McGrath was phoning Police Headquarters.

"Quinn?" he said when the connection was made. "This is McGrath. I've got a nice little murder case all wrapped up like for Christmas, with fancy ribbons and stickers on it. Suppose I bring the guy to your office right now, and we can iron the whole thing out while it's hot."

(Continued on page 8)

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OFF THE RECORD

(Continued from page 6)

Twenty minutes later Tony Quinn's supposedly sightless eyes were staring blankly past Theodore Slater who occupied a chair before his desk, handcuffed to Captain McGrath who sat at his side. Tony Quinn spoke in a calm voice as he made his charge.

"You see how it is, Mr. Slater," the Special District Attorney said. "Everything is against you. So far, I have given you no opportunity to express yourself, because I wanted you to know exactly where you stood. You may or may not talk. That is your privilege. You are an intelligent man, far above the ordinary. You have admitted knowing Phyllis Titus well, of dining with her this evening, taking her home and being observed, successively by a waiter, a taxi driver and the doorman. Some ten minutes after you were last seen with Mrs. Titus, she was murdered."

A Good Story, But—

Slater admitted taking Phyllis home, but insisted that he had left her at the door of her apartment building and that it was a stranger—whose face he did not see—who accompanied her inside. Slater further explained that he had shot at McGrath when confronted in his office because he had already heard about Phyllis' murder over the radio and he feared that McGrath was her murderer come to kill him because he had seen the murderer with Phyllis.

Quinn shook his head slowly. "Mr. Slater, you have a good story," he said. "But do you have any witness to back up your story?"

Slater hesitated. "Mr. Quinn—what I'm going to say next may sound like a pipe dream. Maybe it is. But I stopped after I turned the corner from Phyllis' apartment house. I waited there about ten minutes trying to figure out who the stranger who had accompanied her inside might be. As a car rounded the corner, its headlights flashed on a doorway directly across the street. Somebody was standing there. I hadn't noticed him before because of the darkness."

Quinn leaned forward. "Perhaps if we locate this man and he places you there at the time when Mrs. Titus screamed, you can clear yourself of having murdered her."

The Hooded Man

Slater gave a curt, derisive laugh. "Here is the pay-off. This man was dressed com-

pletely in black. From head to foot. He even had on—a jet black hood which covered his entire head!”

The only man who could alibi Slater, the only man who could save him from the chair was—the Black Bat!

As you can well imagine, Tony Quinn was in a jam. To Silk and Butch and Carol Baldwin, his faithful aides, Tony Quinn would readily admit that he had been in the doorway that night and had seen Slater. But if he publicly came forward to alibi Slater he would have to admit his own identity as the Black Bat and that would be the end of the Black Bat.

And now more danger threatened. Quinn's highly sensitive ears had picked up the sound of the outer door latch closing very gently. Someone had been listening in his outer office. Someone who knew that Captain McGrath suspected that Tony Quinn was not really blind and that he was, moreover, the elusive figure in black known as the Black Bat. And such information could be deadly to Tony Quinn!

You'll miss a lot if you don't read DEAD MAN'S PLUNDER, by G. Wayman Jones, in the next issue of BLACK BOOK DETECTIVE. From this tense start, the story carries on through a whirlwind of action to a terrific climax that will have you breathless. Tony Quinn is at his fighting, shooting, sleuthing best in this complete novel of suspense, surprise—and smash action.

An Unusual Mystery Novelet

Also in the next issue of BLACK BOOK DETECTIVE you'll find LET MURDER SLEEP, by Norman A. Daniels, an unusual mystery novelet. This is the story of Lieutenant Dave Langan, a Marine hero whose buddy Phil Sterling lost his mind when he saw a Japanese soldier about to smash Dave over the head with a rock during action on Saipan.

Phil wound up in a mental hospital back in the United States, having completely lost the ability to talk. And Dave, uninjured, came home too, determined to help his buddy recover his mind.

By hypnotizing Phil, doctors got him to talk, and it was then that they discovered that years before Phil had seen his own father brutally slain in much the same way that Dave was almost killed—by getting smashed over the head with a rock.

(Continued on page 111)

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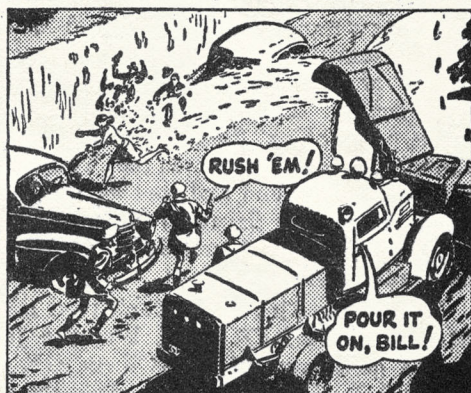
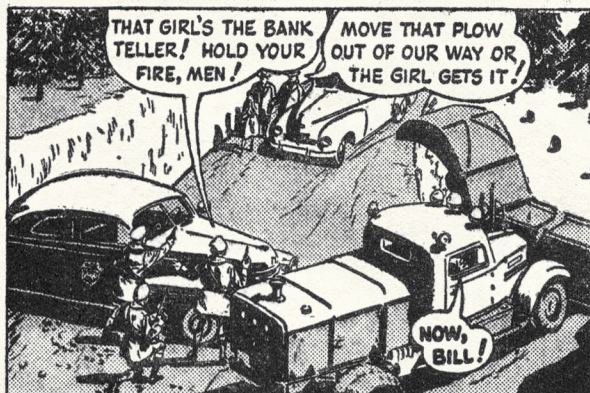
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As Marco's face appeared in the rear window, the Black Bat squeezed the trigger (CHAPTER XIII)

THE MURDER PROPHET

By G. WAYMAN JONES

When the mysterious death predictions of a jittery little man prove uncannily accurate, Tony Quinn begins an investigation which pits him against a diabolical, elusive master of crime!

CHAPTER I

Two Men of Murder

AT ELEVEN o'clock at night the Chatham Building was a lonely tower in a great city. The vast marble foyer was dimly illuminated. The banks of elevators were quiet. Only one, a self-operated car for the exclusive use of tenants, was ready for use. The cigar counter looked forlorn and deserted.

Across the street, two men were eying the place with considerable speculation. They especially watched a window on the sixteenth floor. It was the only front office window that was illuminated.

The men were a strange pair, obscured by the darkness of the doorway which was their refuge. One man was bulky, with a thick neck, a broad forehead and an almost animal intelligence in his

A COMPLETE BLACK BAT NOVEL

A Doctor of Deviltry is One of the Suspects

beady little eyes. The other was no more than five feet five, and dressed like a dandy. He wore highly polished brown shoes, and had well-manicured fingernails. The tilt brim of his gray hat was pulled far down over his eyes. He had a thin, uncompromising mouth.

Of the two, an observer would have acknowledged at once, the smaller man was by far the more deadly.

"Well," he said, as he moved forward a step, "it's time to get at it. You set?"

"Yeah," the other man grunted. "I been set for a long time. Let's go!"

They crossed the street, walking toward the building they had been observing, and the small man looked around. He signaled with a jerk of his head. The bigger man stepped up to the locked foyer door. He manipulated a key, unlocked the door and pushed it open. Both men darted inside and the door was quickly locked again. They walked briskly to the self-service elevator, pushed the button and waited impatiently as the lift came down.

When the cage lights shone through the spaces between the elevator door, the big man reached for his hip pocket and took out a blackjack. He flexed it once, lined himself up beside the elevator door and waited. The door did not open. Nobody was in the cage.

The small man nodded, shoved the door open, both men stepped in, and the dandy pushed an indicator button. The lift arose smoothly and did not stop until it reached the sixteenth floor. Here again, the big man got his blackjack ready, but there was no one on whom to use it.

"This is a cinch," he said. "Easier than I expected. I'm sort of aching to wrap this billy around somebody's skull. Think the guy will put up any kind of a fight?"

THE SMALL man leaned against the side of the elevator cage. He lit a cigarette and puffed on it deeply. He spoke in a modulated voice.

"You keep those aches to commit violence to yourself. Unless we are forced to use them. Your job is to hold him, that's all. And not so tightly that you

leave any bruises. Keep your hands off his face and throat. Just pin his arms. Remember that."

The small man let the cigarette dangle from between his lips. He reached into his pocket and removed a flat, imitation-leather-bound case. He raised the hinged lid and his eyes glittered when he dooked down at the hypodermic syringe and its accompanying needle. There were two tiny glass ampules in the case also. He picked up one of these, grasped the thin, elongated tip and broke off the bit of glass which slid out of his fingers. He dropped it on the elevator floor.

"Find that," he instructed the bigger man.

While his companion began searching for the small bit of glass, the little man calmly inserted the hypo needle into the ampule and drew up the colorless fluid. He put the empty ampule back into the case, slipped the whole thing into his pocket and carefully palmed the hypo still in his hand. The big man was growling. He straightened up. "I can't find it. The heck with it."

"Find it, you dope," ordered his companion. "Things like that are the clues cops go by. Find it!"

The big man grunted and went down on his hands and knees, to methodically paw every inch of the elevator floor. Abruptly he paused, raised his head like a hound sniffing a scent. Then he scrambled to his feet.

"Door just closed," he whispered. "Maybe he's coming out."

"Grab him when he opens the door," the small man said. "There are watchmen in this building, so don't let him yell. Put your hand across his mouth, but not too hard. If there's a single bruise, you'll hear about it."

"Okay. Okay, I'll handle him like he was made of china. Here he comes!"

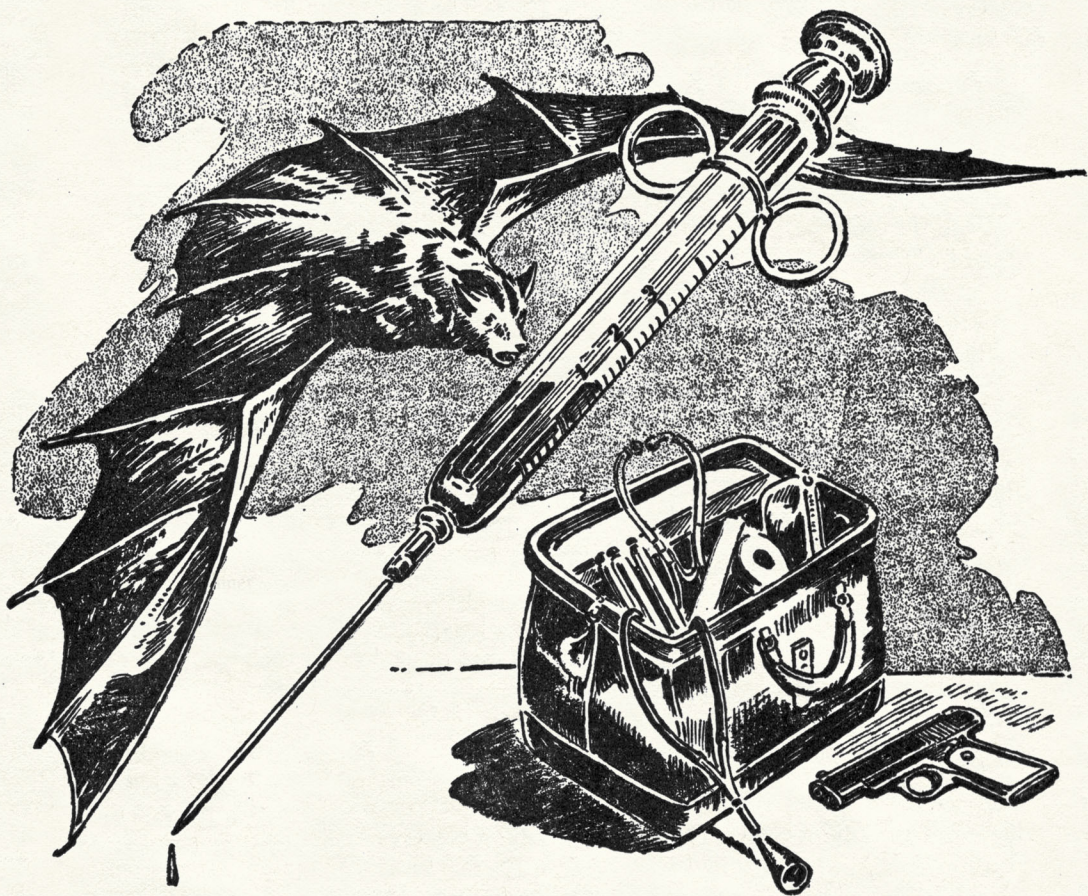
Both men got set. The elevator door slid back and the man for whom they had been waiting, a man whose name was Harry Pembroke, stepped out to enter the cage. He saw the two men. No alarm crossed his features until the bigger of the pair reached out toward him. Pembroke tried to get away, but he wasn't successful.

in a Baffling Mystery that Defies Solution!

A big hand was clamped over his mouth. A brawny arm encircled his body, pinning his arms tightly down as he was shoved into the elevator, both men following. The small man promptly closed the door and pushed the up button for the twenty-ninth floor.

hand against the victim's forehead and pushed his head back until the throat was amply exposed and the flesh stretched and tight. The needle came toward Pembroke.

The victim saw it. Inside him, his heart pounded horribly. So loud he



Pembroke tried to struggle. It was no use. He felt a choking sensation in his throat, and he knew what that portended.

He wanted to tell them to let go. To say that his heart was bad and that any excitement might kill him. He wanted to tell them if they were after money, it was in his hip pocket.

But they made no attempt to search him. The small man was grinning as if he enjoyed this. He took the hypodermic needle from his pocket, held it carefully and approached Pembroke. The little man put the heel of his left

thought it would awaken the whole city. Then there was an excruciating pain. The hypodermic needle, dominating everything his eyes could see, grew dimmer and dimmer. Pembroke went limp. Not with the limpness of despair or terror. It was more than that. He just sagged, like an empty sack.

The big man grunted. Pembroke was heavier than he looked.

"The chump fainted," he growled. "Go ahead, jab him."

But the little man wasn't satisfied.

"Put him down," he said. "Easy now."

The elevator had stopped at the twen-

ty-ninth floor. The small man punched the button for the sixteenth and the cage moved smoothly down again. Then he bent and studied Pembroke's eyes. He felt for a pulse, shook his head slowly, and laughed.

"Fainted nothing." He glanced up at the bigger man. "This guy is dead. We scared him to death. Imagine that!"

"No kidding!" The big man brightened. "Say, makes it kind of easy then. You don't have to use the needle."

"That's right. Pick him up. Be ready to move fast." The little man searched Pembroke's pockets and found a key case. "If the floor is clear, I'll open the door of his office. You carry him inside. We'll fix this so it will look so natural the best doctor in the world wouldn't know the difference. The breaks are with us this time."

NO ONE was on the sixteenth floor. In less than two minutes the transfer of the dead man from elevator cage to office was completed. The big man put the corpse in a chair behind the massive desk. His companion carefully arranged the body. He tipped the corpse forward so that the head was pillowed against one outflung arm that rested across the desk top.

"Okay," he told his companion, as he stepped back. "We're set. Leave the lights on. When he's found they'll think he was ready to go home, got a heart attack, and managed to sit down at the desk before he died. Take his hat off. Drop it on the floor beside the chair. That's it. Now let's get out of here."

The big man was staring at the multitude of photographs framed and hung on the walls. His eyes lighted up.

"Say, did you ever see so many swell looking numbers? This guy was a big shot, eh?"

"Very big. A theatrical man. Those are pictures of some of the stars who worked for him. Come on. We've been lucky so far. Let's not stretch our luck."

"Yeah, I guess you're right," the big man said. "Specially when this is only Number Two." He moved toward the door.

The smaller man hesitated. He walked back to the desk, drawing a handkerchief from his breast pocket.

"Stay by the door and keep your ears open," he cautioned. "I'm going to use the phone."

He dialed, with a pencil end. The phone was held in the folds of the handkerchief. When his call was answered he said:

"He's gone. All by himself, too— Yes, his heart kicked up on him. We didn't have to use the stuff. Yes— Yes, we were mighty lucky. Of course we'll be careful. That's all."

He hung up, wiped the pencil with his handkerchief and then joined the big man. They reached the elevator, both highly elated at the way things had happened. They rode the lift to the lobby floor and strode out of it with a feeling of a job well done—and without risk.

Neither turned around as the automatically operated door slid into place. Neither saw the tiny bit of glass gleam brightly for a second on the newly cleaned floor of the elevator, near the door. The smaller man, by far the most astute of the pair, never gave that am-pule tip another thought. After all, what did it matter? The victim had died of heart failure. Nobody would look for clues.

They unlocked the lobby door, walked boldly out and faded away into the night.

CHAPTER II

The Nervous Man



ENGINE purring, the big sedan made the turn slowly, straightened out, and rolled smoothly down the quiet residential street toward the home of Tony Quinn, Special District Attorney.

Behind the wheel sat Tony Quinn's friend and employee. Silk Kirby was nearing fifty, but didn't show it. He was a slender, lithe sort of a man with a narrow face and shrewd eyes. Once upon a time he had been a slick confidence man and his rating in that dubious profession among his confreres had been extremely high. There were many police departments and many victims who would have testified to this.

But Silk had been reformed for years now. In fact, he battled with Quinn on the side of law and order these days, and



As the doctor put a hand
before his eyes and opened
his mouth to scream, the
Black Bat's gun smashed
down on his skull
(CHAPTER XII)

found the experience steadily refreshing. That was something he never would have imagined could come to pass when he had first entered the Quinn domicile. For on that occasion he had fallen on lean days, when the confidence business had not been flourishing, and he had yielded to the temptation to do a little second-story work.

He had entered the Quinn home, but had almost at once encountered Tony Quinn himself. But, instead of turning him over to the police, as anyone like Silk at that time would have expected, Quinn had sat down with him quietly, and had talked to him, showing him the error of his ways. To top it, when Silk had shown an indication that he would like to reform, Quinn had taken him into his home, to act as valet and general factotum.

Never had Tony Quinn had cause to regret that action. For Silk had turned over a new leaf in earnest. As the years had gone by, he had gradually become more than servant to the man who had shown faith in him. Now he was the close friend and constant companion of Quinn, one of the former district attorney's most trusted allies.

At the present moment, the thought of anything doing in the criminal line was farthest from Silk Kirby's thoughts. He had, indeed, been employed on a prosaic domestic errand. On the seat beside him was a quart of ice cream for which he had run downtown, and he was humming gaily.

The street was as quiet as a country lane. But always at eleven o'clock at night this neighborhood of exclusive homes looked like a side street in a small town, even though it was part of metropolitan New York.

Suddenly Silk's foot transferred itself from gas pedal to brake and came down hard. There was a man in the middle of the road, brilliantly illuminated by the headlights. He was jumping up and down and waving thin arms frantically. Silk couldn't get a good look at him until he stopped. Instantly the little man opened the car door and hopped onto the seat beside him.

Then Silk saw that he was short and rail-thin, and either highly agitated, extremely nervous—or both. There was nothing frightening about the man, perhaps because of his diminutive size. Or maybe it was because of the earnest ex-

pression on his face.

"Why don't you wait to be invited for a pick-up, mister?" Silk asked. "Anyway, you won't be going far with me. This street goes only another block, becomes dead end, and that's where I live."

"Yes—yes, I know." The little man fidgeted. "I know more than you think. I know you are Silk Kirby. You work for Special District Attorney Tony Quinn, and he thinks a great deal of you. I don't blame him. From all I've heard of you, you seem to be very efficient. But I—I mustn't become excited. I mustn't. I must remain calm. Calm and collected."

"For the love of Pete, calm down then," Silk implored. "You're the most jittery guy I've ever seen. Sit still and tell me what this is all about."

The little man rubbed his jaw with quick, hard gestures. At the same time his feet beat a tattoo on the floor board and his shoulders were twitching. He took a long breath, deliberately stiffened his body, and set both feet firmly on the floor.

He spoke, but to himself, even though he talked out loud.

"Brace myself. There, that's it. Talk slowly. Think slowly. Above all, be still. Calm and collected. I've got to be calm."

SILK wondered if he ought to collar the man and turn him over to the nearest policeman. But then the little man began to talk lucidly.

"I'm sorry, Mr. Kirby," he said in a different tone of voice, an apologetic tone. "I happen to be afflicted with a bad nervous condition. I have to restrain myself constantly. Now I shall tell you why I stopped this car. I saw you leave the house and I waited for your return."

"If you wanted to see me, why didn't you come to the house then?" Silk asked.

"Because I— Do I have to explain?" He was fidgety again.

"Well, naturally," Silk shrugged. "I think a man who runs into the middle of the road, waves his hands and hops into another man's car the moment he stops should do a bit of explaining. Don't you?"

"Yes—yes, I suppose so." The scrawny man seemed to be bracing himself even more. "The fact is," he suddenly blurted, "I have some information for

Mr. Quinn. I couldn't go to him directly because he would have asked me a lot of questions. Questions bother me. Make my nerves go absolutely raw. For that reason I could not go to the police, either. They would have been worse."

"Now, look," Silk implored, "my boss is a special district attorney. As such, he maintains an office where people go to register complaints. Why don't you wait until tomorrow and see him there?"

"Too late," the little man said positively. "Much too late. Even now, I doubt you'll be in time. I'm talking about murder, Mr. Kirby. Cold-blooded, deliberately and carefully plotted homicide. I'm not crazy—though some have said I was. My nervous condition is really serious. You see, if I become actively mixed up in this, I'm liable to—what do they call it?—blow my top. Yes, that is the expression. Blow my top."

Silk settled back. "Go ahead," he invited. "Tell me what's on your mind."

"Last week a man named George Andrews, an important drug manufacturer, was found dead. He was murdered, though his death apparently was from natural causes. Tonight a man named Harry Pembroke is listed to be killed. And there are others."

"How do you know?" Silk demanded. He was wondering if he hadn't picked up a lunatic, after all.

"I can't tell you that. It would undoubtedly cost me my reason—if not my life. The fact remains that Harry Pembroke is in grave danger. Someone must try to save him. I wanted to go to the police, but they'd either have laughed at me or locked me up as a lunatic, which you, too, may think I am—but I am not. I have heard that Mr. Quinn is much more reasonable than the police, and that you, being his employee, would likely have the same consideration. Get to Harry Pembroke and save his life!"

"Harry Pembroke," Silk said slowly. "The theatrical producer?"

"Yes—precisely," the thin man said eagerly. "You are a man of intelligence. I'm happy now that I determined to approach you in this manner. Harry Pembroke is slated for death. Tonight! I—wanted to warn somebody about George Andrews, but I couldn't. My nerves would never stand up under ceaseless questioning and I might put myself in considerable danger. Then, too, I wasn't

certain but that the whole thing was a hoax. Until I learned that George Andrews had died suddenly."

"Who else is listed?" Silk asked. Despite himself he found that he half-believed this jittery little man. "And just who are you?"

"I can't . . . that is, I promise to let you know—later. About the others. My name? It doesn't matter. Call me Johnny Jump-Up. That's what I used to be called. I'm afraid to continue now. I'm almost bursting inside. You can't imagine how it is to be afflicted with a condition like mine. That's how I got my name. Couldn't sit still."

Silk squirmed around in the seat. Jittery or not, he meant to collar this man, take him to the house and let Tony Quinn question him. Maybe the man was nothing more than a crackpot or even as crazy as he acted and sounded, but Silk never took any chances.

He reached for the man's arm—and froze.

THERE was a gun pointed at him. It shook like the last leaf on a maple tree with winter gales whipping about it. To reach for that gun would be about as healthy as petting a coiled rattlesnake.

"Now see here—" Silk began irately.

"Please!" the jittery man said. "Please don't move. You can see how nervous I am. My life depends upon not becoming excited. You intended to deliver me to Mr. Quinn. That would be too much. I can't take the chance. Convince him yourself. Believe in me. I'm telling the gospel truth. Harry Pembroke is to be murdered! George Andrews was murdered! There will be others and I'll let you know who they are when I can. Just sit where you are, please. Thank you very much, Mr. Kirby. I'm grateful. Terribly grateful. Good night."

He backed out of the car, his gun still wavering. He continued to back until he reached a hedge. He pushed his way through this and vanished. Silk just sat there, the deep furrows in his forehead growing deeper every moment.

Quite automatically, he reached for the shift lever and the car rolled slowly down the street. He turned at the end of the street and onto a side street which passed only the property of Tony Quinn. Silk parked the car there, got out, and

took a short cut through the front yard to the house.

He entered the house. In one hand he held the box of ice cream and walked into the library, still carrying it. There, in front of a cold fireplace, sat a sturdy-looking man. He had broad shoulders and a powerful neck. His hair was a nice brown, his features were clean-cut.

But there, any complete resemblance toward a handsome man ceased. For his face was marked with deep, glistening scars around the eyes, which marred the symmetry of his features. The eyes themselves were dead and staring. Between his knees was the kind of heavy white cane which is used by a blind man.

"You were gone quite a while, Silk," Tony Quinn said, and smiled. "And I think the ice cream in that box has already melted. Don't tell me you fell for some blonde."

Silk gasped, glanced at the box of ice cream and started moving fast toward the door.

"I'll be back in a second," he said quickly. "Sorry about the ice cream, sir, but I met a man who is either stark mad or he's a—murder prophet."

Silk hurried to the kitchen, ditched the ice cream in the sink and rushed back. In his capacity of confidential friend he pulled up a chair and sat down. Quinn's dead eyes were changing. They seemed to become alive and alert. There was a look of decided interest on his face. Silk answered the unspoken inquiry.

"This guy jumped in front of the car and made me stop," Silk said. "He was about the most nervous man I ever saw in my life, and I've seen some jumpy ones. As a matter of fact, when I asked him his name, he said it was Johnny Jump-Up. Seems someone dubbed him that, and for good reason."

"And what is all this about murder?" Quinn asked.

"He told me that a man named George Andrews died last week and that his death had been accepted as a natural one. But this fellow insisted it was murder. Furthermore, he said that Harry Pembroke, the theatrical producer, was going to be murdered tonight!"

"Did you believe him?" asked Quinn.

"I—don't know." Silk shook his head, as if bewildered. "Honestly, he acted like he was crazy. I expected to see a big man with a butterfly net heave into

view at any second. Still, the little guy sounded worried. So doggone worried that I believe he was sincere. He believed what he told me, anyhow."

"Why did he stop you? Why didn't he go to the police, and why didn't you bring him here, Silk?"

Silk took a long breath. "He said he couldn't stand being questioned. His nervous condition would not permit it. I wanted to bring him here, in fact, I was preparing to do just that, but he persuaded me not to. With a gun."

"A gun?" Quinn exclaimed. "Say, I guess he must have been crazy at that."

"You haven't heard the half of it," Silk went on. "He also told me there was going to be more murders. That he'd let you know about them in time to stop them."

Quinn frowned. "Odd. At times, what you tell me about him makes the man out to be crazy. In other respects . . . Suppose we have a go at it, Silk. We've nothing to lose. Get on the phone and see what you can find out about the death of George Andrews."

"I'll call a newspaper," Silk said.

He went to a telephone on a desk in the same room, looked up a number and dialed it. He identified himself as working for Tony Quinn, asked his question, and did a lot of listening. He hung up, turned around and looked at Quinn.

"The *Globe* says that George Andrews died of a heart attack last Wednesday. That he was buried on Saturday, but that there was nothing at all suspicious about his demise."

"Call Harry Pembroke," Quinn said. "I know him slightly. He has an apartment at the Hotel Elite."

CHAPTER III

Murder Prophet



SILK made the call to the Hotel Elite and hung up quickly.

"I got Pembroke's wife, sir," he told Tony Quinn. "She said Mr. Pembroke is at his office in the Chatham Building, but that when she tried to call him a few minutes ago, there was no answer.

She presumes he is on his way home."



THE BLACK BAT

Quinn arose. "We won't presume any such thing," he said firmly. "This may turn into the wildest errand we ever went on, but just the same we'll go to Pembroke's office. I don't give in to hunches often, so this time I think I'm entitled to indulge."

Quinn's alert eyes suddenly became clouded, again became the dead eyes of a totally blind man. He used his cane to help himself cross the room. Silk paid little attention to him until they were outside the door. Then Silk took his arm and led him along the path and across the grassy lawn.

They went to where the car was parked, got in, and Silk drove off.

It was one o'clock in the morning when Silk Kirby pulled up in front of the Chatham Building. Silk got out first, ran around the car and opened the door for Quinn. He helped the blind man out.

"Take a quick look," Quinn said in a low voice. "I thought I saw lights burning in one window, rather high up."

"There are lights all right," Silk agreed, "but that doesn't mean they're in Pembroke's offices. The lobby door is locked, sir. Shall I ring for the watchman?"

"Yes." Quinn nodded. "We've gone

this far, so we might as well see it through."

Silk kept his finger on the bell. Three or four minutes elapsed before they saw an elevator door open and a man in a uniform emerge. He walked to the glass door and gestured the two men away. Silk said something to Quinn who fumbled in his pocket, produced a leather case and opened it. Inside was the gold badge of the District Attorney's office. It worked like magic. The door was opened at once.

They stepped in and the watchman locked the door again. Quinn's eyes were centered somewhat to the man's left.

"Sorry to bother you," he said. "We're looking for Harry Pembroke. It's very important. Is he in, do you know?"

"There are more than seven hundred offices in this building, mister," the watchman replied. "A lot of the tenants have keys so they can go in and out after the lobby door is locked. I know Mr. Pembroke came in about three or four hours ago. I haven't seen him go out."

"Take us to his offices," Quinn said.

Silk led Quinn to the self-service elevator. The watchman stepped in and pushed the Number Sixteen button. The lift began to rise. Suddenly Quinn's

white cane dropped from his hand and fell with a clatter. He bent quickly and fumbled for it. His hand closed around the crook of the cane, but two fingers also closed about a tiny bit of glass which he had seen gleaming on the floor like a miniature jewel. It was small enough for him to wedge it under his thumbnail and Quinn kept it there until they were out of the elevator. Then he transferred it to a vest pocket.

Light shone through the glass of the outer door of Pembroke's office. Quinn tried the knob. The door was locked. He used the crook of his cane to pound on the side panels. Nobody answered him.

"Watchman," Quinn asked, "have you a pass key?"

"No, sir. Only the cleaning women have 'em and they're all gone home."

Quinn extended his cane in Silk's general direction. "Part of the door is made of glass. I felt it. Smash the door in, Silk."

Silk shattered the glass, reached in and found the inner knob. He swung the door open and they all walked into a waiting room, the walls of which were covered with photos of actors and actresses.

They were confronted by another door. This one wasn't locked. Silk threw it wide.

The watchman let out a cry of horror. Silk choked. But Quinn made no sound. The expression on his face remained quite the same. As a blind man, he was not supposed to see the dead man whose head lay on the surface of his desk.

"What is it?" Quinn asked. "Silk, what do you see?"

"He's dead, sir. At least he looks that way."

"Find out," Quinn snapped. "Hurry! Watchman, I'm blind. I need other people's eyes to help me. Can you see the face of the man Silk believes is dead?"

"Yes, sir," the watchman said hollowly. "He's dead all right. Gray-like, his face is."

"Who is the man?"

"Why, it's Mr. Pembroke, of course."

QUINN'S cane was thrust out as he walked cautiously across the office. The cane hit a chair and he veered around it until he felt the desk and came to a full stop there. Silk was bending

over the man.

"He's gone, sir," Silk said. "The body isn't entirely cold, but I think he's been dead for about an hour."

"Are there any signs of violence, Silk?" asked Quinn.

"None at all, sir. Pembroke has on a topcoat. His hat appears to have fallen off his head and is lying on the floor beside the chair."

"Call Captain McGrath at the Detective Bureau," Quinn ordered. "Have him bring down a medical examiner. Watchman, are you still here?"

"Y-yes, sir," came the choked answer. "I'm behind you, near the door. I—I don't like to be near d-dead people."

"I assure you there is no danger," Quinn half-smiled. "Did you take anyone up to this floor during the past hour or two?"

"No, sir. The tenants use the self-service elevator, after hours like this. I don't know who rides up or down, except that it has to be a tenant because nobody else has a key to the lobby door. Not even employees of the firms that rent space in this building."

"I see," Quinn said. "Thank you very much. You might go downstairs now and be ready to admit the police. That's all."

The watchman gladly hurried away. Quinn heard the elevator door close and the lift descend. Instantly he dropped his mask of blindness, hurried around the desk and bent over the corpse. He lifted the dead man's head, looked at the face and grimaced.

"He looks as if he had been scared to death, Silk," he commented. "But then, if it was a heart attack, he might have realized he was going out. Not a mark on him that I can see."

Silk shrugged. "Off-hand, I'd say it was his heart, sir."

"Um—perhaps. But, Silk, if he did die of heart failure, how did your nervous little man know about it? He said Pembroke would be murdered."

"Yes, sir, I thought of that too," Silk said uneasily. "The only way I can explain it is by saying the nervous little guy must have been here and saw Pembroke dead."

"Why didn't he say so then?" demanded Quinn. "You told me he begged us to reach Pembroke before he was killed."

"I know. I'm all mixed up. But you

CHAPTER IV .

Man In a Black Hood

can see for yourself that there isn't a mark on this dead man."

Quinn stepped around to the back of the chair.

"Quite correct," he said. "No marks that we can see. But observe, Silk, that his topcoat has been lifted up so that he isn't sitting on it. Suppose he was ready to leave the office, felt the attack coming and staggered back here to sit down. Would a man in the throes of a heart attack bother to lift the skirts of his topcoat before he sat down? And there is one other thing."

"I don't see anything," Silk said.

QUINN thrust a fist under Silk's nose, hesitated before opening his hand. In the palm lay a tiny bit of glass.

"This," he said. "I found it on the elevator floor. It's the glass tip of a hypodermic ampule. At least, I think it is."

"But what's odd about that?" Silk asked. "There are dozens of doctors in this building."

"True. But do you recall the watchman saying that the cleaning women had finished, and had gone home? Besides, I noted that the edges of the mat covering the elevator floor were damp, as if it had been mopped a short time ago. If this bit of glass had been there, the mop would have picked it up or pushed it against the wall. Oh, I'm not saying this is a clue to strap somebody in the electric chair, but at least we can warn the medical examiner to search for the marks of a hypo needle."

Quinn put the bit of glass back into his pocket. Then he went to work. First, he searched the dead man, being careful to put everything back as he had found it. Next, he went through the desk, but took as great care not to disturb anything.

Finally, he went over to a corner chair and sat down, pondering the strange story Silk had brought him—and its quick, tragic sequel.

"It's too coincidental," he said slowly. "Either your nervous little man who called himself Johnny Jump-Up was here after Pembroke died, or he really knew something."

Quinn's eyes grew blank again. Even so he could see anything that went on, though the most expert eye specialist would have sworn that Tony Quinn was a totally blind man.



ANTHONY QUINN really had been blind at one time. Prior to that, he had been elected district attorney and had become a hard hitting, crusading young D.A. with a high percentage of convictions to his credit. There were some who claimed the great city

had never had a better prosecutor.

Then an attempt had been made to destroy certain evidence Quinn possessed against a gangster who was on trial. This gangster's friends had tried to throw acid on the evidence. Quinn, quick to resist them, had moved directly into the path of the acid and been struck full in the face by it. He had been blinded almost instantly.

The powerful corrosive, which had eaten deeply, was the reason for those deep scars around Quinn's eyes. The most skilled surgeons available had done their best to restore his sight, but the action of the acid had been so swift that nothing could be done. Tony Quinn had been adjudged hopelessly blind.

He had resigned his position as D. A. and, being wealthy, devoted months to traveling around the world in search of some surgeon who might give him an inkling of hope. None ever had. Quinn had returned, a tired, discouraged and resigned man.

Quite typically though, he had set about making the best of his blindness. He studied Braille, developed his other senses to an amazing degree, and discovered that a blind man's body was almost like a radar instrument. It seemed to reflect back the presence of any impeding body before him.

His hearing became extremely acute and his sense of touch remarkable. And yet these things were hardly substitutes for sound, healthy eyes. He was fortunate in only one thing—the fact that Silk Kirby had entered his life before he had become blind. Silk took on the added duty of being Quinn's eyes.

Months passed after the searing acid had snatched away Tony Quinn's sight. Then one night he had a visitor. **A**

lovely girl named Carol Baldwin came to him with a strange proposition.

Her father, she told him, was a police officer in a faraway little city. He was dying from a bullet wound in the back, fired by a cowardly crook. Carol's father had followed Tony Quinn's career with enthusiasm, and now that he was on his death bed, he thought he saw a chance to be of some help to the man he so greatly admired.

Carol knew there was no hope for her father. He was doomed to death, knew it, and therefore offered Quinn vital parts of his eyes. There was a little known surgeon in the Midwestern home town of the Baldwins who knew the circumstances, and who was willing to operate.

Quinn, eager to grasp at any hope, accepted the offer. He traveled west with Silk and Carol. There the operation was performed, and Carol's father died soon afterward.

Quinn returned home swathed in bandages. Anxious days passed, but when at last he was able to remove the bandages, it was to find that not only could he see again, but that his sight was actually abnormal. For in jet-black darkness he could see even faint pastel colors, as well as small objects.

The darkness he had endured so long was gone forever. And nature had recompensed him for those weary hours in a strange manner, by permitting him to have full benefit of sight in the darkest room.

Quinn's operation, his entire trip to the Middlewest, had been kept a strict secret. For with the birth of hope that he might see again, had come an idea. This was partly induced by the insistence of Carol's father that if the operation proved to be a success, Quinn should again take up his battle against crime and criminals. Tony Quinn was eager to do this as the only thanks he could give his benefactor.

During his tenure as district attorney, Quinn had often fretted under the restrictions of the law's red tape. Now he decided to become a criminal hunter who fought as criminals themselves fought—ruthlessly, and without regard to law. He became the Black Bat, a figure soon dreaded by lawbreakers, a man whom no one apparently knew, but whose head was encased in a somber hood and whose clothes were all black.

The hood was a definite necessity because of the scars around Quinn's eyes. And it was not long after the first appearance of the Black Bat that he became recognized by the underworld as a powerful menace. Many tried to discover the hooded man's identity, but only three people knew it, and they were close allies of the Black Bat and fought his battles with him.

CAROL BALDWIN was one of them. After her father's death, she dedicated her life to the same purpose for which Quinn crusaded, and when she came East to join him, she soon proved she was clever and courageous—a heritage from her policeman father. She was enough so to be of vast help in the Black Bat's constant campaigning.

