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G. WAYMAN JONES

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A Satan Hall Novelet
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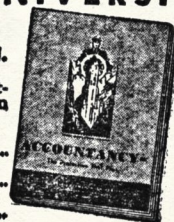
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BLACK BOOK DETECTIVE

Vol. XXVI, No. 1

A THRILLING PUBLICATION

March, 1949

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By **G. Wayman Jones**

The shadow of wealthy empire-builder J. Perry Wade hung over a series of revolting crimes—and sent Tony Quinn, the Masked Nemesis of Crime known as the Black Bat, on the trail of a grim conspiracy! **13**

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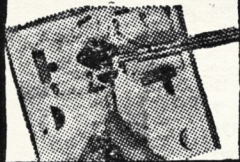
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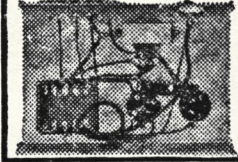
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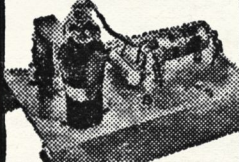
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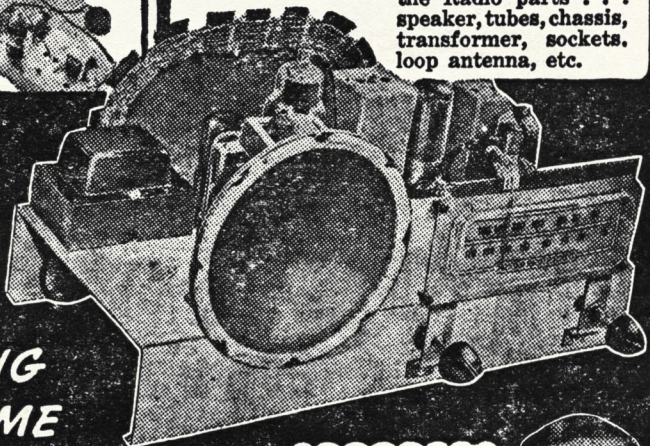


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OFF THE RECORD

A DEPARTMENT WHERE READERS AND THE EDITOR MEET

CAROL BALDWIN was a demure blonde, almost small enough to be petite. She was waiting for Tony Quinn in his laboratory and went straight into his arms when he came there. Quinn held her tightly for a moment.

Carol's blue eyes sparkled as she looked up at the famous "blind" assistant district attorney.

"There's something on the fire, Tony," she said. "I could tell by your voice when you phoned for me to come here."

He led her to a leather davenport and they sat facing the white-tiled tables and cabinets filled with chemicals and apparatus.

"We are in for something, Carol," he told her. "You recall how I've commented on the sudden and unexplained rise in juvenile crime lately. Well, tonight it really broke. A gang commanded by an ugly young punk named Joey Belding was burglarizing an apartment when a patrolman spotted them. Joey shot him. Fortunately, the patrolman did not die."

"How awful, Tony," Carol commented. "Do you think someone has organized these boys?"

"I did think so until I received fairly reliable information that the gangs are only organized into small units, led by themselves, and have no contact with one another. In fact, the gangs are highly jealous and always scrapping."

Startling News

Before they could discuss the situation any further, Butch O'Leary, Tony's powerful helper, came in. He brought the news that Joey Belding, in jail for his shooting of the policeman, showed absolutely no fear of the consequences.

Tony Quinn realized why, a moment later, when from Police Headquarters he received several more startling pieces of news. One, that Joey Belding had been released on bail—a fifty thousand dollar sum that a sharp

lawyer had promptly put up. Second, that the wounded patrolman had died!

Finally, Joey Belding was now wanted for murder, and was nowhere to be found!

It was time for the Black Bat to go into action. Quickly removing his own clothing, Tony Quinn donned the somber regalia that struck terror into the hearts of the lawless. He donned crepe-soled shoes, a black suit and a jet black shirt. He put on tight fitting black gloves and, last of all, pulled on the hood which fitted over his head snugly.

With Butch O'Leary's help, the Black Bat soon traced Joey Belding to a house on the Connecticut shore. There were fresh tire marks on the dirt lane.

"Get ready for trouble," the Black Bat whispered. "Could be that Joey didn't come here alone. You cover the front of the house and I'll try to get in through the rear."

A Scream of Terror

Moving alone, the Black Bat saw the car parked beneath the trees. The door beside the driver's seat was open. The Black Bat was still fifty feet from the house when the shot came. It was from within the house, but unmistakably clear. It was followed by a scream of terror. Almost immediately, someone darted from the house and into the car. It swung away fast.

The Black Bat broke into a swift run. The car's tail light was disappearing by the time he reached his own coupe. Once he got it going, however, he picked up speed at a surprising rate. Reaching under his coat now, he drew his automatic. Though driving with one hand, he was gaining ground every second. Soon he was close enough to make out a form hunched over the wheel. The Black Bat thrust his left hand out of the window, leveled the gun and fired one warning shot.

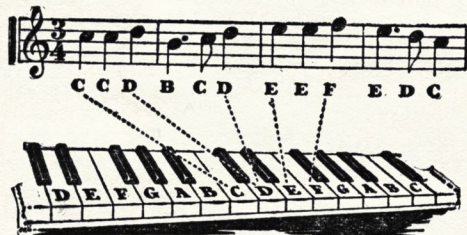
The car ahead swerved wildly, but kept on going. The Black Bat aimed at the rear

(Continued on page 8)

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OFF THE RECORD

(Continued from page 6)

window and put a bullet through it. Still the car kept on going. Now, he waited until he was rolling close behind it. Transferring his foot to the brake, he fired three quick shots and saw the rear left tire of the car ahead go flat.

The sedan weaved crazily, went off the road and crashed through some underbrush. The Black Bat had stopped his coupe by then and was already out of it and running toward the sedan.

A Deadly Match

He saw a man emerge from the sedan and start moving toward the brush. The Black Bat fired at him, placing the bullet dangerously close. The fleeing form skidded to a stop to the accompaniment of a plaintive wail for mercy.

It wasn't Joey Belding! It was a boy of no more than sixteen, pale and shaking. Then the boy asked a surprising question.

"Did—did you k-kill Joey?" the boy asked.

"Is Joey dead?" the Black Bat gasped in surprise.

The boy said that he was. He had come to this house with Joey Belding, not knowing whom Joey planned to meet there. The electricity in the house was cut off and Joey had struck a match. Immediately, the shot came—and Joey fell.

A quick search of the house showed the boy was right. Using Butch's flashlight, they found Joey Belding. Joey lay exactly where the boy said he'd fallen. There was still a burned match between his fingers. When he'd struck that match and made a target of himself, a murderer had fired at pointblank range.

"Who could have done it?" Butch asked.

"I don't know," the Black Bat answered slowly. "But it seems to me that so long as the wounded patrolman was alive, and seemed likely to survive his bullet wounds, Joey was a fair-haired boy for whom an attorney was furnished along with a fifty thousand dollar bail. But when the patrolman died, Joey became a menace. Because Joey, slated for the electric chair, might have talked."

"I thought you said there wasn't an organizer for all this kid stuff," Butch protested. "And what you infer now makes it

(Continued on page 10)

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OFF THE RECORD

(Continued from page 8)

seem there must be. If Joey was bumped to keep his mouth shut, then someone would have been in trouble if he sang.”

“That’s right, Butch,” the Black Bat said grimly. “The murder of Joey Belding makes it plain. Someone is behind this—someone whose efforts have resulted in this sudden wave of violence among young boys!”

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(Continued on page 129)



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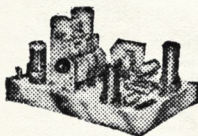
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FLOODS BRING TROUBLE TO TOWN BUT THEN...

CALLING KWX, FERNCLIFF!
EMERGENCY MESSAGE FOR CITY
HOSPITAL / PLEASE FLY IN 200
AMPULES TYPHOID VACCINE.
URGENT / DOCTOR G. EVERTS,
RIVERDALE. REPEAT...

KWX,
FERNCLIFF.
OKAY, WILL
HANDLE!



THEIR LAND COMMUNICATIONS CUT AND WATER
SUPPLY CONTAMINATED BY FLOODS, RIVERDALE'S
CITIZENS ARE UNDERGOING MASS INOCULATIONS,
BUT YOUNG DOCTOR EVERTS'S SERUM SUPPLY IS
RUNNING LOW AND...

RIVERDALE AIRPORT TO PIPER
237: RUNWAYS FLOODED. LAND
ON HIGH GROUND BETWEEN
FLARES. OVER



HERE'S THE
SERUM, DOC.
THIS YOUNG
LADY...

GOOD! WE CAN USE HER!
HELP THE SERGEANT
LINE 'EM UP, MISS!
B-B-BUT...



ONLY FIFTEEN
MORE, DOCTOR

THANK HEAVENS THAT
PILOT BROUGHT FIFTY
EXTRA AMPULES



Eight Hours Later

ME ON YOUR
NEWSCAST? GOSH,
I WAS JUST GOING
HOME AND CLEAN
UP

DO IT AT THE
STUDIO. NOW
TO FIND THAT
SERUM PILOT

WAIT
TILL THE
DOCTOR
FINDS OUT
IT'S ME!



HERE'S A
RAZOR,
DOCTOR

THANKS



REMARKABLE
BLADE! I'VE NEVER
HAD A MORE
REFRESHING
SHAVE!

IT'S A THIN
GILLETTE...
PLENTY KEEN
AND EASY
SHAVING



YOU FLEW
THE SERUM!
WHY...

BUT YOU
NEEDED
HELP...

QUIET! TEN
SECONDS TO GO
M-H-M-M...
HANDSOME



WHEN IT COMES TO FAST, SLICK SHAVES
AT A SAVING, THIN GILLETTES ARE TOPS.
THEY ARE THE MOST POPULAR LOW-PRICED
BLADES ON THE MARKET BECAUSE THEY'RE
KEENER AND LAST LONGER. THIN GILLETTES
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EXACTLY... PROTECT YOU FROM
NICKS AND IRRITATION. ALWAYS
ASK FOR THIN GILLETTES



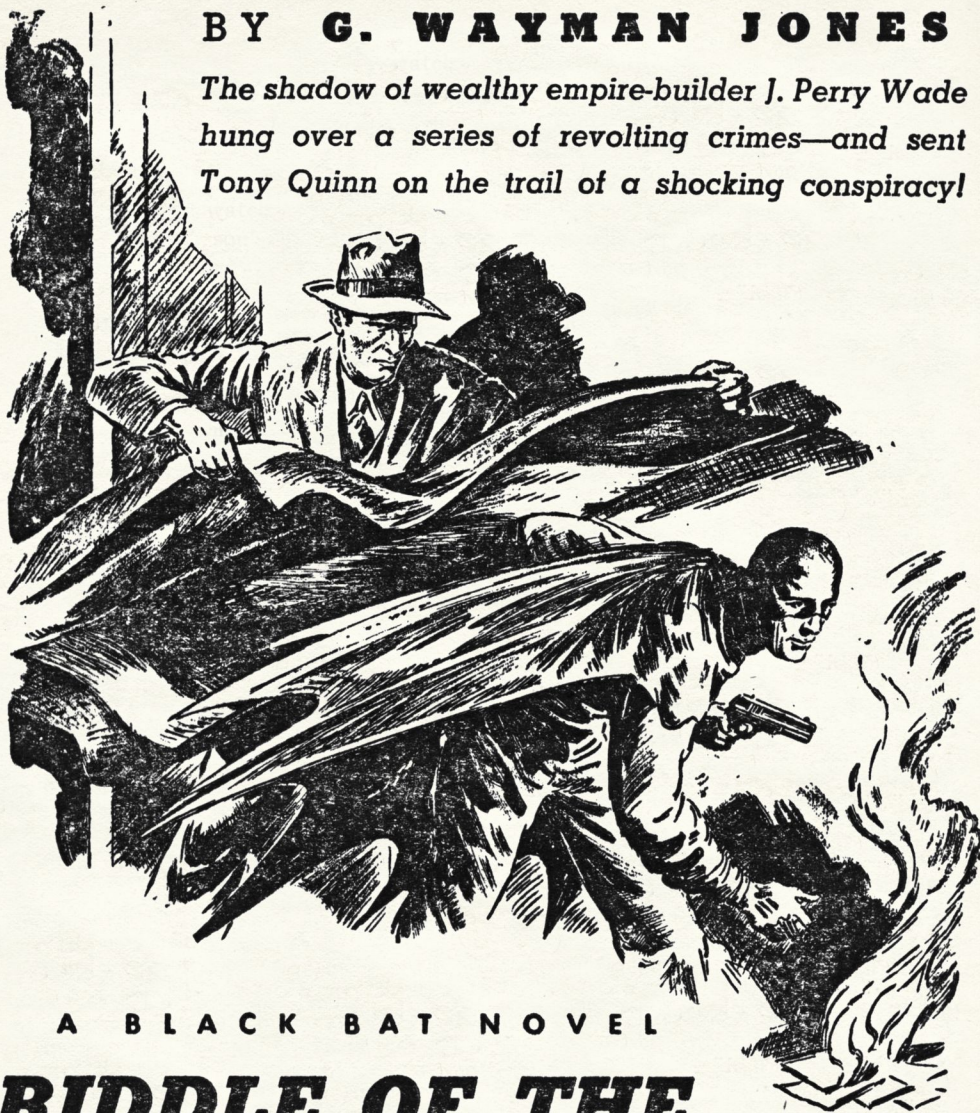
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BY **G. WAYMAN JONES**

The shadow of wealthy empire-builder J. Perry Wade hung over a series of revolting crimes—and sent Tony Quinn on the trail of a shocking conspiracy!



A BLACK BAT NOVEL

RIDDLE OF THE DEAD MAN'S BEQUEST

CHAPTER I

Incident One

TWO things happened that autumn night. There was nothing, apparently, which tied them together. The participants were total strangers to

one another. There was no vaguest indication that in the background was cold-blooded murder.

The first began as a large sedan turned

The Discovery of a Murder Map Provides the

off the main highway of a Long Island town, and slowed as if the driver were unsure of himself. He was, and this "Silk" Kirby rarely didn't know where he was going.

Silk was a middle-aged man with a shining bald head, sharp features, alert eyes and a manner so smooth he had acquired his nickname from it in the days before his reformation, when he had been a slick confidence man.

"Are you certain somebody actually lives in this wilderness, sir?" he asked.

The man beside him nodded and smiled. "Don't let old Wade hear you call this a wilderness. He wanted seclusion so he bought up all the land he could and built his home in the middle of it. You'll see the house pretty soon."

That word "see" apparently applied only to the driver. For his passenger had a white cane between his knees and the blankness of the totally blind was in his eyes. Deep scars were etched into the skin around them.

This man, Tony Quinn, did not look to the right or left. Every action was that of a blind man.

When Silk Kirby saw the illuminated house he pulled the car up to the entrance. A wide porch ran the length of the house. Tile steps were surmounted by imported statuary. The place suggested breeding and wealth, though. Silk thought it looked like a public museum.

Silk got out of the car and helped Quinn to alight. Quinn held his white cane thrust forward, the instinctive act of a blind man.

Silk said, "I don't get it, sir. If old man Wade wants an attorney why don't he come to your office, like everyone else does?"

A slow smile crossed Quinn's face. "Because I'm intrigued. J. Perry Wade is an old-fashioned industrialist. Probably one of the last of his kind. When business competition was cutthroat, he slit more throats than anyone else, black-jacked the opposition out of existence—or bought them out. He gradually carved an empire."

"If being an emperor means living in a joint like this, I'll take Third Avenue," Silk said.

"Wade retains a whole staff of attorneys," said Quinn. "Why should he ask another lawyer to come here? And at seven in the evening? Why should he be so insistent upon speed?"

SILK piloted Quinn up the porch steps. "Successful business men just like to give orders."

"Give the man credit, Silk," Quinn said. "Whatever he has he fought for and earned. It's just one more uncontested fact that every person in this country has the same chance as J. Perry Wade. Well, ring the bell and we'll find out what he wants."

The door opened and the man who greeted them was tall, slim, with bright blue eyes which seemed to be made larger by the lenses of his glasses. He wore a pin stripe blue suit, a quiet polka dot tie, and a white shirt.

"You are the lawyer?" he queried.

"I'm Tony Quinn. Mr. Wade asked me to come. He said it was urgent."

"Yes, I know. My name is Wade too. It's my father who wants you. Please come in and wait a moment."

Silk stepped over the threshold. Eldon Wade blocked his path.

"I'm sorry," he said. "Only Mr. Quinn can be permitted—"

"This is Mr. Kirby," Quinn broke in. "It's necessary that he remain with me because he is my eyes. I'm blind."

Wade made a deprecatory gesture. "Oh—I didn't know. I'm deeply apologetic. By all means, come in. Both of you."

He led them to a vast library, softly illuminated and richly furnished.

"Wait here," he said. "I won't be but a few moments."

They sat down, maintaining a discreet silence. Silk looked around the room. He leaned toward Quinn and spoke in a whisper.

"In the days when I was a crook, this joint would have been some touch. That's a Reubens over the mantelpiece."

Key to a Grim Secret of Sinister Treachery!

That statuette near it is gold."

Quinn nodded but his eyes were utterly blank and he stared unseeingly at the book-lined wall. When fifteen minutes had gone by he began growing restless.

"Silk," he said, "find someone and have Eldon Wade paged. I don't intend sitting here half the night."

if he wants him, Mr. Quinn maintains an office in the State Building."

The servant grew more flustered. "I—I wish you'd wait, sir. I—I'll find Mr. Eldon Wade at once. It's most important."

Silk went back to the library and dropped into one of the leather chairs that seemed to dwarf him.



THE BLACK BAT

Silk beamed and jumped up. He hurried into the hall, found no one, so opened the front door and rang the bell. A skinny man, obviously a servant, padded down the stairway, and seemed surprised to find Silk idly leaning against the inside of the closed front door.

"Go tell Eldon Wade that Mr. Quinn's time is important," Silk said. "He doesn't wish to be kept waiting any longer."

"I'm sure it won't be but a few more minutes," the skinny man said.

"Okay," Silk shrugged. "Then tell Eldon Wade Mr. Quinn has gone and

"I think I scared that totem pole of a butler into action," he told Quinn.

Eldon Wade hurried into the room. His face was slightly red as if he were trying to contain his anger.

"It's Mr. Eldon Wade, sir," Silk said.

"I'm sorry about this," Quinn said. "But my time also is valuable. Now, what did you want with me? I've important matters which need attention. I've missed an appointment at my office already and the detectives assigned to report to me on a matter, aren't paid overtime."

"Detectives?" Eldon Wade asked.

"Perhaps you've forgotten, or did not know, that I'm on the District Attorney's staff. I'm a Special D.A."

"Oh," Wade looked nonplussed. "I see. Of course I knew you held some public office. I'll talk to my father at once."

As Wade spoke a bent man of about fifty-five walked in and greeted Quinn and Silk with a birdlike nod.

"Don't make assurances where your father—my brother—are concerned, Eldon," he said. "You know the stubborn old fool thinks the whole world should wait for him and on him."

WADE turned on his heel and hurried away. The bent man put a stubby pipe between his lips and sent clouds of smoke wafting ceilingward.

"I'm the poor relation," he said affably. "Rufus Wade. The old duck is my eldest brother. I live on him and off him like a parasite and I enjoy it because I hate work."

Quinn chuckled. "You're frank at any

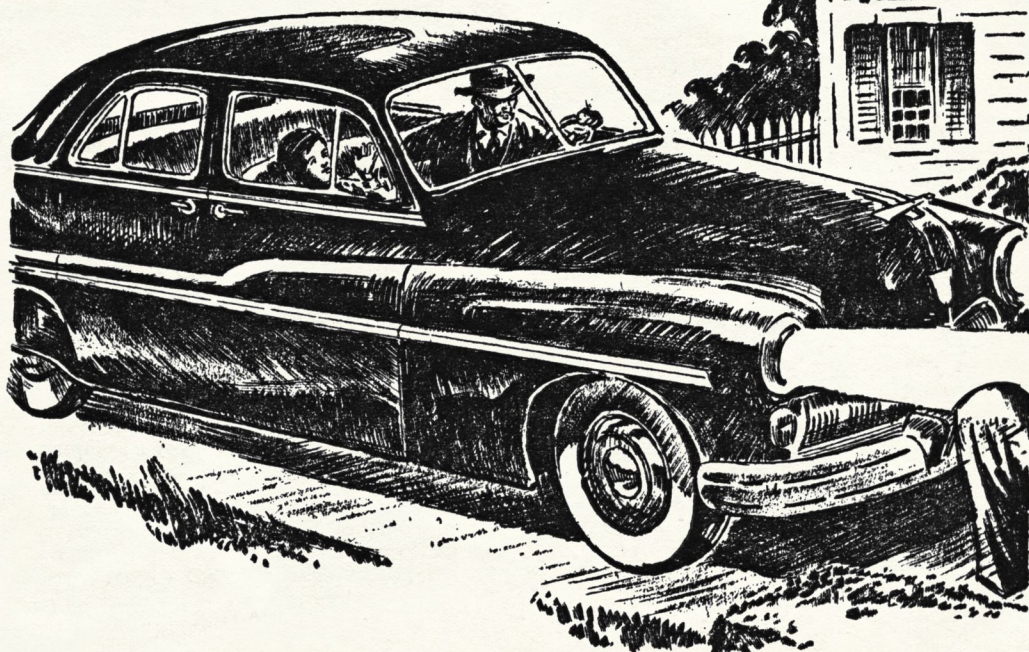
rate, Mr. Wade. My name is Tony Quinn. I'm an attorney and your brother apparently sent for me. I don't like to be kept waiting."

Rufus took the pipe from his mouth. "If you like a fat fee you'll wait. Perry may not be prompt but he pays off."

Quinn arose slowly. "Silk, we'll be going now."

Rufus made a rasping sound. "Sit down, man. The fact is my dear brother is at death's door. If he lasts the night out I'll be surprised. A doctor is at his bedside and Perry has been in a partial coma all day. He woke up about six and yelled his head off for a lawyer named Tony Quinn."

The car swung into the driveway, both gunmen raised their weapons, and the one with a bead on McGrath died almost instantly from the Black Bat's bullet (CHAP. IV)



Quinn sat down again. "Under the circumstances," he said, "I may have been a trifle hasty."

Rufus laughed. "You're the first man who didn't bide his time when Perry demanded it. You won't have to wait much longer. Perry will either see you in the next few minutes or not at all because a dead man has no use for a lawyer."

Hurried footsteps were coming toward the library. Eldon Wade entered, closely followed by a white-haired man who carried a black bag.

"I'm afraid you came for nothing, Mr. Quinn," Eldon said. "This is Doctor Knapp. He'll explain."

"J. Perry Wade is in a critical condition," Dr. Knapp said. "He is dying."



For some reason he wanted an attorney but I'm afraid—well, anything he said would be irrational. If he spoke at all. These final coma breaks are usually short and Mr. Wade is already lapsing back into the last one."

"Perhaps you'd like to be convinced, Mr. Quinn," Eldon Wade said. "You may look in on my father if you wish. Perhaps it would be best, so if any questions came up about whatever he had in mind, you could swear to his condition."

"I'd be of little use," Quinn told them. "Have you forgotten I am blind?"

Eldon Wade bit his lower lip. "I did forget. Pardon me, please. I'm not myself. But your man—"

"Go with him, Silk," Quinn ordered. "I'll wait here."

They left, but Rufus Wade remained.

"You seem quite uninterested in the fact that your brother is dying," Quinn said. "Isn't it customary for close relatives to be with their loved ones at a time like this?"

"Loved ones," Rufus snorted. "You don't know this cockeyed family. Right now, Orella—his sister and mine—is knitting in her room on the upstairs. Dropping a stitch or two, I suppose, but never a tear. Bob Mason, our nephew, had a date to go dancing and he said the old boy never stopped him from enjoying himself while he lived and couldn't do it when he was dead. We're a congenial family, Mr. Quinn. We love one another—like poison."