Silk Kirby, of course, knew the truth and was a willing, valuable aide. The third person who knew the Black Bat's identity was a hulking man named "Butch" O'Leary. Somewhere in the past Butch had possessed a given name, but the name Butch fitted him so eminently well, that his true name had become lost in the shuffle of time. At some time in that past of his, Tony Quinn had done a favor for him which he was now prepared to repay with his life, if need be.

Butch was an enormous man who at some time in his career had sought pugilistic fame, but had given it up to devote all his time to Tony Quinn. He was a veritable giant, whose prowess at crashing down doors or swatting crooks off-balance was of distinct benefit to Quinn in his campaign against crime. Butch was not a quick thinker, but he made up for that by his devotion, his brute strength, and his ability to follow orders stolidly and to the letter.

Captain McGrath, attached to the Homicide Division of the Detective Bureau at Police Headquarters, was a man who was incorruptible in his duty, but was often a thorn in the side of Tony Quinn. Many times he had suspected that Quinn could see, and had a deeply rooted suspicion that the former district attorney now was the Black Bat. But McGrath had never been able to prove this. He was a dogged, insistent worker, though, and had taken an oath that the Black Bat would be locked up some day, and that without regard to what the identity of the nemesis of the

underworld should prove to be.

There were plenty of criminal charges against the hooded figure in black. He killed when killing was necessary. He broke into homes, robbed when robbery was essential to tracking down a criminal. Nothing stopped him, and it was this disregard for law that made the Black Bat a hunted man as well as a hunter. For not only did he cut red tape, but threw it out the window.

Even McGrath, with his stubborn nature, reluctantly admitted that the Black Bat had done far more good than harm, but to McGrath a lawbreaker, no matter in what cause he threw the rules aside, should be arrested. Often McGrath's persistence became a dangerous thing, but Quinn enjoyed it. The detective kept him on his toes every moment, a fact which also served good purpose.

The Black Bat's own headquarters were in a secret laboratory in his home, a large room with two entrances. One was through a hidden door which led from the library in Quinn's home. The other was by way of a garden house at the rear of the property. Quinn and his aides had secretly created a tunnel leading from the summer house directly into the lab. By this means Quinn could come and go as the Black Bat, and Carol and Butch were enabled to visit the laboratory whenever they wished without being seen.

The lab where Quinn did much essential work in criminal investigations was complete. It contained almost all the scientific devices for tracking down criminals that were used in the big police laboratories. There was a library on crime and crime prevention, files crammed full of names, records and fingerprints. And Tony Quinn had studied all phases of criminology, utilizing everything that science had discovered in the everlasting battle of the law-abiding against crooks.

The police in general had come to respect the Black Bat. The underworld feared him, and both elements had vainly tried to see beneath the black hood. But when and if the day should come that Tony Quinn would be revealed as the Black Bat and he would be exposed as a man who could really see, then his life would be forfeit. Every means the underworld had at its command would be summoned to eliminate this menace in black.



"A horn honked below, he went to the window and leaned out for a look, slipped, and pitched out"
(CHAPTER VIII)

One of the two dangers always hanging over the Black Bat and Tony Quinn, now walked into the office of Harry Pembroke where Quinn awaited him. Captain McGrath was short, sturdy, and looked one hundred per cent cop. Chewing on a soggy cigar he glanced at the dead man, then back at Tony Quinn who sat in a corner chair, cane clasped between his knees and staring straight ahead.

"Evening, Tony," McGrath said. "What have we here?"

"Hello, Mac," Quinn sighed. "I'm not sure. It began in a rather bizarre fashion. Silk was driving home alone about two hours ago. A man stopped him by standing in the middle of the road. He told Silk that Harry Pembroke, the dead man you see over there, was to be murdered tonight."

MCGRATH'S nose wrinkled. "What kind of a story is that? Any guy who knows a murder is to be committed would go to the police, not stop the D. A.'s valet and submit the dope to him."

"Hm—yes," Quinn agreed. "It seems he did act in a strange manner. However, he motivated it by telling Silk that he was suffering from a nervous disorder and could not submit to any questioning or get himself into any trouble. Nevertheless, I decided to act upon his information, so after we had called Mrs. Pembroke, who told us her husband was in his office, we came here—to find this."

The medical examiner straightened up from his grisly task, walked over and stood beside McGrath.

"Good evening, Mr. Quinn," he murmured. "I understand there are indications this may be murder. Well, it's possible, of course, but I doubt it. From my examination I'd say the man was leaving the office, felt sure a heart attack was coming on and staggered back to sit at his desk. He died there. A matter of a few seconds, I'd say, after the heart attack. Now he could have been poisoned. Nothing else though, because there isn't a mark on him."

"Better do a post-mortem as quickly as possible, Doctor," Quinn said. "That means the moment you get him to the morgue. For of course you know there are poisons that leave no trace if they aren't detected at once. And, Doctor—look especially for any mark of a hypo-

dermic injection."

"Why a hypo?" McGrath interrupted. "Are you holding out on me?"

"Why no, Mac," Quinn said placidly. "But when there are no marks, when the death may possibly be murder, I'd say it was logical to look for a hypo mark. Wouldn't you?"

McGrath grumbled something and went over to search the corpse. The medical examiner promised Quinn he would telephone the moment the autopsy was finished.

"Of course," he went on, "as you say, some poisons are hard to detect. It may take several days. But if this man died of a heart condition, I'll know that promptly."

"Thank you," Quinn said. He raised his voice and called to McGrath who came over at once. "Mac, this Johnny Jump-Up fellow—that's what he called himself because of his nervous condition—told Silk that a George Andrews who died last week had been murdered, too."

"George Andrews, huh?" McGrath hauled out a notebook and made an entry. "I'll check."

"I already have," said Quinn. "George Andrews, according to the newspapers, died of a heart condition. Quite a natural death."

"Then what are you worrying about?" McGrath wanted to know.

"Simply this. Our Johnny Jump-Up knew that Harry Pembroke would die tonight. Remember, when he told Silk of Pembroke's coming death, Pembroke was apparently still alive. So if he could prophesy this death, and we find it is murder, perhaps he is also correct in stating that Andrews was murdered, too."

"Leave that to me," McGrath said. "Personally, I think this Johnny guy is crazy. Granted, he may have known something, but I'd like to see anybody make a murder out of this corpse."

"I'll tell you what," Quinn said, half musingly. "Notify Pembroke's people of his death and have them get his doctor over to their home at once. Silk and I will stop by there in a few minutes."

"Anything you say," McGrath growled. "You're the D. A. Maybe you're even going to make something of this which is big enough to bring in the Black Bat, eh?"

Quinn smiled as he arose and Silk took

his arm.

"Probably he *will* enter it if the thing amounts to something, Mac. Should he do so, be sure to think that I am the Black Bat. I enjoy your little attempts to prove I'm not blind and that I am the Black Bat. Good night, Captain."

McGrath's face turned purple and his fists clenched, but not because of anger. He was plainly exasperated.

"Good night, Mr. District Attorney," the police officer said sarcastically.

He watched Tony Quinn go through the door, guided by Silk. McGrath was hoping that either one would make some mistake, some false move that would give them away. But Quinn knew his act too perfectly.

CHAPTER V

A Quite Natural Death



OUTSIDE in the car, Quinn removed the tiny bit of glass from his pocket.

"Silk," he said, "this scrap of evidence—if that's what it is—happens to be so minute that I think we ought to examine it before we visit Pembroke's people. So I think you

had better drive me home first."

Twenty minutes later Quinn and Silk were in the secret laboratory. Quinn moved about freely. Here, where there was no danger of being seen, there was no need to keep up the pretense of being blind. He put the bit of glass under a microscope and studied it with the low power lens.

"This is from a medicinal ampule all right," he said to Silk, after a moment. "Such ampules have a thin neck which is etched slightly so the neck will break off with ease. I can see portions of the etched mark on the glass. Also I notice just the tiniest bit of residue adhering to the inside of the neck. Perhaps not enough for an analysis, but I'm going to try to make one anyhow."

"Yes sir, but won't that take too long?"

"No. There are a limited number of medicines which are enclosed in a glass ampule. You'll find a list in that medical treatise in the case. Read them off while I make my preparations."

Silk found the place and read the list to Quinn. It wasn't overly long. Quinn listened carefully.

"Pembroke died of a heart attack, so far as we know," he said speculatively. Therefore we must consider such drugs as adrenalin and nitroglycerine. The latter is almost always taken orally. Adrenalin—well it isn't used extensively any more. Insulin? Perhaps, if he had sugar diabetes."

"But how do you connect that bit of an ampule with Pembroke?" Silk wanted to know. "You found it in the elevator. Pembroke never got out of his office so far as we know."

"True, but we are reasonably certain he was the only tenant in the building who happened to be in his office at that hour. We also know that the elevator had been well cleaned just before Pembroke's death. So if this ampule was broken in the elevator, then Pembroke broke it, or the man or men who murdered him did. Another thing. Remember how his coat was thrown off the seat of the chair? It's possible he was placed in the chair after he was dead."

Silk whistled softly. "Then you believe he may have been attacked in the elevator?"

"Why not?" Quinn queried.

He was busy setting up an apparatus. As soon as it was ready, he set promptly to work. The analysis was rough and not difficult to do. In fifteen minutes Quinn knew that the glass ampule had contained insulin. He turned wordlessly, and looked at Silk.

Silk was still puzzled. "All right," he agreed, "I admit the thing looks funny. But would a couple of killers try to inject insulin into their victim? I never knew it was lethal."

"Ah, but you're wrong. The insulin taken by diabetics is quite weak. If you inject, say, two hundred units of the stuff, death is certain. Furthermore, Silk, the drug leaves no trace in the body unless a post-mortem is done within a few minutes. That is one of the poisons I had in mind when I told the medical examiner to work quickly. It leaves no trace except for the mark of the needle which isn't often found. Especially if the family doctor submits some sort of case history from which sudden death might be predicted."

Silk glanced at his watch. "What about visiting the Pembrokes, sir?"

"We'll go now," Quinn told him. "And we'll also see the relatives of George Andrews. Let's go!"

The late Harry Pembroke's residence occupied an entire floor in one of New York's smartest apartment houses. When Quinn and Silk arrived there, they were expected. A red-eyed servant let them in. They were escorted to a study where a white-haired man waited. He arose as they entered.

"I'm Doctor Abbott, Mr. Quinn," he introduced himself to the blind man. "Mr. Pembroke's wife—ah, widow—has asked to be excused. She's rather badly upset. I am the family doctor and I feel sure I can answer any questions you like."

"Thank you, sir," Quinn said. "Silk, find me a chair, please."

SEATED, Quinn stared blankly to the left of the doctor.

"You have probably guessed," he began, "that because I'm connected with the District Attorney's office, we feel Pembroke's death has to be explained. Frankly, we do. Because, before his death, we were told he was to be murdered."

"Murdered?" Doctor Abbott scoffed. "Now I don't know where you could have obtained such information, Mr. Quinn. Frankly, it's all poppycock. I reached his office before the body was removed and I accompanied it to the morgue. I was present when the autopsy was performed. In fact, I got here only three or four minutes before you arrived. Pembroke died of endocarditis. He suffered from it a long time. I warned him a year ago to take things easy, or he might pass away at any time."

"And the autopsy proved the cause of death, Doctor?" murmured Quinn.

"Yes, of course it did." The physician was a little impatient. "No question about it. Only a month ago I gave him my last warning. He just laughed at me. Pembroke was a hard man to stop. He loved work—his sort of work. I suppose he couldn't stop. Four or five years ago he was down and out—broke flat. But he made a sensational comeback. Shows you what work a man like that can accomplish."

Quinn arose. "Thank you, Doctor. I'm afraid our informant gave us a bad steer this time. We get them frequently, you know. Oh, yes—this informant also

mentioned the death of a man named George Andrews. I don't suppose you know him?"

Dr. Abbott nodded. "I knew of him. Through Doctor Selby. Reginald Selby. He was Andrews' physician, I believe. Don't tell me you believe he was murdered, too?"

Quinn laughed. "In my profession, Doctor, we believe anything we're told until it is proved wrong. Thank you very much. I'm sure there will be no need to trouble you further."

On their way down in the elevator, Silk looked highly disgusted.

"That Johnny Jump-Up is just some half-wit with murder on his mind, sir," he said with decision.

"Perhaps," Quinn said thoughtfully. "In the lobby, go to a phone and locate the residence address of Doctor Reginald Selby."

Silk looked startled, but obeyed when the elevator reached the ground floor.

Dr. Selby maintained offices and residence on the ground floor of a towering apartment building not far from where the Pembrokes lived. It was almost three in the morning when Silk put his finger on the door buzzer and kept it there.

The door opened after a few moments. The man it framed was tall and slender. His hair was mussed and he yawned widely. He wore wrinkled pajamas and an expensive lounging robe. He looked at his early morning callers with cold disapproval.

"Are you Doctor Selby?" Quinn asked.

"Yes, but good heavens, man," the doctor protested, "before you start ringing doorbells in the middle of the night, find out whether or not the physician maintains a general practice. I don't. You can find a doctor—"

"I'm sorry. We're not here to consult you professionally, Doctor. My name is Quinn—of the District Attorney's office."

"District Attorney?" Selby's eyes grew wide. "What in the name of heaven! Well, come in, man."

He stepped aside a bit. Quinn bumped him hard and apologized. Selby's features were not angelic.

"What's the matter with you?" He rubbed his shoulder. "Barging into—oh, I see. Oh, you're blind, aren't you?"

"Yes," Quinn answered curtly.

"Oh—I'm sorry. I— A blind District

Attorney? Odd! But then, why not? Certainly, why not? Now, what can I do for you?"

Silk helped Quinn into a waiting room chair. Selby threw himself onto a leather divan. He was scrutinizing Quinn closely, appraisingly, paying no attention to Silk Kirby.

"Last week a patient of yours died," Quinn said. "A man named George Andrews. I want to know the circumstances of his death."

"Why?" The word came with cannon-like force.

"We have rather remote information that he might have been murdered, Doctor," Quinn said flatly.

Selby stared for a second. Then he threw back his head and laughed. Quinn's apparently blind eyes missed nothing. With those eyes he saw a man whom he instantly disliked. A man who would be cruel, harsh and uncompromising.

Selby finished laughing. "What an absurd notion," he jeered. "Andrews had been a patient of mine for six months. Prior to that, another doctor had him. We both told the man to be very careful with his health. That he was not at all well."

"I see," Quinn nodded. "Did he, by any chance, have diabetes?"

DOCTOR SELBY gaped, but that was an act, though he believed Quinn could not see him. But Quinn did. He saw the artery in the man's slim neck begin to pound more furiously than ever. The word diabetes had struck some sort of a note. Tony Quinn meant to know why.

"Certainly not," Selby said. "It was his heart. Murdered, you say? I doubt

it. He died in the living room of his own home with about a dozen people around him. He had been giving a party, drank a bit too much, which was bad for him, and he suffered a heart attack. He expired within five or ten minutes."

"Was an autopsy performed?" asked Quinn.

"Why should there have been? Two licensed physicians listed the cause of his death as due to a heart condition."

Quinn nudged Silk and both arose.

"Thank you very much, Doctor," Quinn said. "I feel we have wasted your time, to say nothing of our own. But the district attorney's office receives a large number of tips, as you may well imagine, and we must neglect none of them. Some of them develop into big things. Some—like this one—fall flat. We can't take chances, though. Each complaint must be investigated."

Selby was blocking the door. "A tip, you say?" he asked, and Tony Quinn thought he was showing a bit too much interest. "Someone insinuated that Andrews had been murdered? I don't understand. There wasn't an iota of suspicion that he'd been killed. Who on earth gave you such a tip?"

"We don't know," Quinn shrugged. "It was anonymous."

Selby suddenly raised one hand, but if the act startled Quinn, he showed no evidence of it. Selby touched the area below Quinn's left eye and gently pulled the lid down. He moved closer, squinting at the eye.

"A corrosive substance did that, I imagine," he said, in a professional tone. "Have you ever tried to regain your sight, Mr. Quinn?"

"Tried?" Quinn scoffed. "I spent a

[Turn page]



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fortune trying. Over most of the world."

"I mean lately. I'd like to have you come to see me, Quinn. Some time at your convenience. Things have progressed in the science of sight restoration since the war. Possibly I might be able to help you."

Quinn bit his lower lip. "I'm not apt to turn down the slightest bit of encouragement, Doctor. I shall look you up."

"Do that. Good night, then."

"Oh—one more thing," Quinn said. "This Mr. Andrews. Just for the records, what type of man was he?"

"Type? Oh, you mean finances, business and such. Well, he owned and operated a drug manufacturing firm. Very successful with it. His second enterprise. The first failed rather badly, I believe. Then he started up again, on a bigger scale, and really went places. Personally, I'm sure his integrity was of the highest. As a matter of fact, I hardly believe anyone could have had the remotest reason to murder him."

Selby stood in the doorway watching Silk and Quinn walk to the exit of the apartment house. Outside, at the curb, Silk helped Quinn into the car, ran around and got behind the wheel. He drove off. It was nearing morning now, there were few people on the street, and Quinn relaxed enough to drop the dead look about his eyes.

"What do you think of Doctor Selby?" he asked, with a smile.

"If I ever saw a quack, there is one," Silk grunted. "Cure your sight, he says. Piffle! He'd get you coming, soak high fees, and then admit he couldn't do a thing. Or— Say, you aren't going to see him, are you?"

"Not if I can avoid it." Quinn smiled wryly. "I'm not anxious for any doctor to examine my eyes. I submitted a couple of times and got away with it, but I don't mean to press my luck too far. And I don't like what we have just run across. Our friend Dr. Selby knows something, Silk. I believe he wanted me to return so he could pump some information out of me."

"Why, he seemed quite calm," Silk protested.

"On the surface he was as calm as an iceberg. Inwardly, he was more excited than a girl with her first doll. When I mentioned diabetes, I thought his heart action would burst an artery in his neck."

WITH a shake of his head, Silk showed his bewilderment.

"But what could he be excited about?" he insisted.

"I don't know," Quinn confessed. "We've got ourselves a heck of a case here, Silk. An anonymous, high-strung man tells us of one murder which already has been committed, and of another which is about to be accomplished. Well, we have two dead men all right, so our anonymous friend didn't base his story on thin air. Yet both men died natural deaths. That seems sure in the case of Pembroke. Quite as certain in the Andrews death. I don't believe either victim even knew the other. They were in totally different lines of endeavor."

"They had one thing in common," Silk said. "Both of them were broke and failures a few years ago, and then came back with a bang."

Quinn reached over and patted Silk's shoulder.

"You haven't lost any of your native intuition, Silk," he approved. "That's the one fact which has been worrying me, too. Both broke. Both started again on a big scale and died successful men."

"That's not much of a clue, sir," Silk said quietly.

"True. But some murders are well-concealed. Some motives are impossible to find. The cleverer the killer, the harder our job. I may be as wacky as your Johnny Jump-Up, but I'm going through with this, Silk."

"I hoped you would," Silk nodded. "I'm not satisfied either."

"We can do two things," Quinn told him. "If neither of these two things provides further leads for us, the whole thing is off. First, we can exhume the body of George Andrews and check up on his business history, and on Pembroke's. Find out especially where they got the capital to start all over again."

"Yes, sir," Silk said. "So far, though, this doesn't look like anything for the Black Bat."

Quinn lit a cigarette, leaned back, and puffed contemplatively.

"We can hope, Silk," he said pleasantly.

There was a light smile on his lips, and Silk nodded, grinning broadly. For it was apparent that Quinn had more than just hope. He apparently was certain that their efforts would bear fruit.

CHAPTER VI

The Murders to Come

LATER the same morning, Quinn ate a quick breakfast, picked up his cane and tapped his way to the library. He sat down, lit a pipe and smoked for ten minutes. Finally he arose and looked about. The window shades were drawn all the way down. He thrust the cane under his arm and walked swiftly to the book-shelf-lined wall. There he touched a hidden spring and a narrow door opened.

Inside the lab, Carol Baldwin put down the morning paper and came forward to meet Quinn with both arms outstretched. They made no secret of the fact that they were in love, but neither talked much about marriage. The Black Bat's game was too dangerous to consider it, and besides, both realized that they could do more in fighting crime if they went their separate ways than if they undertook marriage, with its obligations. Neither had ever forgotten the provisions under which Tony Quinn had regained his eyesight.

"Tony!" Carol greeted him gaily. "Good morning."

He held her close for a moment, then let her go and looked around.

"No Butch yet, Carol?" he asked.

She sat down on a divan and patted a place beside her. Tony Quinn accepted the invitation.

"Butch will be here soon," she told him. "Tell me about this business. Silk called so late. I was so sleepy and he was so vague I didn't get much."

Before Quinn could answer, a huge head appeared through the trap-door set in the floor. Then a pair of enormous shoulders came into view and finally the bulk that was Butch O'Leary stood there, grinning amiably.

Butch's size alone could frighten an ordinary man. His arms were thick and ended in over-sized fists. He was the despair of any tailor and shoe merchant, for everything he wore was an outsize.

Among friends, this hulk of a man was as pleasant and docile as a kitten. Aroused, he became a whirlwind of de-

struction with one pet method of getting rid of enemies. Usually, if there were two men opposing him, he grasped each by the collar, drew them apart and banged their heads together. One collision like that was always enough.

"Come over here and sit down, Butch," Quinn invited, and held out his hand. "Glad to see you. We've a little job to do."

"Rough, I hope."

Butch grinned as he shook hands, then sat down on a low stool. His knees were as high as his head and the stool vanished under his size so that he seemed to be magically seated on nothing but air.

"Rough?" Quinn laughed. "Not yet, Butch. Listen, you two. I've a brief yarn to tell you. It doesn't even hold water yet, but there are prospects."

He told them about Silk's encounter with the nervous little man, of finding Harry Pembroke dead, supposedly of natural causes. He told also of George Andrews' death a week ago.

"We have nothing to go on," he confessed. "We can't even be sure there was a crime committed, but the knowledge that little fellow possessed couldn't possibly have been coincidental. Here is what I want you to do. There is a single link tying the two dead men together."

"Both of them were broke a few years ago. They started afresh in business that must have required a great deal of money. I want to know where they got this money. Butch, you take George Andrews. Pembroke is yours, Carol. He was a theatrical promoter, and there are four hits running on Broadway right now which he owned. The information I need should be easy to obtain."

"It don't sound any too exciting to me," Butch grumbled. "But maybe things will start buzzing. Okay, I'm on my way."

Quinn gave him the name of the dead man and told him where Andrews had lived. Butch disappeared.

Quinn talked to Carol fifteen minutes longer and then a bluish light glowed at the far corner of the lab. There was a battery of lights installed there, each color having a different meaning. Some warned when there were visitors in the house, or visitors approaching. The blue signal indicated that Silk, in some room in the house, was relaying a phone call to Quinn in the lab.

QUINN picked up the instrument. He spoke a word of greeting, then Carol saw his knuckles grow white. Silk entered the lab through the secret door, stepped up to Carol and whispered to her.

"It's the nervous little guy who gave me that tip last night. Wouldn't talk to me. Wanted Tony. He sounded more nervous than ever—and you should have seen him last night!"

"Now look here, Johnny Whatever-your-name-is," Quinn said, "we can't do business over the phone. Why don't you come to see me? At my office or my home. I guarantee full protection for you. No harm can come—" Abruptly Quinn stopped talking, shrugged, and hung up. He came back to where Carol and Silk were impatiently waiting.

"You were right, Silk, in suspecting Johnny may be out of his mind," he said. "He certainly sounded that way, but he may have given us something important to act upon. He apologized for contacting us too late to help Pembroke, but he said there are two others doomed. Perhaps more than two because he seemed to hesitate a bit after naming the pair. At any rate he claims these men will be murdered. One of them tonight. The other tomorrow."

Silk was excited. "Then we've really got a lead, sir! If we can talk to the victims before the killer strikes, we can certainly try to find out what it's all about."

"That's true," Quinn remarked. "The intended victims whose deaths he prophesied are Creighton Hart, head of a big radio network, and Paul Fuller, head of a chain of drug stores. Both very important men."

"Well, what are we waiting for?" Silk demanded.

"There is no especial hurry," Quinn said coolly. "I'm sure of that. Carol, your assignment still goes. While you and Butch check up on the two dead men, Silk and I will talk to the allegedly doomed pair. Report back here late this afternoon. Oh, yes. If, in your investigation, you happen across the trail of a doctor named Reginald Selby, follow that trail."

Carol picked up her purse and hurried out of the lab. Quinn went back to the library, sat down for a few moments to think, and then heard Silk blowing the car horn out front. Quinn used his cane

to go down the porch steps and along the walk. A passing neighbor called a greeting. Quinn smiled and waved.

"Creighton Hart lives on Long Island, sir," Silk said, as he helped Quinn into the car. "Shall we go there first?"

"Might as well. We'll take a chance that he hasn't left for his Manhattan offices yet. It's still quite early. Oh, for the days of the old telephones where you had to get your number from Central. I could have traced Johnny Jump-Up by such a means. In dial phones we face a diabolical monster which refuses to loosen up with information of any kind."

Both men were silent for the first half of the trip. Each was busy with his own thoughts.

Finally Silk glanced at his apparently blind companion.

"You told Carol to watch out for any connection with Doctor Selby," he said. "You seem to have him on your mind pretty heavily."

Quinn chuckled. "Usually we agree when someone acts in a suspicious manner. This time you can't see anything suspicious about Selby, but I can. The man was worried last night. He was shocked when I mentioned diabetes. Why? Because that disease automatically brings up the thought of insulin. If Selby had been sitting in front of a lie detector machine, he'd have broken the stylus."

Silk finally pulled up in front of a large home some distance out on Long Island. It was one of those places which could house a dozen families in comfort and was set amidst stately old trees and cleverly trimmed shrubbery. A gardener was working in the yard.

A butler, in uniform, opened the door in answer to Silk's ring and asked whom they wished to see.

Quinn and Silk gave their names and were led to a sumptuously furnished study. Ten minutes later a short, stocky man came into the room. He had iron-gray hair, rosy cheeks, and an amiable expression was on his face.

"Well, well!" Creighton Hart extended his hand and when Quinn made no move to grasp it, he seized Quinn's hand and shook it warmly. "Tony Quinn! You may not remember me, but I was present at several broadcasts you made over my station. In relation to fighting crime."

"GLAD to see you again," Quinn said. Few people could resist Creighton Hart's personal magnetism. It was easy to see how he had reached the top in his chosen business.

"What the devil brings you here, at this hour of the morning?" he asked cheerfully. "I haven't even had breakfast yet."

"I'm sorry," Quinn said. "But this is important, and it won't take long."

"Nonsense. I already have given orders for two more places to be set. This is Silk Kirby, your general manager or something, isn't he? Glad to see you too, Silk. I never forget people. Never forget a face. Like you never forget a voice, eh, Quinn? I watched you recognize people by simply listening to them speak. Now, no excuses. You'll have something to eat with me if it's only a cup of coffee. Then we can discuss whatever business you have with me. I'm curious. Deadly curious, but I'm patient too. Once upon a time I had no patience whatsoever. That's why I fell flat on my face. Financially, I mean."

"Were you broke too?" Quinn exclaimed.

Hart roared with laughter. "Who hasn't been broke? Say, there's something serious afoot? I can tell by your face. Come on, let's eat. If you have bad news, good food will make it easier to take. I hope I haven't committed some crime."

They sat down, were served and, at Hart's orders, the dining room was cleared. Quinn sipped coffee, leaned across the table and spoke with deep seriousness.

"I'll be blunt, Mr. Hart," he said frankly, "because I know you can take it. There is good reason to believe that you are next on the list of a murderer."

Hart choked on a piece of toast, washed it down with a swallow of scalding coffee and then drank some water. He blinked owlishly for a moment, tried to smile, and then leaned back. Suddenly he wasn't hungry any more.

"I'm—to be—murdered?" he asked slowly.

"So I have been informed. However, for your own peace of mind, my informant also told me another man had been murdered last week, and I discovered such was not the case. A man named George Andrews. Did you know him?"

"Never heard of him."



McGRATH

"Well," said Quinn, "George Andrews is dead all right. However, his death was from natural causes. At least, we're fairly sure of that. Then last night my informant said that Harry Pembroke, the theatrical producer, was next on the murder list. When we reached Pembroke, he was dead."

"Good—heavens!" Hart gasped.

"And yet we found the same set of circumstances," the special district attorney went on. "Pembroke had a history of heart trouble. The autopsy showed beyond any question that he died from that alone. So, you see, my informant thinks in terms of murder, but the victims he names are very obliging people. They die natural deaths. How is your heart, by the way?"

"Excellent. I had a checkup not a month ago. I'm quite fit. And I didn't know Pembroke, either. Heard of him, of course. Who hasn't? Never met the man to my knowledge."

"How about Paul Fuller, the drug chain operator?" probed Quinn. "He is also named as a potential victim."

"I don't even recall ever hearing the name before," Hart said promptly. He was making a strenuous effort to regain his control.

Quinn fumbled for a cigarette, accepted a light from Silk, and leaned back comfortably.

"So you know none of the men involved," he said musingly. "Yet there

is one thing which ties you up with Pembroke and Andrews. Perhaps with Fuller too. They were broke flat some years ago and made big comebacks. In a series of murders you must look for a connecting link. Being broke and then rich again seems the only link between you men. But it may be one of grave import!"

CHAPTER VII

Fingerprints



HART tried to tackle his eggs again, but put down the fork and contented himself with another cup of coffee.

"How about me?" he asked Tony Quinn. "If you really believe there is a chance I may be killed, I must make arrangements for my own protection."

"That will be taken care of," Quinn promised. "Incidentally, you don't have or never have had diabetes?"

"Certainly not," Hart said quickly.

"And do you know a Doctor Reginald Selby?"

"I do not."

"Very well," Quinn said with a sigh. "Getting back to that connecting link again. It's a vague one, but interesting. Do you mind telling me how you went broke and how you made your comeback? You see, it's possible you hurt someone in fighting your way to the top again. Perhaps the others hurt that same person."

"No, no, no!" Hart shook his head violently. "I had a small radio station which I tried to build into a chain of stations too fast. There wasn't enough money back of me. I went too far—and failed. I kicked around for a while, working for other people, but I didn't like that. So I went to a wealthy man with a proposition. He was amenable, loaned me a large sum, and I was on my way again. I have already paid him back over a third of the money involved."

"And this man was who?" Quinn asked.

Hart hesitated. "I'm not supposed to say," he said uneasily. "That was one of the provisions of the deal. You know how it is. If a man who loans money

on long shots becomes known, he's pestered to death." He shook his head and sighed heavily. "Death! Yes—ugly word. It reminds me I may die soon and any agreements for secrecy go by the board. So I will tell you. The man who loaned me the money was Oliver Sutton. He died two years ago. His estate went to his son Ted. From then on I did my business with the estate through the executor. A man named Carrington. A nice sort of person."

"Silk," Quinn said, "will you lead me to a phone please, and look up the number of Harry Pembroke's apartment? We'll settle this now. If that is the link, we'll soon know."

Quinn talked to Pembroke's brother. He carefully explained who he was and indicated that his question was of extreme importance. Then he asked if Harry Pembroke got the necessary money for his come-back through Oliver Sutton.

Pembroke's brother hesitated, just as Hart had done. "I'm not sure if I should answer that, Mr. Quinn," he finally said. "It's a very personal question. I know you came here last night and indicated that my brother's death might have occurred under suspicious circumstances. We know now that you were wrong. Why go on with it?"

"Because if I'm not wrong, and your brother was murdered, there may be others. That is why your answering this question is so necessary. Naturally, whatever you tell me will be strictly confidential. You may know of me. I keep my word."

"Yes, I realize that. In fact, when I learned it was you who inquired about the death of my brother, I felt certain you could not be wrong, no matter how things looked on the surface. Very well. Yes, Harry did borrow his money from Oliver Sutton."

"Thank you," Quinn said quietly, and hung up. He arose from the chair and spoke to the radio man.

"Please remain at home until a police escort arrives, Mr. Hart. It will be very unobtrusive, but quite alert, I can assure you. Take no chances. Go straight to your office and remain there. Come straight home. Bring something to eat with you that you purchase from a grocery or butcher shop yourself. Don't accept food or drink from anyone. Receive no visitors. Don't open any pack-

ages that reach you."

"I'm getting scared," Hart said and shuddered. "I'll do everything you say. And thanks for warning me. What about that connecting link? Did Pembroke—"

"Keep it very confidential," Quinn replied. "Pembroke was also financed by Oliver Sutton."

Hart sat down suddenly and stayed quiet. Quinn made one more phone call, this one to Police Headquarters, and arranged for a strong guard. He stayed at Hart's home until the police arrived. Quinn gave them orders. Then he and Silk drove back to town.

"We seem to be getting warm," Silk said. "I— Holy smoke, what's this?"

HE BRAKED the car quickly. A scrawny looking man staggered out of the brush alongside the highway. He was clawing at his throat with both hands. He staggered to the shoulders of the road, then slowly sank to his knees. He seemed to be choking to death.

"That looks like Johnny Jump-Up," Silk said sharply. "Or no—they aren't built the same. I'm not sure."

"Have a look," Quinn snapped. "The man needs help anyway. Go to him."

Silk pulled over until the brush scraped against the side of the car. He jumped out and ran toward the fallen man. Quinn didn't move. His head was tilted slightly as if he were listening keenly. His blank eyes were ready to dart in any direction.

Silk reached the man and bent over him. Nothing happened.

Then Quinn heard the faint snap of a dry branch. Then the crunch of dry leaves under a heavy weight. Quickly his hand went down toward the hand brake, reached beneath the dash, and he rapidly let his fingers become covered with the grease and oil lodged there. He swiftly opened his coat. Then he sat back, tense and waiting.

An attack was coming. The man in the road had been the lure while another stalked the car, ready to strike at a given signal when Silk would also be surprised. Quinn's elbow slowly pushed down the door lever until it clicked and would open with nothing more than a shove. He hoped he wasn't sweating too profusely, to give himself away.

Out of the corner of his eye he saw

a big man worming his way stealthily through the brush. The fellow made little noise, but Quinn's hearing was abnormally acute and to him each step sounded like thunder.

This was one of the things he always dreaded. Being trapped by someone who meant to kill. A blind man couldn't reasonably resist without giving away the fact that he could see. And yet something had to be done. The approaching man held a knife in his hand. Quinn was glad that it wasn't a gun or he would have been compelled to draw his own and shoot to kill.

He studied the approaching man and recognized his type. A coarse gangster breed to whom murder meant little or nothing. The big brute was quite close to the car now. His hand was going out to grasp the car door and yank it open. As he did, he whistled shrilly.

Silk, trying to bring the small man out of what seemed to be a dead faint, suddenly found himself enveloped by two scrawny but quite strong arms. At the same time a knee arose and whacked him hard in the stomach. It knocked the wind out of him. He fell on top of the man and they rolled around, squirming madly for the upper hand.

The big man with the knife thought the door was tightly closed and he yanked a trifle too hard. As a result he went off-balance. Quinn, who could normally be expected to have been aroused by the sounds of Silk's shouting, put one foot on the running board, pulled himself out of the car and appeared to slip. He fell straight toward the big man who was still off-balance.

Quinn's weight carried his assailant down with a crash. The knife started to come up. Quinn waved his cane madly. It hit the knife hand a resounding whack and the blade dropped.

The big man growled a curse and reached for Quinn's throat. Quinn dropped his cane and did some work with his hands too. He drove a pair of hard punches to the man's heart region, elbowed him against the chin, and then they were a tangled mass of arms and legs.

Twice Quinn seized the man's hands. In the mêlée some of the grease from his fingers was transferred to his opponent's hands.

In turn, the killer tried to shove Quinn away by placing the flat of both hands

against his chest. He didn't succeed. But Quinn realized that in a matter of seconds he would be forced to reveal that he wasn't blind. His life was at stake. He couldn't take the risks involved in pretending sightlessness.

"I'm coming!"

It was a high-pitched yell from Silk who somehow had disengaged himself. Silk was running fast and tugging at his hip pocket. The scrawny man with whom he had been battling was on his feet and reaching for a gun too. Silk looked over his shoulder, swiveled, and fired twice. The scrawny killer gave a yelp, turned and fled.

THE big man heard those shots and knew what was happening. He suddenly shoved Quinn hard against the ground, got to his feet, and stood there uncertainly. Then he picked up the knife. Quinn was ready to grab his ankles if he bent down to deliver a thrust with that blade. But Silk was coming up fast. The big man turned and fled, crashing through the brush now like a stampeding elephant. Silk helped Quinn up.

"Into the car, quick!" Quinn said. "We've got to get out of here."

Instantly Silk slid behind the wheel. The car shot away and kept at high speed for the next three miles, with neither man uttering a word. Then Silk eased up. He glanced at Quinn.

"Are you all right, sir?" he asked anxiously.

"Yes," Quinn said grimly. "Yes, I'm okay. Just before that fellow lured you into stopping the car, you said something about the trail getting warm. Remember?"

"It's red-hot!" Silk managed a lopsided grin. "That wasn't Johnny Jump-Up. I'm sure now. But did that little rat know all the dirty tricks of fighting? I'll be sore for a week."

"I'll be sore too—until I lay my hands on the man who sent those two hoodlums after us," Quinn said, his voice hard. "We're getting into somebody's hair, Silk. Right now you couldn't convince me that Pembroke and Andrews were not murdered. Or that whoever killed them won't try to kill Hart and Fuller. I wonder to whom we owe the honor of that episode. Someone we approached?"

"Hart could have called them in if they were right handy," Silk suggested.

"I doubt if he did, anyhow," said Tony Quinn. "Hart was genuinely scared and he wouldn't have been if he was nothing more than a plant. Besides, he wouldn't have had much opportunity with his police guard around. No—we were followed here. Cleverly too, because I didn't notice anyone on our tail. It's somebody at Pembroke's house. It's Dr. Abbott or Dr. Selby. Or Andrews' people. Maybe even Johnny Jump-Up. We don't know. There's no way of telling. We've been traveling in a circle that has no end, Silk."

"Yes, sir," Silk said softly. "I can see that."

"We're going to square that circle, Silk. Make some nice corners in it and drive a killer into one of them. At least this attack has helped us somewhat. I think."

"Did you recognize either of those gorillas, sir?"

"No, I did not. But when I realized an attack was coming, I made certain preparations. I greased my fingers good. I rubbed that grease all over the hoodlum's hands and contrived to have him put his hands against my nice fresh white shirt. Have a look—at some beautiful fingerprints."