Silk returned and helped Quinn to arise. Dr. Knapp had remained upstairs. Eldon Wade was beside Silk.

"I'll see that you receive a check for your trouble," Eldon said. "Now, if you will excuse me—"

"Never mind the check," Quinn sighed. "I've done nothing. Good night, Mr. Wade."

Silk led Quinn back to the car and they drove off in silence for a mile or two. Then Silk let out a slow exhalation.

"Whatever that was all about, sir, J. Perry Wade's a dying man if I ever saw one. Looks like a human skeleton about a thousand years old."

Quinn shrugged. "He was probably irrational when he called for me. I suppose we'll never know what was on his

mind. I'm tired. Take me home."

Somewhere along that lonely private road, they passed Death on his way to that great house. And gradually a net of intrigue was being woven around Tony Quinn.

CHAPTER II

Incident Two—and Murder



THE second related incident began at a country club where a fairly wild party was being staged. It was some hours later—shortly after twelve.

Among the swaying couples on the dance floor was one outstanding pair. Tom Foley was just short of thirty, tall, husky, and good-looking. In his college days Tom Foley had been on the all star football team, and especially colorful because of his temper. It boiled over quickly, reached volcanic proportions in no time and subsided just as quickly. But during the few moments it raged, things happened.

Some said the only person who could handle him was his wife, Marge. A diminutive, doll-like person with shining blonde hair and big blue eyes. She was just tall enough to lay her head against his massive chest.

When the dance ended, they headed for the moonlit grounds. They strolled in silence, enjoying the moon and one another's company. A typical happily married couple.

Back in the clubhouse, a dapper man stepped out of a phone booth and looked around hastily. He spotted Tom and Marge Foley walking out and went after them. He stayed well behind and kept glancing nervously back toward the club. Finally a waiter came hurrying out and began calling Tom Foley's name.

Foley called him over, talked with him, then spoke to his wife. Foley returned to the club at a dead run. He went straight to a phone booth, picked up the phone which was off the hook. After a moment or two of listening, he muttered something, hung up the phone

with a crashing bang and stalked out.

His face was red and he looked indignant and angry. He marched out to the garden and hunted for his wife. When he found her his face became chalk-white. For Marge Foley was struggling in the embrace of the man who had trailed her out here, a man tall and powerful.

Tom Foley rushed to them. One hand descended on the man's shoulder and gave it an expert twist. Marge pulled free and stepped back. The man who had been holding her flew back, fell and jumped up. With a yell he attacked Foley.

The fight was brief. Foley knew all the tricks and packed a tremendous wallop. Soon the man sneaked off, muttering curses.

There had been plenty of noise, and patrons were flocking out to see the excitement. Tom Foley was demanding an explanation from his wife in no uncertain terms. In a second they were in the midst of a serious quarrel.

Finally Marge Foley walked away, white-faced and half-crying. She headed straight for their car. Tom trailed behind her, grim and unrelenting. He shouted something, ran into the clubhouse and emerged with his hat and Marge's evening jacket. He threw them into the car, slid behind the wheel—and the quarrel was on again.

They lived in a midtown apartment house. On the way to the eleventh floor the silence between them was strained. Both looked straight ahead and Tom Foley stepped back with exaggerated politeness to let his wife leave the car first.

An hour later, the argument began again. Neighbors heard muffled shouting. When a next-door neighbor banged on the wall the noise abated for a short time and then broke out again, louder than ever. The neighbor headed for his telephone to call the manager. That was when he heard the first muffled shot. He wasn't certain what it was, and even went to the window to look down at the street to see if it had been a backfire.

When the second shot sounded, he didn't hesitate any longer. He telephoned the police, gave the address, a brief resume of what had happened.

After he hung up, he hurried into slippers and a robe and went out of his apartment. Other people were awake too. A buxom woman stood outside the Foley door, undecided what to do.

THEY were still undecided when two radio patrolmen hurried out of the elevator. They knocked on the door, rang the buzzer and heard it sound, but no one came to answer.

"We'd better crash it, Murphy," one of the cops said. "These people heard fighting in here, then shots, so something must have happened."

His partner hunched a massive shoulder at the door.

"Better have your gun ready just in case," he said.

Something clicked on the other side of the door. Instantly both patrolmen whipped out guns. The knob turned. Neighbors moved back, stumbling against one another in their haste.

The patrolmen saw no one at first, though the door was wide open. Then one of them cried:

"It's a kid!"

"A little boy!" The other cop exhaled sharply and put his gun away. He knelt beside the small boy. "Is your daddy or mother home?"

The boy began to cry. Both patrolmen went gingerly into the apartment while the buxom woman did her best to comfort the child.

They found Tom Foley first. He lay crumpled on the floor. In his hand was a black revolver. Blood oozed from his mouth. His eyes were glassy, and his light blue pajamas were red around the heart region.

The cop kneeling beside him lowered a limp wrist.

"Dead," he grunted. "Have a look in the bedroom, Murph."

The other patrolman took one brief look and turned away.

"There's a woman lying across the bed," he said. "Drilled through the head. I'll call Homicide."

One of the first detectives to arrive was Captain McGrath. A short, somewhat pudgy man in a dark suit that closely resembled a canopy in fit. He wore square-toed shoes, didn't care if his gun, sap and cuffs did bulge out his

coat, and rather prided himself that he did look like a detective.

His manner was curt, but efficient. His closely cropped mustache, sprinkled with gray, actually seemed to bristle. He knew precisely what to do and went about his disagreeable task with all the expertness of long training and experience.

Captain McGrath was a good detective, as capable as any other. A home-loving man, a crook hater and not much different from any other cop. Except that Captain McGrath had a phobia. It concerned that mysterious figure all in black who prowled the night and was known as the Black Bat. With Captain McGrath, arresting that somber clad crime fighter was a positive must. He lived for the day when he could corner the Black Bat and rip from his head that closely fitting black hood which concealed his features so well.

At the moment, McGrath wasn't thinking of the Black Bat. He waited until police laboratory men arrived and fingerprinted the dead man and woman, then gave them dermal nitrate, paraffin test for gun powder. Finally photographs were made and the assistant medical examiner completed his gruesome work.

McGrath wagged his head slowly from side to side and muttered to a subordinate:

"This doesn't smell right, Gus. Things add up, but there's a fishy odor."

"What's wrong with it?" the other detective asked. "This guy and his wife had a scrap. He's famous for his hot temper. They started fighting—even that six-year-old son of theirs says so—the guy gets a gun, puts a slug through his wife's head and shoots himself. It happens all the time, when poor saps forget a bullet kills permanently."

"Yeah." McGrath headed for the telephone. "It still smells. I'm not saying that isn't what did happen, but I like to make sure."

"Who you going to call, Skipper?"

"A blind man." McGrath started dialing. "A funny kind of a blind man. He sees a lot of things men with eyes can't see. Sometimes"—McGrath's voice became almost wistful—"he does such a good job I get half an idea he's not blind at all."

Eyes of the Blind



ANTHONY QUINN and Silk Kirby arrived half an hour later. Silk immediately went into the most detailed description of what he saw.

"That's all there is, sir. It's obviously a murder-suicide."

Quinn rubbed his jaw. "Describe again, just how the man's body is placed."

"On its left side, head twisted to the left, left arm beneath the body, right arm outflung and the hand holds the gun. Trigger finger still on the trigger."

"What about the dermal nitrate test?" Quinn asked McGrath.

"Negative on the woman. Positive on the man."

"And the woman, Silk?"

"Across the bed, on her back. Bullet-hole through the side of the head."

"Is the bed unmade? Has it been slept in?"

"Yes, sir. Both pillows are flattened out."

Quinn mulled that over. Then he asked, "What is she wearing?"

"Night pajamas and a robe," Silk replied.

"And a robe, eh? Obviously she was awakened and put on the robe. If the scrap was simply resumed after the lights went out, would she have bothered to slip into a robe? Someone must have been here or she expected someone."

"You're right," Silk said excitedly. "According to the neighbor next door they had a fight when they returned. Then there was quiet for a long time. They must have retired. But her hair is neatly brushed, sir. It wouldn't have stayed that way on a pillow."

"That's what I was talking about," McGrath chimed in. "This is all too pat, too obvious. A thirty-eight revolver shoots high-powered slugs. The tendency is for a victim, shot over the heart, to fall the other way. The momentum throws the victim to the right or to the back, depending which way the gun is

aimed. Tony, I say this is a double murder."

Quinn planted his white cane squarely between his feet and leaned on it. "Nothing found in the apartment that would serve as a clue?"

"Not a thing," McGrath said.

"What does the boy have to say? Their son?"

"They had a sitter in until midnight. She went home then. The boy says he woke up and somebody was talking loud. Then he went back to sleep but the same talking woke him up again. He cries so much he's almost incoherent. The shots scared him and he huddled under the covers until those radio cops hammered on the door and rang the buzzer. He let them in."

"Mac," Quinn said, "take good care of that boy. We could be all wrong about this, but if we are not that boy may know something to help."

"I'll take him home with me," McGrath promised. "My wife will take good care of him until relatives are notified."

"A good idea. Silk, we'll be on our way. See you in the morning, Mac."

In the lobby, Quinn spoke to Silk in a whisper. "Just to cover everything, make tracks for the garage in the basement. Find the Foley car and go through it."

"Do you really think it's double murder?" Silk asked.

"I don't know what to think," Quinn said. "If it is murder, then we have a killer who erased all signs of his presence and rigged the scene neatly. Those small discrepancies you pointed out are not concrete evidence. Things *could* have happened as they seemed to have occurred. I'll wait here, so hurry."

When Silk returned there was a mild flicker in Quinn's seemingly sightless eyes, for Silk's face indicated he had discovered something important. He took Quinn's arm and led him to the car. As they pulled away, Captain McGrath was stalking out of the building and, clutching his hand, was the six-year-old son of those dead people.

"Well, Silk," Quinn said, "out with it. You found something."

"I'll say I did." Silk dipped a hand into his pocket and took out a piece of note paper, folded once. He handed it to Quinn.



McGRATH

"There's a crude map drawn there, sir," Silk went on. "It indicates Route Eight-ninety-four over Long Island. Speedometer readings are noted and the directions indicate a turn just east of the intersection of Croyden Road. Does that sound familiar?"

Quinn nodded. "We took that trip earlier tonight. So Tom Foley had either been to J. Perry Wade's estate, or was going there. Someone gave him the directions over his phone because this paper is identical with those on the note pad beside his phone."

"What are we going to do about this?" Silk said.

QUINN leaned back and closed his eyes.

"It's a matter for McGrath to handle."

Silk seemed disappointed. "But I thought—perhaps—we could—"

"But why?" Quinn protested. "If it's a double murder and there is a connection with J. Perry Wade, it's still something the police can solve."

"Shall I drive to Headquarters, sir?"

"No," Quinn said. "We'd miss McGrath. He meant only to file a brief report, then head for home with that boy. We'll meet him at his house."

Silk headed uptown until he reached a

section occupied by small dwellings, each equipped with a driveway to a garage. McGrath owned the last house in this group and Silk aimed for the front of the house.

They slid past the driveway and Silk began turning the wheel. Quinn said, in a tight voice:

"Keep going. Don't stop. Find the darkest streets you can. We are in this, Silk."

"I don't get it," Silk complained.

"There are two men hidden in that driveway and both of them have drawn guns. They look like paid thugs."

"Holy smokes!" Silk gasped.

"They won't be after Mac." Quinn was scrambling over the front seat into the back of the car. "It's too coincidental any thug would be laying for him the night he is bringing home that boy. At the house where the murder took place I heard more than one person mention how nice Mac was to take the boy home with him. There was plenty of time to get a couple of hoods set. They're after that boy."

As he talked, Quinn was removing his clothes. He opened a hidden compartment in the rear of the sedan, took out jet-black clothing, made of rustle proof material, thin, so it could be stowed in a small place. The shirt and tie were also black. The shoes were soft, the heels and soles of thin foam rubber.

In a shoulder harness was a heavy automatic in its holster. This he strapped on and tested the gun for a quick draw. Finally he drew on a black hood. It covered his entire head and now, through the slits in this hood, Tony Quinn's eyes had radically changed. They were bright and alive, sparkling in anticipation of danger.

The Black Bat was taking wing!

Tony Quinn was not blind, though once he had been. Years before when he'd been the elected D.A. and talked about for a still higher political position tragedy had struck when he had tried to protect certain evidence from crooks who were bent upon destroying it with acid.

The acid had hit Quinn in the face and he had instantly gone blind. He was told that his blindness was permanent, without hope of cure. He had set about traveling the world to find some surgeon who

might see a chance of recovery for him. But although Quinn was independently wealthy his money had not been able to change that world of eternal darkness.

He returned home, finally, and gave up in despair. He had done what he could to make his burden as light as possible—had studied Braille, learned how to guide himself with a cane. And he had found that with the loss of his sight, his hearing had become much more acute, and his sense of touch highly developed.

Silk Kirby was with him through all of this. When Silk had been a confidence man, living by his wits, he had done well at it. Then had come a time when, down and out temporarily, Silk had tried to rob Quinn's house, had been caught in the act, and despite this Quinn had found something so likable in the man that he had set out to reform him—and had succeeded. He had become Quinn's servant, friend and eyes, one of three people who knew of Tony Quinn's double identity.

Quinn had surrendered all thoughts of ever seeing again, when a girl named Carol Baldwin had come into his life. She was petite, blonde, efficient, and with a dazzling smile. She looked as helpless as a doll—and resembled one. But she had a shrewd brain, could use a gun expertly, and her small fists packed a surprising wallop.

CAROL first came to Tony Quinn with a proposition. Her father, in a mid-Western city, was a police sergeant who lay dying from a bandit's bullet. Her father had followed the activities of District Attorney Tony Quinn with admiration. Sergeant Baldwin had seen a chance to help Quinn and had suggested, through Carol, that Quinn submit to an operation for portions of the dying man's eyes to be transferred to Quinn's. Quinn had consented.

Quinn had remained in his world of darkness until the bandages could be removed and during that time he had made plans. As District Attorney he had experienced that constant frustration that comes of fighting, by legal means, men who recognized no law. Red tape blocked him often.

So Tony Quinn made up his mind to carry on his fight against crime anonymously. If his sight returned, he would

keep that a secret and adopt a double identity. His sight did return, and the Black Bat was born. An eerie figure that preyed on crooks and killers, battling them with their own methods. Using stealth when it was called for, open warfare when that became necessary. He broke laws so frequently that he had come under the scrutiny of Captain McGrath, who finally declared that the capture of the Black Bat was a mission he was dedicated to accomplish.

Not long after Carol Baldwin joined forces with the Black Bat, a fourth member of the small band was accepted. He was Butch O'Leary for whom Quinn once had done a favor—and won his eternal loyalty. There were six feet seven inches of Butch. Legs like thick posts supported a barrel-like body and wide shoulders, and his big face was inscrutably phlegmatic. He was a calm man—until a fight began.

These three then, formed the Black Bat's group, each peculiarly skilled in his own line. They alone knew that Tony Quinn was the Black Bat. Only they knew of the tunnel from the garden house at the rear of Quinn's city property to his big house. Their point of assembly was the Black Bat's laboratory, skillfully concealed in Quinn's home, a laboratory complete in every detail pertaining to crime. There were files of fingerprints, photos, and solved and unsolved cases. There were microscopes, spectroscopes—not even police labs were superior.

CHAPTER IV

The Black Bat's Strategy



NOW Tony Quinn had once more become the Black Bat. The situation seemed to demand it. Clad completely in black, he gave Silk quiet orders. The car slid to the curb of the street behind McGrath's home. A fleeting shadow flitted from car to yard and van-

ished.

The Black Bat moved quickly. He

missed all the pitfalls on the lawn because he saw them despite the darkness. The ability to see in the dark had come as a weird bonus of Nature for those months he had suffered absolute blindness. The Black Bat's eyes functioned as well in gloom as in sunlight. This, added to his acute hearing and sense of touch, gave him an edge over his enemies.

He reached the corner of McGrath's garage, crouched and took a careful look. The waiting pair had their backs toward him, wholly unaware that eyes with a hard glint were watching them, or that their whispered words could be heard by extra-sensitive ears.

"You know what to do now," one of the thugs said. "When the copper swings into the driveway, aim for the windshield and his head. Knock him off, in case he sees us in his headlights. I'll take care of the kid."

The other man had a faint spark of mercy in him.

"Somehow I hate killing a kid. What's it all about anyway? How can a six-year-old boy know so much he's gotta be bumped off?"

"I don't know any more than you do," the other man grumbled. "But the dough is right. We take our orders, and they are to knock off the boy. If that copper happens to take one too, so what?"

"Listen, a car. Get set!"

The headlights of McGrath's car swung into the driveway, slowed. The Black Bat took careful aim. If he missed, McGrath was going to die and, possibly, a small boy.

Both gunmen raised their weapons. The one with a bead on McGrath died almost instantly. The Black Bat's bullet was aimed for his shoulder but as he fired, the killer changed position and the .45 bullet ripped through his skull.

The other man didn't realize his companion hadn't fired that shot. It wasn't until the dead man flopped limply onto the driveway that the other gunman went into violent action.

He began shooting. His bullets were aimed at the car door behind which the boy must be seated. McGrath did the only possible thing to avoid disaster. He stepped on the gas and tried to run the gunman down.

But that killer felt the breeze of a bul-

let and suddenly realized he was being attacked from the rear. With a wild yelp he turned and fled.

McGrath, service pistol in hand, leaped from the car. All he saw was the dead man in the driveway and he was puzzled because he hadn't fired a shot.

Then a gun was jabbed against the small of his back. He froze. This was the one moment a policeman dreads. When he is at the mercy of his enemies and one move to extricate himself is suicide.

A soft voice spoke in his ears. The voice was in no manner that of Tony Quinn but it was almost as familiar to McGrath.

"Drop the gun, Captain. Drop it! Don't be a fool."

McGrath let go of the gun and raised his hands shoulder high.

"So it's you again," he said. "Okay, it's your party, Black Bat, and I can be nothing but grateful. Those mugs were after me. You can put your gun away. I wouldn't take you if I could."

The Black Bat chuckled softly. "You might, Captain, when you learn what I'm going to do. Walk over and stand four feet from the wall of your house. Put the flat of your hands out and lean forward until they are supported by the wall. You know what I mean. They teach that way of making a man helpless in police school."

McGrath obeyed. He heard the door of his car open, heard a soft whimper and twisted his head. The Black Bat had the boy against one shoulder and was backing away in the gloom. McGrath let out a yell, tried to push himself erect, but tumbled into a heap, still yelling.

WINDOWS were opening. McGrath's wife, clutching a huge pistol, came onto the porch. A radio car was pulling to the curb. McGrath ordered the radio patrolmen to stand guard over the dead killer, then ran into his own home to the phone. He called the Police Commissioner.

"This is Captain McGrath," he said. "You know how I feel about the Black Bat. Well, sometimes I realize he helps us, but tonight he pulled the worst crime of his career. I was taking home the child of parents who were dead—murder

and suicide or maybe double murder. The Black Bat snatched the boy away from me at gun point and this time I'm not stopping until he is dead or behind bars."

In his excitement and wrath, McGrath didn't remember how the Black Bat had saved his life. He hurried back to his car, and backed out of the driveway. It was siren-equipped and he tore apart the night silence. In less than twelve minutes he stopped before Tony Quinn's home, jumped out, raced through the gate and onto the front porch. He pressed the doorbell and smiled smugly.

Unless the Black Bat had moved with incredible speed, Tony Quinn would not be at home to answer the doorbell. If Silk came, McGrath planned to for e his way in and search the house. He was going to find that boy. Suddenly McGrath shivered. He could be making a world beater of a fool of himself. That eternal doubt as to whether Quinn was the Black Bat returned to him.

A light flashed on upstairs. Then the hall light illuminated the stairway which McGrath could see through the window in the door. Silk Kirby, wearing a dark blue robe, wrinkled pajamas and touseled hair, was descending the steps.

Silk opened the door. "You," he growled. "Now what?"

"Where's the boy? Come on, Silk. I can bring in the whole F.B.I. now. Quinn went too far."

"He did?" Silk asked innocently. "Mr. Quinn is in bed and that certainly isn't far. Captain, would you mind removing your fat finger from the bell and talking plain English?"

McGrath angrily brushed past Silk and ran up the stairs. Silk followed more slowly. Beneath his pajamas, his trouser legs were rolled up as tight as he could get them in his haste, and fast movements might make one of them tumble down.

McGrath knew where Quinn slept and pushed the door wide. Quinn, sightless eyes staring blankly, with an expression of fear on his face, sat bolt upright in bed.

"What's happened?" he asked. "Who is in my room?"

McGrath's voice was thunderous. "Stop faking. Where's that kid? Tony, whatever respect I had for you is gone.

Whatever tolerance I had for the Black Bat is gone. Snatching that boy fixed you up right—with me."

Quinn's features relaxed. "Mac! What on earth! Has the Foley boy been kidnaped?"

"You should ask. Quinn, one of your rights is to resist anyone who wants to search your home without a warrant. Well, you'd better start resisting because I'm going through this place from cellar to attic! The boy must be here. You didn't have time to get rid of him."

Quinn swung his legs off the edge of the bed.

"Go ahead and search, Mac. When you are convinced there is no boy here, perhaps you'll talk sensibly."

McGrath spent half an hour at the search. He never even came close to the secret door behind the book-lined wall of the library, but he expended enough energy to soothe his outraged nerves. When he returned to the library, Quinn was in his usual leather armchair near the fireplace and Silk was holding a tray with two highballs on it.

McGrath took one with a grumbled word of thanks, sat down and slumped as low as he felt.

"I still think you pulled a fast one, Tony. The Black Bat kidnaped the Foley boy. I saw him! Do you blame me for getting excited?"

"Well, hardly, but accusing me of being a kidnaper is something else, Mac. You've let that obsession of me being the Black Bat cloud your good sense. Just what happened?"

McGRATH launched into a rapid sketch of the details. His highball was gone when he ended the recital. Silk promptly handed him another.

"Two men tried to gun you," Quinn said slowly. "In your opinion they only wanted to kill you. But Mac, maybe they were after that boy, and the Black Bat took him because the boy's life was at stake. It would be almost impossible to hide him and if this attempt failed, another would be made. The Black Bat probably realized this and has the boy only for his own protection."

"It was a snatch, no matter what his motives." McGrath still rankled under the memory of falling on his face. "I

warn you, I'll stop at nothing to get that boy back!"

Quinn set his highball glass down on thin air. It crashed to the floor. Silk quickly moved forward.

"I'm sorry, sir. I moved the table and forgot to put it back."

He picked up the broken bits of glass. "Forget it," Quinn sighed. "Now Mac, let's study this thing. Who knew the boy was in your custody?"

"Only everybody who lived in the Foley apartment house," McGrath groaned. "Okay, maybe they were after the kid. Who'd want to kill an old warhorse like me who bungles everything?"

"You couldn't help what happened, Mac." Quinn's voice was soothing. "Now look—that boy must know something. If the Black Bat has him he is safe. Even you must admit that, and the Black Bat may be able to learn the truth from him. The boy has dangerous information—and all of this resolves one thing for us."

"And that?" McGrath asked.

"Tom Foley didn't kill his wife and commit suicide. Both were murdered. Why, I haven't the faintest idea. The boy saw or heard something. Let the Black Bat handle that while you and I concentrate on the double murder. Have you learned anything else?"

"Not much. Both the Foleys had tempers that boiled over too often. Lots of people knew how they battled, made up, and were deeply in love with one another. Around midnight they had a scrap at a country club. Somebody tried to make Foley's wife. Foley flattened the guy."

"Find out who he is," Quinn said. "That man started the whole affair and perhaps it was all carefully planned. Check on everyone at that party. Don't assume anything is unimportant until you run it down. I'll see you later today."

McGrath arose. "Okay, Tony. As usual I'm an old idiot. If you're not the Black Bat, I apologize."

"No hard feelings." Quinn grinned.