Quinn opened his coat and showed Silk the mass of marks. Silk whistled in admiration.

"Now, if that guy only has a record!" he exclaimed. "And say—this is starting to get rough. Now it's something for the Black Bat, eh?"

"Most definitely, Silk. However, our main job at the moment is to protect Creighton Hart. And Paul Fuller. Step on it."

CHAPTER VIII

The Third Murder



EACHING Paul Fuller's offices, Quinn and Silk found them to be astonishingly beautiful rooms in one of the towering city buildings. It was clear that Fuller was no tightwad.

They had a conversation with him which was almost identical with that they'd had with Creighton

Hart. Fuller was an older man than Hart, nearing sixty. He was tall and bald-headed and efficient.

He was startled by the news given him by the special district attorney, and scared too, but not so much that he lost control of his reasoning powers. He willingly told how he had gone broke and had been helped by Oliver Sutton. Quinn promptly arranged a guard and left Fuller feeling fairly secure.

Back at Quinn's office, he promptly peeled off his shirt and handed it to Silk.

"Take it to the police labs and have them bring up the prints," he instructed. "Then check them and come back immediately. Oh, yes—bring the shirt with you. A D.A. is supposed to be fully dressed while in his office. And tell the girl out front I'm to see no one."

Silk carefully wrapped the shirt and departed. Quinn gently rubbed his jaw where a fist had dusted him. He grinned. The trail was developing rapidly into a chase.

He did a lot of phoning while he waited for Silk's report, mostly for members of the medical profession and mostly about Dr. Reginald Selby. Quinn learned that Selby professed to be a psychiatrist and seemed to be doing quite well. He was on the staff of the Monument Retreat, a semi-private asylum. But for all Quinn's earnest efforts on the phone he could not find a trace of any connection between Dr. Selby, and the victims or threatened victims, with the exception of George Andrews.

He ran down the history of Oliver Sutton, too, and found that the man had been extremely wealthy, but certainly not a philanthropist, despite all his money. Oliver Sutton had been a hard-headed business man. If he loaned

money to the quartette of men involved in this affair, Oliver Sutton had meant to get something for his pains.

But Oliver Sutton was dead! He couldn't possibly be involved now. And his only child and heir was Ted Sutton whom Quinn vainly tried to get a line on until he called the society editor of a big newspaper.

There he learned that Ted Sutton was wholly unlike his father. He had never worked. His idea of labor was playing polo or tennis. He traveled extensively, was a member of all the important clubs, and considered a thoroughly eligible bachelor.

When Quinn had gathered all the information available, via telephone, he passed a hand across his forehead. He felt tired, even though it was barely noon. He was still traveling that circle and he could see no chance of creating a neat corner in it as yet.

Silk returned in two hours, highly excited. Quinn's shirt was mottled badly from identification laboratory powders and dyes. He donned it anyway and buttoned his coat. Silk laid a file on Quinn's desk.

"There is the goon who tried to knife you, sir!" he announced. "He's got a record all right. He was tried for murder in nineteen-thirty-eight, but found to be insane, and—"

"By what doctors?" Quinn asked quickly.

"You've sure got Doctor Selby on your mind," Silk replied. "No he wasn't in on the trial."

Quinn read the file quickly. The rogue's gallery photo of the big man was there. Quinn recognized him at once and no longer questioned his at-

[Turn page]

Tired Kidneys Often Bring Sleepless Nights

Doctors say your kidneys contain 15 miles of tiny tubes or filters which help to purify the blood and keep you healthy. When they get tired and don't work right in the daytime, many people have to get up nights. Frequent or scanty passages with smarting and burning sometimes shows there is something wrong with your kidneys or bladder. Don't neglect this condition and lose valuable, restful sleep.

When disorder of kidney function permits

poisonous matter to remain in your blood, it may also cause nagging backache, rheumatic pains, leg pains, loss of pep and energy, swelling, puffiness under the eyes, headaches and dizziness.

Don't wait! Ask your druggist for Doan's Pills, a stimulant diuretic, used successfully by millions for over 50 years. Doan's give happy relief and will help the 15 miles of kidney tubes flush out poisonous waste from your blood. Get Doan's Pills,

(Adv.)

tacker's identity. His name was Vic Marco.

There was a conviction for rum-running with a six month jail term. A conviction for robbery which had sent him to Sing Sing for two years. Three arrests on suspicion of murder, none of which was proved. And, finally, the charge of murdering a drunken seaman in a cheap cafe. This was the crime which had resulted in Vic Marco being sent to a State asylum for the criminally insane.

"There's another file below Marco's," Silk said. "That of my personal scrawny friend. While the boys were bringing up those prints, I took a look through the rogues' gallery. He was there all right."

THE scrawny man's name turned out to be Joseph Barret, better known as "Slim." He was a cheap thief. There were two notes of import on his record. One was a conviction for dope peddling ten years ago.

But Quinn found the last entry highly interesting. Slim Barret had been arrested in the act of pilfering a Long Island home. He had been locked up and, before his trial, he had become raving mad. He had been sent to the same institution where Vic Marco had spent the past several years.

"Interesting," Quinn muttered. "Especially since Doctor Selby is supposed to be a psychiatrist. We'll see." He had not given up Dr. Selby yet.

Quinn called the asylum to which both men had been sent. He talked to the superintendent at length, made several notes, then hung up. He leaned back and glanced at Silk.

"Dividends, my good friend," he observed. "They're coming in fast. It seems that Marco and Barret spent quite a long time at the State Asylum. But two years ago, because of overcrowded conditions, they were adjudged recovered sufficiently to be shipped to a semi-private institution. Now, very coincidentally, the name of that institution is the Monument Retreat. It happens that our Doctor Selby is on the staff of the hospital. Think my hunch about him was wild now?"

Silk shook his head. "No, sir. I was wrong, as usual." He looked thoughtful. "So we have Selby involved. But how does he fit in? Oh, I can see that he

could have arranged for the release of Marco and Barret so he could use them. Still, what does Selby get out of it?"

"I don't know—yet." Quinn looked grim. "But there must be something. Murder isn't done to satisfy a whim. At least not a string of murders. I'm inclined to think, Silk, that the Black Bat is going to move in tonight. With a visit to Ted Sutton, another to Selby and, if we can locate them, our mutual friends Slim and Vic Marco."

"The circle"—Silk grinned—"is assuming an oval shape, sir. One more good squeeze and it will be square—with corners. Then we'll have them."

"The trouble with squares of that kind is the fact that they are resilient," Tony Quinn said. "They snap back into a sphere sometimes. Which means we have work to do. See that lunch is sent in, will you? And also start the procession of people who want to see me. At least, my friend Marco didn't smear the collar of my shirt. I'm ready for customers."

Silk turned away, hesitated, and looked back over his shoulder.

"This may not be important at all, sir," he said, before he left, "but at the police labs they told me Vic had more than grease on his fingertips. There was a lot of wax too. Floor wax, they thought."

Quinn sat erect. "Floor wax!" he exclaimed. "Silk, when someone like Vic Marco begins waxing floors, it's for more than the purpose of beautifying a place. I don't get it. Floor wax! Why?"

"I wish I knew." Silk shrugged and approached the door.

Quinn's eyes instantly clouded over with that film of blindness as he waited for the first of the people with complaints to be shown in.

For the next three hours Quinn listened patiently to the stories of people who had all manner of things to bring to him for solution. Also, he consulted with detectives and staff attorneys who were handling important cases already in court. He lined up the witnesses for a manslaughter trial to start in a few days. There was nothing dreary or unexciting in the office of a district attorney, even a special district attorney.

And Quinn loved the work. He had been appointed easily enough, by the district attorney who didn't especially care for Tony Quinn and believed that no blind man could ever handle the com-

plicated affairs of such an office, so no rivalry would be attached to the job. But Quinn had surprised him. The D. A. then began sending difficult cases only for Quinn's attention. In some instances the Black Bat had taken a hand in their solution, but regardless of that, the unsolved file in Quinn's office was so thin as to be remarkable.

AT THREE-THIRTY he called it a day for interviews and set about arranging matters concerning pending cases. Silk sat quietly by, ready to help with anything Quinn wanted. At all times when on public display like this Quinn was a totally blind man who needed someone at his side constantly.

The phone rang at three fifty-five. Quinn answered it rather absently, then he dropped the file of papers he was holding and bit off a savage curse. He hung up and got quickly to his feet.

"It's about Creighton Hart," he said to Silk. "He's been killed."

Silk gasped. "But how?" he cried. "With all those cops around?"

"His offices are on the sixth floor of the Radio Building. Hart tumbled out of the window and was instantly killed. We'd better get over there. Or wait a minute—"

Quinn called Headquarters. Captain McGrath had already departed for the scene of the crime. Quinn ordered the guards around Paul Fuller doubled and alerted. Then, clutching Silk's arm, he hurried out to the street. The car was parked directly in front of the building. They were soon headed toward the place where Creighton Hart had met his death.

"You can't call our Johnny Jump-Up a fool this time, Silk," Quinn said tightly. "He wasn't guessing. He knew! We've got to reach him somehow. That's another job for the Black Bat and Carol and Butch—and you. Especially you, because you are the only person who has ever seen him."

Silk didn't comment because he was turning into the block in front of the building where Hart had his offices. Silk came to a quick halt. The sidewalks were crowded with morbid spectators. In the middle of the sidewalk was an object already covered with a piece of tarpaulin from the morgue wagon which stood alongside.

McGrath was there. He saw Quinn and rushed up to him.

"Now listen, Quinn," he said irately. "You know more about this business than you have told me. Otherwise, why the guard? The confounded dopes, letting him fall like that!"

"Was it an accident?" Quinn asked.

"What else?" McGrath snorted. "Can a murderer shove his victim out of a window when there are four plainclothes men in the same room?"

"Tell me just what happened," Quinn urged.

"I got the story from the men who saw him fall," McGrath told him. "It was like this. About three-thirty there was a phone call for Hart. When he hung up, he was laughing. He told the boys that his wife had just bought a new car, was driving it to the building and expected to surprise him. A salesman had phoned to tip him off."

"Yes? Then what?"

"Hart went back to work. About fifteen minutes later, they heard a horn honking like mad on the street. Hart got up, walked to the window and leaned out for a look. The rug slipped and he pitched out."

"Ah," Quinn said. "The rug slipped. Take us up to that office, Mac. And understand this. Hart was murdered just as surely as he is now dead. What's more, I know who did it! I'll tell you as soon as we reach a phone so you can send out an alarm for the killers."

"Now, look," McGrath said, with exasperated patience, "nobody was in the office. Nobody pushed him. It was an accident."

"Wait," Quinn said grimly, "and see."

CHAPTER IX

Hooded Visitor



WHEN the three men reached Creighton Hart's private office, Quinn asked to be led directly to the window from which the radio man had fallen. There Quinn promptly bent down and felt around the floor. His fingers encountered a small ornamental rug. He snapped this over and ran fingers across the back of it.

"McGrath," he said, "have the building

super brought in here. Also whoever is in charge of the office. Maybe the receptionist will do."

McGrath barked the orders. Then he went down on his hands and knees, too.

"Give me the dope," he implored. "Honest, I look like a fool standing here doing nothing while a blind man discovers clues by simply feeling around the floor."

"Yes, the floor," Quinn said tersely. "It's been very heavily waxed. Recently, too. And the back of this small rug is rather white, isn't it? As if it had been painted or something."

"But you can't see that rug," McGrath argued. "How did you know?"

"Then it is white," said Quinn. "You have given me answer enough. By using my fingertips I can even tell what the stuff is, Mac. Starch. Plain laundry starch. Here is what happened. Somebody got a murder trap set. First the floor was thoroughly waxed below this window, to make it as slippery as new ice. Then the little throw rug was starched on the back. Put any starched piece of material on a freshly waxed floor, stand on it, and you're going down in a heap."

McGrath spoke half under his breath. "The man who planned this has the mind of a devil."

"He certainly has," Quinn agreed. "Now the phone call about Hart's wife driving up in a new car was phony. You can soon prove that. The horn was sounded to make him look out. Naturally he saw no new car, nor did he see his wife, so he leaned further out—and the rug did the rest of it. Your men were not to blame. They couldn't possibly foresee this. In fact, I'm really to blame because I didn't recognize a clue that was pressed smack against my chest."

"Clue—against your chest?" McGrath said helplessly, but Quinn did not elaborate.

A girl and a middle-aged man were led into the office and introduced as the receptionist and building super respectively.

"Miss," Quinn asked, "did anyone show up today with floor waxing equipment?"

"Why, yes," she replied, looking about fearfully. "Right after the office opened this morning. Two men. They said the super sent them."

"All right." Quinn's dead eyes didn't move toward the super. "Now will the superintendent answer this question? Did you hire anyone to wax the floors?"

"No, sir," the man replied promptly. "I'm positive of that."

"Silk," Quinn said, "you have those files I gave you to hold. Show the pictures of Slim Barret and Vic Marco to the receptionist. Miss, take a good look now and be very certain. Do you recognize those faces?"

"Oh yes, sir," she gasped. "Those are the two men who came to wax the floor!"

"That's all," Quinn said. "Mac, phone Headquarters and put out a dragnet for that pair."

"Sure. Of course." McGrath was still dazed. "But I don't see how you knew."

"This morning I went out to Long Island to warn Hart that he was slated for murder," Quinn explained. "Johnny Jump-Up phoned me and gave me Hart's name. Also, that of Paul Fuller. On our way back from Mr. Hart's estate, Silk and I were tricked into stopping the car. A man attacked me while Silk was battling with another man he had thought had fainted in the road, and was trying to help. My attacker's hands were greasy and he left his print on my white shirt. Besides grease, there were also traces of floor wax which came from Marco's hands. The police labs found that. But I couldn't associate it with murder. Will you start the hunt for those two killers, Mac?"

McGRATH sprang to the phone, seized the files from Silk's hands and began giving rapid orders. When he finished, he sagged in the chair and rubbed the back of his hand across tired eyes.

"Why is it," he asked nobody in particular, "that a blind man is always blessed with such phenomenal brains?"

Quinn permitted himself a mirthless laugh. "Without eyes you have to have brains, Mac. The moment those two mugs are hauled in, let me know. Though I've an idea that they'll be hard to get. Silk, take me home."

In the outer office, Quinn stopped Silk and ordered him to examine the receptionist's record book of visitors for the past several weeks. Silk read off the names. The only one which struck a familiar note was that of Carrington.

"Creighton Hart himself told me that

Carrington was the executor of the Sutton estate," Quinn said thoughtfully. "Hart said that he had been to this office. Naturally he had business here. Well, there is no one else of interest on the list of callers. Let's go home, Silk."

Once more at home and in the privacy of the secret lab, Quinn ceased to be a blind man. Both Carol and Butch were

of his other hand.

"Yeah, I do," he averred. "I'll call in every time I get a chance."

Butch departed in a hurry. Carol sank into a chair.

"Tony," she said, "we're up against it this time, aren't we? Not a lead except for those two ex-asylum inmates and they'll be well hidden by now."



SILK

there. Their news jibed with what Quinn already had learned from Creighton Hart.

Quinn paced the lab floor.

"We've got to find this Johnny Jump-Up," he insisted. "I think he knows of other intended victims and we can't afford to wait until the impulse to phone us occurs to him. Yet we haven't a single lead toward that little man. The moment one crops up, we'll all concentrate on it. Butch, I've an important assignment for you."

"Just name it," Butch said.

"The life of a fourth man is threatened. Silk will give you Paul Fuller's address. Go there. You'll find the area swarming with cops, but stick around anyway. If you see anyone suspicious—and be certain he isn't a detective—grab him and make him talk. You know ways of doing that."

Butch smacked one fist into the palm

"Well, we've smoked something out of the brush at any rate," Quinn said. "More will develop. I issued an exhumation order to remove the body of George Andrews from his grave to the morgue. It ought to be there now. Maybe we'll learn something there. I've got to talk with Ted Sutton, whose father loaned money to the three victims, and to Fuller, the next man slated to go. I want to talk to Doctor Selby, who I am sure knows a great deal more than he pretends."

"Suppose you leave Doctor Selby to me until you are ready to tackle him," Carol said. "I can at least keep the man under observation."

"A good idea. Carol, be careful. Somehow I have a feeling that Selby has the mind of a fiend. Be certain to contact Silk every hour. Unless you do, I'm going to Selby's and find you. Don't go near the man and watch out for those two ex-asylum inmates."

"Tony, were they really insane, do you think?"

"I doubt it. At the time they were put away, there happened to be a wave of such commitments. Anybody with enough cash on the line could hire a dozen so-called alienists who would testify against anybody the State could produce. You know how juries are. Judges, too, sometimes. They fall for that stuff. I'd lay good odds that both Vic Marco and Slim Barret successfully faked insanity and bought their way into an asylum instead of being sent to prison where they belonged."

"I'll watch out for the good doctor," Carol promised.

She opened her spacious handbag and showed a heavy automatic nestled alongside a lipstick, a compact and the dozen other items that crowd a girl's bag.

"Use it if you have to," Quinn advised. "Selby is smart, educated and dangerous. I am positive of that."

TWO minutes after Carol had disappeared, a light on the signal panel flashed. Silk hurried to the telephone. He called Quinn over. McGrath was on the wire.

"I'm at the morgue," the police captain declared curtly. "They've just gone over George Andrews' body. They found a needle puncture on his thigh. They're going to examine the viscera at once. Let you know as soon as they report anything to me."

"All right, Mac," said Tony Quinn. "This is in your hands now. From here on, I'm too handicapped to be of much help. It will take dogged, hard work. Stay on it closely and I'll be handy if you want me for anything."

"Okay," McGrath said. "There's no trace of Slim or his pal Marco yet. We're living in hopes. A cop has to live in hopes."

He hung up. Quinn went back to his library and sat down, once more a blind man fumbling clumsily for his pipe and tobacco. Then for a match. He puffed slowly and stared at nothing. Then he called to Silk.

"Go into the lab and get the regalia ready," he instructed. "Some people are going to have a visitor in black tonight. . . ."

Some hours later, at the elaborate home of young Ted Sutton, five people were seated in the living room. A butler

served a tray of cocktails and discreetly withdrew, closing the door after him. The five drank in silence. Ted Sutton finished his cocktail in one swallow, arose, and hurled the empty glass against the fireplace.

"I tell you this is just a coincidence," he said. "A strange one, but what else can it be? Three men are dead. There's talk that they were murdered. Another man's life is threatened, and it so happens that all four owe me a great deal of money, and that I take over their businesses upon their deaths. Those businesses are incredibly successful. Therefore, I have a motive for killing those men. A motive! Listen, I'm worth three million dollars without the businesses those men left to me. I don't want their enterprises. I won't accept them!"

A dapper little man who held a briefcase on his lap, clucked his tongue chidingly.

"Ted," he said, "as your attorney, as attorney to your father before you, I maintain this information should be given to the police at once. If they find it out—and they are bound to—you'll be hounded."

Ted Sutton was a too-handsome young man of twenty-six. He had the shoulders and waist of an athlete, the looks of a Hollywood leading man, and half the brains his father had owned. And one one-thousandth the ambition. He was easily offended. A great deal of money and power had done him no good at all.

"Hurley, you fool," he snapped, "are you insinuating I killed those men because I wanted the businesses they'd developed out of Dad's money?"

"No, no!" Attorney Hurley exclaimed hastily. "Don't be so impetuous, my boy. I meant nothing of the sort. It's incredible even to think you have a motive, because you are too rich already. Yet I can assure you the police will make trouble. Also, the member of the district attorney's staff in charge of the case happens to be Tony Quinn. He's blind, but don't be fooled. He's sharp, clever. Nobody to tangle with."

Ted Sutton sat down hard. "Oh, to the devil with it all. I'm not afraid of Tony Quinn or anyone else."

One of the five people in the room was a girl, dark, svelte and lovely. She arose, walked over and sat down beside Ted Sutton. Her hand rested lightly

on his arm.

"Don't get so excited, darling," she murmured. "Mr. Hurley is only trying to make you see that trouble is going to develop anyway, and you'd be better off by starting it yourself. Now telephone this blind man, whatever his name is. Tell him what you know."

Ted softened. "All right, Nita. I guess you're right. I'll do it at once."

He jumped to his feet, and at that moment they all felt a cool breeze and then a voice, far colder than the breeze, froze them where they sat. Framed in one of the French doors was a man all in black.

"Gentlemen—and you, miss, please be calm and relax. I'm the Black Bat."

"Oh, my gosh," one man gasped. "Now we are sunk!"

CHAPTER X

Challenge to the Black Bat



DELIBERATELY, the figure in black walked to the middle of the room. The five people didn't move. They stared at this eerie figure clad in somber garments from head to foot. They saw the gleaming eyes that appraised them from the slits in the black hood.

They saw the automatic in the Black Bat's fist.

The Black Bat stopped a few feet away from them and leaned against the back of a straight chair. He looked straight at the man who had spoken so excitedly.

"You," he said. "That was a strange statement to make. Why should my appearance mean that you are sunk? Who are you, anyway?"

This man didn't reply. He hardly seemed capable of speech. The answer came from a rolypoly little man with a considerable paunch, jowls, and a wholesome, trusting smile. He arose somewhat laboriously and walked over toward the Black Bat. He paid no attention to the gun confronting him except to wave a hand at it.

"Put that thing away, Black Bat," he said easily. "You're not in the company of thieves and crooks."

The Black Bat laughed harshly. "The gun stays, sir. But I'm entirely willing to listen to what you or anyone else has to say. Just let me warn you. You know what has brought me here, and what I am investigating. Because of it, three men are already dead. Another's life is threatened, and somehow all that killing is tied up with the Sutton family. I'd like to know who you people are first. I already know Attorney Hurley and I respect him as an honest, persevering man. I know Ted Sutton also, from his pictures in our newspapers. You others are strangers."

The rolypoly man chuckled. "Offhand, I'd say you were something of a stranger, too. But we'll gladly cooperate. I am Jonathan Carrington. My occupation? Existing. I detest work of any sort. It happens that I'm wealthy enough to cater to my likes. It also happens that I was a lifelong friend to Ted's father. I maintained the estate until Ted reached the age of twenty-five. That was last year. It seems Ted's father believed his only son would be immature until such an age."

Carrington turned and indicated the man who had spoken in such alarm.

"Meet Ray Coleman," he introduced. "A most efficient business representative. He handles the affairs of the Sutton estate. I can vouch for him. You see, I examined his books when I was legally in charge of the property."

The Black Bat inclined his head toward Ray Coleman and studied him for a moment. Coleman's age was deceptive. He might be thirty or fifty. His hair was coal-black, his eyes a deep brown. There wasn't a wrinkle on his face. He was well-dressed, though the mass of pencils stuck into a vest pocket were an odd note in such a gathering.

Carrington turned toward the girl, whose color was slowly returning.

"This is Miss Anita Dyne," Carrington murmured. "It is expected by all society reporters that she will marry Ted some day. Myself, I'm not so sure. Anita and Ted are level-headed youngsters and will do exactly as they wish."

Anita Dyne half arose, sank back again and moistened her heavily rouged lips.

"How do you do," she managed.

"Well, now that we are all very cozy," the Black Bat said, "suppose you, Mr. Carrington, illuminate me still further

along the lines of the subject you were discussing when I was ungentlemanly enough to be listening outside the French door."

Carrington shrugged. "Three dead men—Pembroke, Andrews and Hart—borrowed a great deal of cash from Ted's father," he said, in a businesslike tone. "That was some years ago. Ted's father was a hard-headed business man. He gave away nothing. The contracts involved in the loan stipulated that if any borrower died, the entire business was to be the property of Ted's father. He is dead, but those contracts still hold. The businesses the men developed through the use of the Sutton money, now belong to Ted."

"And did a man named Paul Fuller also borrow money under these same conditions?" the Black Bat asked.

Carrington's mouth opened slightly and he stared at the figure in black.

"Do you mean that—that Fuller is—also dead?" he stammered.

"No. Not yet, and he won't be if I can help it. But you have answered my question. Fuller is obligated to the Sutton estate and if he dies, his enterprise will become Ted Sutton's property. That's about as powerful a motive for murder as I have ever heard.

NOISILY Attorney Hurley cleared his throat, calling for the Black Bat's attention.

"As Ted Sutton's lawyer," he said, "I maintain that your statement is libelous."

"Sue me." The Black Bat laughed. "Mr. Hurley, I make any sort of statements I choose, and take any action I choose—as perhaps you may have heard."

Hurley subsided a bit. "Yes, I suppose you do—and get away with it. At least you have so far. But what I really meant was your accusation of murder. What murder? Naturally, knowing what I do about their business affairs, I have been interested in the deaths of these men.

"George Andrews dropped dead at a dinner party. I know. I was present at the time. Pembroke died of a heart condition from which he had suffered for years. Creighton Hart simply tumbled out of his office window accidentally, with police guard witnesses to the regrettable affair. So I repeat—what mur-

der?"

The Black Bat spoke calmly. "All three of those men were murdered. Cold-bloodedly and with diabolical skill. I admit we have no proof of murder yet, but it is certain that the plans were made some time ago. Mr. Fuller is on the list, too. And so, suppose the chief suspect tells me just where he has been these past twenty-four hours. Especially last night from ten o'clock until one. How about it, Ted Sutton?"

"I—I know it must look awfully bad for me," Ted answered. "I—I guess I'm the only person who profits by these deaths, but I didn't kill them. I hardly knew the men. I didn't need any more money. I don't want any more. I have too much now."

"And last night between ten and one?" the Black Bat persisted.

"He was with me," Anita Dyne spoke up suddenly. "I met Ted at eight last night. He wasn't out of my sight until two o'clock in the morning. I can prove it by a number of people who saw us together. We went to the theater, then to the Persian Room, and finally back here. We arrived about twelve-thirty. And—and we parked until two."

The Black Bat bowed slightly in Anita's direction.

"If that alibi holds up, I grant it is a very good one. We shall see. I'm quite certain that—"

Suddenly the Black Bat swung around and the automatic in his fist blazed once. Ray Coleman, the Sutton business representative, screamed. A nickel-plated revolver fell from his fist. He doubled up in pain, clutching at his wounded hand.

The Black Bat stepped back a couple of paces.

"That was extremely foolish, Mr. Coleman," he said grimly. "Besides nearly getting yourself killed, you have automatically placed yourself in an unenviable position. I came here to help Ted Sutton. It seems that you didn't want him helped. Why?"

"You can go to the devil!" Coleman shouted. "You're nothing but a murdering coward who runs around under the obscurity of a black hood! The police say you're a criminal, so you must have come here with criminal intentions. I was only trying to defend Ted."

"You picked a dangerous way to do it," the Black Bat observed drily. "And your interest might go a trifle deeper.



CAROL

As the business manager of this estate you could have dug into its funds somewhat. I intend to find out if you have. Right now—get a doctor for your hand. Incidentally, who is your doctor?”

“None of your business,” Coleman snapped.

“Could it be a man named Selby?” the Black Bat asked, and the gleaming eyes behind that hood darted about the room, watching everyone.

The only person who seemed to react to the name of Dr. Selby was Ted Sutton. He sank back against the divan slowly and his grip on Anita’s hand became so tight that she winced.

The Black Bat moved toward the French door through which he had entered.

“I’m leaving now,” he said. “It would be very unwise for any of you to follow me. Very unwise. Good night.”

Stark silence followed the Black Bat’s disappearance, until Coleman glared at everyone.

“Well, how about a doctor for this hand?” he demanded. “Am I going to be allowed to bleed to death?”

“He should have put that bullet through your head, Coleman,” Attorney Hurley said, very softly. “Of all the fool things to do! Now there’s no telling what the Black Bat will think of us.”

Jonathan Carrington quieted them. “Stop arguing,” he said shortly. “Anita, go phone for a doctor. Gentlemen, one thing we must realize. The Black Bat means to help us. I doubt he has any suspicions that Ted had those men killed. It didn’t appear so to me.”

“They were not murdered!” Attorney Hurley shouted.

Carrington raised his eyebrows. “If the Black Bat says they were, you can bank on it—there have been three murders. I’m going to have a drink. A great big drink. And I think the rest of you need one too. How about it?”

WHILE the Black Bat had been having his interesting conversation in Ted Sutton’s home, his aides had been equally busy in his or her own way, carrying out his orders.

One of them, Carol Baldwin, was now parked across and down the street about a hundred yards from Dr. Selby’s apartment. She had trailed him twice, but each time he had done nothing more exciting than make professional visits.

Now it was after his office hours and patients had ceased going in and out of his office. Carol was on the alert. If Selby planned anything, now was the time he would pull it.

She was driving a fast little coupe and

was ready for action. She wished something would happen. She also wondered what Tony Quinn and his alter ego, the Black Bat, was doing. And Butch, who had been assigned to help guard Fuller.

The only member of the small organization whose activities she could visualize was Silk. In times like these, Silk was required to remain at home, to make excuses for Quinn's absence if anyone came, and to act in general as liaison man in the event that she, Butch, or the Black Bat called in for help.

Then Carol's idle thought vanished and she was all attention. Dr. Selby had sauntered out of his apartment house. He held a professional bag in one hand and he walked slowly toward his car. Entering it, he drove away. Carol promptly took up the chase.

Apparently Selby had no suspicions that he might be followed, for he took a direct route to his destination, an ordinary brownstone front house far uptown and close by the North River. He parked his car, got out and lit a cigarette. During this operation, he looked around carefully.

Carol drove on by, but she reached up, adjusted the car's rear-view mirror and when Selby entered the house, she saw him. Carol turned the corner, left her car there, and hurried back.

She considered the brownstone front and realized she had to know the purpose of Selby's visit. It might be nothing more than the routine call of a physician, and yet Selby's clientele didn't seem to be the type to live in this modest section. Most of his patients were women, middle-aged or beyond, and clad in mink or sable.

Carol walked past the house, studying it as covertly as possible. There were no curtains at the windows. The place looked to be unoccupied. Two doors further on she found an alley which would take her to the courtyard behind the house, and she promptly turned into it.

Not being gifted with the Black Bat's ability to see through darkness, Carol's foot hit a stone which almost tripped her. She muttered a little, bent down and picked up the stone. It was an old piece of a cobblestone from some paving job—a fairly heavy bit of rock. She opened her hand bag and thrust the rock into it. Then she balanced the handbag by its long strap and hoped that Dr.

Selby would try to stop her.

The back door of the place was locked, but off the porch were two windows on either side, both readily accessible with a bit of climbing. One of these windows was ajar. Carol raised it slowly, carefully. There was little noise.

She got one shapely leg through the window, balanced herself, and finally was inside the house. From somewhere in the front of the place she heard a low murmur of voices and moved in that direction. The house was empty and picked up the soft sounds her shoes made. To her ears it seemed she made as much noise as if she were pounding through an empty cathedral with steel-spiked shoes.

She found a closed door barring her path, grasped the knob and turned it slowly. Pushing the door open an inch, she tried to listen, but whoever was speaking was doing so in a low tone and no words were distinguishable.

Carol opened the door all the way, left it wide, and tiptoed further ahead. She came to a stop finally. This might be too dangerous a job for one person to attempt. Perhaps, if she contacted the Black Bat, he could get over in time to surprise the men in the house.

But if he didn't, if she was unable to reach him, some valuable clue might be lost. She had to go through with it, dangerous or not.

Carol lifted her hand bag, snapped it open, and was reaching for the automatic jammed beneath the stone, when a big hand suddenly gripped her shoulder!

CHAPTER XI

Lady in a Trap



FROM somewhere the man whose hand held Carol so firmly had materialized out of the darkness. He must have been close by. Carol tried to wrench herself free, but it was no use. She closed the handbag, took a firm grip on the long handle and swung it.

The bag went upward in an arc. It hit the man squarely on the chin and made a funny sort of sound. Like slapping a hard football.

The grip on her shoulder loosened instantly. The big man, just a shadowy hulk in the gloom, swayed for a moment, then crashed headlong to the floor. Carol decided this was a most excellent time to depart. She turned and started toward the door and, beyond it, the open window. She realized now that it was her own carelessness which had given away her presence in the house. There had been a strong draft from the window and the door. It must have aroused this man she'd knocked out.

Carol was halfway across the room when someone came running, fast. At the same moment, a flashlight was turned on, covering her. A much smaller man than the first attacker went into a dive. His arms closed around Carol's legs and she fell headlong.

The smaller man took no chances. He had seen his companion stretched full length on the floor. He drew back a fist and clipped Carol squarely on the jaw.

The last thing she heard before slipping into that black void of unconsciousness, was an educated and unexcited voice saying:

"Get me her hand bag. We must find out who she is and what she is doing here."

When Carol opened her eyes again, she was still lying on the floor, but now her ankles and wrists were taped with wide adhesive and there was a gag between her teeth. She struggled, and finally managed to sit up. By squirming about, she got her back against the wall. That support helped to steady her and slowly her benumbed mind grew clear—and filled with horror.

Someone moved toward her and a flashlight was snapped on. She blinked, and finally closed her eyes tightly. The flash moved away and when she opened her eyes she could see two men. One held the flash, with the beam splashing a wall and throwing back enough light to let her see what her captors looked like.

Instinctively Carol shivered. These two men were killers! It glistened in their eyes and the big one, who had a swollen jaw, now, looked absolutely murderous. The smaller man moved up. He slapped Carol hard across the face. Then he loosened the gag.

"Took you long enough to snap out of it," he growled. Okay, who are you and who sent you here?"

"I—rented the place," Carol said weakly. "I—wanted to look it over. The back door was open, so I just came in."

"It was locked," he snapped. "And you were going to look the dump over, huh? With a thirty-eight automatic in your handbag, besides the brick which knocked Vic silly."

"No names," the big man snarled.

The little man grinned. "And who is she going to tell our names to, huh? Now listen, beautiful, we're not fooling. Either tell us what this is all about or Vic there will wrap his hands around your pretty neck and he won't let go until you're good and dead. I'm asking just once. So talk!"

Carol guessed who they were. Vic Marco and Slim Barret, both wanted for murder. She wondered then why she hadn't chosen some other line of work. Liking painting skyscraper flagpoles.

Vic Marco, the big man, was busy with something. In the faint light Carol had a hard time trying to distinguish what he was up to. Then she got the flash of bright metal. He was inserting a needle into a glass hypodermic syringe.

Slim Barret saw it, too, and whirled around.

"Put that away, you half-baked fool," he snarled. "We only got one ampule of stuff and it's got to be used on somebody else."

"She goes out," Vic said methodically. "We got to do it so there's no trace and this stuff will do it."

"Okay, we don't want any trace," Slim said. "But I tell you the stuff is meant for a guy whose number is up. There are ways to get rid of this girl. Sure, plenty of ways. The river, an auto accident. A—hey, I got it! Boy, what a beaut of an idea. It's so good we can pull it again."

"It better be," Vic grumbled. "Go ahead, tell me the idea."

SLIM became extremely enthusiastic while Carol's hopes faded and her terrors grew by leaps and bounds. Slim was describing a horrible death—and it was clever.

"We put her in the car and take a little ride to the sanitarium," Slim said. "There we slip inside and let a certain party loose. You know who I mean. We show him this girl. Why, he'll kill her in two seconds. And when they find out, who is to blame? Just some

crazy guy who killed three women so far and will kill anything in skirts he finds. We untie the dame, knock her good and cold, and leave the rest to our pal."

Vic nodded in full agreement. "It'll work," he said, almost gleefully. "It's perfect. Slim—there I forgot—using your name. What difference does it make? Slim, you got more brains than I thought. Okay, bring the car down the alley and in back of the house. I'll lug her out."

Vic bent over Carol and forced the gag back between her teeth. He was scowling.

"Busting me on the chin like that," he growled. "See what it's going to get you?"

Carol began squirming desperately. Vic tapped her on the jaw, laughed, and picked her up. To Carol everything was vague and dim.

A bit later, she knew she was lying on the floor of a car. She wanted to attract attention, but there was no way she could. Nerves and muscles positively refused to coordinate in any way. She felt like a side of beef on its way to a butcher shop.

The car went on and on, but finally slid to a halt, started up again, and made a sharp turn. It bumped over a rough road and the jouncing snapped Carol out of it. But there still was nothing she could do, for her ankles and wrists were still taped, her mouth gagged. She tried raising her legs so that fingernails could pry at the tape around the ankles. It was no use. To try to loosen her bonds that way would take a great deal of time and the two men were already getting out of the car.

The door opened. Vic reached in, seized her shoulder and sat her up. He looked at the tape to see that she was still securely bound, then shoved her back. He slammed the door.

She could hear the two killers talking. Then one of them walked away quickly. Carol resorted to the last hope she had. Simple prayer. At least it helped to calm her down a bit.

There was no escape this time. No Black Bat hovering protectively around. No Butch to come crashing to the rescue. No Silk to sidle up and free her. She was alone. Carol thought that no one in the world had ever been more alone.

Back in town, Dr. Selby had long since left the vacant house where Carol

had been taken prisoner. He had not driven directly home, but had stopped to make a professional call or two, so that at the time Carol Baldwin, the Black Bat's aide, had been driven up to the spot near the sanitarium by the two men bent on killing her, Dr. Reginald Selby had just driven up and stopped his car in front of his apartment house. He got out and walked slowly into the lobby. His waiting room door was unlocked and he opened it. He took keys from his pocket, inserted the proper key into his private office door and reached for the light switch.

Humming softly, he snapped it on, entered, and closed the door behind him without turning around. He dropped his bag onto a chair, walked toward his desk and around it. Then he looked up and stiffened in horror.

Leaning idly against the wall beside the door was a man clad all in black. Dr. Selby required no introduction. He slowly placed the flat of both hands on his desk and sat down as slowly.

"Wh-what do you want?" he asked, swallowing hard.

"Just a little information, Doctor," the Black Bat said. "Where are Vic Marco and Slim Barret hiding?"

"I—never heard of them," Selby choked. "I—don't know what you're talking about."

THE Black Bat walked over to the desk and perched himself on the edge of it.

"Oh come now, Doctor," he said amiably. "You're supposed to be an intelligent man. You are on the staff of Monument Retreat. Among recent patients were Vic Marco and Slim Barret, transferred to your institution from a state asylum for the criminally insane. The fact is that neither one was, or is, crazy. It was a dodge to get them out of a long prison sentence. You certified, recently, that both men had recovered and could be paroled."

"Oh," Selby gulped. "Oh, I see. I—I'd forgotten their names."