McGrath's voice became louder. "But if you are the Black Bat, I'm landing you this time, so help me! Good night."

He slammed the door on his way out. Silk dropped into a chair and unloosened his heavy robe.

"Whew!" he exhaled. "If I'd been

overweight, the last half an hour would have sweated more pounds off me than ten hours of exercise and massage."

Quinn nodded. "It was too close for comfort, and the worst of it is, McGrath is really on the warpath this time. We've got to watch our step more than ever. You'd better look in on the boy. I'm certain he wasn't hurt badly when McGrath's crazy stop and start threw him against the dashboard."

"Yes, sir."

Silk opened the secret panel and edged through the narrow door. Quinn followed him.

The Foley boy lay on a divan. There was a large lump on his forehead and he was pale, but he seemed to be sleeping soundly and naturally.

"He'll do," Silk whispered.

"Good. He hasn't the faintest idea what happened. By the time he awakens, perhaps we can have him in Butch's care."

"Butch?" Silk asked. "That big lug doesn't know how to take care of a little boy."

"Butch may not know a great deal about child care"—Quinn grinned—"but when it comes to protecting this boy I'd rather have Butch do it than a regiment of marines."

CHAPTER V

Post Mortem



SOON after dawn, there were two visitors to the Black Bat's laboratory. Butch, looking bigger than ever as he held the sleeping Foley boy, and Carol, who seemed slightly alarmed over placing such a small boy in his care.

"Take the boy to your rooms, Butch," Tony Quinn said. "Nobody is to know of his presence but if it is discovered, have a good story ready. Every cop in town will be hunting him and so will certain killers who would cheerfully eliminate you along with the boy."

"I hope they try," Butch whispered hoarsely so as not to awaken the boy.

"Anybody who'd take a shot at a little boy ought to have his head pushed in and me—I'm an expert at that. Don't worry about the kid."

Butch disappeared into the tunnel shaft.

Carol sat down beside Quinn.

"What's it all about, Tony?" she asked.

"I don't know," Quinn acknowledged.

"Last night I was called to the home of J. Perry Wade. I guess he actually called for me all right. Yet I never knew him. When I got there I was stalled. Then the old man lapsed into a coma and I came home."

"Where does the boy come in?" Carol asked. "I haven't even read a newspaper yet."

"The boy's parents quarreled at a party. They carried the quarrel home. Shots were heard. It looks as if this Tom Foley killed his wife and himself. There is no evidence to the contrary."

"But how in the world does that tie up with J. Perry Wade?"

"Don't be so eager," Quinn chided. "You'll have the story and an assignment to help crack it too. In Tom Foley's car we found written directions on how to reach the Wade estate. Wade may have changed his mind about me and switched to Tom Foley, who was also an attorney. That, I can determine. But about the time I'd made up my mind the whole affair didn't concern me, I discovered a pair of hired gunmen planted to kill the Foley boy."

Carol compressed her lips and there was a glint of steel in her eyes. "Tony, we've got to find whoever ordered the death of that little boy."

"It won't be easy," Quinn said. "The tracks will be covered well."

"What can I do to help?"

"Let's consider the Wade family. There is Eldon Wade, Perry's only son. Then Rufus Wade, the old man's younger brother. He's a character. Looked forward to his brother's demise and openly admitted he hated him and would like his share of the estate."

"A cold-blooded man like that could engineer the murder of a small boy," Carol said musingly.

"A good point," Quinn admitted. "Then there is Orella Wade, a sister. She also, I gather, will shed no tears over



The Black Bat spun, saw Mrs. Gandy beckoning, and sped toward her (CHAP. VIII)

her brother's death. Finally, we have Bob Mason, old man Wade's nephew. Bob went out dancing last night while the old man lay dying. So Bob's heart isn't exactly soft either."

"I'll take Rufus Wade or Bob Mason," Carol said. "I'd love finding the evidence to put them where they belong."

"You can have Bob Mason." Quinn grinned. "He's young and will have an eye for blondes. Be careful. Learn all you can about the family. I'll think up an excuse to visit the old man today. I doubt he will be conscious but I might put fear into some of his relations. Also I want to learn if Tom Foley went out there last night."

"I'll work on that, too," Carol promised.

The arrival of Silk interrupted them. He had the morning newspapers. It wasn't necessary for Quinn to read any further than the headlines. The death of J. Perry Wade was international news and played up to the hilt. There was an obituary, tracing the man's activities to his childhood days.

Quinn laid the newspaper down and frowned. "Well—that's that. Nobody is going to ask Wade what he wanted with me, or if Tom Foley saw him last night."

"Don't you think this looks a trifle suspicious?" Carol suggested. "His dying so soon after he sent for you?"

"Suspicious enough so that I'm going to investigate the death, as the District Attorney . . . Silk, I'll want to be at the office early."

SILK departed to prepare breakfast. "I want you to meet Bob Mason," Quinn said to Carol. "I don't know why, but he could become a key figure in this and may be the softest member of the Wade clan."

"If he's the talkative type, he'll talk," Carol promised.

"Good. There seems to be no especial urgency. Wade is dead."

"But the little Foley boy is alive," Carol reminded him. "And—well, even Butch can't cope with the odds a murderer might use to get at the child."

"There must be a tie up between that double murder and the death of old man Wade, Carol. The boy holds some sort of a secret of which he himself is prob-

ably unaware. I'll talk to him later, perhaps tonight—and as the Black Bat."

Carol left, and Quinn and Silk departed for Quinn's office. There Quinn at once put to work the authority vested in him. He summoned Dr. Knapp, Wade's physician, first.

Dr. Knapp was none too pleased.

"I can't see what business this is to the District Attorney's office," he protested. "Mr. Wade died—that's all there is to it. I've certified the cause of death as being due, primarily, to old age. He had a severe shock with partial paralysis about a week ago."

"Then you have no objections to a post mortem?" Quinn purred.

"Why should I have? But you won't find the Wade family as tolerant. They can make a lot of trouble."

Quinn put the tips of his fingers together. "You may be an excellent physician, Doctor, but you don't shine as an attorney. I can apply for an order for a post mortem and even the Wade millions can't stop me. Unless permission is given, I will obtain such an order."

"Then I'd advise you to hurry," Knapp said. "The old man's will stated he is to be cremated without a funeral."

Quinn's P.B.X. system buzzed and his secretary announced that Eldon Wade was in the office, fuming.

Quinn smiled. "You see, Doctor, I have lost no time. Eldon Wade kept me waiting last night and I'll let him cool off a bit now. Do you know why J. Perry Wade asked for me to see him last night?"

"I haven't the faintest idea. Though I heard him ask for you. So did Eldon and the housekeeper, a church-going woman who wouldn't lie for anything."

"What time did Attorney Thomas Foley arrive?" Quinn asked.

"Foley? Never heard of him. He didn't see Wade while I was there. I shouldn't have permitted it. Mr. Wade was in his right mind during his waking moments but in no condition to see anyone."

"Thank you," Quinn said. "That's all—for now. Good morning, Doctor." Quinn's blank eyes stared slightly to his visitor's left.

As Knapp walked out the buzzer sounded again. Eldon Wade was getting violently impatient.

Quinn kept him waiting. He grinned at Silk. "We're getting back at Eldon," he said, "but with a reason. I figure the madder he gets the more he'll spout. How are things with Butch?"

"Fine. The boy ate well though Butch's choice of food for breakfast was surprising—hot dogs and coffee and ice cream. He seems to have forgotten last night's nightmare and has accepted Butch as someone placed in charge of him."

"Well, we're on our way, though I don't know where we are going. What's the latest on the Foley murders?"

"It's been accepted as murder and suicide. Sir—every last thing points to that. If it wasn't for the attempt on the boy's life and the directions to the Wade estate, I'd say we were rapidly pulling a boner."

"Perhaps we are," Quinn admitted. "Let's get on with it. Send in Eldon Wade."

Eldon blew into the office, face contorted with rage, finger shaking at Quinn as if he believed Quinn could see his angry gestures.

"My father died last night," he thundered. "I've a million things to do, the least of them more important than being forced to come to your office. Unless I have a reasonable explanation for your actions I'm going far over your head. Is that quite clear?"

"Sit down," Quinn said curtly. "As one of the heirs of your father's estate you have undoubtedly become one of the wealthiest men in the country, but in the eyes of the law you are no different than Joe Doaks down in the Bowery. I want permission to have an autopsy performed on your father."

ELDON sat down weakly, all the roaring rage out of him.

"In heaven's name why?"

"Last night your father sent for me," Quinn said. "I did not see him. Later, an attorney named Tom Foley was called in. Is that the truth?"

"What of it?" Wade's belligerency was returning.

"Why wasn't I called back, seeing that your father had asked for me?"

Wade began to laugh sarcastically. "So that's it. Professional jealousy. All be-

cause you could send my father a juicy bill!"

Quinn restrained the anger in his voice. "I'm acting now as a member of the District Attorney's staff—and think Tom Foley was murdered last night."

Eldon Wade gave no sign of surprise. "Naturally I read of Foley's death. I believed it to be suicide. However, I am no mere policeman like you, Mr. Quinn. What do you wish to know?"

"Why was Foley called to your home?"

"Because when my father recovered consciousness shortly before his death, he asked where you were and we told him the truth—that you were blind. He hadn't known that, and asked for another attorney. Foley had done a little work for me and he agreed to come out when I promised him a double fee."

"You still haven't told me why I was sent for—and later on Foley."

"Because," Eldon Wade said angrily, "my father wanted to add a codicil or two to his will."

"And what about permission to do a post mortem?"

"Absolutely not," Wade snapped.

"It will be done anyway," Quinn reminded him. "If you don't grant permission it may look as if you had something to hide."

Wade arose slowly, hands clenched. "If you attempt to do that, I'll drive you out of office. I'll make things so hot you'll be glad to resign. I'll make a fool of you! A blind man a district attorney! It's absurd."

"Good day, Mr. Wade," Quinn said tightly.

"You can't put me out!"

"Good day, Mr. Wade," Quinn repeated.

Wade stalked out. Quinn lifted the phone and put a stop to the cremation of J. Perry Wade and started the proceedings for a post mortem.

He was vaguely ill at ease. He knew it was like bucking a mountain. The Wade fortune was tremendous and carried a great deal of weight. Yet something seemed wrong, and the death of J. Perry Wade was far more significant than that of Tom Foley and his wife, Marge. Their deaths were incidental to something big.

Quinn knew then that the brunt of this investigation would be on the shoulders of the Black Bat. Fighting the Wade family by legal means would get him nowhere.

Their money and power could top any investigation in its track.

CHAPTER VI

The Darkness Man



BY LATE afternoon Quinn was in an even worse quandary. The post mortem had shown that J. Perry Wade had died a natural death from complications due to old age and shock.

The investigation into the deaths of Tom and Marge Foley had been all but brought to

a standstill by the police. Only Tony Quinn seemed to suspect that it was a double murder. A few newspaper stories were a trifle sarcastic.

"We've drawn a blank," Quinn said. "We're exactly where we started—nowhere."

Silk looked downcast. "I'd say we were worse off, sir. Eldon Wade isn't going to let this pass."

"We'll go home," Quinn sighed. "It's been a tough day and . . . Silk, do you realize that if we fail to prove murder its likely I'll be the ex-Special D.A.?"

"Throwing you out of office won't hamper the Black Bat."

Silk helped Quinn through the office, down the elevator and across the huge lobby. Everyone seemed to know Quinn and had a cheerful word for him. Quinn didn't have to pretend he recognized voices, because he *could* recognize people by either voices or footsteps. That accomplishment had not departed with the return of his sight.

"As soon as it is safe," he said to Silk, when they were in the car, "the Black Bat is going to pay the Wade family a little social call. Also I want to inspect that house from top to bottom. J. Perry Wade lived there for nearly fifty years, the last forty as almost a recluse."

"But how could a man with all his

interests lock himself away like that?" Silk asked.

"J. Perry Wade liked to use the telephone. If personal visits were necessary, people came to him. Infrequently he appeared at directors' meetings, made a few radio broadcasts during the war and occasionally he attended weddings, funerals or especially important banquets."

"But why did he hole himself up like that?"

"He took the death of his wife hard," Quinn explained. "She died about a year after their marriage, and he withdrew from active social life."

Silk was out of the busy areas by now where there were no towering buildings. He saw a truck coming but paid little attention to it. Suddenly the truck veered to the middle of the road and headed for them, dead on.

"Watch it, Silk!" Quinn said, but he gave not the slightest sign that he saw five tons of mechanized death hurtling at him.

Silk didn't swerve wildly to avoid the truck. He waited until there was less than twenty yards between him and the monster. Then he gave the wheel a savage yank.

He skinned past the front of the truck and gave a cry of horror when he saw a heavy sedan which had been following the truck so closely as to be hidden. This car swerved out and the entire road was blocked. Silk had put on an extra burst of speed to clear the truck and the two cars met with a rending crash of metal and the crackle of shattering glass.

Quinn waited until the last possible moment, when he realized there was only one man in the other car and no one on the rear of the truck to observe him. The other driver certainly was not watching the reaction of the men he was trying to kill. Quinn slid as low as possible and hastily covered his face.

He had an awesome dread of damage to his eyes. He'd lived in darkness too long not to fear it. Silk threw up one protecting arm too. For a moment after the head-on collision there was an intense silence. Quinn was jammed tight between bent metal and trying to extricate himself. He knew he wasn't seriously hurt but he had never felt more helpless.

The driver of the other car was crawling out of the wreck. Quinn knew then that this car had been especially prepared to resist a collision. Nine-tenths of the damage was to Quinn's car.

The driver carried a gun and was running toward them. Silk, blood streaming down his face, reached under his coat, pulled a gun, and opened fire.

BUT Silk was dazed and shocked by the crash. His hand shook too much for accurate shooting but he did plant a couple of bullets dangerously close to the killer. The man raced back to his car. He put it into reverse, ripped loose of Quinn's sedan and tore away into the evening dusk.

Silk forced open the door of his car. The truck had vanished.

"Are you all right, sir?" Silk asked.

"If—you can pry—this dashboard away from my chest," Quinn grunted.

People were hurrying toward the scene now and a patrolman came at a run. Quinn was extricated from the wreckage and helped into an ambulance which quickly arrived.

"You'd better come along to the hospital, Mr. Quinn," a young intern said. "I'm sure there are no internal injuries but you've had a shock."

"I can rest at home," Quinn told him with a smile. "I'm not feeling too good, but I'll do."

Quinn rode home in the ambulance with Silk beside him. Silk was rather well wrapped up in bandages but he thought little of his own injuries. He alternately fussed over Quinn and cursed those murderous drivers. A report had

been made to Headquarters and Captain McGrath pulled up at Quinn's home as Quinn was helped out of the ambulance.

Inside the house, McGrath listened to the story.

"That was a deliberate attempt to kill you, Tony," he said grimly.

"I know, Mac. Silk told me just what was going on. And now I'm more certain than ever that I'm on the track of something big. Someone hired those men to kill me and whoever did that is afraid of me. The only important case I'm handling is the Foley-Wade affair."

McGrath shook his head. "The Inspector tells me I'm getting stupid in my old age and to forget double murder. The Wade death was officially closed with the autopsy."

"Well, if no one believes us," Quinn said, "we'll show them proof. We must gather it anyway for a jury. Mac, turn all your attention to the Foley deaths. Never mind Wade. You wouldn't get to the front door of that estate. Leave the Wades to me."

"Whatever you say," McGrath agreed. "But you're not gallivanting around—"

"As the Black Bat?" Quinn groaned and clapped a hand to his side. "Mac, I'm not the Black Bat and if I were, I'd hardly operate the way I feel right now. I'm going to bed."

"That's what the ambulance doctor told me to make you do," McGrath admitted. "Silk, I'll give you a hand if you like."

"Thank you," Silk replied, "but I can manage." After the Captain left, Quinn made a pretence of retiring. For the

[Turn page]

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benefit of anyone who might have the house under observation. He talked to Silk as he prepared for bed.

"This won't be the last attempt, Silk. We'll have to be careful."

"Who do you think paid those hoodlums, sir?"

"Perhaps Eldon Wade, or Rufus Wade. Maybe Orella, the dead man's sister. Or Bob Mason, his nephew. Whoever it may be, I'm recognized as a potential danger, and if I'm feared as a blind man, I hope I terrorize them as the Black Bat. Put out the lights all over the house. Soon I'll slip into the lab, out the tunnel and take the coupé. You'll have to stay here. There are so many bandages on your face you'd be too well remembered if we were seen together."

"If you need me," Silk said, "just call and don't think about my bandaged face."

A full hour went by. Silk extinguished one light after another and went to bed. Quinn slipped out of bed, made his way down to the library. He moved with serene sureness, for darkness was no impediment to him.

He entered the lab and quickly donned the somber dress of the Black Bat. He took along a brace of automatics and a small, flat kit of fine burglar tools as he passed through the tunnel to the garden house at the rear, then moved like a shadow toward a coupé which was always parked on the dead end street.

Once in the car, the Black Bat slipped off his hood and replaced it with a wide-brimmed hat. This concealed his features well, and would attract much less attention than a hood. It also hid those telltale scars around his eyes.

IT WAS still early evening when he headed for the apartment house where Butch had rooms on the first floor. The Black Bat could reach him there without passing through the lobby. The Black Bat only had to scratch against the window a second or two before it was noiselessly raised and a gigantic arm came out to help him scramble inside.

Butch closed the window and drew the shade.

"The kid is okay. I've kept him so busy he's just about forgotten what happened last night. He's got the idea I'm

the giant in Jack and the Beanstalk."

Quinn chuckled, then sobered. "But what's he going to think of a hooded man interviewing him? Six-year-old boys nowadays are remarkably smart."

"I told him I had a friend who was going to a Hallowe'en party," Butch explained, "and would be wearing a mask. He's looking forward to seeing you."

"I'll talk to him right away. Butch, nobody has seen him?"

"Not a soul. When he fell asleep I went out and bought enough groceries to last for a month. And a whole case of lollypops. We're in swell shape."

"What's his name, Butch?" the Black Bat asked. "I never did stop to find out."

"It's Donald. And he calls me Uncle Butch. Ain't that nice?"

"One more thing," the Black Bat warned. "An attempt was made on my life tonight. We're getting under someone's skin though I still can't figure out what this is all about. They must be searching for this boy. He must be a menace to them, so be prepared for trouble."

"I'm all set. Let's go see the kid."

Donald Foley was industriously using a massive paint set and daubing colors into a book. When he saw the hooded man, he drew back but a reassuring nod from Butch was enough. He came forward shyly.

In a few moments he was at ease and deftly Quinn turned the conversation to the events of the evening before.

"Your daddy and mommy were talking loud," the Black Bat led him on. "Could you hear what they said?"

"Oh, no. I can't hear much in my room."

"But you heard shots?"

"You mean like bang-bang? Nope—I didn't hear that."

"You got up, didn't you? You went out of your room?"

"I was scared. I wanted to tell Daddy not to talk so loud. But it was dark and I got more scared. I ran back to my room."

"You just started for your daddy's room and something scared you? What was it? A big shadow or a cat or something?"

"I don't know. . . . Uncle Butch is going to buy me a moving picture ma-

chine. He says I can take it home to show Mommy."

"Of course you can," the Black Bat sighed. "But you have to stay indoors for a little while. You'll have all the toys you want. You're sure you saw no one when you left your room?"

Donald was playing with the paint set again. "It was all dark," he said as if to dismiss the whole thing for the more important task of fashioning a blue cow.

They left him and went back to the other room. The Black Bat expressed his disappointment.

"I felt certain he'd have something to tell me. I still believe that, but whatever he knows simply doesn't seem important to him. We can't force the boy. Keep talking to him. See if he remembers his father's friends and if any strange people came to the house. Make notes of everything he tells you, even if it doesn't seem important. That's your job, Butch—that, and keeping the boy from harm."

"If they get him, they get me first," Butch vowed. "You got to excuse me now. I promised him a hamburger before he goes to bed. With onion, no less. You know, I bet that kid'll grow up to be a big-shot football player."

CHAPTER VII

Midnight Visit



MIDNIGHT, and the huge Wade mansion was still illuminated, but on the third floor, where the servants' quarters were located, the lights were out. Down the dark corridor moved a form hardly visible in the gloom. The Black Bat stopped at each door, pressed an ear against the panels to hear any sound.

In the last room was some indication of life. The Black Bat's superlative hearing detected soft sobbing. He already knew that of all the servants in this house only two were old and faithful in point of service and in years. One was Hughes, the butler, and the other Mrs. Gandy, the housekeeper.

The Black Bat tried the door gently. It was locked. He withdrew that small kit of burglar tools from an inner pocket and took from it a pair of pliers, long and thin. These reached through the old-fashioned keyhole, seized the key and turned it without making the slightest sound.

He opened the door a crack. The room was in darkness but his unusual eyes could see the housekeeper seated in an old rocking chair. Beside her was a table with an unlighted lamp on it.

"Mrs. Gandy," the Black Bat said in a whisper, "please don't be alarmed. I'm a friend."

Instantly she reached for the table lamp but a firm hand closed around her wrist and again the gentle voice, an impelling voice, spoke.

"Mrs. Gandy, I am the Black Bat. You must have heard of me and know I mean no harm to people like you. We won't turn on any lights. Do you believe Mr. Wade was murdered?"

"Murdered!" she repeated in a hoarse whisper. "In heaven's name why should anyone murder a dying man? He'd been dying for days."

THE Black Bat carried a chair over facing the wrinkled old woman. He sat down, and his voice was a whisper.

"I didn't mean to alarm you. But Mrs. Gandy, there is something wrong. You worked for Mr. Wade for years and I imagine you thought a great deal of him. Perhaps he was not murdered, but indirectly his death was responsible for the murder of two innocent people. The Foleys."

She nodded and her watery eyes were eager now. "I confess I wondered about that. But Mr. Wade had nothing to do with it. I'm sure he was dead himself when they died."

"Still," the Black Bat went on, "you feel something is wrong. Don't you?"

"Yes," she admitted. "I don't like talking to someone I can't see. . . ."

The Black Bat snapped on the table lamp for a moment. She looked at him steadily after her eyes were accustomed to the brilliance.

"You'd better put the light out before someone sees it," she said. "I trust you. If you are interested in Mr. Wade's

death, you have good reason to be. Ask me anything you like."

"Thank you," the Black Bat said sincerely. "First, did you hear Mr. Wade request that a lawyer named Quinn be summoned?"

"I did. Mr. Wade had been unconscious for hours. When he awakened he smiled at me once. Then he demanded that a lawyer named Quinn be called immediately.

"What time was that?"

"It must have been about six o'clock."

"What happened after that?"

"Dr. Knapp didn't want him to have any visitors but Mr. Wade said he knew he was dying. Eldon Wade telephoned the lawyer. I understand he came but by then Mr. Wade had begun to rave. The lawyer didn't wait. About ten Mr. Wade was himself again and wanted to know where the lawyer was."

"And then?"

"Eldon told him Mr. Quinn was blind and wouldn't be much good to him. Mr. Wade said he could be the judge of that but since Quinn wouldn't wait, another lawyer was to be summoned. Any lawyer who could get here fast."

"Why didn't he ask for his own attorneys?"

"I imagine he wanted someone who could move fast," Mrs. Gandy said somewhat tartly.

"Then Attorney Tom Foley arrived?"

"Yes, sir. At about eleven or shortly after. Rufus—he's Mr. Wade's younger brother—came and told me I had to witness something. I went into Mr. Wade's room. I heard him tell this young lawyer to write a codicil to his will. He left some small hospital fifty thousand dollars. A hospital that gives free treatment to crippled children. And he gave the details concerning his funeral."

"Who was present besides yourself and Attorney Foley?"

"Rufus, and a silly maid I hired in one of my weaker moments. She cried so much she could hardly see to witness the document."

"And that was all?"

"Yes. We left, and Mr. Wade died a short time afterwards."

"Eldon Wade was not present? Or Dr. Knapp or Bob Mason or Orella Wade?"

THE old lady sighed.