"Yes, you did." The Black Bat laughed shortly. "You saw those men within the last hour or so. You gave them orders on how to commit three murders. Almost perfect murders. In fact, they were so good that you or that precious pair couldn't even be convicted of them. With, perhaps, the exception

of the murder of George Andrews."

"He died of a heart ailment," Selby protested, "in front of a lot of people. You're wrong, Black Bat. I haven't done anything. I haven't killed anyone or ordered murder committed."

"George Andrews' body was exhumed," the Black Bat said inexorably. "It was carefully examined this time and the puncture of a hypodermic needle was discovered. But no traces of any

The Black Bat's laugh was crammed with sarcasm.

"I think you might find the police amenable to such an idea," he drawled, "but they'd have to catch me first and they haven't done so yet. Selby, you're a disgrace to one of the greatest professions on earth. You are a doctor without the slightest moral right to be one. And I intend to get the whole truth out of you."



BUTCH

drug. You used a lethal potion of insulin. You were present at Andrews' home when he died. Somehow you contrived to inject this drug into him. Perhaps by telling him it was something else. Something harmless. But you killed him, Doctor."

Selby wanted to reach for a cigarette and started to, but he saw the Black Bat's gloved hand stiffen and rise toward what must be a shoulder clip. Selby didn't want to smoke. He slumped lower into his chair.

The Black Bat straightened, walked around the desk and seized Selby by the collar. He hoisted the man to his feet and rapidly searched him. He found nothing of interest.

"I tell you this is all a mistake," Selby tried threats now. "I'm going to have you arrested!"

"But I don't know anything," Selby shrilled. "I don't even know what you're talking about."

"Why were those three men murdered?" demanded the Black Bat. "Why is Paul Fuller threatened?"

"I tell you I don't know!"

The Black Bat snorted behind the mask, turned and walked to Selby's case file. He studied the index drawers, opened the one under "S," and found a card listed under the name of Ted Sutton. He located the file also, and read it.

"So Ted Sutton is a patient of yours," the Black Bat said. "That's most interesting, because when I mentioned your name to young Sutton, he almost blew a gasket. I thought there might be a connection. What's the matter with him?"

"Nothing. That is, nothing serious. It's just that he never had any respon-

The Doctor's Story

sibility before his father's death and then, all of a sudden that whole commercial empire descended upon him. He wasn't mentally trained to handle it. He—had a breakdown."

"Doctor, you are beginning to make sense," the Black Bat said. "Very good sense. Now, who hired you to have those men killed so that young Sutton's empire, as you call it, would become even greater?"

"I tell you somebody gave you a wrong tip!" Selby protested vehemently. "I'm innocent! Look here, Black Bat, just to prove that I'll show you documents. Or no—I'd better not. A physician's trust is sacred. I have no right to tell you."

The Black Bat stared at Selby thoughtfully.

"Doctor," he said, "you are correct about a physician having a right to keep any information his patients tell him a strict secret. Until that information concerns a murder. Here we have three murders. I think you'd be wise to show me whatever it is you have in the way of evidence."

"I—suppose you're right," Selby faltered. "I've been a fool, haven't I? But it can all be explained, even to your satisfaction. Just a moment."

Selby arose, walked past the Black Bat, and advanced toward his professional bag. He bent over it. Then he looked around.

"I am trying to think of what I did with something," Selby said, wrinkling his brow and looking up at the ceiling.

"I am waiting," said the Black Bat, a cool smile on his lips. "Take your time and think hard. What was it you wanted?"

"Papers," Selby replied, continuing his act. "Some papers that I might have misplaced and they are very important."

"Were they in your bag? Perhaps you took them out. Is that it?"

"Black Bat, if you will get out the file on George Andrews—it's in that top drawer of the cabinet—you'll find his history most interesting in conjunction with this other evidence. Frankly, I carried it in my bag all the time because it was much too dangerous—"

"Selby!" The Black Bat's voice had the quality of thunder. "If you pull a gun out of that instrument bag, you'll be a dead man before you even get a chance to level the weapon. Turn around!"



JUST for a second or two Selby froze. Then the hand already inside the bag came out—empty. He let it fall listlessly to his side and turned around in obedience to the Black Bat's command. There was no gun in the Black Bat's hand, but his arm was crooked slightly, the

fingers stiff and ready to go for the automatic under his arm.

"You win," Selby said disgustedly. "I should have known better. There is nothing in my bag. No evidence of any kind. I was bluffing."

"Move over against the wall, Doctor," ordered the Black Bat, "and keep your hands well away from your body. Now face the wall and stay that way."

The Black Bat stepped over to the instrument bag and glanced inside. There was a .38 automatic thrust into one of the wall pockets of the case. He took this out and beneath that mask, his face went grim and deadly. This was Carol Baldwin's gun. The last time he had seen it it had been in her handbag. The Black Bat shoved the gun into his pocket.

He picked up the bag and dumped its contents on the chair. Prodding several instruments aside, he found a nickel-plated hypo kit and opened this. Besides syringes and needles it contained ampules of various drugs. He was especially interested in those marked insulin. He put two of them into his pocket and broke the neck off the third. He sniffed of the contents.

"Who needs a two hundred unit dose of insulin, Doctor?" he asked. "That would kill two or three men. That's what you shot into Andrews. Doctor Selby, you are going to the electric chair."

Selby whirled, stretching his hands high above his head.

"No! Please—I couldn't help it. I only did—I'm talking too much. Listen, will you bargain?"

"I want two things from you," the Black Bat said. "The name of the man who hired you to do this and the reasons

he had you over a barrel. Secondly, I want to know where the girl who followed you is right now."

Selby wetted his lips. "She—is one of your helpers?"

"Never mind who or what she is," snapped the Black Bat. "Where is she?"

Selby shook his head and looked forlorn. The Black Bat's hand darted beneath his coat and came away holding a gun. That hand moved so fast that Selby thought the whole procedure looked like some magic trick. The gun was leveled at him.

"I'm not fooling, Doctor. Tell me where she is or you'll die within the next two minutes. Talk!"

"I don't know! Marco and Barret took her. I told them not to kill her. Just hold her until this was over with."

"You ordered them to kill her!" the Black Bat thundered. "Where was she when you last saw her?"

"In a—a house at Two-thirteen West Carmody Street. It's a vacant house. Marco and Barret were hiding there. Listen, I swear I told them not to harm her. But those two men are dangerous!"

The Black Bat advanced quickly. Selby did his best to duck. He put both hands before his eyes and opened his mouth to scream. The Black Bat's gun smashed down on the doctor's skull. The man hit the floor with a crash.

The Black Bat worked quickly then. He used adhesive tape to wind around the doctor's legs and arms. He used plenty of it until the man looked like a mummy. He fashioned an efficient gag and put it in place. Then he dragged the doctor over to a supply closet, shoved him inside and closed and locked the door. He put the key into his pocket.

He sped from the office, slowed up, and came back to take the phone off its hook so no calls could come in. In the waiting room he reversed the card on the door to the private office.

"'The Doctor Is Out,'" he read, and added, "This time the card means it."

Two minutes later the Black Bat was driving toward the address which Selby had given him. There was no hood over his head when he ventured onto public streets. Instead he wore a wide-brimmed black hat with the brim tilted down. It concealed his face, especially the ugly scars around the eyes, but attracted no attention.

Reaching the vicinity of Carmody

Street, he drove slowly past the house. It was dark. He parked, looked around and when he was certain no one had observed him, he hurried toward the same alley down which Carol had gone. He located the still open window and through it entered the house. Gun in hand, he searched every room.

THE only significant thing he found were scratches on the floor of one room which looked as if they might have been made by Carols' spiked heels in her attempts to free herself of ropes or other bonds. There was not a clue as to her whereabouts.

The Black Bat had a film of sweat on his face and was more worried than he had been in many months. Seconds counted, he knew. Marco and Barret were killers, trained to kill without leaving a trace. They were wholly irresponsible men who probably acted freely on the theory that if they were apprehended for murder, they could merely plead innocent on the grounds of insanity. And their plea might stick, with their past history of having spent time in an asylum.

Asylum! The Black Bat held his breath. He wondered if they could possibly have taken Carol there. Then he shook his head. He rarely traveled on hunches. Anyway, why would they go back there, with a prisoner they intended to put to death? The river was easier, or any lonely road where they could fashion a rigged-up accident.

The Black Bat was completely at a loss. For one of the few times in his career he didn't know which way to turn—and Carol's life hung in the balance. Perhaps, he reasoned, Dr. Selby had lied. Or he might know another hideout to which Marco and Barret might have taken her. He decided to go back to Selby's office. It was wasting time, perhaps, but there seemed to be nothing else to do.

He left the deserted house via the back door this time. On the small porch he came to a stop, peering through the darkness easily. On a similar porch of the house next door sat an old man, smoking a pipe. He was dressed in overalls and a greasy shirt.

There were times when the Black Bat had to take dangerous risks and this was one of them. He pulled the brim of his hat well down and walked directly over

to the man.

The man gave a mild yelp of surprise when this figure in black materialized out of the darkness. He took the pipe out of his mouth.

"This is a police matter," the Black Bat said. "How long have you been sitting here? Believe me, it's a most important question."

"Well, I see no reason why I shouldn't answer it," said the old man. "About an hour. Say, did you come out of that vacant house next door?"

"Yes. I expected to find someone there. I was disappointed. Did anyone else come out?"

"Two men. First one of 'em came out. I asked him what he was doing. He told me there was some old furniture in the house and he had bought it. None of my business, so I didn't do anything. Pretty soon he came back with a car. Drove it right up to the door. Then a bigger fellow came out with what looked to me like a rug thrown over his shoulder. He put it in the car. They got in and drove away. That's all I know."

The Black Bat stifled a groan. "Didn't either man say a word?"

"Yes, they did some talking. The little fellow told his friend to be careful with the rug. Then, as he got into the car, he said it would be best to take the Northrup Road. Anyway, I think that was the name of it."

"Thank you," the Black Bat said fervently. "Thank you very much."

He raced to the street, heedless now of being spotted. He reached his car, jumped in and headed uptown. This time he was not following a hunch. Just riding a fact hard. Northrup Road was in the vicinity of Monument Retreat. It was familiar territory to those killers.

The Black Bat prayed that no motorcycle cop would pick up his trail. The only thing in his favor was the lateness of the hour and the sparse traffic. He rolled the car to sixty and held it there along a speedway, turned off it at the city limits and hit a state highway.

He followed this for two miles, slowed down, and watched for the side road which led to the sanitarium from the west. There was another road, but a busier one. That was why Barret had thought it necessary to warn Marco to take the Northrup Road.

He found it, turned down it and shut off the headlights of the car. At a crawl-

ing pace he found time to whip off the wide-brimmed hat and draw the black hood over his head. The sanitarium, he knew, was about half a mile away. He quietly pulled off the road and killed the motor.

GETTING out of the car, he touched the gun under his armpit and kept close to the heavily shrubbed side of the road. Then he heard the strike of a match, saw its glow through the branches, and came to a dead halt. The match went out, but the glowing tip of a cigarette took its place.

The Black Bat bent, pushed apart the brush, and moved quietly in the direction of the cigarette.

Soon his uncanny eyesight swept away the darkness and spotted the bulk of Vic Marco, standing beside a car with one foot on the running board. The rear door of the car was open. The Black Bat silently drew nearer until there was nothing but a cleared space between him and the killer. He rose to full height.

The Black Bat moved forward. Marco heard him, flipped away the cigarette and quickly drew a gun.

"Slim, that you?" he whispered hoarsely.

"It's the Black Bat, Marco," a voice came back to him from the darkness. "Put that gun away and raise your hands or you're a dead man. I'll give you two seconds!"

Marco slowly lowered the gun. Then he dived to the left. The move carried him over to the car and he lunged head-first into the back seat.

"Who's going to be a dead man?" he shouted. "I've got a girl in here! She's the reason why you came here. Well, I'll put a bullet through her pretty head unless you do exactly as I say."

The Black Bat's hand moved toward his spring clip and came away holding the automatic. His finger pushed the safety to the "off" position. He was watching the rear window of the car carefully. Ordinary eyes could have seen nothing but the bulk of the sedan for it was pitch-dark here, but the Black Bat's unusual sight penetrated the gloom as if it had been daylight.

"What do you want me to do?" he called.

"Walk right toward the car. With your hands up. Any trick and the girl gets it. Start now!"

CHAPTER XIII

Mark of the Black Bat

MOVING slowly, the Black Bat walked forward, but the gun was still in his hand. Marco couldn't see it. He might glimpse the Black Bat's figure, but hardly the gun. Marco's face appeared in the rear window of the sedan. His lips were spread in a sardonic grin.

The Black Bat realized that Marco couldn't be tricked. As soon as he came close enough, the killer would open fire. The Black Bat was willing to trade shots with him, but not when Carol's life hung in the balance. By the flick of a wrist Marco could aim the gun downward and kill her.

The Black Bat raised his automatic. He was still moving forward. Marco's face disappeared. There was a jet of flame from the car. A bullet hummed close, but the Black Bat kept moving. Marco's face appeared in the rear window again, to see whether or not his hastily fired shot had been effective.

The Black Bat squeezed the trigger. The glass window was shattered. So was Marco's face. The Black Bat began running fast to the car. Marco was sprawled half on the seat, half on the floor, pinning down a struggling girl. The Black Bat pulled Marco out of the car. Then he took a knife from his pocket and quickly slit the adhesive binding Carol. He removed her gag, helped her to her feet and held her close for a fraction of a second.

"My car—straight through the brush," he said hastily. "Wait for me there."

"Hurry, Tony," Carol managed to say through swollen lips. "The other one went after a lunatic killer."

The Black Bat nodded. Before Carol disappeared through the brush, he was kneeling beside Marco. He searched the man, but found nothing of consequence. He took a small tin box from his own pocket, opened it and removed a sticker fashioned in the shape of a bat in full flight. He moistened this gently, pasted it in the middle of the dead man's forehead, then scrambled for the shelter of

the brush. He could hear voices. The shot had aroused sanitarium guards.

The sticker was the Black Bat's trademark. It identified him as the man who had killed Marco. A necessary killing, but he wanted no one else to be blamed for it.

He reached his car, slid behind the wheel, and turned the vehicle around. In a moment he and Carol were racing off into the night.

"Don't try to talk now," he told Carol. "Just get yourself together. We'll be home soon, then we'll all have plenty to say."

They made the trip back to Tony Quinn's home in a short time, and hurried through the tunnel to the laboratory. In a little while Silk had summoned Butch there, and he quickly arrived. The Black Bat's small band was in full attendance. Carol sipped ice-water. It seemed she couldn't get enough of it.

"That gag was so tight I couldn't swallow," she explained. "I was dying, but all I could think of was a drink of water. I bungled that one, Tony. Although I can tell you this much. Doctor Selby is actively mixed up in this and really is the man who bossed those two killers."

"Yes, I know," Tony Quinn said.

He had quickly changed to a grey suit, held his cane, and was prepared to enact the rôle of a blind man at the first warning of trouble.

"And don't let anyone fool you, Tony," Carol went on. "Marco was no lunatic. Neither is Barret. They are just a couple of hoodlums. That is, one of them is. You rather permanently fixed Marco."

"I had a talk with Doctor Selby," Quinn said. "I found your gun in his instrument bag and knew you were in danger. Selby admitted being a part of this murder scheme. I didn't have time to question him thoroughly, so I put him on ice—tape up and gagged and locked safely in the supply closet of his own office."

"Captain McGrath is taking good care of that part of the business now. I phoned him—as the Black Bat—and gave him what details I knew. Selby will talk. A hint of the electric chair will bring out a severe effort to talk. I think we'll find the whole affair cleaned up soon now."

CAROL looked at him, perplexed. "Tony," she asked, "what's it all about?"

"I'm not too certain," he told her. "There are several angles which aren't clear. But the deaths of those three men and the planned murder of Paul Fuller led to a certain conclusion. Our only clue linking them together was the fact that while they were strangers to one another, they had all been broke. Around the same time, each one started a comeback, well-financed, and they became successful. The man who backed them was Oliver Sutton."

"But he died two or three years ago, Tony."

"Yes, Carol, I know. He had an only son named Ted. A rather soft-shelled individual not given to standing on his own two feet. Now with each loan, the elder Sutton was businesslike enough to attach a clause stating that in the event of the death of any debtor, his entire business would revert to Sutton."

Silk whistled. "So that's it! Those four men were successful. Their businesses must be worth a fortune. And yet, if young Sutton has enough money, why is he after more? And resorting to murder to get it?"

"I don't think he is," Quinn said. "Sutton is surrounded by men I believe to be parasites. There is Attorney Hurlley, a capable lawyer who served Ted's father. Now he works for the boy. There is a Raymond Coleman, business manager of the estate, who handled it for young Sutton's father as well. Coleman is in an excellent spot to tap the estate and cover up his tracks. Perhaps he's so deep in this that he needs fresh resources, the figures and profits of which he might be able to cover up."

"Don't you think those people ought to be thoroughly investigated then?" Silk inquired.

"I do. It's a job for all of us. Now, besides that precious pair, there are two others. A girl named Anita Dyne. Apparently she is either engaged to young Sutton or hopes to be. I think she dominates him. Now in considering her as a suspect, we have an excellent motive. As his wife she could control the estate or, upon his death, own it.

"There is one other. A man named Jonathan Carrington who candidly admits a cordial dislike of work, but infers he is well-off. He took care of the estate,

as administrator, between the death of the elder Sutton and the time when young Ted reached twenty-five, at which age his father's will stipulated he was to come into control."

"Maybe Carrington filched a lot of money from the estate then?" Carol suggested.

"All this can be easily checked up on," Quinn replied. "I suggest that you study the case of Anita Dyne, Carol. I'll handle the others through my office. Butch, go back and watch over Fuller."

"He's being pretty careful," Butch said. "Must be scared to death. But I've been thinking—wouldn't it be funny if he was the guy behind all this?"

"I don't see a motive now," Quinn said. "Which does not eliminate him as a suspect. So keep your eyes and ears open, Butch."

Carol and Butch both departed. Quinn returned to his library and the rôle of a blind man. Silk bustled about the house while Quinn tried to puzzle out this strange series of events. One thing he did know—that the brain behind these murders was shrewd enough to plot killings to resemble accidents or natural deaths. And he could do it so well that at the moment Quinn doubted he could get a conviction for murder against any defendant on the evidence so far available.

He realized just as strongly that Dr. Selby was merely an instrument in the hands of the real killer. Just as Marco and Slim Barret were Selby's tools. By this time though, McGrath should have Dr. Selby sweating badly and, perhaps, talking his head off. Selby's admission of guilt would go far toward solving the crimes.

Quinn heard Silk gasp loudly, then come rushing through the house to the accompaniment of a crackling newspaper whose pages he was folding back.

"I just happened to see this, sir!" he exclaimed. "You didn't put the ad in, did you?"

QUINN glanced at the boxed advertisement in the middle of the second page. It read:

INFORMATION WANTED CONCERNING A MAN KNOWN AS JOHNNY JUMP-UP. IMMUNITY PROMISED AND ALL HELP AND PROTECTION GUARANTEED. CONTACT BOX 417 THIS NEWSPAPER AT ONCE. VITALLY IMPORTANT.

Quinn dropped the paper, sat back and gave vent to a few choice expletives.

"No," he told Silk, "I didn't put that ad in the paper. I don't know who did, but I can guess. Silk, this is the worst break we've had so far. The moment your friend Johnny reads it, he's going to bury himself so deep no one will uncover him."

"Yes, sir, I know," Silk agreed morosely.

"Further than that," Quinn went on, "if he is known at all under his nickname, the man behind these murders may guess who informed us of the impending kills. That man will look up Johnny, will guess who he is and if he reaches him before we do—well, there won't be any witness."

Silk gathered up the newspaper, smoothed it and tucked it beneath his arm.

"I wish I could make some suggestion as to how to find him, sir," he said regretfully.

"I can," Quinn said. "It's clear that the Monument Retreat was the place where these crimes were plotted. Johnny Jump-Up explained how nervous he is, that he'd been ill and ordered to control his nerves. We can assume he may have been a patient there also. Not an insane patient. Just someone in a high state of nerves."

"Perhaps he was in on the deal, or more likely overheard the plans being made. He probably thought they were just the ravings of some patient, until he discovered that the first victim had died. I believe we can find Johnny through the sanitarium and I intend to do just that as quickly as possible. We've got to reach him first. I'm sure—Silk, a car just stopped outside."

Silk hurried out of the room. In a moment he called back that Captain McGrath was stamping up the walk to the porch. McGrath entered, glared at Silk, kept his hat on and stalked into the library.

"Well, Mac," Quinn said, "from the way you walk, I'd say there was something on your mind."

"There is. Plenty." McGrath sat down. "As you doggone well know, the Black Bat is in on this mess. I'm getting surer than ever that you are the Black Bat. However, that's beside the point right now. The fact is, he telephoned me not long ago and told me to pick up a Doctor Selby who was being safely held in a supply closet of his office. He said that Selby would probably be in a talking mood and knew what was behind these murders."

"And didn't he?" Quinn asked, while the first boding of disaster began to circulate through his brain.

"You know very well he was in anything but a talking mood," McGrath snapped. "He was all taped up, nicely gagged, locked in the closet and all. Just as the Black Bat said he would be. Only the Black Bat neglected to advise me of one fact. That Selby was dead. Shot through the head."

Quinn allowed none of the despair he felt to show on his features.

"But why blame the Black Bat?" he asked. "If he told you Doctor Selby was available for questioning, then the doctor must have been alive when the Black Bat left him. Someone got to him first, that's all."

McGrath looked smug. "Yeah, and plastered one of those Black Bat stickers in the middle of his forehead. Those

[Turn page]

A Suspenseful Mystery of Hypnotism and Homicide!

HYPNOSIS revealed the facts. Phil Sterling was haunted by the memory of the killing of his father. And it was up to Phil's pal, ex-Marine Dave Langan, to unearth the facts about this unsolved mystery—in order to restore Phil to sanity. After Langan begins his investigation, things happen fast—in a whirlwind nov-
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There's a thrill a minute in *LET MURDER SLEEP*, by Norman A. Daniels, coming next issue! Look forward to a psychological spine-chiller that's taut, tense and terrific from start to finish!



stickers are the Black Bat's confession of murder. He killed Dr. Selby!"

CHAPTER XIV

Dangerous Advertisement



QUINN barely restrained the impulse to bite his lip. Something had gone wrong. He tamped down tobacco in his pipe, applied a match, and puffed slowly for a moment or two, trying to assemble his thoughts.

"Mac," he finally said, "I'll admit this much. The Bat Black has been in contact with me. He told me he was getting in touch with you and that he had, by sheer necessity, killed a crook involved in the case. Did you go looking for that dead crook?"

"Of course I did. I sent a radio prowler car to the vicinity of Monument Retreat. They found Vic Marco there."

"And was the emblem of the Black Bat on Vic Marco's forehead?"

"It was not," McGrath snorted.

Quinn heaved a great sigh. "Then I think you can assume that someone—perhaps Slim Barret, or the man behind Selby—removed the Black Bat's brand from Marco, took it to Selby's and killed the doctor."

"Why?" McGrath growled. "I thought of that, but it didn't make sense."

"I don't know," Quinn admitted. "Perhaps it was only an attempt to confuse you. Or to make out the Black Bat as a cold-blooded killer instead of a man who was forced to shoot down a criminal like Marco. I've never heard of the Black Bat shooting a man who was bound and gagged. Have you?"

"No," McGrath admitted, with some reluctance. His eyes narrowed in suspicion. "For a blind man who does nothing but stay at home, you certainly know a lot about what's happened."

Quinn permitted himself a wan smile. "I keep my ears open, Mac. Especially when the Black Bat is pouring information into them. And now there is something I'd like to ask you."

"Well, go ahead."

"Did you insert an ad in the late evening newspapers asking Johnny Jump-

Up to contact you?"

"Yes, I did. What of it? If he's strictly on the level, I thought an approach like that might make him show himself."

"It was the worst possible thing you could have done, Mac," Quinn said. "If Johnny is known, under his nickname, to the murderer, you have probably put a great big thumb on him. Don't you see? The murderer is even more anxious to find out who tipped us off than we are."

"All the more reason why Johnny will come running to us for protection. The ad should force him out from under cover."

Quinn shook his head sadly. "Perhaps, if the murderer doesn't reach him first. Order all precincts and officers to be alerted. If Johnny does appear, he must be placed under strong guard at once. That's all, Mac. Thanks for coming anyway."

McGrath arose slowly. "I guess I fumbled it, didn't I? That's how it goes. If Johnny turns up because of that ad, I'm a smart guy. If he gets knocked off, I'm a dope."

"Keep praying you'll be called smart," Quinn said fervently. "This whole case depends on our friend Johnny."

McGrath walked slowly out of the house, all his former belligerence gone. The moment he drove away, Quinn was on his feet.

"Silk!" he called. "Bring the car around. We're going to that sanitarium at once."

"Shall we use the limousine or the coupe, sir?"

"The coupe," Quinn said, after a moment's thought. "I'll be going as the Black Bat because there is no telling what this trail may lead to. . . ."

The Monument Retreat looked like a small college with a pleasant, walled-in campus. There were tennis and badminton courts, flower-bordered walks, two artificial ponds and even a fairly good-sized vegetable garden. Guards were patrolling alertly, since the shooting which had occurred half a mile away.

Yet, alert as they were, none of them noticed the figure in black which slipped noiselessly through the darkness and reached the rear entrance of the administration building.

The young psychiatrist who was on night duty was startled out of his wits

when the Black Bat suddenly confronted him. The doctor hadn't even heard the door of his private office open and close.

"Please remain seated," the Black Bat urged. "You know who I am. My business with you is most important. It may mean the life of more than one man, and the unveiling of a murderer."

"Anything I can do," the doctor agreed hastily.

"Have you been at this institution long?"

"Almost four years."

"Good. During that time you had two inmates who were transferred here from a penal institution. Vic Marco and Slim Barret. Remember them?"

"Certainly," the psychiatrist said. "Both came here at the recommendation of Doctor Selby, of our staff. Prison institutions were crowded and patients who seemed to be responding were being farmed out, at their own expense, to sanitariums like this one."

"Were those men insane?" asked the Black Bat.

The doctor shrugged. "Understand me," he replied, "I'm not a staff psychiatrist. I cannot question the judgment of my superiors. It isn't ethical."

"Under conditions of murder, Doctor, ethics go by the board. What you tell me will be strictly confidential. Go on—talk."

"They were as sane as you or I, sir. Is that frank enough?"

A CHUCKLE came from behind the black hood.

"Admirably so, Doctor. And now that you are warmed up to exchanging confidences, what about an inmate probably nicknamed Johnny Jump-Up?"

"Oh—him!" the doctor answered. "I don't believe we'll ever forget him. A case of completely shattered nerves. No insanity, although schizophrenia was a distinct possibility. Caught him in time, I think. He was discharged about two weeks ago."

"And his real name?"

"John Jordan. I'll let you see the file if you wish."

The Black Bat studied the dossier on John Jordan. He learned that the highly nervous little man had been a chemist, always on the verge of finding some new and vast discovery, but never quite making it. Frustration was recorded as the cause of his trouble. He was single, and

his address was listed as a moderate type hotel.

The Black Bat handed back the file.

"Thank you, Doctor," he murmured. "Now one more thing. Did a Ted Sutton ever check in as a patient?"

The doctor shook his head. "The name isn't familiar. However, we have many anonymous people as patients. Mostly dipsomaniacs so far gone as to need the type of treatment our institution can give. If he came as one of those, and happens to be a prominent person, our files wouldn't show his name."

"Would such a patient come of his own accord or under the sponsorship of some member of his family?" the Black Bat wanted to know.

"Either way. Sometimes the doctor ushers the patient in and keeps his identity a secret."

"Do any of these names ring a familiar note in your memory? Anita Dyne? Raymond Coleman? Jonathan Carrington? Milton Hurley?"

"Hurley?" the doctor repeated. "An attorney. Yes, I remember him. He filed an application for the admittance of a client who needed our care."

"As an out-and-out mental case or a dipsomaniac?"

"A dipso, I'm sure. The cases of actual mania cannot be held a secret. The patient was a young fellow. Nice sort of a chap. Blond, not too much character. Seemed to have a lot of money."

"I'm grateful, Doctor," the Black Bat said. "I'll double that gratitude if you keep my visit a strict secret."

"Especially from Selby, eh?" The doctor smiled. "Frankly, I never liked the man. Don't worry. He won't hear a thing about this."

"I'm certain of it. Doctor Selby is dead. He was murdered. By the man your information is going to help run down. Thank you again, Doctor."

Before the shocked young psychiatrist could get his breath back, the figure in black slipped through the door and was gone, as noiselessly and mysteriously as he had appeared.

Back in the car, the Black Bat transmitted the significance of his new information to Silk as they drove rapidly back to town.

"So I have a line on Johnny at last," he said. "His name is John Jordan. You're the man best fitted to approach him, if he is hiding at his hotel. And

we've learned that young Sutton was an inmate of the retreat. As the result of an extended drinking bout. That Attorney Hurley entered him in the institution. Which gives Hurley a neat black eye. You see now what this is all about Silk?"

"Yes, sir," Silk replied. "With a history of having been confined to an institution, it wouldn't be difficult for a smart guy to have young Sutton declared incompetent. Then the man behind the scheme could take over and administer the estate any way he liked. With all those new and prospering businesses taken into the fold, he could manipulate things beautifully."

"Right. But it doesn't solve our puzzle, because all of the suspects have a legal interest in taking over the estate. Hurley, as family lawyer. Carrington, as the former administrator. Ray Coleman, as business manager, and Anita Dyne, as young Sutton's wife—if a marriage should be performed in the near future. We're still up against the unknown, Silk, but finding John Jordan may simplify things."

SOON after, Silk parked the coupe on a quiet side street, a block from the uptown residential hotel where John Jordan lived. The Black Bat, minus the hood and wearing his hat in place of it, remained in the car while Silk hurried to the hotel.

Silk was not gone long. He returned at a dead run, popped into the car, and was driving off before he explained.

"Someone else was looking for Jordan tonight, sir," he said tensely. "From the description I got from the desk clerk, I'd say it was Slim Barret and that means trouble."

"Jordan wasn't there, Silk?"

"No, sir. He disappeared three days ago. Left no forwarding address or explanation. But Jordan has quite a little money. He isn't wealthy, but has enough to indulge in his profession as an inventor-chemist. He often made calls to a laboratory which he maintains on Long Island. It's located on part of an estate left him some time ago. He has an assistant working there and contacted him often. I'd say he might be hiding there right now."

"Did Slim Barret get this information too?"

"Yes. The desk clerk admitted giving

it to him."

"Then step on the gas, Silk! This always has been a race to see who would reach John Jordan first. Now it's neck and neck!"

CHAPTER XV

Race for a Life



THE trip to Long Island was made in a series of fast runs when the highways were empty, and at aggravatingly slow speeds through small towns or more congested areas. Above all, the Black Bat did not want to be stopped by any policeman. The risks were far too grave, the stakes too important.

The Jordan place turned out to be an old-fashioned frame dwelling, rather isolated and forlorn-looking. The house was in darkness, but through the trees behind the place, the Black Bat saw yellow light. He left Silk with the coupe, made his way across the dark yard and paused to study the building which showed light in two windows.

This proved to be a fieldstone house of small size and fitted with a tiled, slanting roof. It was old and badly in need of repairs. Some of the roof tiles, near the overhanging eaves, looked treacherously loose.

The Black Bat came to a dead halt and stood there in the darkness, listening with his highly sensitive ears. He heard no sound except the faint tinkle of glass from inside the fieldstone building. Apparently, Slim Barret had not as yet reached the scene. Perhaps because he knew there was an alarm out for him and wanted to move carefully. Or he had lost time in contacting the man for whom he was doing this murderous work.

The Black Bat approached one of the open windows. From some distance away he saw John Jordan busily engaged at some task on his laboratory bench. He was just as nervous as Silk had described him, but apparently secure in the belief that he would never be found at this remote spot.

The Black Bat was making his way toward the door when he heard stealthy footsteps which might not have been

heard by average ears. The Black Bat quickly sidestepped toward the protection of a great oak tree. Its branches extended over the small house and scraped against the tiles in a gentle, steady murmur of sound.

There were several tiles lying on the ground, relics of some windstorm. The Black Bat picked one of them up and hefted it. The thing was heavy, a formidable weapon. He kept it and slid out of sight behind the tree.

The man who finally broke out of the shrubs was Slim Barret. And he was murder-bound. There was a gun in his hand and he moved with what he must have thought was remarkable silence. The Black Bat quietly drew his own gun.

Barret crouched suddenly and began looking around. Certain that no one observed him, he crept closer to the window which was no more than a dozen feet from where the Black Bat was hidden. Barret took a quick look inside. John Jordan was merrily clinking glassware and all his attention was on his work.

Barret got into line with the open window and curved his left arm. Against it he rested the gun to steady the weapon so he could draw an accurate bead. His finger began squeezing the trigger. He stood just beneath the overhanging eaves, starkly silhouetted in the light from the window.

The Black Bat moved out, gun in one hand ready to kill if Barret became alarmed and turned around. In the other hand he gripped the heavy tile. He raised this and brought it down hard. Barret never uttered a sound. He merely slumped to the ground and stayed there.

The Black Bat raced for the door, opened it, and stepped inside. John Jordan gave a startled scream and stood frozen, a flask of some yellow liquid in one hand, a bottle of acid in the other.

"Put those things down," the Black Bat commanded. "I'm here to help you, and it seems I didn't arrive any too soon. A man outside was just preparing to shoot you in the back. If you don't believe me, look out the window. He's lying on the ground, unconscious."

Jordan whimpered. He dropped the flask and it crashed at his feet, spraying the floor with whatever solution it held. Jordan tottered to the window, saw Barret's form crumpled up, and dropped the bottle he held in his other hand.

"We have little time," the Black Bat said. "You're safe now. Perfectly safe, do you understand?"

"Yes. Yes, I understand. I—I'm glad you came. I've been so frightened."

"Tell me how you knew about all the plans for the killings?"

JORDAN tried to pull himself together.

"Doctor Selby," he muttered. "Get Selby. He came to the Retreat and talked about it to two men named Marco and Barret. He promised to get them freedom if they worked with him. And he promised them money too. I was doing some janitor work in the cellar. There was a hot air vent. The pipe had slipped off in the room where they were talking. I heard every word."

"About the plot to kill four men?"

"Yes—four men. Three are dead. The fourth is doomed. I—I thought what I heard was just the ravings of a pair of lunatics. Then, after they let me go, I learned that George Andrews was dead. Those men even talked about the dates when the killings would be done, and how they'd be done. Doctor Selby was to take care of Andrews because he was a patient and he could get at him easily. Marco and Barret were to take care of the others."

"They did—except for Paul Fuller. Why didn't you tell someone what you heard?"

"Who'd believe me?" Jordan protested. "Lots of inmates talked about murdering people. Even when I recognized Selby's voice, I thought he was only catering to the whims of some patients, agreeing and even entering into the scheme because that would keep the patients quiet. I had no idea I was actually listening to a real murder plot."

The Black Bat kept looking out of the window. Barret had not stirred as yet.

"You're in good shape, Mr. Jordan," he said. "Your life is in danger, but by helping me, you'll help yourself. Are you agreeable?"

"I'll do anything. Anything!"

"Good. I want you to lie down on the floor, beside the remnants of that flask you dropped. Lie very still, and pretend that you are dead. I hit Barret with a tile. He is no mental genius and he'll believe the tile fell off the eave and struck him. I'll fire a shot from

his gun, put it back in his hand and let him wake up and see it. He'll have to be convinced that he actually fired a bullet into your body before the tile hit him. He'll be dizzy from the blow, sluggish-brained, and will grasp at the first thought that strikes him."

"But won't it be dangerous?" pleaded Jordan. "What if he—tries to make sure—I'm really dead?"

The Black Bat patted the muzzle of his automatic.

"If he levels his gun, I'll kill him. He won't. He'll be afraid the shot was heard and he'll want to get away from here as fast as he can travel."

Jordan's trembling ceased. He appeared to be taking a firm grip on his nerves. He quickly got down on the floor, but immediately started shaking again—badly. The combination of nerves and terror were too much. The Black Bat bent, drew back a fist and snapped a short blow to Jordan's chin. He collapsed.

"That's better than being shot," the Black Bat muttered.

He arranged Jordan's limp form quickly, stepped back and knew that the man really looked dead. Then he hurried back to where Barret lay. The Black Bat extricated the revolver from the unconscious killer's grasp, fired it into the air and quickly tucked it back into Barret's fist. The next moment the Black Bat was out of sight, but with a gun ready to cut Barret down if he attempted to put a sure-thing slug into Jordan.

The crack of the revolver helped to arouse Barret. The Black Bat knew that if the killer heard the shot, even subconsciously, he would believe he had fired it, and had only momentarily been stunned by the falling tile which lay beside him now.

Barret stirred, muttered savagely, and sat up. He rubbed his head, picked up his hat and put it on gingerly. Then he sprang to his feet and raced toward the window. He was still clutching the revolver. The Black Bat's automatic was trained on Barret's back. He would not hesitate to kill a killer.

The killer peered through the window, turned, and went back to where he had fallen. He kicked the tile, glanced up at the eaves, and saw other tiles loose. He laughed stuffed the gun into his pocket and hurried away.

THE Black Bat estimated the direction Barret was taking, raced to where Silk was parked and decidedly worried after hearing the shot. The Black Bat explained in a few words. Silk drove fast and made a corner several hundred yards away, in time to pick up Slim Barret's trail.

"Stick with him," the Black Bat said. "Try not to let him know he is being trailed. I've an idea he'll report that he killed Jordan. Perhaps make a date for the pay-off."

There were no lights on the coupe Silk drove. He kept as far behind Barret as possible, and still remain certain of not losing the man. Barret drove fast, apparently quite secure in the belief that he had successfully completed his lethal mission.

When they reached a small town Barret pulled into the deserted railroad parking space and entered the station. There were telephones there. By the time Silk had driven up, Barret had completed his call. He got back into his car and drove to the city.

Barely across the bridge, he slid to a stop beside a small park. He stayed there, lit a cigarette, and apparently was going to keep some sort of a date.

"Silk, this may be it," the Black Bat said. "He's keeping a date. The man he contacted may pay him off with a bullet or cash. We've got to be ready for either eventuality. You stay with the car. I'm going into the park."