"You can't know this family. They were all waiting for him to die. Rufus wanted his share of the fortune, though he'd never spend a penny of it. Bob Mason, who wanted to see how quickly he could gamble it away or drink himself to death. Orella, who has no use for money at all. She hasn't left this house for years."

"And Eldon?"

"He's the only one with sense. Wasn't for Eldon the industries Mr. Wade built up would have to be sold. He's the only one worth his salt. But why am I telling you all this?"

"Because you trust me," the Black Bat said. "And you sense there is something wrong. When did you first come to work for this family?"

"Forty-five years ago, when Eldon was a baby. I'd lost my husband, and the job has been good—up until now."

The Black Bat knew that whatever this woman said was the unvarnished truth, and yet every time she spoke she removed any element of mystery or violence from the case. Why would Tom Foley be murdered simply because he'd drawn up two innocent codicils to a will? What did anyone else in the family have to gain? Fifty thousand dollars was trivial compared to the sum total of the estate. And anyway, the codicils had been written, signed and witnessed.

"After Mr. Wade signed the codicils, what happened?" the Black Bat asked.

"We all filed out of the room," the old lady replied. "Dr. Knapp was in the kitchen eating. Later he went to Mr. Wade's room alone and came downstairs immediately. He told us Mr. Wade had just died."

"How did the family act?"

"Rufus said it was about time. Eldon just sat there, staring, remembering the happier days when his father had been young and active. Orella never left her room but I'll swear when she was told she simply kept right on knitting. That's all she ever does—knit."

"And Bob Mason?"

"He came home about three in the morning—drunk. He went straight to bed. Tonight he went out at his accustomed time. The only difference was that he asked Eldon for twice as much



SILK

money as usual, saying he might as well have some of his share at once."

"A delightful family, Mrs. Gandy," the Black Bat commented wryly. "Why do you feel there is something wrong?"

"There's too much whispering. Even Hughes, the butler, has taken to eavesdropping the last few weeks. He skulks about like a shadow, prying."

"I'm grateful to you," the Black Bat said. "I'd appreciate it even more if you kept my visit a secret. And one more thing. Who was in this house at two o'clock yesterday morning?"

"I don't know. I stayed in my room. I didn't want to watch them start counting the money they'd just inherited. Now let me ask a question. You're some sort of a detective, aren't you?"

"It has been so alleged," the Black Bat chuckled.

"Why don't you ask me what I think of the codicil giving that hospital for cripples all that money?" she asked.

"Then I am asking that, Mrs. Gandy."

"It surprised me. It shocked me. Because that place is run by Dr. Paul Dale, and Mr. Wade hated him like he hated no living man. Let me tell you why.

Mr. Wade married late in life. Ann was beautiful, dazzling, and Mr. Wade adored her. When Eldon was born, Dr. Paul Dale was in charge. The baby came sooner than anyone expected and Mrs. Wade was very ill. They tried to reach Dr. Dale but—Dr. Dale was somewhere playing poker and drinking. When he did come, Ann had died. Mr. Wade never forgave him."

The Black Bat's eyes narrowed. "And now Wade leaves this man he hated all that money?"

"It doesn't make sense. For after Ann's death Dr. Dale might as well have been dead too. Mr. Wade ruined him. Dr. Dale would rent an office and build up a practice. Mr. Wade would buy the building and throw him out. It kept on like that until Dale was licked. Once he came here and said he'd make Mr. Wade pay some day."

MRS. GANDY paused to draw breath, then went on:

"Dale became a ship's doctor, but Mr. Wade owned controlling interest in the ship line and had Dale kicked off the boat. I often told Mr. Wade the doctor

had been punished enough. I . . . Where are you? Where have you gone?"

She snapped on the light, then sank back slowly and started rocking fast. She was quite alone, and the whole thing seemed like a fantastic dream. Except that Mrs. Gandy felt better for having told all she knew.

By the time the old lady realized she was alone, the Black Bat had reached Rufus Wade's room. Rufus sat at a desk, smugly writing down figures. He was a wealthy man. For the first time in his useless life he was a powerful man.

He heard the snick of the door catch and looked up, straight at the figure in black and straight along the barrel of a large automatic. Rufus carefully put down his pencil and raised both hands slowly.

"What do you want?" he demanded. "There's nothing here worth stealing."

"I'm not here to steal," said the figure in black. "I'm the Black Bat."

"What do you want?" Rufus repeated.

"Simply the answer to a question. At two o'clock yesterday morning, were you here, at home?"

"Of course I was. My brother had just died—"

"I know. Who else was here?"

"That's none of your business," Rufus barked. "I'm not talking to a man who hides behind a mask."

The lights in the room suddenly winked out. Rufus got to his feet and tiptoed a dozen yards to a chest. He opened a drawer and reached into it for the gun he knew was there. Fingers clamped down around his wrist. The gun was expertly twisted from his grasp and he was sent reeling back into a chair.

"Rank amateurs shouldn't play dangerous games," the Black Bat warned. "I asked you a question. I want an answer. I'm no policeman, bound by laws. I'm no court of justice adhering to the red-tape of evidence. But I want a simple answer and I'm going to get it!"



Visitors of Violence

UFUS WADE laughed, but he stopped that abruptly when a gloved hand slapped him hard across the face. His angry cry was stifled by that same hand.

"You're a useless, worthless specimen of manhood," the Black Bat whispered in his ear. "You've lived your

life waiting for this day when you'd become rich. But you may not enjoy the money you've waited so long to get."

"What do you mean?"

"Dead men can't spend money, Rufus."

The automatic's muzzle rested lightly against Rufus' throat and made him break out in a cold sweat. He made two attempts to speak. The third was but a dismal croak.

"I—was here. I swear it! So were all the others—Eldon, Bob, Orella, Dr. Knapp, Mrs. Gandy and Hughes, the butler. We were all in the living room."

"That's a lie. Mrs. Gandy was in her room. And Bob Mason was not yet home."

"I didn't pay much attention to Mrs. Gandy, with her crying. Maybe she had gone to her room. And I forgot Bob. He's home so seldom. You'd never think he lived here except when he tries to chisel money."

Rufus was aware that the gun had been removed from his neck. He listened intently. There wasn't even the sound of breathing. He jumped up, ran to the door and opened his mouth to scream the alarm.

A hand drapped on his shoulder and whirled him around. A gloved fist collided violently with his chin and Rufus slumped in the arms of the man in black.

"I thought you'd do that," the Black Bat chided softly, "and I need more time in this house."

He left Rufus sleeping it off in a chair, and went in search of Orella Wade's room. He wanted to meet this woman who spent all her time knitting and had no more sorrow for her broth-

NEXT ISSUE

MY PAL, THE KILLER

A Complete Crime Novelet

By W. H. SWANBERG

AND MANY OTHER STORIES

er's death than anyone else in this strange household.

No sound came from behind any of the doors. At the end of the hall was a somewhat narrower door than the others and decorated with hand carved ducks and geese marching in an endless parade around the paneling. The lock seemed to be rusted clear to the surface plate.

He insterted his pliers but there was no key on the opposite side to turn. He took out an instrument curved at the end somewhat like an old-fashioned buttonhook. He skillfully plied this until it caught. A moment later he was inside a small room. There was a thick layer of dust over everything.

The room was a nursery. The walls had once been pink. There was a crib decorated with pink lace which fell away in rotted fragments when he touched it. There were pink baby clothes in a small dresser, all of them made fragile by age and yellowed from the years.

There were shelves of toys. Dolls, teddy bears, old-fashioned games, paint sets and crayons. He doubted that anyone had disturbed the sanctity of the room in years. It was intriguing but apparently had nothing to do with the mystery of murder, so the Black Bat quietly moved out of the room.

He had the door almost shut when he heard a scream from the third floor. It rang through the house. A screaming woman ran down the third floor steps. She was about forty, and wearing a nightgown and slippers. And between screams she shouted something that sounded like "Murder!"

The Black Bat emerged from the nursery and raced for the staircase. He climbed the steps three at a time, saw a light streaming from two adjoining rooms. One apparently had been occupied by the maid who had fled in panic. The other was occupied by the corpse of a man, seated at a small desk with his head pillowed against one arm. From his back protruded a blood smeared knife handle.

The Black Bat quickly moved to the man's side. Apparently he had been writing something because his hand still clutched the corner of a piece of paper. There was nothing on that.

The Black Bat raised the man's head

gently. It was Hughes, the tall, thin butler.

PEOPLE were running up the stairs. The Black Bat looked for an exit and found that there was only one—the stairway which would now be crowded.

"You—you there."

The voice came from behind him. The Black Bat spun, hand darting toward his gun holster. Mrs. Gandy was beckoning and he sped toward her.

"In my room!" She gestured. "I'll close the door of Hughes' room after they are all inside. Get out of here as quickly as you can."

The Black Bat obeyed because there was nothing else to do. He extinguished the light, kept the door open a crack and saw most of the household stream into the dead man's room. Eldon was not among them.

Then the door closed softly. The Black Bat fled noiselessly past the door, down the steps and out the rear exit. . .

Driving back to the city, the Black Bat was genuinely worried. Again he had been beaten to the punch by the killer. That butler had known something and had been writing it out when the murderer struck. But worse than that, when Rufus would proclaim from the house-tops that the Black Bat had been in the house and roughed him up, the police would honestly believe the Black Bat, had knifed that butler.

Captain McGrath would go all out hunting down the figure in black. Not even the Police Commissioner, who chose to close his eyes to the activities of the Black Bat, would be able to stall an organized manhunt. From now on the Black Bat's movements were going to be packed with danger.

He had one thing vitally necessary to do before this peril closed in around him. He had to visit the Foley apartment and determine whether or not McGrath had missed anything. McGrath rarely did, but the pugnacious detective captain had withdrawn from this case early and his successors had simply accepted the evidence as presented and closed the case.

He parked the coupé behind the apartment house where the Foleys had lived, exchanged the wide-brimmed hat for the hood, then made his way to the service

entrance. The freight elevator was at the basement floor—a break.

It took him to the eleventh floor and he left it there, doors wide open, but lights out. He moved carefully down the corridor to the Foley door. At any moment someone might step from one of the apartments or the passenger elevators might open.

The Black Bat rarely attempted to pick any lock without first trying the knob. This time he found such a precaution wise, for the door was not locked. He quickly drew his gun, pushed the door open a crack and listened. He didn't hear a sound. He opened the door wide and grimaced when it squealed slightly.

The apartment was in darkness and he invaded it boldly. There was a blood stain on the floor, a grisly reminder of what had happened here. The door to the bedroom was closed. He approached this and paused again to listen. Finally he turned that knob.

At once he saw flames. A pile of papers in the middle of the floor was just beginning to burn briskly. The Black Bat leaped toward them and for one of the few times in his career he was the victim of a clever ruse.

Someone stepped from behind the partially open door. The form was obscured by a blanket held high. This blanket descended over the Black Bat's head, a foot was inserted between his legs, and he was neatly tripped.

The Black Bat's arms flailed wildly. He secured a grip on the blanket and gradually worked his way out of it. The moment his head was free he heard the doors of the freight elevator sliding shut. He raced out to the corridor but was too late.

The car had already descended and with it this unknown person who had been hiding in the apartment.

There was no way to pursue. The Black Bat hurried back to the apartment, fully aware that whoever had escaped him might turn in a police alarm.

He closed the door, went back to the bedroom where the fire had already died out.

He examined the papers and found they were blank pages. He knew then exactly what had happened.

SOMEONE had been in here, searching. When the door had opened and squeaked, the intruder had quickly realized that to escape he must use trickery. So he had started the fire, held the blanket ready, and in all probability never even knew who had surprised him.

There was nothing of interest in the bedroom. The Black Bat went to young Don Foley's room next. It reminded him, a little, of the abandoned nursery in the Wade mansion. Except that this room was spotless. No toys lay haphazardly around. He found a large chest, crammed to the top with the toys a boy likes.

On the top lay a jump rope with red wooden handles. Below it were picture books and toy automobiles. The Black Bat closed the chest lid and looked over the rest of the room. He could find nothing. The intruder had either been careful about not leaving any clues, or had been here only seconds before the entrance of the Black Bat.