The Black Bat vanished from sight. Silk, within view of Barret's car, drew a gun and waited, breathlessly. It was obvious that the man who would appear was bound to be the brains behind all this.

The Black Bat approached quite close and lay in wait, as anxious as Silk. The next few moments would tell the story. Then a cab rolled down the street and came to a stop. Another appeared and stopped some distance behind the first one.

A man got out of the first cab and the Black Bat's attention was concentrated upon him. He paid off the driver and walked briskly toward the car in which Barret waited.

The man who appeared was Paul Fuller, the fourth member of the doomed quartette. The man who was supposed to be completely guarded by Captain McGrath's detectives!

Barret stepped out of his sedan and left the door open. The two men were walking toward one another. Suddenly Paul Fuller slowed, came to a stop and started to turn around. The Black Bat saw the terror on his face.

Barret reached for a gun and the Black Bat arose to spring into action.

CHAPTER XVI

A Killer Pays Off



BEFORE the Black Bat could make his first move a hulking form crashed through the bushes bordering the park. Barret heard him coming, tried to turn and level his gun, but he was too late. Barret gave a wild scream before two giant hands descended on him.

One fist struck his gun arm with such force that bone snapped. The other hand encircled his throat and he was lifted, much as a great Dane might lift a doll. Lifted high and flung with terrific force to the sidewalk where he lay, very still, his neck awry, his face a dead-white.

Above him stood Butch O'Leary, big arms still outspread, body tensed to pounce if Barret moved. Paul Fuller had come to a stop and was looking back. A voice called his name. He hesitated. A figure garbed in black stepped into view for a moment, gestured, then moved back into the darkness of the little park. Fuller walked toward the spot.

"This is the Black Bat, Mr. Fuller," a voice came out of the gloom. "You were told to come here. Why and by whom?"

"It was—Hurley," Fuller said, in a shaky voice. "The lawyer for the Sutton estate. He told me I had to slip away from my police guard and meet him here. If I didn't appear, I'd find myself in a lot of financial trouble. I—thought it safe to take the chance."

"You were being led into a neat trap," the Black Bat said. "Go back home quickly. Stay there, and no matter who phones you, don't go out again."

"Yes. I can see how foolish I was. But I'd like to pay this big man who saved my life something."

"That isn't necessary," the Black Bat

said. "Get away from here quickly."

Fuller nodded, and walked rapidly down the street. Butch came over to where the Black Bat was hidden by darkness.

"I think the guy is dead," he said, low-voiced. "I didn't mean to toss him so hard."

"He deserves to be dead, Butch," the Black Bat said firmly. "You get away from here too. Back to the lab. With Barret's death, our murderer has lost his last ally and he won't dare strike himself. Silk and I will meet you there shortly."

Three minutes later, only the body of Slim Barret lay sprawled out on the sidewalk. A black sticker, in the form of a bat, glistened slightly on his forehead. The street was empty and silent as a tomb. . . .

In the morning, blind Tony Quinn was at his office. Lack of sleep didn't show on him and he was as mentally alert as if he'd had his regular eight hours. For the first hour, reports came in through Silk. They were from Carol and Butch.

"Last night may have ended in a fiasco," Quinn remarked to Silk, "but it made sense at that. Now things are developing. Carol has learned that Anita Dyne is a neat little gold digger. Obviously after Ted Sutton's money. Butch discovered that Attorney Hurley is in hot water with the estate because he lost an important case for it. I haven't heard anything about Jonathan Carrington nor Raymond Coleman as yet, but I expect to. Carrington is coming to see me this morning. He'll be here any moment now."

Silk frowned. "But after last night, sir, I thought it had been settled that Attorney Hurley is our man. Even before Barret thought he'd killed Jordan, Hurley must have decided to finish the thing and sent Fuller to keep a death date with Barret who would be waiting for him."

Quinn rubbed his jaw and smiled. "So it appears, but I'm not satisfied yet. As it happens, we're probably worse off than ever. Because our killer is safely hidden behind the locked lips of the only men who came into contact with him. Selby, Marco and Barret are all dead."

"And not a clue to his identity," Silk groaned. "Or are you holding out?"

"Well—no," Quinn smiled a trifle. "There may be a clue or two. Not

enough to present before a jury. There is one out though. I may be forced to take it. A risky business. We'll see. Carrington may be of some help."

CARRINGTON was announced fifteen minutes later. Silk quietly withdrew to the next room. Carrington sat down and looked worried.

"I asked to see you, Mr. Quinn," he said, "at once because there are certain things you ought to know. I realize that all this killing is some sort of a plot against the Sutton estate. I can't figure out what it is or how it is to be worked, but quite obviously the man behind it is close to us. Do you agree?"

"Very much so. What did you wish to tell me?" Quinn's blank eyes centered to one side of Carrington.

"The fact is," Carrington said, "I made a grave discovery yesterday. Raymond Coleman is guilty of embezzlement. To the tune of nearly forty thousand dollars."

Quinn whistled. "Does he know you are aware of the shortage?"

"I doubt it. Acting in Ted's interests I did a lot of checking—with Attorney Hurley's methods and with Coleman. Hurley seems to be in the clear. I also investigated Anita Dyne. I'm afraid that she is—well, bluntly, a gold digger."

"That, I already know," Quinn said. "It might also interest you to know that I have had your handling of the Sutton estate checked. I'm gratified to learn that your administration of it was superb."

"Thank you." Carrington exhaled sharply. "I was going to suggest that be done, but I was afraid it might seem as though I were trying to prove my innocence, and an innocent man doesn't go looking for proof. He knows. Thank you very much, sir."

"In fact," Quinn went on, "of all the people associated with Ted Sutton, I feel you are the only one to be completely trusted. Hurley made a fool of himself over one legal action. Lost it when everything was in his favor."

"You certainly go into things," Carrington remarked. "However, nothing Hurley did can be construed as criminal or profitable for him. He was just stupid. I intend to ask him to resign. You can trust me, Mr. Quinn. I'm as anxious as you to have this puzzled out."

"I can imagine," Quinn said. "Perhaps

we shall have to cooperate closely, Mr. Carrington. Beginning as of now. Did anyone at the Sutton house receive a phone call last night? Or early this morning—about three o'clock?"

"There were some phone calls early in the evening, yes. For Ted. Anita phoned twice. Then Hurley called me and tried to talk his way out of that mess. I'm sure there were no calls after eleven o'clock."

"I see. And you were home all evening?"

"Why, certainly. I— Say, what is this? Am I being given a polite third degree?"

Quinn laughed. "You have a suspicious mind, Mr. Carrington. I merely wanted to know if you were at home all evening so that, through you, I might determine if Ted Sutton was provided with an alibi."

Carrington mopped his forehead. "Oh! I was beginning to wonder. Ted was at home all evening. Too worried to go out, I guess. He spent his time sneaking drinks when I wasn't looking."

"So he's at it again," Quinn said. "I know he spent some time in a sanitarium as a dipsomaniac. That doesn't do his personal record a bit of good. Why didn't you keep him in check better, Mr. Carrington? After all, you were his guardian."

Carrington made a wry face. "Did you ever try to hold a restless tiger in check? I'd have needed a dozen private detectives to watch Ted every moment of the day and night."

QUINN tapped fingertips against the edge of his desk.

"Perhaps. But the estate was rich enough to stand such an expense—if it was for Ted's welfare and to prove that he was forced to take a liquor habit cure was a lie. Your management of the estate was excellent, without the slightest criticism. But your management of Ted was lax. I'm being frank. I hope you can take it."

Carrington arose. "I don't like those comments," he said, "but I realize how true they are. And I agree with you. I'm a lazy man. The estate was all I could possibly handle. But all this has nothing to do with those murders. If they were murders. How do you intend to find out? To solve them?"

"By this afternoon," Quinn said slowly, "I shall have a plan worked out. It

won't fail, Mr. Carrington, because I know what I'm doing. The chips will fall wherever they may. That will be on Hurley, the girl, Coleman or even Ted or yourself. Suppose we let it go at that."

"Very well. I'll see you this afternoon then?"

"At four. I'll come to the Sutton home. If I'm a trifle late, please don't worry. I've an appointment to have a tooth extracted."

"I'm sorry—about the tooth," Carrington said. "Glad you'll be out to get this over with."

He bowed out and Silk came back into the office. "Toothache?" he said. "I didn't know you were having any trouble with your teeth?"

"I'm not." Quinn grinned. "But someone is going to have—with the kind that form a trap. Remember that circle I hoped to square? Well, there's a nice pocket in it, and I'm going to drive a killer straight into it!"

CHAPTER XVII

Blind Man's Bluff



IT WAS four - twenty when Silk drove Tony Quinn's car up to the entrance of the Sutton home. Carrington came out to help Quinn from the car and led him inside.

"Ted is upstairs, sleeping off one of his bouts," he explained.

"He was awake when I returned from your office and kept mumbling something about expecting to be arrested at any moment. Quinn, it can't be Ted?"

"No." Tony Quinn shook his head. "Not Ted. If I'm a bit curt, Mr. Carrington, excuse me. My jaw is very sore. That dentist used his needle on me half a dozen times. Hurts worse than the actual extraction."

Carrington turned and spoke over his shoulder.

"What you need is a stiff drink. I'll bring it at once."

He brought a full bottle and poured a good-sized drink. Quinn sipped it, nodded in appreciation, and fumbled in a pocket for his pipe. He finally got it lit.

"I'm poor company today," he said. "This mess bothered me terribly. So many have been murdered and I couldn't do much to prevent the killings. I knew Pembroke was to die, and got there too late.

"I knew Creighton Hart was doomed, and let the killer work his trick right under my nose. Last night, partly through my carelessness, the informant who put me on the track of all this, was shot to death. If I had my sight, I might be able to take this better."

"Nonsense," Carrington chided gently. "Why, your record—"

"That's in the past," Quinn said wearily. "Most of it made when I could see. Carrington, you can't imagine how being condemned to blindness can affect a man. No one blessed with sight can. Take the murder of Hart. The plant was there. A starched rug, a heavily waxed floor. I couldn't see them. The blame for his death rests upon my incapacity, and I know it. Sometimes, especially on days like this, I feel as though nothing is of any use."

"What on earth are you saying?" Carrington cried.

Quinn smiled wanly. "That I have contemplated ending all this many, many times. Some day I may. Silk is worried stiff about it. So are many of my friends. I try to overcome it, but I can't. Essentially I'm a man of action. How can I act when I cannot see?"

"Take another drink and stop talking that way," Carrington advised. "Get your mind off yourself. You were going to tell me who you think murdered those people. And why. Tell me—now!"

"It's a long story," Quinn sighed. "The evidence happens to be where I can lay my hands on it. This John Jordan chap not only heard facts. He heard names and motives. He noted it all down. Full confirmation is at his laboratory. Would you like to go there with me and see it?"

"Would I!" Carrington exclaimed. "We'll leave immediately, eh? I'll drive you."

"If you wish," Quinn said. "I'll send Silk back to town. Tell him—or no, I'll write him a note. Have you some paper? A pencil or a pen, please?"

Carrington furnished the paper quickly. Quinn scrawled a brief message.

THERE IS NO USE WAITING. THIS

MAY TAKE LONGER THAN I ANTICIPATED. GO HOME AND STAY THERE. IF I'M DELAYED, DON'T WORRY ABOUT ME. AND FORGIVE ME FOR THE WAY I'VE ACTED ALL DAY. FORGIVE ANYTHING I MAY DO.

Carrington glanced at the note. "Morbid sort of thing, Mr. Quinn," he commented.

Quinn folded the paper. "Silk will understand. Please see that he gets it, will you?"

"I'll give it to him myself," Carrington said. "At once."

He went out and Quinn heard the car starter whirr, then the sound of tires against gravel. Carrington returned, said that he would bring his car to the front and soon led Quinn out to it.

"Turn north on Route Eleven," Quinn said. "John Jordan's laboratory is that way. And thanks for the drink. I'm feeling much better."

They rode in silence for about two miles. Carrington made the proper turn, drove along the highway for a short distance, and suddenly pulled onto a narrow side road, heavily bordered with trees. He came to a stop.

"Suppose we have this out now," he suggested. "Name your names—and your motives. Let's see how accurate you are, before we hunt for Jordan's records. How about it?"

A LOW-FLYING plane's engine made him stop for a moment.

"Drat that plane," he growled. "Some fool pilot who can't resist flying low, I suppose."

"He did sound rather close," Quinn said. "All right, Mr. Carrington. I'll tell you just what I think. The man behind these killings is extraordinarily clever. He is someone who has a lot of time to plot and plan, study all the little details."

Quinn kept talking. Out of the corner of his eye he saw Carrington take a leather kit from his pocket, open it and withdraw a hypodermic needle. Then an ampule, the tip of which he snapped off. Carrington's face grew grim and deadly. He drew up the contents of the ampule into the syringe.

Quinn, acting the part of a blind man, showed no indication that he had any knowledge of all this. Carrington held the needle firmly in one hand and turned slightly toward Quinn.

"Just one moment," he said, shutting off Quinn's flow of words. "I want you to know that I appreciate a worthy antagonist. Quinn, I had those people killed. You knew that, didn't you?"

Quinn tensed. "Suppose I did," he countered.

"And you have a neat trap set for me at Jordan's lab. He didn't leave any record. I know, because I searched that lab and his hotel room personally. It was just a scheme on your part to make me act—in front of witnesses you'd have planted there. Isn't that the truth?"

Quinn didn't answer for a moment. He seemed to be holding his breath.

"All right," he said finally. "It looks like this is your round. There was no other way of pinning the crimes on you, Carrington. You left no clues. You are, in fact, the most clever killer I have ever encountered. Now, I suppose, you intend to do away with me. But how? Without incriminating yourself?"

Carrington laughed harshly. "I knew I would have to do this, but I had no idea it would be made so easy for me. There are three methods. I can pretend that you had a fatal accident. Like falling out of my car. A blind man is expected to have accidents. Or you could commit suicide. From the way you have acted all day and from the tone of the note I delivered to your driver, suicide could be expected. I was really going to take advantage of that, but I decided against it only a few moments ago."

Quinn pressed himself as far away from Carrington as possible. The killer kept talking.

"However, there is a better way. It worked with George Andrews. An injection of insulin in a lethally strong dosage. No trace remains. It's quick and easy."

"You're wrong," Quinn said frantically. "We knew Andrews had been subjected to a hypo. We found the mark of the needle on his body. They'll find one on mine. You can't hide that."

"Not once in a thousand times, perhaps," Carrington said, "but this is the exception. An injection at the site of your extracted tooth. A needle traveling the identical course as your dentist's needle. Who can detect that? And you're blind, helpless against me. I'll wait here until you are dead. Then I'll drive furiously to the nearest hospital or doctor. They'll say it was your heart.

They always do when nothing else shows up. And nothing will."

There was open sadism on Carrington's face now. Slowly he reached one arm up around Quinn's shoulders, holding it suspended there while he poised the needle. The arm came down, winding about Quinn's neck. He forced the blind man's head back against the cushions of the car and the needle started down. Quinn opened his mouth as if to yell. Carrington drew back with a gasp.

"You've had no tooth extracted," he howled. "What are you up to?"

The muzzle of a gun touched the back of Carrington's head. His chin quivered. He let go of the needle, tried to speak and couldn't. Then, suddenly, he doubled up in a dead faint.

Captain McGrath opened the car door and pulled Carrington out. He turned him over to two detectives, then picked up the needle. Silk hurried over. Quinn lay back against the seat, his face covered with beads of perspiration.

"You never had a thing to worry about, Tony," McGrath said happily. "My gun was trained on him every second."

QUINN'S voice was weak. "But he had that needle ready. I didn't even know if you'd found me, though your spotting plane came so close it almost made Carrington suspicious. Mac, this was a fine idea. In theory, it sounded like a masterpiece, but if I ever make another suggestion like this, take me to Monument Retreat for an examination."

"Well, it's all over," McGrath said. "I don't know all the details, but we heard Carrington admit being the killer. And Tony"—he dropped his voice to a whisper—"I'll go to Monument Retreat myself if I ever suspect you of not being blind again. If you could see, you'd never have been able to stand watching that needle being prepared and poised. No, sir, I was wrong, and I'll be the first man to admit it."

"That's some consolation," Quinn said. "Somebody drive me back to the office and I'll tell you how I pinned this on Carrington. . . ."

Quinn was able to smile and talk easily when McGrath and Silk sat down before his desk. He lit a cigarette, leaned back and began talking.

"First of all," he explained, "I sus-

pected Carrington when I learned that he alone, of all the suspects, had visited Creighton Hart's offices. Therefore, he knew of the small rug before the window and how it could be turned into a murder trap. It had to be someone who had been there. Then Carrington was in an excellent position to throw the blame in several directions—by doctoring Raymond Coleman's books to make him out an embezzler, by making Hurley take on a civil case which he was bound to lose and put himself in Ted's disfavor, and then using Hurley's name to lure Paul Fuller to what he hoped would be Fuller's death, by backing up that gold digger's play for Ted so she'd be suspected, and by allowing Ted to indulge in his weakness for drink.

"It was all carefully planned over a long period of time. When Ted was sent to the retreat, Carrington didn't handle the details. Oh, no—he saw to it that Hurley did.

"Carrington's record as administrator of the estate prior to Ted's coming into full possession, was perfect. He banked on that. He even said he would never take it on again, but he was planning to. The man behind this scheme was intent upon staying in the background, being a good fellow, a help to the authorities. And all the while he was heaping suspicion and the suggestion of incompetence upon all the others who might be appointed administrator of the estate so that when Ted finally should be adjudged incapable of handling his affairs, Carrington would have been begged to take charge."

"But the murders?" McGrath asked. "What did they have to do with all that?"

"As executor of Ted's estate after he was committed—and he would have been, because Doctor Selby would have seen to that—Carrington couldn't hope to twist the then existing estate much. But if four new and prosperous enterprises were suddenly added, along with all the inevitable confusion which would result from the sudden deaths of the four owners of those enterprises, Carrington could act.

"He could destroy the businesses for his own profit and claim they were built on sand anyway. The four owners had failed once. They could be expected to fail again. Just as Ted could be expected to require sanitarium treatment

a second and, probably, longer time."

"I see that now," Silk broke in. "Jordan overheard Selby planning with Marco and Barret. For their freedom they agreed to kill the men designated. Carrington hoped the deaths would never be considered anything else but natural or accidental. Only Jordan tipped the cart over when he talked."

"Jordan is okay," McGrath said. "We locked him up for safe-keeping. Found him plenty dazed after the Black Bat conked him. He isn't afraid any more. So Carrington killed Selby because he knew the Black Bat had him sewed up. And blamed it on the Black Bat by transferring the sticker from Marco's body to Selby's."

"That's right." Quinn crushed out his

cigarette. "It had to be Carrington because he alone was in a favorable position to arrange all this. But the evidence was scanty until we made him admit his guilt. I gave him every reason to kill me and get away with it. I told him about injections in my gum so he could use his pet method of a hypo. I gave him a yarn about being disgusted enough to—end it all myself, so he could try to arrange something along that line. I knew he would fall because he sensed I was close to the truth and he was frightened. Scare a killer and all his evil crops out for the world to see."

Quinn arose wearily.

"Take me home, Silk. This is the kind of day when I feel I've earned the taxpayers' money."



"If You Try to Protect Your Identity, You'll Be Sending an Innocent Man to the Chair—"

CAPTAIN McGRATH glowered at Tony Quinn. "Here are the facts, Tony. Ted Slater is being held for the murder of Phyllis Titus. Only one witness can clear him. That witness was dressed all in black, with a black hood over his face. That witness was—the Black Bat! Come clean, Quinn! If you're the Black Bat, it's up to you to alibi Slater."

It was a tough spot for Tony Quinn. McGrath took it for granted that the hooded man observed at the scene of the crime was the Black Bat. But Tony didn't give his hand away. He neither affirmed nor denied McGrath's accusation.

"We'll go to trial with the case in ten to fourteen days," he said casually. "The charge is still first degree murder."

McGrath shrugged. "I'll be looking into the matter," he warned.

Tony Quinn left McGrath and started on one of the most intensive investigations of his career! An investigation that brought him into deadly peril—and unearthed the amazing, shocking facts revealed in **DEAD MAN'S PLUNDER**, the gripping complete novel by G. Wayman Jones in the next issue!

DEAD MAN'S PLUNDER is packed with action, suspense and surprises—and it brings you the Black Bat at his fighting, sleuthing best! Look forward to one of the crime fiction treats of the year!



Prayle pulled the sheet off the body

THE RATTLER

By EDWARD CHURCHILL

Prayle knew the girl was deadly—but it wasn't her killing looks that gave her husband that bad case of rigor mortis!

D EPUTY Sheriff Roger Prayle's steely blue eyes shifted from tawny-haired Daphne Hagar's young face to her husband's horrible swollen blue-green leg, with the two small holes in it. The rest of Henry Hagar's body was covered with a sheet, for he was dead.

The snake was still on the floor of the living room of the two-room Hagar guest house.

It was a rattler, its severed head lying near a big lounge chair a yard from its body. The dead man was lying on a bed in the bedroom.

Questions packed Prayle's eyes as he looked at narrow-faced Lawrence, the butler. Lawrence, at this hour of the morning, was in a black coat with tails, bat-wing collar, black four-in-hand and striped trousers. That was city folk in the mountains for you, Prayle thought.

"It did the master in," Lawrence said, staring at the reptile. "A bit unusual. That's why I called your office."

"Quite right," approved a man who had introduced himself as Dr. Phillip Maine. "It was quite the thing to do."

His inflection, and the rebuke in the glance he shot at Lawrence, told Prayle that he didn't approve at all of Lawrence's having called in the sheriff.

Dr. Maine, like Lawrence and the huge, ornately-rustic Hagar mansion with its remote guest house, was incongruous in this isolated resort. Maine wore golf knickers, a jersey, heavy walking shoes, a stiff white shirt and tie, and spectacles on the end of a black ribbon. His age, Prayle decided, was about forty. He was just going soft around the middle.

"We sent for you, Prayle," Maine said, his small eyes shifting beneath a high brow, and willfulness showing in the thin line of his mouth, "because of the unusual, as Lawrence puts it, circumstances surrounding the death of my dear friend and patient. Yet, when you consider everything, Henry's being bitten is not so odd. As you know, rattlesnakes are common to this area in August."

"Just what did happen?" Prayle asked Daphne Hagar. "Give me the whole story."

He measured the woman, whom he believed was not more than twenty-five, with far deeper than official interest. He had been intrigued by her sophisticated beauty for three summers now. She was sun-tanned, straight and, as Sophie McChesney, the postmistress, sniffed, "proud and haughty."

Prayle, from a distance, had watched Daphne Hagar on the raft down at the lake many times. She was tantalizingly rounded and long limbed in her scanty two-piece bathing suits which left her bronzed midriff bare. Her brown eyes, like bright agates under her wide brow, had stirred him. The lights in them, had often made him stare, yet she had ignored him. Her full lips, in a high-cheekboned face, unknowingly had enticed him, mocked him, told him they were something he couldn't have.

PRAYLE had watched Daphne's fishlike grace, her long legs in powerful, rhythmic beat, her arms and hands cutting the water like burnished

knives. And Prayle knew that, of an evening, as she passed the drug store in the village, a silence cloaked the loiterers, stilled their usual coy whistles, as if here was something far beyond reach.

"I'm sorry," her throaty voice was telling him now. "I know nothing about what happened here. Perhaps you'd better ask Dr. Maine."

"The rattlesnake got into the guest house," the doctor said promptly. "Henry was reading or sleeping in that chair there, I think, the big one set on the carpet near the fire."

He pointed. Prayle glanced at the chair.

"Go on," he said.

He watched a shaft of early morning sunlight do tricks with Daphne Hagar's hair which the sun had bleached into two-tone strands. She had swept the hair back in a long bob which curled above the neck of her figure-revealing, tan angora sweater.

Prayle looked at the body on the bed. Henry Hagar, he judged, had been about sixty years old. Then there was a sound at the outside door, beyond the living room, telling of the arrival of someone new.

"I didn't find him until this morning," Dr. Maine was saying. "I woke up early in my room in the east wing of the main house. My first thought was to see how he was."

"Why did Hagar sleep in the guest house?" Prayle asked.

He heard the soft pad of feet on the living room's rich, deep carpet. Then a man appeared. Prayle had seen him around the village and in cocktail bars with Daphne. He fought against a cold, personal resentment—a jealousy that had nothing to do with the job at hand.

The newcomer was about two inches over six feet. He wore tennis shoes, dungarees and a T-shirt that clung tightly to his rugged, muscular body. A crop of curly blond hair surmounted a tan brow. Prayle figured him to be in his late twenties, of a type who would describe, without much urging, the touchdown he had made against Notre Dame in the last big game before the war.

His face strained, he came into the bedroom and went protectingly to Daphne Hagar's side. Sympathy softened his square jaw line as he took her extended hand.

Prayle looked hard into her face, saw her eyes welcome him, and what he saw in their faces made him feel an outsider, if not an intruder. He was surprised to find himself thinking of Nell, a nineteen-year-old, red-headed waitress with hungry lips whom grizzled old Eli Draper had brought back as his wife from Los Angeles, and who made a habit of sneaking out the back door of drowsing Eli's cabin to be with the boys.

Daphne Hagar's rich contralto filled the room.

"Sheriff Prayle, I'd like to present my—our house guest, Doyle France."

The big fellow pushed aside Prayle's measuring, challenging look with a large outstretched hand. Prayle shook it stonily.

"Glad to meet you, Prayle," France said. "Sorry it has to be under these circumstances. Devil of a thing, isn't it?"

"Yes," agreed Prayle, anxious now to get on with it. He turned to Daphne. "Is everybody here?"

"Yes," she said. "But couldn't we go in the living room?"

"Certainly."

France took her arm. The others followed them out of the bedroom. Prayle turned to Dr. Maine.

"I was asking why Hagar slept in the guest house."

Maine coughed. He exchanged a quick glance with Daphne and France.

"He slept in the guest house for his health," he said finally. "He had insomnia—and he was afraid he'd disturb the others."

Prayle dropped it there. He pushed the toe of his shoe against the deep pile of the carpet, which covered most of the big room, and which must have cost a fortune.

"Go on with your story, Dr. Maine," he said.

"I came into the room here," the doctor said. "Henry was slumped in his chair. I spoke to him, and when he didn't answer, I went to him and shook his shoulder. I felt his pulse. I thought I detected a very faint beat. Then there was a rustling sound. I looked around, and I saw the snake wriggling over there." He pointed to the bare hardwood floor about five feet from the huge fireplace. "I took the ash shovel from the bronze rack and chopped off

its head."

Prayle saw dried blood and scarred wood.

"Then," continued the doctor, "working feverishly, I half dragged and half carried Henry to the bedroom and hoisted him onto the bed. I cut off his boot, and started working on him, but he was dead."

"Very good, Dr. Maine." Prayle looked from one face to another. "Did anybody hear any outcry during the night?"

HE WAS answered by the unanimous shaking of heads.

"Henry had a bad heart condition," Dr. Maine offered. "The shock alone was probably enough to prove fatal."

"You were treating Henry Hagar for alcoholism," Prayle said.

He saw the blandness fall away from the physician, and the expressions of the others in the group tightened.

"How did you know that?" Daphne Hagar asked, blanching.

"You city folks don't take time to know the village, Mrs. Hagar," Prayle told her. "There is no keeping secrets from it. Your husband's benders made him notorious. You have summoned Dr. Maine from the city many times during the past three seasons—over a party line and through the village switchboard."

"I hadn't thought of that," Daphne murmured.

Prayle turned to Dr. Maine.

"I'd like to take another look at the body," he said,

"Very well."

The physician led the way, and the others stayed behind. An icy chill ran through Prayle's veins as a backward look showed him France putting his arm around the tawny-haired woman.

Prayle pulled the sheet off the body. Henry Hagar was clothed in a heavy tailored flannel shirt and a pair of breeches, the left leg of which had been ripped to the knee. Prayle estimated the man's weight as better than two hundred and fifty pounds. He once again covered the body with the sheet and looked around the room. Picking the counterpane off the floor, he spread it out and shook it gently. A small column of dust flew upward. Then he rolled the counterpane up and laid it against the wall.

"I'll want that again," he said.

The tops of boots protruded from beneath the bed. He dropped to one knee and fished for them. He saw the empty fifth of rye then, under the bed and well back toward the wall. He left it there.

Pulling out the boots, he saw that the right one was whole and undamaged, but that the left one had been sliced from top to sole.

"I had to do that to get the boot off," Dr. Maine explained. "The leg was so swollen."

"All this monkeying around you did," Prayle said, a chill in his voice, "was all right if you thought Hagar was alive. But if he was dead, and you knew it—"

He saw fire in Maine's eyes.

"Are you questioning my ethics?"

"Take it or leave it," Prayle said, studying the left boot.

He examined the fang holes, noting the distance up from the heel. He pulled back the sheet again, and measured the holes in the boot against the marks on the dead man's leg. To pierce the skin, the fangs had gone through an eighth of an inch of leather.

"What treatment have you been giving Hagar for alcoholism?" he asked.

"Intravenous injections of a solution that makes the system intolerant of any form of intoxicant."

Prayle led the way back into the living room. Lawrence, the butler, was still standing, waiting. Daphne Hagar and Doyle France, their backs turned, were at the wide bay window, looking out over the lake beyond the sprawling Hagar summer home.

As Prayle and Dr. Maine entered, France swung around to face them.

"It seems to us," the young man said, "the snake must've been looking for warmth. The nights are chilly now, and there was a fire here all evening. The snake must've got very close to Henry, sitting in the big chair there. Henry probably moved and alarmed it. It struck, sinking its fangs through his boot."

Prayle looked at the big lounge chair. A book, opened, lay on the carpet beside it.

"He probably dozed," Daphne suggested, "dropped the book, and that made the snake strike."

Prayle picked up the volume, thumbed through it, and put it back. He

turned to Lawrence abruptly.

"What did you do with the two bottles of rye you bought last night at Archie's Liquor Store?"

"Why—sir, I—" Lawrence began, but before he could finish Prayle whirled on Dr. Maine.

"You surely didn't allow Lawrence to buy liquor for Hagar under the circumstances, did you, Doctor?" he asked.

"Of course not."

Fear made Lawrence sputter.

"Mr. Hagar threatened to sack me if I didn't, sir," he said. "He told me he'd cut off the money he'd left me."

Prayle gave Dr. Maine an oblique look.

"Your cure, apparently, wasn't working so well."

The physician leaned forward, flushing.

"See here, Prayle! I've given you the straight of it. Now don't go twisting it into something it isn't!"

France laid a heavy hand on the doctor's shoulder.

"Take it easy, Phil," he said.

"I know, you want to satisfy me that this was an accident," Prayle said. "But, unfortunately, it's plain that it's a murder."

"Oh no!" Daphne Hagar gasped, one hand flying to her throat.

"You're crazy," Maine said, bunching his fists. "You get the devil out of here."

Daphne stepped in front of him.

"We've got to hear him through," she said, "no matter how preposterous he is. He's the sheriff."

DAPHNE'S full lips, curling downward, appraised Prayle.

"Mrs. Hagar," Prayle said, "Lawrence suggests your husband had a will. Who collects?"

"I get the bulk of his estate," she said, "after certain bequests. Dr. Maine gets one hundred thousand dollars. Lawrence has taken care of Henry for years, and he gets fifty thousand. A similar amount goes to a son of Henry's by a former marriage." She paused. "And now, Sheriff Prayle, you'd better explain your ridiculous murder theory—and do it fast."

Prayle's white teeth showed in a humorless grin.

"Very well," he said. "In the first place, if Hagar had drunk two fifths of

rye in a couple of hours, he wouldn't be in any condition to read a book. In the second place, there's a motive for all of you except France. It if wasn't for the moonlight and a chance to marry a wealthy young widow, he'd be out of this case completely."

"How do you mean that?" France asked, his slight smile and his voice indicating he was just humoring a stupid, hick sheriff.

"I get around," Prayle said. "I'm the fellow who came on you and Mrs. Hagar on Inspiration Point last week. When old men marry young women, there's always something like that going on behind their backs."

He watched the interplay of glances among them. Stepping forward, he bent swiftly and picked up the fat, ugly body of the snake. He held it out to Lawrence. "Get rid of this," he said. "We're through with it."

The butler whitened, retreating, his eyes wide and his trembling palms objecting. Prayle thought he was going to faint.

"Okay," Prayle said. He tossed the reptile onto the floor and faced Dr. Maine. "Hagar wasn't reading that book," he said, pointing. "It's fiction. Some of the pages in the front are still uncut. Nobody starts reading a story in the middle. Furthermore, he wasn't sitting in that chair. He was lying on the counterpane on the bed in the next room, fully dressed and out like a light. The dust from his boots is still on the spread. If you recall, Dr. Maine, you turned the spread and the other covers back when you laid Hagar's body on the bed." He paused, then added with unmistakable emphasis, "Thinking he was alive, of course."

"That can't be so," Dr. Maine said, apprehension glittering in his small eyes. "I found him—" He paused. "Are you accusing me of murdering Henry?"

"You're too smart to import a rattlesnake, and take all that bother and risk to kill your patient when you could have done it much more simply. He was already full of holes from that liquor cure. One more hole, made by a hypo needle filled with poison, wouldn't be noticed. And then you could have assigned any cause on the death certificate."

"Well, who did kill Henry then?" asked France, tolerantly.

"Lawrence didn't," Prayle continued. "He's deathly afraid of snakes. You just saw that. He couldn't have brought himself to drive the head of a live rattlesnake through his alcohol-soaked master's boot, even though he might be capable of murdering him some other way."

"Thanks," said Lawrence, bitterly.

"I suppose you think I did it?" Daphne Hagar said. "Snakes, no doubt, are my hobby."

Prayle shook his head.

"You aren't strong enough to drag your husband's body from the bed in there to the chair here, and then prop him up in it."

Doyle France's voice was smooth.

"Then that leaves me," he said, smiling.

"That's right, France."

"You're crazy. What are you trying to cook up? The snake got into this room. It bit Hagar sometime last night or early this morning. Dr. Maine killed the snake. That's all."

"No, it isn't," Prayle said. "You're a city man, France. So you don't know about snakes, and you set it up all wrong. The snake, of its own accord, couldn't have bitten Hagar. It never would have tried to cross the carpet. If you knew reptile anatomy, you'd never have put Hagar in the chair. A snake uses its ribs to travel. The ends of the ribs connect with ventral plates which propel it. These plates depend on objects beneath them holding so that it can push itself forward. A snake moves with extreme difficulty on soft, thick-piled carpets. A snake would no more go onto a carpet like this than you'd walk down an icy, slippery pavement if a cinder path lay alongside it. Furthermore, with so little traction, the snake couldn't have struck hard enough to go through Hagar's leather boot."

France's hate-charged eyes made Prayle wonder how fast he could get his service revolver from its holster.

"I'll kill—" France snarled, and started forward.

Prayle's hand flicked at the revolver and it popped into his hand. France froze, staring foolishly at the muzzle, his hands working.

Daphne Hagar gave a hurt little cry, as if something was being torn from her. Prayle for an instant, again saw

(Concluded on page 87)

*An Exciting
Novelet*



As Murray whirled like a cat, Reade flung himself from the sofa,
knocked Addy sprawling and grabbed the gunman from behind



POSTSCRIPT TO AN ELECTRIC CHAIR

By SAM MERWIN, JR.

Justis Reade takes the trail of a murderer who allowed an innocent man to pay the penalty—and lands in a death trap!

CHAPTER I

Suicide's Letter

AT TEN o'clock Friday night, Charles "Conky" Crehan died in the electric chair at the state capital.

One hour later and a hundred and fifty

miles away, in the city where Crehan killed Anthony Morgan—in another room of the Haymarket, the very hotel which had been the scene of the crime—Lou Anatole's body was found flat on the carpet.

The horrified hotel clerk, who had entered via skeleton key in response to

complaints from slumberers roused by the sound of the shot, noted the thin trickle of crimson that flowed from a powder-blackened hole in Anatole's right temple. He saw the pistol gripped firmly in the corpse's right hand, said "Gracious!" and fainted dead way.

Revived by a pitcher of ice water, he summoned the night manager of the Haymarket. The manager, in turn, summoned the police. It was Lieutenant Clint Sanger of the City Homicide who spotted the handwritten note on the tumbler-scarred bureau top. It read:

I killed Anthony Morgan when he tried to turn me in to the police as a card sharper. When Conky Crehan was convicted for it I thought it was a good gag. I never thought he'd burn. Now he is dead for something I did and I don't want to live any more. This is good-by.

Lou Anatole

Lieutenant Sanger, a dapper, desiccated, light-haired plainclothesman with very light blue eyes and a mouth that spilt his face diagonally when he smiled, read it gain. Then, holding the suicide note carefully by the edges, he sniffed at it, sniffed again.

"Phew!" he exclaimed to the other representatives of the City law gathered in the threadbare room. "Smells like the parlor at Madam O'Brien's."

Then his mouth slanted in his smile and he stepped into an unoccupied room across the corridor to phone, and thus avoid leaving his prints on the instrument in the corpse's chamber. Lieutenant Sanger was a conscientious police officer. He told the patrolman, who had temporarily taken over the Haymarket switchboard, to get him the home number of District Attorney Merle Tennyson.

THERE was little of the politician about District Attorney Merle Tennyson. Watching him indulgently as he rose from a comfortable armchair in the living room of his big house on the Hill, Justis Reade thought he looked more like an oversized teddy bear or a quondam Yale tackle. Finally, across the top of his whisky and soda, the District Attorney's special assistant decided Merle was a combination of both. Added to this rugged amiability, however, was a level-eyed open idealism which the entire City trusted.

Reade, slender, dark-haired, sardonic, immaculate, was his superior's diametric opposite—which was perhaps the root cause of their mutual devotion. An utter pragmatist, realism had led him to the same conclusions that had inspired Tennyson to become District Attorney on the reform ticket.

The City, Reade was convinced, could not afford indefinitely the cost of corruption. By far the more brilliant lawyer of the two, he had joined forces with Tennyson and between them, they were making quite a team. The execution of Conky Crehan was the first step against elements that had long made the City a sanctuary for wanted criminals.

True, it was a short step. If rumor were true, Roy Murray, one of the nation's deadliest gunmen, was hiding out somewhere in the corporate limits. But it was progress. Tennyson's self-evident honesty had cut deep into the shadows so long in control where more oblique attacks had been blunted and turned aside.

Reade drained his glass as Tennyson picked up the telephone, bent forward to refill it, thus missing the sudden sag of Tennyson's shoulders. They had been sitting out the death watch together here in Tennyson's living room, ears glued to the radio until the report of the execution had come in. Now that it was over, they had permitted themselves to relax.

Up to the very last moment, nagging worry had persisted lest someone should have reached the Governor and won a last-minute stay of execution. But no one had. Surprisingly, after a savage defense backed by Blaine Fairman, boss of the old regime, and his cohorts, only routine efforts had been made to set aside the conviction. It had been puzzling, especially since the evidence had been entirely circumstantial. But it was over now. Merle and the forces he represented had won the first round with a murderer's life.

"Justis!"

Reade glanced up after squirting just the right amount of seltzer water into his glass. Merle's voice had an odd, hoarse timbre. He walked to his chair unsteadily, sank into it, staring straight ahead. His full mouth was oddly, unhappily twisted, his face gray.

"What's the matter, Merle?" Reade asked, sitting upright.

"That was Sanger," said the District Attorney, his voice still unnatural. "Lou Anatole just shot himself in his room at the Haymarket."

"After the heat we've been putting on all those boys, I'm not exactly surprised," said Reade. He didn't say it, but "good riddance" was in his tone.

"He left a note," said Tennyson. "In it he confessed to having killed Anthony Morgan."

The silence was like alabaster—cold, milky, translucent . . . and hard as marble. It filled the living room around them, between them, shutting them off, each in his own chilled thoughts.

Quickly, almost without conscious volition, Reade reviewed the facts as he knew them, his swift, facile brain moving clearly, accurately. He knew the case perhaps better than anyone else. He had prepared the prosecution himself, had steered Merle Tennyson through the tortuous booby traps set up by the highly-paid defense.

Anthony Morgan had come to the City to swing a real estate deal. He had done so successfully. With the cash in his pocket, he had dropped into a bar to have a drink in celebration. There Conky Crehan had picked him up. The rest had followed an age-old pattern—more drinks, a hint of a game of chance.

MORGAN, feeling lucky already and increasingly expansive under the influence of alcohol, had been a plum ripe for the plucking. The game in a suite at the Haymarket had followed. Inevitably, Morgan had lost. Swift and sober realization of his plight had followed. He had sought to pick up a telephone and call the police. Someone had hit him over the head with a bottle, fractured his head and killed him.

According to the case Reade had prepared and Merle Tennyson had carried through to completion so successfully, that bottle wielder had been Conky Crehan. He had been the pick-up man and the game had been held in his rooms. He had tried ineffectually to bolt, once the crime had been committed. He was a known card sharp and had a criminal record. It had seemed open and shut.

Merle and Reade had put extreme pressure on the case as their first major opportunity since attaining office. The City was becoming notorious as a place where strangers were being mercilessly

fleeced. It was affecting business. The Chamber of Commerce and the business elements in the town, who were largely responsible for putting in the reform regime, had backed them to the hilt. And they had won.

Since the mob of which Crehan was a member had been paying fat sums for protection into political coffers, the old-line gang had done its best to protect him. They had hired expensive legal aid, tired every trick in the book. But the evidence, plus the defendant's record, had been incontrovertible.

But, thought Reade gloomily, Crehan might not have done it. There had been others engaged in the game. The number of glasses, of piles of chips, of cigarette butts, of cards, proved that. All of them had escaped before the police arrived on the scene.

And Lou Anatole had been known as a member of the gambling mob. He had been questioned, but had come forward with an alibi which was supported by a girl named Ivy Thomas, who danced at the Club Samba. Lou *could* have done it.

Reade glanced at Merle Tennyson, who had buried his face in his hands.

"Take a reef in yourself, Merle," he said. "After all, Lou Anatole was hardly an ideal citizen."

"That," the District Attorney said through his hands, "is not the point, and you know it, Justis."

"Okay," said Reade. "But you can't let this break you up. You can't let it stop you."

And as he said the words, something flickered inside him. What, he wondered, if this suicide weren't a suicide at all? What if it had been contrived by the old-line political gang as a weapon?

Merle, wealthy in his own right, was incorruptible and they knew it. He had been hitting them where it hurt, was threatening to shatter the base of the graft-ridden organization that had been in control of the City for so long. They were cunning. And they were ruthless enough to carry through such a plan if it were the only way to break the strangling grip of Merle Tennyson.

"It *has* stopped me," said Tennyson, lifting his head. He was like a man in a trance. "How can I ever prosecute another arraignee? I—it never occurred to me Crehan might be innocent. I shall resign my office tomorrow."

"For Pete's sake, don't quit!" cried Reade, springing to his feet. "At least give me time to look into it. This may be a gag for all we know, just to drive you to resign. You may be playing into their hands!"

"The evidence against Crehan was circumstantial, and you know it, Justis," said Tennyson quietly. Now that he had determined upon a course of action, his face regained something of its former purpose. He smiled. "I appreciate your wish to help," he went on. "But I'd be wearing the butcher label to myself for the rest of my life."

"Bushwah!" said Reade angrily. "I'm going down to see what I can dig out of this. If you quit, I'll be stuck with the case anyway—if it is a case."

"You'll make a better District Attorney than I, Justis," said Tennyson. "You're tougher—and cleverer."

"But I don't inspire faith, which is what the job needs right now," said Reade from the doorway. He said no more, but snatched his hat from a hall table and ran on out to his convertible in the driveway.

CHAPTER II

Elusive Scent



NORMALLY, it took twenty minutes to drive to the Haymarket Hotel from Tennyson's big house on the Hill. Tonight, Reade made it in nine.

Striding into the hotel, he was in time to see a couple of coroner's helpers lugging the body through the hushed and dingy lobby in a basket. Upstairs, he found Clint Sanger smoking a cigar calmly while his minions went through their technical routine paces.

"Hello, Justis," said the Homicide lieutenant. "How'd Tennyson take it?"

"Just about as you'd expect," said Reade. "What gives with this business anyway? It looks rugged."

"It is," said Sanger with his slanted grin. "But it's one death they can't blame on Roy Murray. Take a look at this."

He pulled the suicide note from his pocket, handed it to the Assistant Dis-

trict Attorney. Reade studied it, then checked it with some scribbled lines which the deceased had penciled on the margin of a racing form. He scowled. Superficially at any rate, the handwriting was the same.

"Anything else?" he asked. Sanger nodded toward the suicide letter.

"Get a whiff of it," he said. Reade bent over it and sniffed, glared at the detective.

"Remind me to buy you some decent cigars," he said. "Those weeds of yours blanket all other odors." He headed into the corridor, tried again.

This time he got it—an elusive whiff of delicate and distinctly feminine perfume. Justis Reade, himself a young man of inherited means, had moved around considerably where the lights were bright during his thirty-two years. He knew quite a lot about women and something of the things they liked—lingerie, jewelry, flowers and perfume.

It seemed to him that this was a definitely upper case aroma. It was not the olfactory residue of cheap cologne, or any obvious scent. But it had a lingering lightness that did not usually come from any drug store product. All in all, it was a surprising scent for Louis Anatole to have left on a sheet of Haymarket Hotel stationary. He frowned.

Suddenly he thought of Ivy Thomas, the dancer who had provided the deceased with his alibi for the Crehan killing. There was probably nothing in it, but all the same, he decided, a talk with her might be indicated. He could think of nothing else to do at the moment.

Leaving the Haymarket, Reade tooled his car a half dozen blocks through the City and managed to park it in an alley around from the Samba, currently the rage after dark. Its marquee carried a poster of a Brazilian dancer outlined in neon with bunches of somewhat surrealistic neon bananas carrying out the tropical theme.

Inside a headwaiter greeted him with raised brows on the opposite side of a plush rope across the doorway to the dance floor. It was, Reade reflected, almost two years since he had shown his face around the City after dark. Politics and play had not mixed in his case.

He asked if he could see Miss Thomas after informing the one-headed cerberus who he was. The captain, now a study in servility, was sorry but Miss Thomas

could not be seen just then as the show was to start in ten minutes. Perhaps a table for Mr. Reade would be acceptable.

"Okay," said Reade. He followed the captain, but was not destined to sit at the table selected for him. A rather throaty contralto voice hailed him as he passed a large party.

"Hi! Justis Reade!"

He stopped, looked down to see an extremely comely young woman smiling up at him, her vermilion lips parted in an engaging grin. Dark blond hair fell in a perfectly-groomed heavy wave to a bare white shoulder that gleamed as white as the white satin strapless evening gown she wore.

IT WAS Adelaide "Addy" Fairman, eye-crashing niece of and official hostess for James G. Blaine Fairman, long the political boss of the City.

"Hi, yourself, Addy," he said. Momentarily he wished Addy Fairman were not who she was. It meant foregoing so many things that otherwise might have been. Or was he growing ancient enough to have an old man's dreams?

Next to her sat Monty Weir, red-headed, dynamic and more attractive than any man so homely had a right to be. He was in full evening regalia and the sight of his fingers resting possessively on the firm curved flesh of Addy's forearm caused Reade's blood to stir unpleasantly.

Weir was a young man who had traded his considerable birthright for a mess of imported scotch, expensively dyed blondes and more horses than song. Ultimately his father had regretfully put him on his own and a welter of bad checks had been the result. But Weir had finally settled down and won himself a job as Blaine Fairman's personal and confidential secretary—thus gaining access to Addy, a blonde whose hair color was her own.

"Sit down, Justis," said Weir. "You haven't showed in one of these spots in a coon's age."

Weir, Reade decided, was not suffering from sobriety. He glanced at Blaine Fairman, who sat at the head of the table like a great white-shirted Buddha. Seeing the boss of the City in the flesh, of which there was a great deal, the Assistant District Attorney always found it difficult to believe any evil of the man.

There was a leonine magnificence about Fairman that made him appear as if any chicanery were beneath him. Yet behind that immense forehead, Reade knew, lurked more unsavory secrets than were stored anywhere else in the City. His smile at the new arrival was a shining expression of open friendliness.

"Sit down, young man, do," he said. "Frenchy will move over."

"Frenchy" Dulac, short, stocky, swarthy and impassive, rose from his chair to make room for Reade. Dulac was Fairman's bodyguard and, if rumor were true, something more deadly on occasion. But rumor had never become a proven fact. Dulac muttered some sort of greeting as Reade dropped into a chair.

Studying the others briefly, Reade was struck by the aura of festivity that clung to all of them but Frenchy. In contrast to his own dark mood, the feeling of light-hearted gaiety was the more marked.

"This looks like some sort of celebration," he said.

"In a way, it is," said Addy, again smiling at him.

"Any particular occasion?" Reade asked.

"Nothing special," said Monty Weir. "We happened to remember we haven't had a party for a long time. Why?"

"It seems an odd night for it, that's all," said Reade with unmistakable emphasis.

Reade's eyes went from face to face during the silence that followed. The band had concluded a number with a pseudo-Krupa burst on the drums, and the stillness was deafening. Frenchy scowled at the table. Addy looked around at the others as if wondering what ailed them, a little line of perplexity between her symmetrically curved brows. Monty Weir looked blankly at nothing, his ruddy eyebrows lifted a trifle.

It was Blaine Fairman who broke it. Nipping off the end of a costly-looking panatella with a well manicured fingernail, he put the cigar carefully in his mouth and leaned toward Reade.

"Will you give me a light, Justis?" he said quietly. "My lighter just quit working."

"Certainly," said Justis. The old boy was certainly imperturbable. Once the cigar was burning, Fairman sat back,

blew three perfect smoke rings and watched them slowly dissolve in the air above the table.

FAIRMAN had a thoughtful expression on his face as he pursed his lips.

"When you have seen as many people pass on as I have," the boss said, and reluctantly Reade had to admit the choice of words was perfect, "one more death, whether it comes from natural causes or by the hand of the state executioner, grows less important. Because I was committed—and mind you, Justis, I'll deny this if you try to make anything of it—I did my best to defend Crehan. The jury found him guilty and our appeals were denied. My hands are clean."

"Why so solemn about it, Just?" Addy asked. "I should think you'd be feeling pretty good."

"Ouch!" said Reade. He smiled faintly, then his face settled in grim lines. "Unfortunately, something has happened since. Lou Anatole shot himself tonight and left a note, confessing to the crime, on his bureau at the Haymarket."

Again he studied them, seeking some response to his bombshell—if it were a bombshell. Blaine Fairman's eyes narrowed into slits framed by little rolls of flesh and he rolled the cigar in his mouth. Frenchy Dulac lifted his eyes and stared at Reade unfathomably. Monty Weir hiccuped loudly and lifted his napkin to cover his mouth apologetically and a trifle too late.

But Addy Fairman turned white beneath her makeup and gripped the edge of the table as if she were afraid she would faint. Studying her covertly, Reade wondered why the news should affect her. Blaine Fairman's voice broke in.

"That's rather rough on Tennyson, isn't it?" he said, his tone as steady as a crooner's on a low note. "How is he taking it, Justis?"

"How would you?" the Assistant District Attorney asked.

"When you have been through as much as I have," the boss said, "you develop a certain philosophy. But Tennyson is a young man."

"Young," said Reade. "And a man." His eyes were on Addy. "But I've brought enough gloom already. Addy,

may I have this dance?"

The girl rose a trifle too quickly, as if Reade had offered her a welcome relief from something. A moment later they were swinging out smoothly to one of the newest song hits. The band, although its members wore ruffled shirts, was about as Brazilian as "Muskrat Ramble." They played that way, but excellently.

Dancing with Addy was always exciting for Reade. She seemed to fit perfectly into the curve of his arm, to follow him as if she sensed his every move before he made it. Her perfume was heady, sweet, dry at once. Almost subconsciously he sniffed at it. But it was not the scent of the envelope.

"Do I smell bad or something?" she asked.

"Divine," said Reade, hoping he wasn't blushing. "What is it? It's new to me."

"A special blend from François," said the girl. "And I suppose you have them all catalogued, you wolf."

"Rather a passé wolf, I fear."

"You needn't be," said Addy and there was a distinct gleam in her eyes. Hang it, she was disturbing him again, and tonight of all nights.

"I wish I could—for you," he replied. "But what's the use? You're devoted to your uncle and I'm after his scalp. We'd be throwing things in a week."

"You're wrong about Blaine," she told him seriously. "He's a much maligned old darling. I know."

"I hope you're right, Addy." Then, slowly, "What upset you so when I told you about Anatole? You didn't know him, did you?"

"No," she said. "But I delivered a message for Blaine to the Haymarket yesterday afternoon. This place felt—rather close, that's all."

"Whom did you deliver it to?" he asked sharply, his thoughts clicking rapidly. Yesterday afternoon was when the Governor had turned down the last appeal for a reprieve. Addy sometimes ran errands for Blaine when he was busy. If her perfume weren't different—

"I don't know," she said. "It was addressed to a Mr. Hartshorn. I was told to give it to one of the bellboys—Rorey, I think his name was."

"Thanks, honey," he said, then put his mind on their dancing until the set ended. It was not difficult.

The midnight show came on when the

music ceased.

Sitting at Blaine Fairman's table, Reade paid little attention to it until Ivy Thomas was announced. And after one look at her unappetizing torrid gyrations in a so-called muscle dance, he let his eyes rest on Addy.

CHAPTER III

Silent Dancer



WHEN the show stopped, Reade excused himself and went backstage. "Backstage" was a grimy corridor that reeked of an odor compiled of equal parts of powder, grease paint and sweat. He knocked on the door of the dancer's dressing room and was told, in a

throaty voice, to come on in.

Ivy Thomas, her theatrical makeup still on and wearing a dark blue traveling suit, was kneeling on a suitcase to force it shut as Reade entered. After finishing the job, she looked up at him and her face went white under the twin circles of rouge on her cheeks.

"Going somewhere, Ivy?" he asked, leaning against the door jamb. He sniffed and winced. The dancer's perfume had all the delicacy of a garbage wagon. She rose slowly to her feet, glaring at him, and pushed blue-black hair back from her face.

"And how I am!" she said in a voice reminiscent of Gravel Gertie. "My contract here is up and I'm grabbing the one-thirty to New York. What's it to you, copper?"

She knew Reade. He had questioned her during the investigation of the Anthony Morgan murder. And she had made no bones about her dislike for him and all other minions of the law. Reade shot in the dark.

"So you sold out Lou to Mr. Hartshorn and now that you've been paid off, you're scrambling—or are you?"

"What kind of double-talk is that?" she asked, but her voice had acquired a new tremolo beneath its defiance.

"Lou's dead—shot—and you know it, Ivy. The police think it's suicide, but they don't know about Hartshorn yet. If I were you I'd cash those tickets in

and stick around awhile — unless you want to be pulled off the train."

"But they told me they weren't going to—" she began, then caught herself. Her eyes hardened. "What kind of a pitch are you throwing, copper? I had dinner with Lou tonight. He's okay and you know it."

"I'm afraid not, Ivy," said Reade quietly. "They crossed you up. Maybe you know—or maybe you were just tired of Lou and they told you they'd fix it so he wouldn't follow you to New York." He paused, watching her sink onto the wooden kitchen chair in front of her dressing table. "Feel like talking about it? I'm in a listening mood."

"Not to you, copper, not to you," she said, but her hoarse voice was barely more than a whisper. Only her eyes were defiant, still burning their hatred at him. He shrugged, knowing Ivy of yore.

"All right then, take your time," he told her. "But take it in the City. I'll be around later."

He turned on his heel and left her there. Apparently this Mr. Hartshorn, whoever he was, was a new factor in the case. Leaving the Samba by the service entrance, Reade drove back to the Haymarket and put some questions to the desk clerk. The clerk shook his head.

"There has been no Mr. Hartshorn registered here in the last month, Mr. Reade. I'd remember that name if I saw or heard it. It's an odd one, all right."

"Maybe that isn't the name he signed on the register," said Reade, frowning. If this were another dead end, he was up against it. And whatever could be done had to be done fast. An after-thought struck him.

"Do you have a bellhop here called Rorey?"

"Sure, Rorey Burke. He's on days. Smart lad."

"So I've gathered," said Reade. "Do you have any idea where he can be reached now?" He wished he had Sanger's police resources just now. But although he was inclined to trust the Homicide lieutenant's basic honesty, the Department was a sieve. He'd have to do it alone.

The clerk went into the office behind the hotel desk, emerged in a few moments with a scrap of paper.

"Burke has a room at Seventeen North

Trent Street, Mr. Reade," he said, handing the paper with its written address to the Assistant District Attorney. "That's down by the tracks. He should be there, but you know how those boys are on their own time."

"I've heard rumors," said Reade.

HE THANKED the clerk, went outside and sat in his car. His next step might be all-important. Mr. Hartshorn, who and whatever he was, was the only chink he had found in the wall someone had so carefully built up around Anatole's death. Hartshorn and a lingering perfume on the suicide note. It wasn't much to go on, but it would have to do.

The bellboy, Burke, might or might not be in his room. He might or might not know who Hartshorn was—and if he did, might not be disposed to talk.

On the other hand, Reade was certain that Ivy Thomas *did* know. He was going to have to make her talk. She, too, lived at the Haymarket, the City's one "sporting" hotel, but had not come in yet.

Starting the motor, he drove his convertible slowly back toward the Samba, checking to see if she were walking back to the hotel. Of course, if someone drove her or she took a cab, he'd miss her.

It was a risk he had to take. The City, he thought, was certainly showing little improvement under the new regime of which he was a part. So far, for the record, they had convicted only one killer—and the wrong man at that. Now, unless he were way off the beam, a cold-blooded murder was going to get by as suicide. And Roy Murray, if in town, was at large. Reade's long chin shortened as he pressed his lips together in determination.

Once this wretched business was cleared up, Reade determined, he would get Merle to swear in a lot of husky bright young veterans they knew as special assistants, even if it meant money out of his own pocket. Then they would get to work and really root out the underworld in the City—and if Roy Murray were hiding out here, they'd get him. That would put all of them on the map.

He found the Samba officially closed. But the waiters were piling chairs on the tabletops for the night. The captain, not such a forbidding figure in shirt sleeves, was superintending the job.

Reade hailed him and asked if Miss Thomas had departed yet.

"She may have left by the service door," the servitor replied, shaking his head from side to side. "But she hasn't come through here yet, tonight. Maybe she's still back there packing. Her contract is up."

"I know," said Reade. He slipped the man five dollars and went on through. Crashes of pots and pans in the kitchen sounded through the thin partition that was one wall of the corridor. Ivy Thomas' door was closed.

Feeling as if he'd missed the boat badly, Reade opened it and entered—and stood stock still, just inside, staring in amazement at what he saw there.

Ivy Thomas was sitting on the floor with her back against the wall beside her dressing table—and so much blood covered her that she looked as if a bucket of paint had been thrown at her. Apparently she had been shot through the throat. Gore had splurged up to splash her face, had spilled all over the front of her dark blue dress, into her lap and ultimately to form a pool around her on the floor.

At one side of the room stood the swarthy, burly Frenchy Dulac. He was staring at the dancer's body as if his eyes were held in that direction by a magnet. Then, suddenly, he jumped like a startled hare, turned and saw Reade standing there looking at him.

"*Dieu!*" he said softly. Then in English, "Do you know who has done this terrible thing, Mr. Reade?"

"Are you kidding?" the Assistant District Attorney countered. A cold rage was sweeping over him. Something about the dead woman was reminiscent of a child's doll that had been wantonly smashed and defaced. No longer was she a brash, unpleasant, undoubtedly evil creature of cheap jobs, cheap romances, cheap defiance of the law.

And this hirsute gorilla with the face of a retired pug had the nerve to put such a question to him. Reade was so angry he walked right up to Blaine Fairman's bodyguard and held out his right hand, palm up.

"All right, Frenchy," he said quietly. "Let's have the gun."

SO AUTHORITATIVE was his tone and manner that the bodyguard made a move to obey, then caught him—

self and pulled his hand down from his lapel. His beetling black brows met above the bridge of his nose.

"Hey, Mr. Reade," he protested. "I didn't kill her. I only came to get her for Mr. Fairman. He wants to talk to her. I found her like this."

"Hand it over, Frenchy," said Reade inexorably. The Canadian stared at him, looked down at the outstretched hand. Comprehension dawned in the little black eyes.

"You don't believe me, do you, Mr. Reade?"

"Not for a moment, Frenchy. Let's not kid around. You're on the spot, and there's nothing you can do about it. Killing Ivy and getting caught at it was pretty stupid. Much stupider than the way you knocked off Lou Anatole. But you're not dumb enough to try to shoot me. So let's have that gun of yours."

"What are you going to do, Mr. Reade?"

"I'm going to turn you in, Frenchy. What did you expect?"

Frenchy's feet shuffled and he swung around to face Reade. His right shoulder dropped a trifle.

"Mr. Fairman isn't going to like this," he said, almost mournfully.

Reade got the idea then. This professional muscle man was going to knock him cold if he could. Instinctively the Assistant District Attorney fell into a posture of defense and poked his own left out. He had boxed a bit at college and had kept in shape since with gymnasium workouts. He had height and reach on Dulac even if the burly one outweighed him in pounds and experience.

Remembering the ancient advice about landing the first punch, Reade jabbed with his left, low, then pivoted and crossed with a down-chopping right hook. The blow had every ounce of momentum Reade could put behind it.

Frenchy never even ducked. He took it flush on the chin, apparently without ill effect. Reade felt as if his right hand had been caught in a cement mixer. He could almost hear the ripping of skin across his knuckles. And then, before he could regain his balance, he saw the Canadian's right fist coming up toward his own chin in a short, sharp uppercut.

For a fraction of a second after the blow landed, Reade thought that his head was being lifted right off his shoul-

ders. Then the whole room seemed to explode in a single sheet of light, which was followed by merciful darkness.

He came to, less than three minutes later according to his wristwatch, to find the waiter captain swabbing his face with a cold towel. The captain was desolate.

"I'm so sorry, Mr. Reade. It shouldn't have happened here. Tell me who did it and I'll have him fired."

"Cut it!" snapped Reade. He felt as if his neck had been permanently stretched. His head was ringing as if someone had struck a gong inside of it. But the sight of Ivy Thomas' body, still covered with blood, staring at him with sightless eyes, brought him out of it quickly.

"What about *her*?" he snapped. "Have you called the police?" As the captain nodded and explained that he had already had that matter attended to, Reade struggled to his feet. The back of his head was sore too. He must have bumped it on something as he fell.

"When Lieutenant Sanger gets here," he ordered angrily, "tell him to put out a call for Frenchy Dulac on my orders—and to get him if he wants to keep his job."

"But, *monsieur*, where are you going. You can't—"

"Oh, yes I can," barked Reade, striding toward the service door. "Tell Sanger I'll call him up later."

It was Sanger's job to get Frenchy. As for himself, he had only one clue remaining—Rorey Burke, the bellhop. He didn't intend to bungle *that* one.

CHAPTER IV

Hideout



COOL night air cleared Reade's ringing head as he drove down into the slum district of the City toward North Trent Street. Like a shock of cold water it struck him that he had probably been responsible for Ivy Thomas' murder. His mention of the mysterious Mr.

Hartshorn had scared her. His news of Anatole's death had apparently jolted her too. Or had it?

At any rate, the poor little fool must have gotten in touch with whoever was behind the deal. And Frenchy Dulac had been right there in the club, his gun in a shoulder holster. Reade didn't need a diagram from that point. He hoped Sanger would be able to pull in the gorilla, and fast.

But at any rate, Reade was now certain his hunch had been true. Anatole's suicide had not been a suicide at all. Someone had shot him dead in cold blood in a desperate effort to crack Merle Tennyson. And unless Reade could find the killer and proof of what lay behind the crime, the move was going to be effective.

If Sanger could only get hold of Dulac in time—and make him talk! Reade's face was taut and strained as he turned his convertible into Railroad Avenue. From somewhere close by a train whistle tooted dismally. A glance at the dial of his watch informed him that it was one thirty-two. If he hadn't stopped her, Ivy Thomas would have been on this train, alive and safe.

Angrily he reminded himself that one Merle Tennyson was worth a thousand Ivy Thomases, dead or alive. He also realized that his jaw was going to hurt like blazes in a little while. Frenchy packed a terrible wallop in his right fist.

North Trent Street, a dead-end one-block alley that ended at the tracks, was in the process of being repaved. A pair of sawhorses with red lanterns dangling from them informed him of the fact. He swung on past and parked just beyond. The smell of garbage stung his nostrils as he climbed out.

Number Seventeen was one of a number of shabby, multiple-family tenements whose railroad grime was mercifully hidden by the darkness. As he climbed the worn front steps, Reade shivered. The night around him seemed alive with the terrible unsleeping vitality of the slums.

Lighting a match, Reade peered at a battered row of name-card holders by the almost paintless mail boxes in the front entry. Rorey Burke's name was there, printed in pencil, apparently on the third floor front. He tried the front door, found it unlocked. No one here was supposed to have anything worth a burglar's effort.

Dim bulbs in the hall showed him a scratched public box phone, and stone

steps, worn down on their treads like the marble roads of ancient China with their two-foot-deep wagon wheel ruts. Slowly, for his head still hurt him, he walked up two flights, rapped on a door. A sleepy voice within asked him profanely who he was.

Again the door was unlocked, and Reade pushed on inside. The room was dark, but a light went on and Reade found himself gazing at a tousle-haired, slender fellow with a broken nose not quite in the center of a pallid, young-old face. He'd been sleeping on a filthy cot in a sleeveless undershirt. His hand was on the string above the bed which turned on the unshaded ceiling light. The room also contained a battered chair and table, one window, and an unpleasant musty aroma.

"Rorey Burke?" the Assistant District Attorney asked.

"That's the handle," said Burke, looking curiously at his visitor. "What's it to you?"

"Maybe nothing," said Reade. "Sorry to rouse you like this, but it may be important. Cigarette?"

"Okay," said Burke, accepting the butt and a light. He inhaled deeply, blew out the smoke through his nose. He looked up at Reade expectantly, saying nothing.

"I'm Justis Reade," said his visitor, giving his position.

ROREY'S eyes widened briefly, then narrowed.

"And what would the Assistant District Attorney be wanting with me?"

"All you know about a guy named Hartshorn at the Haymarket."

"What's it pay?" the young-old man asked.

"Plenty—if it pans out," said Reade. "You'll have to trust me on that."

"Okay, boss," said Burke after studying Reade for a long moment through narrowed eyes. "You look like a sucker so I guess it's all right. The only trouble is I don't know much about him."

Reade laughed at Burke's bluntness. He only hoped the bellhop wasn't going to embroider fact to make his story more palatable. He debated giving him some money now, decided it would only be a further inducement toward lying.

"Let's have it, Burke."

"The guy was in Three-ten," Burke said. "He didn't come out at all the last

three weeks. I slipped his meals and booze to him from the kitchen because he didn't want anyone to know he was there. He made it worth while—if he ain't still in the shack."

"It's highly doubtful," said Reade, pacing the uneven floor. "But you'd know him if you saw him?"

"I'd know him in the dark," said the bellhop with confidence. Reade smiled, pulled a fifty from his wallet, handed it to his informer, who took it with a casual glance.

"There'll be three more of these when you finger him for me," said Reade. "Thanks a lot, Burke. Sweet dreams."

He closed the door behind him, went on down the two flights of steps to the street. As he swung out of the entryway, a man moved from the shadows beside the door and swung a massive hand at his head.

Made doubly conscious of assault by his experience with Dulac, Reade ducked away from the blow. He was not entirely successful, for the hand struck his shoulder, but apparently his attacker was trying to collar him rather than to hit him. Even so, the shock of impact was staggering.

He reeled back into the entryway, glanced wildly around the dimly lit hall for a weapon. It was as bare as the old lady's cupboard in the nursery rhyme. Frightened, Reade wished his gun were not locked in the dashboard compartment of his car. He looked around for a place to flee, for some shelter. He had lost faith in himself as a master of rough and tumble.

He froze as he heard the swish of rapidly scuffling footsteps, his stomach turning over. Then he realized with almost sickening relief that they were receding, not coming toward him. Suddenly they stopped. Whoever his attacker was, he had not gone far.

With new awareness, Reade raced back up the stairs and reentered the bellhop's room. Burke turned the light on again and gazed at him curiously.

"Is this getting to be a habit?" he inquired.

"I hope not," said Reade. He spoke incisively. "I was jumped just now in the entryway, Burke. I asked just one other person tonight about Hartshorn. Ivy Thomas. She's already dead with a bullet in her throat."

"Miss Thomas!" said Burke, sitting

upright. "Holy cow!" His oddly faded eyes widened. "Then you mean *I* may be next in line?"

"Exactly," said Reade. "Put on some clothes and show me a back way out of here. I think the fellow pulled out when he saw it wasn't you. You're coming with me and staying under cover."

"Protective custody?" the bellhop asked. "No jail."

"No jail," affirmed Reade. "I'm going to stash you in my own apartment. It's the safest place I know of. Get moving."

BURKE made no objections. He pulled on a pair of pants with about six too many pleats, donned a checkered open-neck shirt and a coat with a belted back. Red-and-blue imitation Argyle socks came next, then a pair of low buff shoes with fringed tongues. The whole process took about three minutes.

"Let's go, boss," said Burke, pulling out the light.

Cautiously they descended to the ground floor. No one was in sight, and Burke led the way toward the rear of the building. A squeaking metal door opened onto a flight of wooden steps which led in turn to a junk-filled back yard. This led to an alley which brought them tortuously through to the next dead-end street. There Reade took the lead and they reached his parked car in safety.

He left explicit orders at the desk of his apartment building before taking the bellhop upstairs. Within his own rooms, he offered Burke the pistol which he had removed from his car.

"Keep it on you," he said. "Don't answer the door or the telephone. I have my own keys."

"Okay, boss," said Burke. "But what about this heater? I haven't got a permit for it."

"I'm giving it to you," said Reade. "Here's where you sleep." He led the way to the spare bedroom, showed his guest the bathroom, the kitchen, where the whisky was. "I'm going out for a while—business. Just sit tight. The fire escape passes under my bedroom window. It's locked. Keep it that way. Got it?"

"I'm not crazy, boss," said Burke. "And this is quite a dump."

"Glad you like it," said Reade. "So long."

Reade drove back to the Hill. The

light was still on in Merle Tennyson's living room, so he pulled into the driveway and rang the bell. When he looked at the District Attorney, he thought the man had aged ten years. The dynamic vitality seemed to have left him as he led the way to the living room. He seemed to have been working hard at something. Papers were scattered all over a bridge table.

"What news, Justis?" Tennyson asked him when they were seated.

"Plenty," said Reade. He recounted the events of the night, emphasizing his certainty that the so-called suicide had really been a cleverly arranged murder. But at its conclusion, Tennyson shook his head slowly.

"You're indulging in wishful thinking, I fear. Not that I don't appreciate it, Justis. But just how all this activity connects with Anatole, I don't see. You have established no real connection between him and this mysterious Mr. Hartshorn—at least none that will stand up in court."

"Then why was Ivy Thomas killed?" Reade asked.

"I don't know," said Tennyson. "And neither do you. Justis, you seemed to have stirred up some new mare's nest in the town. But I'm not in it." He gestured toward the papers on the table in front of him. "I'm preparing my resignation. I'm putting it on the air tomorrow—no, this afternoon at five."

Reade argued with all of the forensic skill he could muster. But to no avail. When at last he gave up, he felt wrung and defeated. Tail between his legs, he drove back to his apartment house and let himself in. His guest was snoring peacefully in the guest bedroom and one of the whisky bottle was two thirds empty. Reade smiled faintly and turned in himself.

He awoke to the smell of coffee and bacon cooking. The electric clock beside his bed informed him it was past ten o'clock. Waking up in a hurry, he leaped out of bed and headed for the shower. Emerging, with a toweling robe around him, he found that Rorey Burke had prepared an excellent breakfast for two.

"You shouldn't be bell hopping in a hotel," Reade said after sampling the omelet. "You ought to be in back, cooking. Sleep all right?"

"Swell, thanks, boss. That's some

mattress you've got. A real haymaker. You eat too fast."

"Not usually," said Reade, smiling at his guest's impertinence. "Anybody try to get in here last night?"

"No, but the phone kept ringing. I didn't answer."

That, thought Reade, would have been Sanger. Well, he'd square it with the homicide lieutenant later. He finished his coffee, feeling like a new man, hurried into his clothes.

CHAPTER V

Reade's Defiance



BACK at the Haymarket, he consulted the manager about Room Three-Ten. With perplexing results. Three-Ten, it appeared, had not been occupied at all. When Reade revealed something of his information about it, the manager scowled. Reade went back with him while he consulted the room service and the cook about meals.

The result was a total blank. Nobody knew a thing. Or if anyone had such knowledge, he was not revealing it. Leaving the perplexed hotel official to work it out, Reade went out and drove back toward the hill. This time he went right on past Merle Tennyson's estate to an even larger and more ornate residence a mile and a half further out. It was time he had a showdown with Blaine Fairman and Company.

They were eating a late breakfast-lunch when he entered. Fairman wore a dressing gown and slippers and Addy was clad in casual slacks and halter. Only Monty Weir was conventionally attired. His eyes were puffy as if he were suffering from a hangover.

"Welcome, enemy," said Addy with a grin. She had a trace of egg on her otherwise perfect chin.

"Hello, foe," said Reade amiably. Then he turned to the girl's uncle, his face growing serious. "Pardon my intrusion, Fairman, but I've got to have it out with you and time is short."

"Go right ahead," said the older man blandly, revealing no intention of leaving the table. "It's time a number of

things were aired—in confidence, of course.”

“Let’s have it, Justis,” said Weir. Affording him a glance of distaste, Reade pulled up a chair. He wished Addy weren’t in on this, but after all the girl was over twenty-one. And time was of the essence.

“You must know by now,” he said, deliberately using the shock treatment, “that I caught your man Dulac red-handed after he had killed Ivy Thomas last night.”

“Just a moment,” said Blaine Fairman, lifting his voice. “Dulac has talked with me. Naturally I would not reveal his whereabouts even if I knew it. But he told me he did not kill the girl.”

“What’s his explanation for his behavior?”

“He went to that dressing room to question Miss Thomas about a totally different affair—a private investigation in which he has been helping me—and found her dead. Then you walked in and tried to hang it on him.”

“All right,” said Reade. “So he hung one on me. But if he was innocent, why did he cut and run? Ballistics would prove he didn’t do it.”

“He didn’t have time, Reade. As it was, he lost a valuable lead to a man we are searching for.”

“I think I’m beginning to understand,” said Reade softly. “I don’t suppose you were hunting for Roy Murray. And I don’t suppose you were out to have him captured by your man to show up Merle Tennyson.”

“What do you think?” Monty Weir asked insultingly.

“Just a minute, Monty, I’ll handle this,” said Fairman. “Put that way, it does sound a little crude. But politics, young man, is not a kid-glove game.”

“That I understand,” said Reade. “But such being the case, why did you and your gang allow mobsters like Murray to hide out in the City?”

“Sometimes,” the older man said, “it is impossible to alter conditions too suddenly lest the whole political structure collapse. My predecessors inaugurated this policy you bring up. For years now, I have been seeking to change it, to clear the City of its bad name.”

“Recent events certainly bear you out,” said Reade with irony. Fairman permitted himself a faint smile.

“Permit me to remind you that recent

events have occurred during the administration of which you are an integral part,” he said.

“Politics again,” said Weir. Addy looked at him, frowning a little.

“Only because the machine you built is still handling routine affairs,” said Reade bitterly.

FAIRMAN lifted his eyebrows and nodded his head.

“You see now what I mean about moving gradually,” said the boss. “That’s the trouble with all reform groups. They try to do too much too fast—and everything gets out of hand. You don’t suppose I’m against them in theory.”

“I don’t give a hang about your theory, Fairman,” said Reade. “It’s your practise I object to. Having your niece deliver the fake suicide note to Lou Anatole’s killer is just an example.”

“What do you mean, Reade?” said Fairman. The bluff good humor had dropped as if it were a flimsy garment. The City boss’ tone was hard, dangerous.

“Oh, no!” gasped Addy, turning pale.

“You have no proof of that,” roared Fairman, pounding the table. “Because it’s a filthy lie!”

“I have proof enough for me,” said Reade. He paused to sniff. Yes, the same perfume that had surrounded the suicide note was now emanating from Addy. “And now that I know, I’ll find proof enough for any court in the land.”

“If I were a younger man,” shouted Fairman, rising from the table, his immense pear face scarlet, “I’d throw you out of here myself.”

“I was just going,” said Reade. At the doorway, he turned to face Addy’s shocked blue eyes. “Hereafter, I suggest you read some of the messages you deliver for your uncle, Addy. They might prove educational.”

Reade drove toward town a little way, picked out the driveway of an abandoned house he had in mind, backed his car into it and lighted a cigarette. His thoughts were in turmoil. But he knew now that Addy had delivered that fatal message. She had told him her perfume was made up specially by François. Which meant she undoubtedly used different scents for day and evening. Girls who could did such things.

That Fairman should use his niece for such unsavory errands had him boiling. Always before, while dead set against

Fairman and all he stood for politically, he personally had entertained a sneaking liking for the old boss. Fairman had appeared to operate with a certain set of standards of his own. They might not have been of the highest, but at least he lived up to them. Now Fairman had revealed another side to his nature.

Reade wondered if Addy would be sent out again now that he had planted his dynamite. Men like Fairman disliked using the telephone—their own telephones at any rate—for such skulduggery.

If Addy were sent out once more, Reade intended to follow her. He decided to give himself an hour before going back to town and tangling with Sanger.

It was thirty-five minutes later that Addy drove by in her smart little blue roadster. With a sudden this-is-it feeling, he slipped the convertible into gear and took off after her.

Evidently Addy had something on her mind, for she drove as if she were out to break records. While it meant Reade had to step to keep her in sight, it was also a factor in his favor. It implied she would pay little attention to whether or not she were being followed.

He stayed with her all the way into town. As she took turn after turn, a frown tightened Reade's features. Addy seemed to be heading toward a familiar destination. If she turned right at the next cross-street, it would mean she was going to his own apartment house.

She took the turn and pulled to a stop in front of the marquee. Utterly baffled, Reade braked to a stop in back of her in time to see her disappear through the front doors of the building. Hope and a stronger emotion welled up within him. She had taken his warning and was going to turn to him!

IT NEVER occurred to him that she might be visiting another apartment in the building. He skidded into the elevator beside her, just as the operator was closing the door.

"Addy!" he said. "You almost missed me."

"Justis!" she exclaimed, looking at him blankly. "What are you doing—but of course, you live here."

He gaped at her. Then, as that disturbing perfume became evident in the confines of the cage, he snapped out of it.

But it didn't make sense.

"Then you weren't coming to see me?" he asked.

"Of course not," she replied, a trifle stiffly. "I'm doing one of those errands for Blaine you were so absurd about this morning."

"Mr. Hartshorn, I presume," said Reade acidly. She colored, but made no reply. He stared at her and she stared fixedly straight ahead. The elevator operator had to call to them when they reached his floor.

"Seven, Miss," he said. Reade, thoroughly angry, started to move out, bumped into her. She was getting off at the same floor. He apologized, allowed her to sweep past him.

Moving a trifle haughtily, she went on down the hall looking at the numbers on the apartment doors, finally paused in front of one—his own.

"Here," he said. "Let me. And won't you come in?"

"But it can't be yours!" she almost wailed.

"But it is," he replied. He opened the door, ushered her in, then blocked her passage. "Welcome to the domicile, Addy. And now—let me see that envelope you're carrying."

In her bewilderment, she acceded to his demand, put the square of folded and sealed white paper into his hand. He scowled at it, switched on the light. It was to Mr. Hartshorn, Apartment Seven-C, in the building—his own apartment.

"But this is insane!" he said.

"I know," Addy murmured. She stared at him as he turned the envelope over.

"Maybe it's a gag, Addy. There is no Mr. Hartshorn here." He handed it back to her. "Open it."

She ripped it apart, scanned the message. Her eyes narrowed, then looked at his, wide with fright.

"Read it, Justis," she told him.

He did, feeling lost in Looking Glass Land. In a hasty scrawl was written:

Hartshorn:—

Take care of Reade. Make it look like the Anatole job if you can. Come what may, this should be the final rubout we need. And don't go back to the job. Too many people are onto it. Use my place for a hideout until we can cool things off.

It was unsigned. Reade studied it, then led the way into his living room. He nodded to Rorey, who was sprawled

out on the sofa, listening to a program of swing music on the radio. The bellhop scrambled to his feet respectfully when he saw Addy. Then as she smiled at him, he grinned back.

"Howdy, Miss Fairman," he said.

Reade explained that he was holding Rorey under cover for his own protection until he had solved the identity of Mr. Hartshorn. He suggested a drink.

"Not only because I've been marked for the spot," he told the girl, "but in honor of your first visit to my humble home."

CHAPTER VI

Masks Off



LAINLY Addy was sunk. She sat down heavily in one of the armchairs like a lady in a dream. When Reade put a glass of neat brandy in her hand, she gulped it quickly. Having her illusions about her uncle crash around her was knocking the

props out from under her.

Reade downed a shot himself, glanced again at the note and scowled. There was something about that writing. And then the full import of it struck him. He went to Addy and helped her to her feet.

"I've got a conference coming up in just a few minutes," he lied. "Addy, I'm sorry to make this so brief, but you'll come back, won't you?"

"Of course, if you want me," said Addy. "You've always known that. Oh, Justis!" She looked about ready to burst into tears. Reade tried to calm her, argued, and all but forced her from the apartment. But when she acceded to his pleading, the words he had been dreading and waiting for sounded behind him.

"Uh-uh! Miss Fairman stays."

Rorey Burke was standing in the middle of the carpet, holding the gun Reade had given him with practised negligence. Reade winced, led the bewildered Addy back to the armchair.

"Very well, Mr. Hartshorn!" Reade said. "You seem to be in charge for the moment."

"That's right." The young-old man grinned without mirth. "So you finally

got wise to me. I knew it couldn't last."

"Your own buddy tipped me off," said Reade, nodding toward the letter. "That's what did it, Mr. Hartshorn—or should I say Roy Murray?"

"He'll pay," said the gunman in a matter-of-fact tone that was more chilling than any show of temper. "Once you got hep to the Hartshorn gag, the other was easy, huh?"

"Justis," said Addy faintly. "Is that—"

"That's Roy Murray," Reade replied. "Yes, Murray, once the one cover-up broke, the other was easy. Smart gag, though—hiding out as a bellhop. What are you going to do?"

"Lam," said Murray, "and tend to a little unfinished business. When I get orders to rub out an Assistant D.A., I know it's time to beat it. Yes, I overheard you and Miss Fairman in the hall. Thanks for giving me time to get heeled." He began to laugh silently.

"What's so funny?" Reade inquired.

"Why, how it's going to look when it comes out that I was held in protective custody by the Assistant D.A. himself. That is going to be a riot in the newspapers."

Reade curdled. It would finish not only his career, but Merle Tennyson's. It would undo all that he had accomplished to prove Anatole's death murder instead of suicide.

Yet he couldn't blame himself too severely. Murray's disguise as a bellhop was inspired. No one expects a criminal on the lam to take a menial job. And this particular job was one which had kept him in the very heart of the City's activity—with his finger on its pulse. But he and inevitably Tennyson were due to be tarred with the same brush. He began to wonder about his chances of joining his superior on his resignation broadcast this afternoon.

"Are you going to—kill us?" Addy asked.

"Nope." Murray shook his head and smiled secretively. "Contrary to the views of some of our most prominent criminal psychiatrists—I got the word right, didn't I, Reade?—I am not crazy. This looked like a good racket here, but you, Reade, have blown it sky-high overnight. I owe you a little something for that."

He paused, ran a hand across his mouth, chuckled.

"I'm going to leave you two tied up here and send in a little tip to the police. Your being tied up after keeping me in your home as a guest, will look sour enough, Reade, but to have the boss' niece here with you, should really tie things up in this town."

READE suppressed an oath with difficulty. He wished he could think of some way out of it, but experience during the Pacific War had taught him the painful futility of trying to rush a loaded gun in the hands of a competent gunman. He tried to meet Addy's hopeless gaze cheerfully. It was an impossible, an ignominious situation.

"Just in case something like this comes up," said Murray, "I bring my own tools along with me." He pulled four rolls of two-inch-wide adhesive tape out of his jacket pockets, laid them on a table beside the couch.

"Lie down, Reade, on the sofa. That's it. Take off your coat. You try anything and I plug Miss Fairman."

There was no doubt about his meaning it. His eyes were as cold as frozen marbles. There was going to be just one opportunity, when Murray began to wind the tape. But the gunman was ahead of him. Once Reade was lying flat, he stood back and beckoned the girl over with his gun.

"Wind that tape around his upper arms," Murray said. "And make it binding."

But at that instant there came a sound of shattering glass from the bedroom. Murray whirled like a cat. Reade flung himself from the sofa and grabbed the gunman from behind. As Murray tore himself free, Reade plunged at the gunman's legs in a perfect clip from behind that would have brought an automatic fifteen-yard penalty on a football field. This game was for higher stakes.

With his knee he also lashed out hard, sending Addy sprawling flat, but in no way detracting from the vital direction of his block. Murray let out a sound that was a cross between a grunt and a yelp. Then he fell forward and banged his head against the table containing the rolls of tape. When he hit the carpet he was out cold.

Scrambling to his feet, Reade snatched up his pistol from where it had fallen, gave Murray a thoughtful kick on the left temple with the point of his shoe,

then swung to face his bedroom door.

Frenchy Dulac had rushed through, and skidded to an abrupt stop as he saw the tableau in the living room. He grinned with relief when Addy got up slowly, rubbing her hip.

"You all right, Miss Addy?" the gorilla asked, ignoring the gun Reade was pointing at him. When she nodded and essayed a tremulous smile, he relaxed, dropped his own revolver to his side and came over to gaze at the unconscious gunman.

"You got him, Mr. Reade? Nice going."

"Thanks to you," said Reade. "He was about to tape us up when you came smashing through that window and diverted his attention." He stuck out his hand. "Forget about last night. Okay?"

"Okay," said the Canadian, grinning sheepishly. "Say I thought you was this fellow—" with a glance at the unconscious Murray "—when I jumped you in that North Trent Street Hallway."

"So that was you?"

"Sure. I've been on that guy's tail since he knocked Ivy Thomas off. I got a glimpse of him running out as I came backstage. I recognized him. That's why I didn't have time to explain then and had to bust you."

"It's all right," said Reade. "How are you, Addy? I didn't mean to hurt you, but there were too many guns loose to take chances with you upright."

"I know you meant well," said the girl witheringly. Then she grinned. A thundering knock sounded on the door.

It was Blaine Fairman and Clint Sanger. Reade waved them inside and gave a brief resumé of the situation.

When the police had taken Murray away, and Reade, the Fairmans and Dulac were alone, Reade poured a drink for his guests. That done, he picked up the note which Addy had brought and showed it to the politician.

"Ever see this before, Fairman?" he asked.

"Never, and you've seen my signature enough to know it," Fairman retorted.

"That's what tipped me off," he said. "I gather you've taken care of the situation at your end."

A SLOW smile spread over Fairman's face.

"I have. You got me thinking, young man, once I recovered my temper this

morning. I took on young Weir because he seemed a bright chap and for—well, in considerations of some favors his father had done the party. It seems I certainly took on more than I ever bargained for."

"It was Weir who actually gave you those messages, wasn't it, Addy?" Reade asked.

She nodded.

"As I get it, Weir figured the reform win was just what he needed to take control of the old gang you've been running," said Reade. "He was in an ideal spot, of course."

"Clever devil—too clever for anybody's good. I got Sanger up at the house a while ago and we broke him down. Oh, it wasn't hard once I knew what he was up to. But if he had managed to discredit both Tennyson and myself, he would have been hard to dislodge. When I think of some of the things he has been doing in my name—well, I haven't always played clean, Reade, but some things are too much."

"Blaine," said Reade, "that's one of the things that has had me baffled. I couldn't believe you were behind a lot of what's been going on—the sluggings, clippings and yes, the killings. I suppose young

Weir picked up his knack for forgery during his bad check era."

"It will be hard on his father," said the old man, sighing. "But when I think of how he was using Addy here, I hope he draws the chair. He's earned it."

"I'd like to ask you a question, Blaine," said Reade. "Drawing on your vast political experience, do you think it would be bad policy for me to take the niece of the opposition leader out for the biggest and best wine-dine-and-dance evening I can put together in this town—and make a habit of it?"

"Unorthodoxy," said the old man, his eyes twinkling, "is said to be a hallmark of genius. Go to it, son."

"Don't I have a thing to say?" Addy asked, and she looked anything but displeased.

"Not a thing," said Reade. He glanced at his watch, whooped. "Oh, my gosh! Merle goes on the air in less than an hour to resign his post. I'll have to write him a whole new speech. He's slower than a mud-turtle himself."

He raced for the door, skidded to a halt, called back.

"Keep her here, Blaine, and help yourself to whatever you want. I'll be back in time to take her out."

THE RATTLER

(Concluded from page 69)

her in France's arms in the car under the moon. He slipped manacles from the clip on his belt with his free hand, and clamped them on France's wrists.

"We'll find your fingerprints, not Hagar's, on the book, France," he said. "We'll learn how and where you got the snake. It'll be easy to sew up the case." He paused. "You should've learned more about snakes. You'll have plenty of time now—but it won't do you any good."

Prayle found himself feeling very sorry for stricken, white-faced Daphne Hagar, swaying there to one side of him—sorry that he was taking so much away from her. Then she was looking at him.

"I'm sorry I didn't believe you," her eyes said. "And I thank you."

Those eyes seemed to promise something. It was vague, but it was there. And the derision, the anger, were gone.

Prayle hoped that the tragedy in the guest house wouldn't drive Daphne Hagar away from the resort. He wanted to see her on the raft again, her long, sleek body varnished with the clear waters of the lake, her tawny hair brown-gold in the sunlight. Maybe, then, if he swam up to the raft beside her, she'd talk to him. And maybe, after a while, things would go a little further than that.

At least, she couldn't ignore him any more. . . .



Next Issue: THE STICKUP, an exciting crime story by JACK KOFOED—plus many other thrill-packed yarns!



There was a sickening thump as the body hit the ground

POST-HYPNOTIC

By SAMUEL MINES

When Professor Manning's psychology experiment takes a wrong turn, it proves to be a problem for the police!

IN APRIL, the tall, old-fashioned campus lamps were lighted at seven and full dark had come half an hour later.

Kenny Tomas, pre-med, made his way down the curving flagstone path like a message in Morse code dashes—appearing and disappearing at regular intervals.

In one of the wide spaces of dark between the round pools of light cast by the lamp posts, he detected movement and heard sounds. A familiar silvery tinkle of laughter, the paler shine of a girl's dress against a man's dark coat.

Tomas stepped off the path, his feet noiseless on soft spring grass. Two strides brought him to the bench where girl and man were locked in each other's arms. They moved apart without panic.

"A peeping Tom," said the shadow on the bench.

Tomas peered at him.

"Reynolds?" he asked. "Thought it

was you." His eyes swiveled to the faint oval gleam of the girl's face. "And Aimee Harper, of course. The siren. Reynolds, hasn't anyone warned you?"

"Of course," said the girl. "I've warned him myself." Her laughter rang out again.

"Go away," Reynolds said. "Go to your psychology precept and learn about human emotions. Learn about love."

"I'm going," Tomas said. "And you and Harpy—excuse—Harper—are due there too, in case you've forgotten."

"Well, go!"

"I want to say something first," Tomas said grimly. "Even if it gets me a punch in the nose. I like you, Reynolds, and for that reason alone I'm committing the unpardonable sin of shoving in where I'm not wanted."

"You certainly aren't."

"Okay. But I want to say, and I want you to remember later, that I warned you about this dame. She's no good.

And it's not just a little matter of being a wolf in skirts. Sure, she's had romances with every male on the campus—but it's more than that. She's got the hellish ability somehow to hurt, to warp you—”

“That'll be enough of that!” Reynolds said, coming to his feet.

Tomas did not mistake the rising anger in his tones. The pre-med stepped back.

“Okay,” he said. “I did my duty.”

“Very nobly done,” interposed Aimee Harper. “Has anyone stopped to think that what may be bothering our distinguished medical colleague is a slight case of jealousy?”

Tomas turned his back and moved away without looking back. He went up the flagstones again, plunging into dark, emerging like a swimmer into the round circles of light, disappearing again.

Behind him he left silence.

Another shadow approached as he neared Professor Manning's door. He identified it by its bulk.

“That you, Muscles?”

“You were expecting maybe the Thin Man?”

There was plenty of John “Muscles” Larue, right guard, captain of the football team, wrestling team, and star of the shot-put event in track. He loomed over Tomas, casting a shadow a head taller and twice as wide.

“Hiya, kid,” Muscles went on. “Know your stuff for tonight?”

“Reasonably well,” Tomas said. “Psychology's pretty much common sense, isn't it?”

“I don't know how common it is,” Muscles replied, “but if it is, I ought to have it. Nobody around here's any commoner than me.”

He rapped the door gently with his knuckles and it was opened hastily by Professor Manning, evidently trying to save it from destruction. The psychology mentor was a chubby little man with a good-humored face and a nearly bald pate that gleamed in any stray beam of light.

“Come in gentlemen,” he invited. “Mr Conklin is the only one here—on time, I might add.”

“The boy genius,” Muscles Larue grunted, lumbering in ahead of Tomas. “Hiya, Elbert.”

ELBERT CONKLIN, editor of the Campus paper, “Grisette,” lifted his nose from a book and showed a thin, sardonic face with an affected lift of one black eyebrow.

“Arrowsmith and Gargantua,” he murmured.

“Don't go calling Kenny an ape,” Muscles said as he grinned. “He's sensitive.”

Professor Manning appeared amused. He went to answer another knock on the door and ushered in Aimee Harper and Frank Reynolds. Seen in the light, the girl was strikingly beautiful. It was a dark, exotic, lush beauty, smoldering, as though always on the point of bursting into violent flame.

Knowing the importance of a good entrance, she managed to halt, posed in the doorway, while Frank Reynolds lifted her tweed jacket from her shoulders. Tomas saw that she held every eye in the room.

Reynolds, taking her coat, was looking at her hungrily. Across the room, Elbert Conklin pointed his sharp face her way and let that left eyebrow slide up in a mocking gesture of dislike as though he were seeing through her and wanted to let her know he did.

Larue, looming large against the Professor's massed bookcases, stared at her with a carefully impassive face. But under that controlled mask some hurriedly buried emotion stirred and showed itself for a moment.

Even Professor Manning had stopped fussing with his papers and was watching her. But Tomas could not read the man's expression. He only knew that the usual good humor of that round face was almost gone, the mien solemn.

As for himself—unconsciously his eyes lifted to the mirror on the opposite wall and he was shocked at what he saw. His face was drawn with bitterness and hurt, and tight with anger. So this was how he looked to the others!

“Our discussion tonight,” Professor Manning said, clearing his throat hastily, “concerns one of the side issues of psychology, the phenomenon of hypnosis. I asked you to do a bit of reading in preparation. What have you discovered, Mr. Larue?”

“Well,” Muscles said, “the first thing I wanted to make sure of was that hypnosis wasn't a fake.”

“And are you satisfied of that?”

"Yes. It can be done. There's been a lot of faking connected with it because it seems like magic, so lots of phonies have used it to swindle people."

"Very good," the Professor said. "Anything else?"

"It holds great fascination for many people," Aimee Harper added, "because of its apparent mystical powers. As such, it appeals to those interested in the occult."

"That's the unfortunate side of it," explained Professor Manning. "That it should be tied up with magic and spiritualism and fortune telling. In the hands of a physician or psychiatrist it is an extremely useful agent in dealing with neurotics, because of the great influence on the mind of suggestions made during hypnosis. Have you anything to add to that, Mr. Larue?"

"Yeh. The most interesting thing about hypnotic suggestion is that while you can make the subject do all kinds of silly things like crawling around and barking like a dog, you can't make him steal or kill somebody. If you try that he'll wake up."

"Do you know why?"

"It's obvious," Elbert Conklin put in. "Any suggestion which is repugnant to the individual's code of morals produces such a conflict in his subconscious that he resists obeying the order and hence breaks out of the hypnotic trance."

"Precisely," the Professor said. "Now tonight, it was my plan to try an experiment in actual hypnosis. It is not difficult. Have any of you ever seen one performed?"

There was a general shaking of heads.

"Would one of you like to volunteer to be guinea pig tonight?"

Surprisingly, it was Aimee Harper who made the first move forward, but Muscles Larue heaved up and dominated the scene.

"Take me, Professor Manning," he urged. "I'm the dumbest one here so you won't have any trouble putting me under."

"It has little to do with intelligence," Manning smiled. "All that is required is the cooperation of the subject. I couldn't hypnotize you if you resisted, Mr. Larue, no matter how—uh—'dumb' you might be."

As he talked, he brought forward a small lamp and a tiny propeller-like fan

with shiny blades. He focussed the lamp upon the fan and then set the fan to spinning so that its bright, revolving blades made a shimmering blur in the air.

"Now the lights," he said.

Elbert Conklin snapped the main switch and the room was in darkness except for the spot of light concentrated on the spinning blades.

"Mr. Larue, keep your eyes fixed on the blades. Relax, don't fight me, let your mind slip where it will. The rest of you, try to keep awake."

Then in a soft monotone, Manning began to tell the big football guard that he was sleepy, that he was dozing off, that he was going to sleep—over and over and over.

KNOWING this was the way it was done, Tomas still felt it was corny. Skepticism tickled him, made him want to laugh. And when, in a few minutes, he saw Larue's eyelids droop and close, he felt sure the big man was faking. But Professor Manning had no such doubts. "He's asleep," he announced. "Lights, Conklin."

When the lights went up, they all stared at Larue. The varsity champ seemed fast asleep, chin sunk on chest. He paid no attention to their excited crowding around, their talk.

"Now to make this a real experiment," Professor Manning said, "I propose this. We'll have someone give Mr. Larue a suggestion, to operate post-hypnotically. This suggestion will be known only to the person giving it. The proof of the pudding will then be whether or not Mr. Larue performs this task so clearly and decisively that there will be no doubt that the rest of us can recognize it without being told. Is that clear?"

Everyone nodded. The Professor looked around the group and pointed to Elbert Conklin.

"Mr. Conklin, you whisper in Mr. Larue's ear the errand you wish to send him upon. Have him do it and meet us in half an hour at our psychology room, six-o-eight in the Science Building."

Elbert Conklin thought a moment. Then his eyebrow slid up and he nodded. At the Professor's gesture he stepped over to Muscles and, leaning forward, whispered urgently into the apparently unconscious ear. None of them could

hear what he had said.

When he straightened up, the Professor moved forward.

"Mr. Larue," he said, "when you awake, you will carry out Mr. Conklin's order. Then you will meet us at room six-o-eight in the Science Building. Now, wake up, Mr. Larue!"

He clapped his hands sharply. Muscles stirred, lifted his head, opened his eyes and blinked.

"It worked," he said. "Did I do anything silly?"

They reassured him he had been most decorous. And then suddenly he cocked his head to one side like a setter dog.

"Say, just remembered something important I forgot," he said. "Could I be excused, Professor? I got to attend to this right away."

"Go right ahead," Manning said.

When the door closed behind Muscles, the Professor gave the group their instructions.

"Split up, all of you, and approach the Science Building separately. I want no pairs at all, so there will be no question of collusion or anything like that. Leave one by one."

Kenny Tomas left promptly. He felt depressed, let down. Vanity, he told himself. There was nothing left of the flame which had blazed between Aimee Harper and himself, only his hurt pride at the discovery she had been fooling and he had been sincere. She took over every eligible male that way, sometimes for nothing more than the excitement of taking him away from another girl. Yet the vision of her in Frank Reynolds's arms persisted and he cursed himself for a juvenile fool.

Fleetingly he wondered how the others felt. Conklin, he knew had had some sort of romantic attachment to her, though he masked any emotion under that supercilious raised eyebrow. As for Muscles Larue, the big man had rushed her madly one football season when she had accepted his attentions gladly because he was king of the campus. But when she had tired, as she did, he seemed to accept the worship of the other coeds as an easy substitute.

In a gesture of defiance Tomas stopped at the Honey Bowl and had himself a hot fudge sundae with marshmallow and chopped nuts on top.

Consuming this used up enough of his

half hour so that when he had finished, it was time to start back to the Science Building.

Approaching, he saw the twin lights over the main doorway, but no light showed upstairs.

He was almost under the building when a scream split the night air and something fell from above.

Tomas ducked instinctively. He saw a flash of whirling limbs and flying, pale skirt, and then there was a sickening thump on the ground. He broke from his frozen trance and dashed forward. The swift crunch of feet sounded on gravel and from the shadows, Professor Manning hurried, to crouch with him in wordless terror over the body of Aimee Harper.

"Sh-she's dead!" Tomas whispered. "Neck broken."

"Did you see it?" Professor Manning demanded. "Did you see what happened, Mr. Tomas?"

"She fell from up there—from six-o-eight, I think!"

More steps pounded toward them. Reynolds was first. He gave a horrified gasp and dropped on his knees above the girl's crumpled body.

"How—how—" he stammered.

Larue and Conklin pounded up.

"We heard a scream—"

"One of you stay here with her," Professor Manning said hurriedly. "Reynolds—"

"I'll stay," the boy muttered brokenly.

"The rest of you come with me. I want to see that room. Then we've got to call the police."

The lights were working when they came into room six-o-eight. Everything looked normal. The window was open, wide.

"She must have come in here in the dark," Conklin said, his face drawn, his eyebrow in place for once. "Didn't see the window open and fell out."

Manning and Tomas crossed to the open window and leaned out to look. A ledge ran around the building about three feet below. Beyond its outer edge they could see Frank Reynolds crouching over the still body of Aimee Harper. He seemed to be stroking her hair.

Manning and the pre-med student looked at each other. Then the Professor walked to the telephone and called the police.

A LIEUTENANT from Homicide, two detectives and three patrolmen answered the summons. They covered the ground rapidly, photographing, checking for fingerprints and footprints and all the hundred other details.

Then the lieutenant brought his detectives and Reynolds back into room six-o-eight. The body of Aimee Harper was taken away.

"Before notifying the college president and beginning an official inquiry," the police officer said, "with all the red tape that it involves, I'd like to get your stories right here—you who were connected with this."

Tomas and Professor Manning exchanged a glance. The professor nodded as though giving the boy permission to speak.

"I think we can do more than that, Lieutenant," the student said. "We'll give you your murderer."

He waited then, while shock held the others in the room.

Elbert Conklin's eyebrow went up.

"You mean," he said deliberately, "that the murderer is one of us?"

"That's exactly what he means," Professor Manning replied. "Mr. Tomas and I saw the solution simultaneously."

"I'm waiting," the police officer said.

Tomas told the story of the night's experiment in hypnosis, including his own walk from the Honey Bowl and his sight of Aimee hurtling down from above.

The lieutenant turned and looked at Muscles Larue.

"Is he still hypnotized?" he asked. "Or is he out of it now?"

"Oh, he's out of it," Professor Manning assured him. "The post-hypnotic influence is a very strange thing. The subject is completely normal after being awakened, yet he has this strange impulse, which he himself cannot understand, to go and do something. And he is not happy until he has done it. Once that's off his mind, he is as free from suggestion as you or I."

"What was the suggestion?" the lieutenant demanded. "What was the order given him?"

Muscles looked blank.

"Search me," he said.

"He wouldn't know," the Professor corroborated.

The officer swung on Conklin.

"What was the order you gave him?"

The editor flushed, then went pale again. But he braced himself defiantly.

"I ordered him to come back here, wait for Aimee and kill her when she came!"

Frank Reynolds sobbed aloud and started for Conklin. A patrolman caught him and held him back. Conklin's nervous glance switched to the struggling youth.

"Don't be a fool, Frank!" he said sharply. "I was only doing it to break up the experiment. You know that you can't make a hypnotized man commit murder!"

"Mr. Conklin has a reputation for maliciousness to maintain," Manning said quietly.

"But she was murdered!" the lieutenant said. "So what about that, Mr. Conklin?"

"Of course she wasn't!" the editor snapped. "She walked in here in the dark, not putting on any lights—maybe she had a date with Frank there—and she fell out the window. It was an accident."

"No, it wasn't," Tomas said evenly. "She was murdered."

"Yeah? How do you know?"

"There's a ledge down below this window," the pre-med said. "If she'd fallen out of the window she'd have landed on the ledge. Somebody threw her out—threw her with strength enough to clear that ledge and go sailing down and out! See how far from the building she landed?"

There was silence again. Conklin glared around wildly.

"But it's impossible!" he shouted. His voice cracked foolishly and no one noticed. "You can't make a hypnotized man kill! Professor Manning said so!"

"Wait a minute!" Muscles Larue belatedly. "Are you tryin' to pin this on me? How do we know what you were doing all this time? Why is everybody so sure it was me who threw her out the window?"

"Because, Muscles," Tomas said. "You're the only one strong enough to throw her that far."

"But I couldn't!" the big man roared. "You heard the Professor—"

"I did. I heard him say that no one could make a hypnotized man do something that was morally repugnant to him, like stealing or killing. But sup-

(Concluded on page 113)

"The men were clouting McCann over the head with their canes, when I rushed to his defense"



THE GOOD LORD BARRINGTON

By LEO MARR

This self-styled British nobleman cut a wide swathe until he discovered to his dismay that crime really doesn't pay!

AN UNPOPULAR character named Hitler once remarked that if you told a big enough lie, a lot of people would believe you because they wouldn't dream anyone would have nerve enough to make up such a whopper. Unhappily, it was true.

Thirty years before Schickelgruber, there was an Englishman who called himself Lord Frederick Seymour Barrington, and who operated on the same vulpine philosophy, with similar, if milder results.

Lord Barrington descended upon the bucolic city of St. Louis in the year 1903, like a gift from the gods to its socially

ambitious mothers with unmarried daughters. It was an era of climbers, a time when having an earl to tea was a triumph paralleled only by an invitation to the White House. And to have one's daughter marry into Europe's nobility—matrons swooned at the thought.

Frederick Seymour Barrington was a wonderful catch. He was tall and handsome, always impeccably clothed, with polished, charming Old World manners. Moreover his lineage was positively dazzling.

"Had to get away from the ancestral acres, doncher know," he would say. A wave of the hand brought, magically, a

AN AMAZING TRUE CRIME STORY

vision of vast landed estates and frowning castles dating back to Richard the Lionhearted. "All that responsibility—mine some day, of course. But until then, a bit of a fling, a look at the world, a few wild oats before I settle down, haw! And of course I wanted to see Ameddica. Charming country, charming!"

Among those who succumbed to Lord Barrington's charm was the lovely Grace Cochran, elite daughter of one of St. Louis' most elite families. Considered the prettiest debutante in the Mississippi Valley, she had the inside track with Lord Barrington from the moment he saw her. She was a romantic little thing with dreams of a castle in Spain—or England—and she was a pushover for the Barrington line of gab.

"Grace—may I call you Grace? Ah, you'd love our English mornings with the mist rising from the meadows and the horses stamping outside, impatient for you to be up and away. I can hear the bugle of the master of hounds, see the red coats of the horsemen, smell the morning."

Grace Cochran sighed ecstatically, seeing herself mistress of all this romance and glamour. Or it might be a different sort of tale:

"Did I ever tell you about the time His Majesty, King Edward, and I almost broke the bank at Monte Carlo?" A little apologetic laugh at his own temerity in telling so naughty a story to a sweet young girl.

GRACE COCHRAN fell like a ton of brick. No small factor in his quick surrender was the fierce rivalry of other marriageable girls and their predatory mothers. Financial buccaneers who had made fortunes despoiling a continent now sought respectability avidly, and their wives who might well have started life with a scrub brush in one hand and a bucket in the other, now schemed night and day to crash the sacred purlieus of the Four Hundred. A title of course, was passport to any social circle in the world and to a little girl from St. Louis it meant a jump from one world to another.

Gracie Cochran and Lord Frederick Seymour Barrington were married with such speed that the bride even gave up her cherished dream of a huge wedding at the biggest church in St. Louis with

all the pomp and ritual that could be assembled about such an affair. It was a quick and quiet tying of the knot in a little church around the nearest corner.

After a brief honeymoon, Lord and Lady Barrington established themselves at the fashionable Southern Hotel in St. Louis. They lived in noble style, as befitted their station, and matched the easier tempo of the day. There were lavish parties and gay suppers, where champagne flowed like borscht. Bell-hops and maids actually competed for the privilege of serving them. The hotel management outdid itself in seeing that each want and whim was supplied instantly. Lady Barrington was fairly dazzled at the difference between the life of a lord and that of an ordinary being.

Came the dawn.

The management presented a statement. They pointed out, in some distress, that several bills had gone ignored. They were overwhelmed at having a lord as guest. But how about some cash on the line?

"Ah—er—my remittance from England seems to be somewhat delayed," Lord Barrington muttered. "Devilishly embarrassing, doncher know."

It became even more embarrassing as time went on. The management grew bitter. They stated, not unreasonably, that in the time Lord and Lady Barrington had stayed at the Southern Hotel, at least four remittances had had time to arrive.

Lord Barrington's protests fell upon ears grown suddenly inhospitable.

"Very sorry, my lord, but we shall have to ask you for your suite."

Lord and Lady Barrington were, to put it politely, tossed out, bag and baggage.

"Dashed outrage!" Lord Barrington fumed. "Mercenary beggars. Just because my solicitors in London have somehow failed to send my remittance!"

A sympathetic ear was lent by Mrs. Elliot, of West Belle Place.

"Why it's outrageous!" she agreed. "You two sweet things shall come and stay with me until your funds arrive."

Lord Barrington did not have to be coaxed. Especially since Mrs. Elliot was Grace's sister, and it was—ahem—little more than her duty to stand by in such an emergency.

Time marched on. Lord Barrington

and his wife continued to enjoy the hospitality of the Elliots. Nothing was heard from London. And at this point, Jimmy Cochran, Gracie's big brother, decided that the aroma of rodent was too plain to be missed. Lord Barrington, he decided, was a phony. He took himself to the Elliot home, where he found his lordship at ease.

"I've got a few things to say to you, Freddy," Cochran said ominously. He said them.

His Lordship blew a gasket and advanced to wreak physical vengeance upon this upstart who dared to insult him.

"And here's something else for you," Jimmy said.

He let go a left and right that connected with his lordship's chin and Barrington thudded to the floor where he remained limp as a dishrag until the police arrived to find out who had started the riot.

"This so-and-so had the nerve to talk my sister into marrying him," Jimmy said. "He's a swindler and a confidence man and he got only part of what's coming to him."

The police were impressed. They carted Lord Barrington off to the local bastille and tossed him into a cell, where he spent the night. Next morning he was arraigned, found guilty of misrepresenting himself, and also of disturbing the peace.

Not exactly tongue-tied, Lord Barrington rose to his own defense. Before a packed courtroom he delivered a magnificent harangue on the blindness of justice and his own purity of motive, soul and mind.

"Five hundred dollars and costs," said the judge.

"Er—sorry, Your Honor, I haven't a shilling."

"Six months in the workhouse."

THE idea of a titled ne'er-do-well making little ones out of big ones on the rock pile tickled the newspapers far and wide. They splashed Lord Barrington's troubles all over their pages. And as always in such cases, publicity brought forth new and unsuspected facts about his lordship's Ameddican career.

It seems that Frederick had not confined his romantic adventures to St. Louis. Working his way West, he had

bestowed his heart and title upon three other ladies in the country before meeting Grace Cochran. This brought him face to face with a possible bigamy charge, and of course automatically freed Grace Cochran who learned that she hadn't been legally married at all.

But a strange thing happened. Royalty hungry Americans gave Freddy sympathy instead of a kick in the pants.

"Shameful for a lord to be working on the rock pile," they said.

Somebody started a petition for his release and names piled up like snowflakes in January. Mayor Wells, yielding to the influential names on the sheet, turned him loose.

Deprived of a bed and three free meals a day, Lord Barrington found himself free but broke. He wandered into the famed Gillespie bar at Fourth and Pine Street, center for the St. Louis sporting crowd, and attached himself to the free lunch. His fame had preceded him and Gillespie suddenly had the idea that Barrington might be a good drawing card if kept on permanently. So he was offered a job and presently was master of ceremonies, mine host, or what have you. Certainly he had the appearance and manners—and wardrobe, in spite of his reverses.

He was a great success at Gillespie's. Crowds flocked to see him, and of course to buy. But success went to his lordship's head. He began to take too many things for granted—including a lot of loose change from the cash drawer. Regretfully Gillespie was forced to escort him to the door and kick him into the street.

Still looking the picture of the wealthy British sportsman, Barrington wandered into another bar and ran into Jim McCann. McCann was also a sportsman. He bet heavily on races, prize-fights and river boat races. He owned a string of ponies, a big house and a bank roll that would choke a crocodile. He liked his Scotch straight, with plain water as a chaser, and he liked good company. He thought Barrington was darned good company.

They became fast friends over the drinks McCann bought. And the American lent a sympathetic ear when Barrington confided that he was temporarily embarrassed in a financial way.

"Dashed solicitors in London, doncher know. I'll have a few things to say

about their negligence when I write."

McCann peeled a fifty off his roll and told Barrington to forget it.

"Not only that, but you're coming home with me to meet the wife. I know the genuine goods when I see it."

McCann introduced Barrington to his wife.

"Lord Barrington is going to live with us," he announced.

So Freddy's board problems were solved again at least temporarily. And on a lavish scale. The McCanns lived at the luxurious Hotel Leland on Franklin Avenue where the scale of living was high enough even for European nobility. And McCann was the kind of man who went all the way for a friend. Deciding that he liked Barrington, he did more than furnish him with meals and a room. He gave him money and gifts and took him everywhere. Barrington's wardrobe, always good, became fabulous. He was presented in the most exclusive circles of Mid-west society.

The old scandal about him seemed to have died away. His superb manner and his British accent charmed away all doubts. He was the most popular bachelor in St. Louis. And then all this milk and honey came to a sudden, unexpected end.

It was June. The spring floods that had sent the Mississippi raging against its levee were dying down. The air was balmy, the evenings long. Arm in arm, Jim McCann and his good friend Lord Barrington set out for the drug store to bring back some headache pills.

They were gone a long time. And then Barrington came back alone.

"Mr. McCann received a sudden, urgent message," he told Mrs. McCann. "He said you were not to worry, that he would be in touch with you." He gave her the pills.

Mrs. McCann was not worried. This sort of thing happened frequently. In pursuit of sporting events, McCann often disappeared overnight. Sure enough, next morning there was a telegram from him:

AM IN SAFE HANDS, WILL
RETURN IN SHORT TIME

J. M.

The following day there was a brief letter from him, telling her again that all was well and that he would be back shortly.

But another day passed, and a third, and Mrs. McCann began to feel stirrings of alarm. Lord Barrington, most solicitous, shared her growing concern. He went out to see what information he could gleam.

WHILE he was gone a telephone message came for Mrs. McCann. It was from Chicago and stated that "agents" had located her husband in that city and that he was all right. She told Barrington about it when the Englishman returned.

"Good," he said. "The message is from a private detective agency in Chicago which I engaged to trace your husband."

This solicitude backfired. It sounded phony to Mrs. McCann. She began to smell a rat, just as Jimmy Cochran had. On June 23, 1903, she informed the police that her husband was missing.

Sergeant Cabanne, ace detective of the St. Louis department was assigned to the case. He was not unduly alarmed. He knew gamblers and sportsmen of the McCann type, and these disappearances were not uncommon. When the gambling fever hit them they were apt to forget wives and families and everything else. The track season was now in full swing in all parts of the country. McCann had probably gone from one track to another, forgetting his wife completely.

But when Cabanne found that Barrington was living in the McCann apartment, the sergeant woke up and listened. This was a horse of a different color. Barrington was down on the police blotter as a man with a record. And now Cabanne also began to smell a rat—a large one.

He went to Western Union to check on the first telegram McCann was supposed to have sent. A clerk, who knew Barrington well, told him that the Englishman had sent the message to Mrs. McCann himself.

That was a nice hard, incontrovertible clue. Then Cabanne tried to run down the Chicago agency which Barrington said he had retained to trace McCann. That search turned up a man with a conscience that was bothering him. He admitted that Barrington had persuaded him to make the phone call to the Hotel Leland right from St. Louis, though he had told Mrs. McCann it was

Chicago calling.

"I thought it was just a harmless joke," he said miserably.

Inquiries in the neighborhood brought out a pattern of Barrington's movements. A hardware dealer contributed an interesting item.

"Mr. McCann bought a thirty-eight caliber revolver for Lord Barrington a few days before he disappeared," he told the detective. "Lord Barrington had reported prowlers were around the hotel at night and he wanted protection."

So Barrington was armed. That was a point to remember.

When Sergeant Cabanne got around to the race tracks he located a bookmaker who knew Lord Barrington well.

"The day after Jim McCann faded out," he said, "Barrington cashed betting checks for a hundred and fifty-nine dollars that belonged to McCann. But because they were such close friends, nobody thought anything about it."

It was plenty for Cabanne however. He went back to the Leland and found Barrington.

"You'll have to come along with me, sir," he said, "and answer some questions."

Barrington was unruffled. "I've been expecting you chaps to question me," he said. "I am most anxious to do my part in clearing up this mystery."

"Start clearing," Cabanne invited, when they got down to Headquarters.

"McCann and I went to the drug store," Barrington related. "As we were leaving, McCann suggested a quick trip to Suburban Gardens (a beer garden) and I agreed. McCann met two men and a woman there whom he knew. We ordered drinks. Shortly after midnight we left the Gardens and walked north along a dirt road which ran parallel with the suburban tracks. We walked about two and a half miles from the Loop entrance to the tracks.

"On the way, McCann began saying terrible things about his wife. I warned him against speaking so disrespectfully of her in the presence of others. As a result we got into a bit of an argument. We were near a large meadow and McCann and the woman walked into the field, while the two men and I remained talking on the tracks.

"Suddenly the woman screamed. We ran to her. The two men got there first and began striking McCann about the

head with their canes. I rushed to his defense and they turned on me, knocking me unconscious. When I came to, the battle was over. It was pitch dark and raining. I was lying in the ditch. McCann seemed all right and all four were talking. One man went for a hansom cab and came back, driving it himself. All got in, but before he did McCann came to me and said, 'I'm with friends. I'm going to take a trip with them. Lend me some money.'

"I gave him twenty-seven dollars and fifty cents which I had with me and they drove off. I remained in the ditch until daybreak and then went back to the hotel and told Mrs. McCann not to worry, that Jim was with friends."

SERGEANT Cabanne drew a deep breath. This was undoubtedly the whoppingest whopper he had ever heard. He didn't believe a word of it, but there was nothing he could prove or disprove, so he decided to lay low and wait for a break. He didn't have to wait long.

A Negro workman named Lewis Tucker found a nude corpse in an abandoned quarry at Bonfield, a nearby town. Cabanne took over. In a wheat field several hundred yards away, he found a pair of brown shoes. Nearer was a .38 cartridge, unfired, and five exploded ones. The broken, bloody handle of a razor was the next find. And under a trestle they turned up a man's shirt and undershirt, both splashed with blood. In one sleeve of the shirt was a gold cuff button bearing the initials "J.M."

Mrs. McCann identified the cuff button as her husband's, without hesitation. Evidence was accumulating, but Cabanne knew he still did not have enough for a case. Barrington might have done it; on the other hand he might have been telling the truth, or a reasonable facsimile thereof, and the two men and women might have done it. If they existed.

He continued the careful investigation. And in the porter at the Hotel Leland he struck pay dirt again.

"Mistah Barrington come home early the mornin' of the twentieth," he told the detective. "He was all over blood and dirt. He told me to get rid of his clothes and I tuk and put 'em in a barrel in the cellar."

The clothes were still there when Cabanne went to look for them, a dreadful,

stupid oversight on any murderer's part. They were Barrington's clothes and they were covered with blood. His goose was ready for the cooking.

When Cabanne and his squad closed in on his lordship, that distinguished member of the peerage was just preparing to move out by a side entrance of the hotel. He was a minute too late.

In the horse-drawn patrol wagon, Barrington gave more evidence that his cupidity was greater than his common sense. A patrolman saw him trying to get rid of a gold watch and chain and intercepted it before it could be thrown into the gutter. It was engraved with the fatal initials "J.M." Searching, the patrolman discovered, under the seat cushion, a gold signet ring with the same initials and a diamond scarf pin which was later also identified as belonging to McCann. The greedy Barrington had not been able to bring himself to part with these baubles which spelled life or death to him.

A trunk at the railway station under Barrington's name was opened and found crammed with clothes belonging to Jim McCann. Cabanne's case was pretty solid now and all he needed was positive identification of the decomposed corpse. A dentist supplied this by identifying bridgework. The case was complete.

Small bits of evidence completed the iron ring about Barrington. William Mott, a motorman on an electric train, testified he had passed Barrington several times on the track from Bonfield to St. Louis. Other trainmen spotted him

as the man who had ridden their train to the Bonfield quarry the night of the 19th in the company of a man who answered Jim McCann's description. It looked very much as if the two men and woman were pure inventions.

Frederick Seymour Barrington was convicted of murder in the first degree by a jury in complete agreement. The judge sentenced him to be hanged on April 23, 1904, when the St. Louis World's Fair was to be in full swing.

There was a stay of execution until March 15, 1906, a month before the San Francisco earthquake. Again there was a postponement until July 1, 1907.

Then, unexpectedly, on June 29, 1907 Governor Folk commuted his sentence to life imprisonment. The Barrington charm apparently was still at work. Nor was this the end. Ten years later, in 1917, he was set free, by whose grace nobody seems to know. He seemed to have an almost magical knack for making Americans do as he wished.

But his own countrymen were a bit more realistic. Scotland Yard heard that Barrington was free and Scotland Yard wanted him. There were several crimes still on the books charged with his name—and a little matter of a murder in England. There was even the matter of his name, for Barrington was not it. Freddie George Barton was his real name.

So America saw him leave, go back to England to the tender mercies of those who knew him best. And of those who knew him here, they could only think whatever he got he richly deserved.

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One of the men fired twice, and Mr. Murphy fell to the pavement

HOLDUP

By JACK KOFOED

The fear of vengeance lives and grows with a boy who was sole witness to murder, and when the dread day comes—

ALL boys enjoy the game of cops and robbers. When I was a kid, I loved it. Ever since I've remembered it. When I was little, I wanted to be a policeman. It seemed like the biggest and most important job in the world.

When I was about twelve years old, I lived in Philadelphia, and the cop on our beat was a big, red-faced man named Tim Murphy. He was nice, and never interfered with our street ball games. He even fixed it with the neighbors whenever we

broke a window pane. We were all crazy about Mr. Murphy and thought him better, and more important, than the President of the United States.

One summer afternoon, Mom sent me to the grocery to get a loaf of bread. I had just come out of the shop when an automobile stopped in front of Schmidfogel's jewelry store. At that time of the day there weren't many people on the streets. The men were working, and the women were home, getting dinner started.

It was very hot, and the sweat was running down the back of my neck. I thought how nice it would be under the trees at Willow Grove, with a picnic basket, but we didn't have much money then, and picnics were few and far between.

I stopped in the doorway of the store, looking at a pile of chocolate bars, and wishing I had one. That's the only reason the men in the automobile didn't see me. They were busy tying bandanna handkerchiefs, such as railroaders use, over their faces.

I knew who they were, because they lived on Warnock Street just back of us. They hung around Hartman's poolroom, and played snooker all day. Their names were Harry Wisniewski, Danny Phillips and Les Burcher. I didn't like them, because they were bullies and always kicked the little kids around.

The men jumped out of the car, leaving the motor running. All of them had pistols in their hands, and they rushed into the store, where Mr. Schmidfogel was standing behind the counter. I came out of the doorway and peeked. Mr. Schmidfogel had his hands up in the air, and his chin was hanging. He was the most surprised man I ever saw in my life. Two of the thieves were back of the counter, grabbing things out of the showcases and cash register.

IF COURSE I had been to enough movies to know a holdup when I saw one happen right under my nose. At first, I thought of running for Mr. Murphy, but just about this time each day he stopped in at Hess' saloon for a glass of beer. It would take too long to reach him. The Warnock Street gang would be gone by the time I got back.

It never occurred to me that I could tell Mr. Murphy who they were, and they would be arrested anyway. I was afraid they would get me for it. But, I wanted to help Mr. Schmidfogel if I could do it without being hurt, for he was a nice man, who bought me ice cream cones once in a while. Then I thought: "They'll need that car to get away in. They can't run around Germantown Avenue with masks on."

The men in the store were too busy to notice me, so I went around to the street side of the car. I yanked the ignition key out of the switch, and threw it across the street. Then I ran, because those guys would kick my teeth out if they found out what I had done.

But I couldn't pull myself away from drama like that, so I stopped halfway up the block, and waited to see what would happen. I had dropped the loaf of bread, and was scared to go back for it, even though I knew Mom would give me plenty for that when I got back home.

The robbers came out of the store. One of them carried a big, canvas bag. No sooner were they on the sidewalk than the burglar alarm above the door began to jangle and shrill. Afterward I found that Mr. Schmidfogel had locked the door, and lain down on the floor with his hand on the button that started the alarm.

The Warnock Street men jumped nervously. They had done little jobs before, but this was their first big one, and they were easily startled. They went for the car, and when they saw the key was gone, they cursed like I never heard anyone curse before.

Mr. Murphy came running up the street. He must have heard the alarm while he was finishing his beer, because there was a wisp of foam on his mustache. His face was almost purple from the heat and exertion, and he panted and yanked at the pistol in his holster. The men threw down the canvas bag, and pelted past me as fast as they could go. They were too busy to notice a small boy at that moment. One of them turned and fired twice. The sharp reports made me jump.

Mr. Murphy fell down on the hot pavement. He twitched a little, and lay very still. I began to cry, because I knew he was dead, and I loved Mr. Murphy more than any other man in the world except my pop. It was then that I made up my mind I was going to get the three men for what they had done.

The men ran around the corner. I edged along the store fronts and took a look. There was nobody else in sight, except the three of them. They stopped, took off the bandannas and threw them and the pistols down a sewer culvert. They were all pretty white and shaken, and didn't seem to know what to do.

"You killed Murphy," said Burcher, his voice shaking. "Why in blazes did you have to do that?"

Wisniewski tried to swagger it through. "So all right," he said. "So you're all in it as much as I am. He had it comin' to him, the fool. There's only one thing to do. Nobody saw us. Let's go back, and say we heard shots, and what's the matter? It's the only way out."

Danny Phillips began to snifle.

"Shut up," said Harry Wisnewski. "If you tip this off, I'll kill you just as quick as I did Murphy."

I just had time to duck into Orr's hardware store next to the corner when they came past, running. I ran after them.

A pretty big crowd had gathered by this time. They all stared at Mr. Murphy, who lay crumpled and still on the sidewalk, and listened to Mr. Schmidfogel, who had picked up the bag and was talking very fast and loud.

"What happened?" Harry asked, and made a clucking sound with his lips, when he saw Mr. Murphy.

A patrol wagon rumbled up, and a half dozen cops and plainclothes men jumped out, including Mr. O'Brien, the detective lieutenant, who was in charge.

THE Warnock Street crowd separated, and mingled with other people, and kept saying: "Ain't it too bad about Mr. Murphy?" and things like that.

That is, Danny and Les did, but Harry didn't say anything after his first remark, and he didn't look at Mr. Murphy again.

Mr. O'Brien began asking questions, but no one had any answers. Mr. Schmidfogel couldn't tell who the bandits were, because of the bandanna handkerchiefs. But he was so flustered he wouldn't have been of much use anyway.

No one else had seen what happened. The automobile wouldn't prove anything, because it had been stolen from Mr. Harrison, who lived on Somerset Street. I knew the police would not find any fingerprints for all the men had worn gloves.

"So nobody knows anything, hey?" the lieutenant said in a flat and disgusted voice.

I edged up to him, and whispered:

"I do, Mr. O'Brien. Don't talk loud, 'cause I'm awful scared."

"All right, son," he said. "What is it?"

I told him about taking the key out of the switch, and throwing it across the street. By this time the ambulance had arrived, and the men in white were putting Mr. Murphy's body on a stretcher. This caused everybody to crowd up as close as they could. Nobody paid any attention to Mr. O'Brien or me. Then I told

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him about how they shot Mr. Murphy, and ran around the corner, and threw their pistols and handkerchiefs down the culvert.

Mr. O'Brien's face kept getting brighter and brighter, and he patted me on the shoulder. Of course, we were talking low, because I didn't want the Warnock Street bunch to hear me. It was still scared, and if they hadn't killed Mr. Murphy, I would have gone home without saying anything.

A policeman went across the street, and scrambled in the gutter until he found the key. That proved to Mr. O'Brien I had been telling the truth.

"Look, boy," he said, "you'd make a better cop than most of the lunkheads who are workin' for me. Just one more thing. Think hard. Would you know these men again if you saw them?"

"Sure, I know them, Mr. O'Brien," I said. "They are Harry Wisnewski and Danny Phillips and Les Burcher. It was Harry who shot Mr. Murphy. They're right here in the crowd, because they thought if they came back nobody would know they did it."

Well, Mr. O'Brien called a couple of his men, and they grabbed the Warnock Street boys without warning. They screamed bloody murder.

"It's a bum rap," Wisnewski kept saying. "You ain't got a thing on us, copper. We'll sue you for false arrest."

That didn't get them anything. They were bundled into the patrol wagon. By this time the whole neighborhood knew what had happened. Mom came out, and she was so excited she forgot to scold me for losing the bread.

I didn't want anybody to know I had told the police, but in five minutes everybody did. They said I was a hero, and everything like that, and Mr. Schmidfogel gave me a ten-dollar gold piece, because if it hadn't been for me, he would have lost all his jewelry.

Of course, I was the star witness at the trial. I felt a little funny sitting in the witness chair, and looking at Harry and Danny and Les. They were all cleaned up, and had new clothes, and looked better than I had ever seen them before. I kept thinking that, if it hadn't been for me, they would be in Hartman's poolroom, playing snooker, instead of being tried for their lives. It made me uncomfortable.

Maybe it was because I was the only

witness, but while they were convicted, it was for armed robbery and manslaughter instead of murder, which would have meant the death sentence. So, they were given twenty to thirty years in the Eastern penitentiary.

When the judge pronounced sentence, Harry Wisnewski turned around and looked at me.

"You dirty little rat," he said. "If it wasn't for you, we wouldn't be in this jam. By the time I get out of stir you'll be grown up, but you can't go anywhere I won't find you. I'll kill you for this. I'll cut the heart out of you—"

QUICKLY the policeman grabbed his arm, and jerked it. He was a big man and must have squeezed pretty hard, because Harry winced, and the sweat came out on his forehead.

"Shut up," the cop said, "or I'll give you a goin' over you won't like when we get out of court."

That night, on the front pages of the *Bulletin* and *Ledger*, there were pictures of the Warnock Street boys, and of me—and I was a hero all over again. But, I kept thinking of what Harry Wisnewski said—and how his eyes glared—and what looked like foam at the edges of his mouth. That made me scared again, because at home there were no policemen to look after me if anything happened.

It got so I didn't sleep well and would wake up screaming. Finally Mother went to see Mr. O'Brien, and he came to the house to talk to me.

"There's no use bein' scared, son," he said. "They won't be out of the pen for twenty years at least. By that time they won't be so tough, and you'll be big and husky, and able to take care of yourself. Don't worry about it, son. Everything will be all right."

Well, it sounded all right, and reasonable enough, but I couldn't get over that experience in a hurry. Neurotic? Maybe. Or, maybe it was only that some things make a deep impression on a boy's mind, and dig in, and stay there in spite of everything he can do. While I was living in Philadelphia, I used to call up Mr. O'Brien every once in awhile, and ask if the Warnock Street boys were still in jail.

The detective would laugh, and say:

"Sure. It ain't often anybody breaks out of the Eastern penitentiary."

But I always held my breath when I opened the newspaper in the morning, fearing I'd see a story that Harry Wisniewski was on the loose.

Even when I went to college, I'd have occasional nightmares, and in them Wisniewski was gunning for me. I'd wake up in a sweat, and it would take a long time for me to get back to sleep again.

I got back to Philadelphia occasionally after I started working and would see the people around Germantown Avenue. My old friends knew how I felt, and they kind of laughed at me for being a silly billy, but that didn't help.

Hartman's poolroom, where the War-nock Street crowd used to hang out, was closed, and a delicatessen store was in its place. Of course, the old crowd who had been Wisniewski's friends would have been scattered by this time, anyway, but I was glad the poolroom had disappeared.

"A good thing, too," Mr. O'Brien said once when I went to see him. "There were probably more bums developed in that joint than any place in the neighborhood. I always thought Hartman was a fence, but I never could pin anything on him."

So what? I didn't care about any other hoodlums than Harry Wisniewski, and he was stuck away in the pen for from twenty to thirty years. Still, I kept thinking, he might get time off for good behavior, and sooner or later he would be out. I remembered how he had looked at me in the courtroom, even though I was only twelve years old, and how the saliva had dribbled from the corners of his mouth.

I knew he would try to kill me some day. I was sure of it. No matter how much time passed, Harry would hate me more than anybody else in the world. I remembered the look on his face when he had shot Mr. Murphy. There was something of the rat about him—gray and little-eyed, and you could almost imagine the musty smell.

The years went by. One after the other, treading on each other's heels. They went fast for me, but they must have been going very slowly for Harry Wisniewski and his pals in the routine of prison life.

One day is twenty-four hours. Twenty-four hours make fourteen hundred and forty minutes. That amounts to eighty-

[Turn page]



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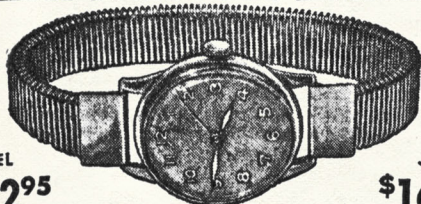
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six thousand and four hundred seconds. In twenty years it would be more than sixty-three billion seconds, and for every one of them Harry Wisniewski would hate me more and more. He'd have to kill me. He couldn't do anything else. No one could endure that accumulation of hate without killing.

I don't mean to say I went on worrying day in and out, but fear rode in on me at odd moments. It might be in a subway train, where I'd see another passenger who reminded me of Harry. Or, perhaps in the middle of the night, I'd wake up and imagine I saw his eyes burning at me through the darkness.

There was a feeling of certainty in my heart that some day he would come looking for me. Then, I'd lie on the pavement, or the floor, or whatever it was, the way Mr. Murphy had on the hot cement of Germantown Avenue.

It didn't make sense, but that's the way it was.

MORE years went by and I was doing very well with the advertising firm I had joined in New York. I was married to a wonderful girl and had a couple of swell kids. The memory of Harry Wisniewski and the Warnock Street mob faded so that only occasionally did dreams about him bother me.

One afternoon I came back from lunch feeling very happy. The boss had told me I'd been elected a vice-president of the firm, and my salary was upped along with the promotion. I called my wife on the phone, and we held a mutual cheering session. It was a lovely, lovely day.

My secretary, Miss Allison, came in.

"There's a man who wants to see you," she said. But she didn't get a chance to finish, because the man pushed in past her.

Miss Allison looked at him indignantly.

"You can't come in here," she told him.

"Dry up, sister," he said, "and beat it. This is very, very private."

He pushed her through the door and slammed it shut.

I looked at the man who was standing there, one hand in the pocket of his coat.

"Who are you?" I asked, aroused by his roughness.

"You ought to know," he said. "Look at me. I'm Harry Wisnewski. They let me out of the pen yesterday, and I came to see you as fast as I could. That was plenty clubby of me, don't you think?"

I gulped, my mouth suddenly dry as ashes.

"What's the matter?" the man went on. "Ain't you feelin' good? You look awful pale."

I shut my eyes for a minute. All the things that had happened on German-town Avenue that summer afternoon so long ago were vivid in my memory. It wasn't possible, but what I feared had finally caught up with me.

I opened my eyes and looked at Wisnewski again. If I had met him casually on the street, I wouldn't have known him. He had been tall and good looking in a common sort of way, with slicked down hair. Now he was an old man, with dragged down shoulders, and veins on the back of the one hand I could see. Prison had done a lot to him.

If only I had a gun in my desk! Being afraid, as I had been for so many years, it was criminal that I had neglected to get one. If only—!

At least I would have had the chance of shooting it out instead of being a target. I thought of rushing him, but I was standing behind the desk, and by the time I could get around it, he could pump half a dozen bullets into me.

Wasn't it ironical? A few minutes before I had been the happiest man in the world. Now I was the most frightened.

"It's a laugh, you havin' a secretary," Harry said. "The last time I saw you, you were just a dirty-faced kid." He paused, and his eyes narrowed. "Remember the last time I saw you?"

That had been in the courtroom, when Wisnewski threatened to kill me. He must have seen that I remembered, for a queer glint came into his eyes. There wasn't any use ducking it, and my nerves wouldn't let me just stand there and talk.


"All right, Harry," I said, trying to keep my voice from doing jumps. "What's on your mind?"

I knew what was on his mind, but I had to bring it out into the open.

"What do you think?" he asked.

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"I was just a kid," I said. "I did what any other kid would have done. I guess if you hadn't killed Mr. Murphy, I wouldn't have said anything, but Mr. Murphy—"

"Shut up," he said. "It don't make no difference why you did it. The main idea is that you got me stuck away in stir all this time. You can't even begin to understand what that's like. A guy sits in his cell, and he thinks and thinks until his mind spins around like a top. He thinks about the time he was on the outside, and could do what he wanted. Then he remembers how long it will be until he's on the outside again."

The hand in his pocket twitched. I thought he was going to pull the trigger, and my whole body froze.

Then I said to myself: It's good-by to everything—to Myra and the kids and my job. I'm going to die right here in this office, but if I have to die, I'd better do it like a man. What good would it do to beg and crawl? I would only be demeaning myself.

"Okay, Harry," I said. "You're stir crazy. You came here to kill me. You've twenty years in the pen behind you. All that's ahead is the electric chair, if you knock me off."

WISNEWSKI grinned crookedly.

"That might not be so bad," he said. "It's quick, anyway—quicker than time in the Big House."

"Go ahead," I said. "You did it fast to Mr. Murphy. He never knew what hit him. Why fool around with me?"

Wisnewski sat down in a chair by the door, putting the width of the office between him and me. He kept his right hand in his coat pocket. There was no chance of catching him off guard. I wondered about Miss Allison. She didn't know about the thing that had been worrying me, so it wouldn't occur to her to call the police.

"I did a lot of thinking in jail," Harry said.

"About me?"

"Yeah, about you. When they sprung me, the warden gave me ten dollars, and a lot of advice I didn't need. The ten got me to New York, and paid for a room and a meal. A pal of mine loaned me his gun. That's all I got now—the gun. I ain't got enough dough to get back to Philadelphia,

even if I wanted to go there."

"If you use that gun on me, you won't need carfare to Philadelphia. The only ride you'll take will be from the Tombs to the Death House, and the state will pay for that."

"You did me a dirty trick, kid," Wisniewski answered, "and if I rubbed you out, it wouldn't even up what's happened to me. But, I ain't so old yet. There's a chance for me to have a little fun. If you—"

Then I knew what he was driving at. He wanted me to buy my life. All he wanted was money. I could have jumped into the air and yelled with joy. If I gave him every nickel I had, it would be a cheap deal. Buy my life? Of course, I would.

"How much do you want?" I asked.

"Twenty grand," he said, "one for each year I put in at the Eastern penitentiary."

"Okay. You can have it."

Harry scratched the stubble of whiskers on his cheek. "You got it here?" he asked.

"Certainly not. I'll have to send Miss Allison to the bank with a check."

"You gave in awful quick," said Wisniewski. "No tricks now. Danny Phillips is in this with me. You pull a quickie, and he'll finish you tomorrow."

"No tricks," I agreed, "if you'll get out of the country, and leave me alone."

The ex-convict let out a thin little sigh.

"All right," he said. "Call the dame in."


I pressed the buzzer, and Miss Allison entered. She seemed a little flustered, and perhaps a bit resentful at the way this shabby stranger had treated her. But she also seemed a little relieved that nothing unpleasant had happened.

Harry came over to the desk to watch while I wrote a check for twenty thousand dollars. Probably he wanted to make sure I didn't slip her a note, tipping off the deal.

"Take this to the bank right away, Miss Allison," I said, "and get back as fast as you can."

She looked me hard in the eyes and must have guessed this was blackmail. I was afraid she would say something that would frighten Wisniewski, and in his obvious mental state, I was afraid he would begin shooting up the place. Even after

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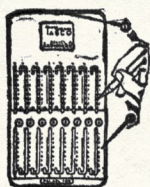
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DEALERS WRITE

twenty years he might have a touchy trigger finger. There had been no need for killing Mr. Murphy. The Warnock Street gang could have outrun him without difficulty.

"Shall I—?" Miss Allison began.

"There's just one thing for you to do," I said brusquely. "Get to the bank and back as fast as you can. It shouldn't take more than ten minutes."

"Yes, sir," she said, starting across the room.

The door of the outer office opened and closed. A bulky man with white hair and a close cropped pepper and salt mustache, entered, and came straight to the open door of my office. Wisnewski took his hand out of his coat pocket, and seemed to shrivel. The man was Mr. O'Brien, the Philadelphia detective lieutenant. At the sight of his broad red face all my cares vanished into thin air.

"Hello, Mr. O'Brien," I said. "I'm certainly glad you came."

"Your secretary called me, and I hurried right over." He looked at my visitor, and whistled. "Don't the darnedest things happen, though?"

"You mean Harry Wisnewski being here?"

Mr. O'Brien looked around with a startled air.

"Wisnewski? Where?"

"Right here." I pointed.

Mr. O'Brien burst into a roar of laughter.

"That's not Wisnewski. Harry tried a jail break, and nearly killed two guards, and they gave him ten years extra. I don't think he'll live his term out. You'll never have to worry about him again."

"Then who is this guy?"

"Why, that," said Mr. O'Brien, "is Joe Hartman, who used to run the poolroom, where Harry and the boys hung out. What did he try to pull on you?"

"He made me think he was Wisnewski, and wanted twenty thousand dollars for not killing me."

Mr. O'Brien honked with laughter again.

"Fear is a funny thing, son," he said. "It can get you into a lot of unnecessary trouble. Everybody along Germantown Avenue knew you were scared of what

might happen when Harry Wisnewski came out of jail. Joe knew it as well as anybody else. He probably figured you hadn't seen either Harry or him since you were twelve years old, and wouldn't recognize him. So he thought it would be pretty easy to shake you down. Didn't you, Hartman?"

The former poolroom owner nodded sullenly.

Mr. O'Brien took a pair of handcuffs from his pocket and neatly clipped them over Hartman's wrists. Joe didn't resist. He just stood there, looking as though the end of the world had come. It had—for him.

"Fear is one thing," said Mr. O'Brien, "and luck is another. The New York Department has been looking for Hartman and they asked me to come over, to help them. He had tried that old confidence game stuff on a couple of credulous women. The boys up here figured I knew more about Joe than they did. When I got in town I called your office to tell you that you didn't have to worry about Harry Wisnewski any more. You weren't in, so I left my phone number with Miss Allison.

[Turn page]

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When this character showed up, she called me."

"But, why?" I asked, turning to my secretary. "I never said anything about Wisniewski to you, Miss Allison. If you called the police about every crackpot who comes to see me, we'd have detectives here all the time."

Miss Allison smiled for the first time.

"You didn't tell me, sir," she said, "but your wife did. She told me all about Harry Wisniewski, and told me to call the police any time I suspected something was wrong."

Mr. O'Brien took Joe Hartman by the elbow.

"We'll take a little ride down to headquarters," he said. "You have a smart secretary there, son. She rates a dinner and theater tickets for what she did."

"Sure," I said, "sure. That and a good, fat raise, too. This has cured me. I'll never be afraid of anything else as long as I live."

But, you know, it was funny. As Mr. O'Brien and Hartman went out the door, I thought of Harry Wisniewski.

"Ten years more," I said to myself. "I wonder if he'll still want to come after me then. Heck, I've got ten years to worry about that!"

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(Continued from page 9)

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Here are some letters right out of our mail bag:

I have been reading **BLACK BOOK DETECTIVE** since '38 or '39. This is the only book of this type that I read. When I went into the Navy in '42 I missed a lot of the copies but I am trying to make up for it now. I just finished reading **THE CRIME TO COME** and enjoyed every chapter of it. The short stories are good also. I wish you could put this book out more often.—*J. H. Rohrer, Marysville, Calif.*

Of all the magazines that I read **BLACK BOOK DETECTIVE** is tops. Tony Quinn is super, but the short stories are even better sometimes. How about more stories featuring Detective Mugs Kelly? Mugs is a howl and is always good for a laugh a minute with me, so how about putting him in some longer stories?—*Bristol Thomas, Augusta, Maine.*

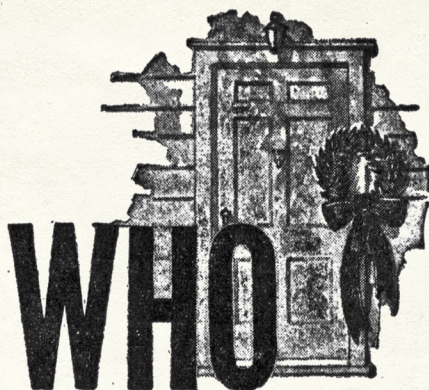
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TECTIVE? I think it would be interesting if Carol Baldwin played a larger part with Tony Quinn in solving the cases. Also that there be a little more romance between them. They don't have to get married, but there should be more romance. I am fond of all detective stories.—*Mrs. Irene O'Donnell, Oak Ridge, Tenn.*

How about getting Tony Quinn mixed up with the FBI sometime? It could be a case involving counterfeiting, smuggling, or maybe the hot car racket.—*Les Deeter, Vandalia, Ill.*

I would like to see some true articles in **BLACK BOOK DETECTIVE**, explaining police methods and how detectives work. I think it would be very interesting. **THE CRIME TO COME**, by G. Wayman Jones, was excellent. Keep up the good work.—*Kyle J. Kavanaugh, Poughkeepsie, N.Y.*

I'll bet you won't print this, but I thought **THE CRIME TO COME** was below your usual standard. Why don't you print some better stories, like you used to?—*Tom Porsorski, Lincoln, Neb.*

I read **THE CRIME TO COME** over and over again, I thought it was so good. Up here in Canada we like your **BLACK BOOK DETECTIVE**. It doesn't come out nearly often enough to suit us.—*Felice Busi, Regina, Canada.*

Let's have more stories like **THE CRIME TO COME** and you will have me for a faithful reader. I would like to read a story in which Tony Quinn gets a Seeing Eye dog. Maybe it could be part of a plot by Captain McGrath to show up that Tony really isn't blind. Anyway I would like to read a story with a dog in it. I think **BLACK BOOK DETECTIVE** is a good book.—*James Aldous, Jr., Bluff, Utah.*

Well, friends, thanks for all the nice things you had to say. However, if you have only brickbats to offer, let's hear from you, too! We'll print them all in this column, bouquets and brickbats alike, as space permits. So let's have your letters and postcards. Kindly address all communications to The Editor, **BLACK BOOK DETECTIVE**, 10 East 40th Street, New York 16, N. Y. So long—until next issue!

—THE EDITOR.

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POST-HYPNOTIC

(Concluded from page 92)

pose, Muscles—suppose killing was not repugnant to you? Then what?"

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It took the combined efforts of all the policemen to pull him off, and Conklin was half strangled when he was at last released.

With order restored, the police lieutenant found himself chewing on his pencil.

"So Larue killed her," he said. "But he did it under hypnotic orders from Conklin—so who is the killer?"

"That," said Professor Manning, "is something for the court to decide. All we can tell you is this: Conklin, out of malice, made that suggestion to Larue. Whether he knew Larue was capable of murder or not, we'll never know. Maybe he did it just to break up the experiment, as he says. But Larue was morally capable of murder. If you dig back in his past far enough, Lieutenant, you'll probably find corroboration of that. And so Larue had no struggle with his conscience, but did go ahead and commit the murder.

"The strange thing about it is that he did it subconsciously, under hypnotic control and not really aware of what he was doing. The problem therefore is—which of these men is the real murderer?"

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BY GROUCHO MARX

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On second thought, you'd better keep on saving, chum. Otherwise you're licked.

For instance, how are you ever going to build



that Little Dream House, without a trunk full of moolah? You think the carpenters are going to work free? Or the plumbers? Or the architects? Not those lads. They've been around. They're no dopes.

And how are you going to send that kid of yours to college, without the folding stuff?

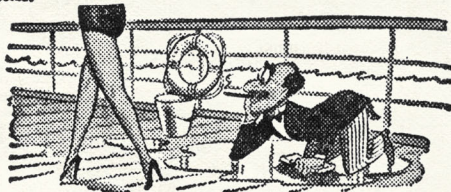
Maybe you think he can work his way through by playing the flute.

If so, you're crazy. (Only three students have ever worked their way through college by playing the flute. And they had to stop eating for four years.)

And how are you going to do that world-traveling you've always wanted to do? Maybe you think you can stoke your way across, or scrub decks. Well, that's no good. I've tried it. It interferes with shipboard romances.

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So stick with the Payroll Plan, son—and you can't lose.

SAVE THE EASY WAY... BUY YOUR BONDS THROUGH PAYROLL SAVINGS

Contributed by this magazine in co-operation
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Will You Let Me PROVE I Can Make YOU a New Man?



LET ME START SHOWING YOU RESULTS LIKE THESE

<p>5 inches of new Muscle</p> <p>"My arms increased 11 1/2", chest 2 1/2", forearm 7/8". — C. S., W. Va.</p>	<p>What a difference!</p> <p>"Have put 3 1/2" on chest (normal) and 2 1/2" expanded." — F. S., N. Y.</p>
<p>Here's what ATLAS did for ME!</p> <p>John Jacobs BEFORE John Jacobs AFTER</p>	<p>For quick results I recommend CHARLES ATLAS</p> <p>"Am sending snapshot showing wonderful progress." — W. G., N. J.</p> <p>GAINED 29 POUNDS</p> <p>"When I started, weighed only 141. Now 170." — T. K., N. Y.</p>

CHARLES ATLAS

Awarded the title of "The World's Most Perfectly Developed Man" in international contest — in competition with ALL men who would consent to appear against him. This photo of Charles Atlas is not a studio picture but an actual untouched snapshot.

Here's What Only 15 Minutes a Day Can Do For You

I DON'T care how old or young you are, or how ashamed of your present physical condition you may be. If you can simply raise your arm and flex it I can add **SOLID MUSCLE** to your biceps—yes, on each arm—in double-quick time! Only 15 minutes a day—right in your own home—is all the time I ask of you! And there's no cost if I fail.

I can broaden your shoulders, strengthen your back, develop your whole muscular system **INSIDE** and **OUTSIDE**! I can add inches to your chest, give you a vise-like grip, make those legs of yours lithe and powerful. I can shoot new strength into your old backbone, exercise those inner organs, help you cram your body so full of pep, vigor and red-blooded vitality that you won't feel there's even "standing room" left for weakness and that lazy feeling! Before I get through with you I'll have your whole frame "measured" to a nice, new beautiful suit of muscle!

with. When you have learned to develop your Strength through "Dynamic Tension" you can laugh at artificial muscle-makers. You simply utilize the **DORMANT** muscle-power in your own God-given body—watch it increase and multiply double-quick into real solid **MUSCLE**.

My method—"Dynamic Tension"—will turn the trick for you. No theory—every exercise is practical. And man, so easy! Spend only 15 minutes a day in your own home. From the very start you'll be using my method of "Dynamic Tension" almost unconsciously every minute of the day—walking, bending over, etc.—to **BUILD MUSCLE** and **VITALITY**.

FREE BOOK

"Everlasting Health and Strength"

In it I talk to you in straight-from-the-shoulder language. Packed with inspirational pictures of myself and pupils—fellows who became **NEW MEN** in strength, my way. Let me show you what I helped **THEM** do. See what I can do for **YOU**! For a real thrill, send for this book today. **AT ONCE, CHARLES ATLAS**, Dept. 6, 115 East 23rd St., New York 10, N. Y.

What's My Secret?

"Dynamic Tension!" That's the ticket! The identical natural method that I myself developed to change my body from the scrawny, skinny-chested weakling I was at 17 to my present super-man physique! Thousands of other fellows are becoming marvelous physical specimens—my way. I give you no gadgets or contraptions to fool

CHARLES ATLAS, Dept. 476.
115 East 23rd St., New York 10, N. Y.

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

Name..... Age.....
(Please print or write plainly)

Address.....

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





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