By now the Long Island Police would be alerting Manhattan precincts about the murder of Hughes. Captain McGrath would be one of the first to be notified. The Black Bat returned to his coupé and drove rapidly home.

As he passed by the house he thought it strange that only the hall light was on. Perhaps Silk had been more seriously injured in that accident than it had been believed. The Black Bat hastily parked the coupé, darted through the gate to the garden house. In a moment he was clambering into the laboratory where he quickly changed to the tweeds Tony Quinn wore. He picked up his white cane, allowed the mask of blindness to come down over his eyes and moved to the secret door.

As he stepped into the library he sensed at once that something was wrong. He was tempted to retreat and resume the garb of the Black Bat. As Tony Quinn, blind man, he was in no position to resist an attack. Yet there wasn't time. Captain McGrath would make a direct line to this house the moment he knew that murder evidence pointed to the Black Bat. When McGrath arrived blind Tony Quinn had to be there.

Quinn took a firm grip on his heavy

CHAPTER IX

cane and moved into the hallway. He saw Silk crumpled in a pitiful heap near the front door. The bandages on his head were covered with fresh blood. Silk gave a low moan.

Quinn stood stock-still, straining every sense. He had fallen into one baited trap already and Silk could be the lure for another. Then he heard the distant wail of a siren, steadily growing louder. McGrath was arriving in state this time.

Quinn rushed to Silk and raised his head. Silk was half conscious, but he mustered some sort of a grin.

"Tried to—make me tell—where you—were. Three of them. Plain—mugs."

"Silk how badly are you hurt?" Quinn said. "How far did they go in beating you up?"

"How—far?" Silk shuddered. "Just to the point of—breaking bones."

"The Black Bat is going to be accused of cold-blooded murder," Quinn said. "McGrath will pull up here in a moment or so. Can you walk if I help you?"

"Let's try," Silk suggested, "and see."

Quinn lifted him, and Silk maintained his balance with considerable effort.

"Got an idea," he said. "While they held me—and searched, I thought where would you be if you were trying to hide—from them? I thought of the old closet on the second floor—your old darkroom. The door is hard to find since we—took off the knob."

"Silk, have you got the key?"

Silk nodded. "On my ring."

"Then you intend to suggest that I go there, you lock me in and say we heard these men coming and I hid. If you're too badly hurt, Silk, forget the whole thing."

"I can make it," Silk grunted. "Just give me—little support. Hurry, sir."

Murder Complications

QUINN half-lifted, half-dragged Silk to the second floor. Quinn opened the old dark-room door, stepped inside, and Silk locked it from the outside.

Silk reeled away from smoothing a piece of tapestry over the door. He had reached the stairs when the doorbell began to clamor with that peculiar insistency of McGrath's when he was on the warpath.

Silk managed to get halfway down. Then he stumbled, and fell to the bottom.

Through the little window in the door McGrath saw Silk fall, and wasted no time crashing the lock. He took a quick look at Silk and called to a man to summon a doctor fast. McGrath saw the black and blue marks on Silk's throat where he had been choked. He saw the ugly bruises just below the edge of the bandages.

"Silk!" McGrath said. "Silk, can you hear me? Silk, where is Tony?"

"I—won't—tell," Silk mumbled. "Go ahead—break my arm. I—won't tell."

McGrath gently laid him down, drew his gun and summoned two more men.

"I don't know what's happened in here," he said, "and I'm almost afraid to look. So help me if anything has happened to Quinn . . . Come on, let's go!"

They started searching the house. It had been well ransacked already and to McGrath this couldn't possibly be a set-up. There was no trace of Quinn, but McGrath stood at the top of the stairs and yelled Quinn's name.

Almost at once there was a loud thumping. It took some time to track down the source of it. McGrath found the tapestry and then the door.

"Silk has the key!" Quinn called from inside. "Where is Silk?"

McGrath sent one of his men down to fetch Silk's keys. In moments Quinn emerged from the dusty, unused room, demanding to know where Silk was.

McGrath led him to a chair and helped

A TRUE STORY

PIRATES of the
HIGH IRON

*Railroad Criminals
and Rackets*

By COLONEL GEORGE F. CHANDLER

COMING NEXT ISSUE

him into it. "Tony, Silk's been beaten up. I came here on another matter which we can speak of later. Right now I want to know who sacked your house and darned near killed Silk."

"Mac," Quinn said, "whether you believe it or not, I can't see. Silk and I were talking when I heard someone stealthily approach the house. You know I hear better than the average man. I heard someone say I was to be killed on sight. I told Silk and he hustled me upstairs and locked me in that darkroom. I heard loud voices, much banging around, then a lot of silence. I think someone was searching the house."

McGrath looked around. "That's no exaggeration," he said. "Silk will be okay. I sent for a doctor. Tony, why are you a target for murder? Only a couple of hours ago you were nearly killed in a planned auto accident. Now killers come here looking for you and put Silk through torture to make him tell where you are. You must know something."

Quinn passed a hand across his face. "We'll talk about it after I know how badly Silk is hurt. Help me downstairs."

McGrath did that, then went back upstairs with the doctor who rushed in. Before long he returned to the library and sat down.

"They've put Silk to bed," he told Quinn. "More shock than anything else. Those mugs took good care not to injure him so badly he'd pass out. He told the same story you did. Now I've got one to tell."

Quinn stared starkly at the cold fireplace, his features grim.

"Tonight," McGrath went on, "the Black Bat visited the Wade estate. This time I thought I had him cold. He talked to Rufus Wade and finished off by knocking him stiff. Then he had a talk with the butler. Chap named Hughes. He finished that conversation by driving a knife into Hughes' back."

"There was the usual black sticker on the butler's forehead?" Quinn asked suddenly. "The brand of the Black Bat?"

"Not this time, Tony. It was cold-blooded murder, done in a particularly ratty fashion, not face to face as the Black Bat usually fights."

"Who says the Black Bat is the killer?" Quinn wanted to know.

McGrath shrugged. "Nobody saw the crime, Tony. But the Black Bat was in the house. No other stranger was and that servant was held in high esteem by the whole family."

"I've had dealings with the Black Bat. He doesn't work that way. When did this happen?"

"About forty-five minutes ago. Rufus Wade had to drive two miles to telephone. The wires had been cut at the Wade place."

QUINN hoped he didn't betray the interest that aroused. The maid had discovered the murder a full hour and a half ago. The phone wires must have been cut by some member of the Wade family, a method of gaining time. But for what? Time for someone to go to the Foley apartment before the Black Bat could reach it?

"Mac," Quinn said, "I'm in someone's hair. They're trying to brush me off by killing me. That means I'm close to some secret, though I have no idea what it is . . . Tell me, did you do any work on the fracas between the Foleys at that dance?"

"I found out a fellow named Loren Joyce started the whole thing. Madge Foley knew him, but didn't like him, and he'd never tried anything on her before. But Tom Foley was just about as jealous a husband as existed . . . What are you driving at, Tony?"

"Tom Foley was summoned to the Wade house. He saw J. Perry Wade just before he died, and drew up some papers for him. Could the argument at the dance have been planned to set the stage so a double murder would look like murder and suicide? Could this Loren Joyce have been hired to start the ball rolling by making Tom Foley sore?"

"I'll haul Joyce in and work him over," said McGrath. "But I still don't know why they are after you."

"Because I was also summoned to the Wade house. Nothing happened there, so far as I was concerned, but perhaps I missed something. After all, I'm blind. Then I took an active part in the investigation of the Foley deaths and may have stepped on some toes without knowing

it. So killers have been hired to rub me out."

"If we only knew why," sighed McGrath. "Tony, you're not holding out?"

"Would I be such a fool after what happened tonight?" Quinn asked. "I want a police guard—one man—stationed across the street from the house. One man might not be observed and he could raise an alarm.

"I'll assign a man at once," McGrath promised. "You know, Tony, my suspicions that you could be the Black Bat are gone now. No matter if it meant exposure, you'd never stand by and permit Silk to be beaten up that way."

"Never mind that, Mac. Get busy on Loren Joyce. Put a man on his trail. Check his bank account. He'd have been paid off plenty if he is involved.

McGrath nodded and arose. "Tony, if we had that Foley child we might find the one clue we're looking for. He has to know enough to set us straight or they'd never have tried to kill him."

"Suppose we leave the Foley boy to the Black Bat," Quinn said. "The child is at least safe from harm. And you'll never make me believe the Black Bat knifed anyone in the back."

Quinn went to the door with McGrath and the detective-captain assigned a man to take up a position across the street. It rendered a certain amount of protection for Tony Quinn and in no way interfered with the comings and goings of the Black Bat.

Upstairs, Quinn sat down beside Silk's bed. Silk had a wide grin on his face now.

"We fooled 'em, sir. For spur-of-the-moment thinking, it was a good idea for you to hide that way."

"McGrath is just about convinced I'm not the Black Bat," Quinn chuckled. "Just how badly do you feel, Silk?"

"About half as bad as McGrath thinks. Those three hoodlums pulled their punches so they'd hurt more than they'd disable. They rang the bell. I opened the door and the three of them came at me. I was held at gun point while they searched the house. Then they slapped me around. Said they knew you were here because they'd seen us go in and we never came out. They figured I'd hidden you."

"They were murder-bent?" Quinn asked slowly.

"You were to be riddled on sight. I'd know them again and I intend to meet that trio. Next time I'll be holding the gun."

Quinn pursed his lips in serious thought. "When a man has to hire assassins it means he isn't ordinarily a crook himself. But in hiring them, there had to be some contact. Silk, we're going to hunt these men down."

"That's something I won't miss," Silk vowed. "But haven't you any idea why they want you dead so badly?"

"No—except that I'm the only official who persists in working on the Foley case as if it were double murder. Solve the Foley case and you run smack into the motive behind these crimes. Now the Wade butler is dead—knifed in the back. He was recognized as a weak link and permanently shut up."

"Carol phoned before those three men arrived," Silk told Quinn. "She said she'd be in the lab about two in the morning—about now. Maybe she's learned something."

"And you're tired," Quinn laughed. "All right, Silk. I'll let you sleep."

TONY QUINN went downstairs to the library, using his cane and moving with the deliberation of a blind man. The shades were fully drawn so he went straight to the secret door. Carol was nervously pacing the floor of the laboratory.

She rushed into his arms. "Tony, what's happened? All those police around?"

He sat down beside her on the divan and detailed all of the events which had transpired. She listened intently, then told about her own activities.

"I wangled an introduction to Bob Mason, Tony," she said, "and he's the flattest heel I've ever met. It was easy to get him to take me to dinner and then a club, and finally to one of the roughest gambling spots I've ever seen. Thousand-dollar bills were floating around like nickels at the automat."

"What did he have to say, Carol?"

"Well, he was glad that his uncle arranged so there would be no funeral. He anticipates getting a lot of money from

the estate, but is afraid of his cousin Eldon who is rather strict. Also, at a family gathering this afternoon, Eldon was determined to start action against a foolish Special District Attorney who took it upon himself to order an autopsy, contrary to the wishes of Eldon."

"I expected that," Quinn told her. "So Bob Mason is a gambler. Did he have a great deal of money?"

"If you call three or four thousand a great deal—as I do—he had it."

"What sort of luck did he have?"

"Medium. He lost about three hundred dollars, but he's an awful sucker when the dice, cards or roulette balls seem to be running hot for him."

"What does he think of the rest of the family?"

"Eldon is the only one he fears. Rufus, he claims, is a fool. Orella is crazy. Tony, do you believe one of this clan is involved in the murder of J. Perry Wade and of Tom and Marge Foley?"

"Of Tom and Marge—yes. I am certain J. Perry Wade was not murdered. The motive still eludes me and I'm still intrigued about why J. Perry sent for me. The knifing of Hughes brings the D.A.'s office right back into the case though the Wades and the police have made up their minds that the Black Bat did the killing."

"What has Bob Mason to do with it?" Carol asked. "He seems too lazy to be a murderer."

QUINN handed her a cigarette, held a match, then applied it to his pipe.

"Mason isn't smart, stern and severe as the others in the family," he said. "He'd break down first, so we hold him until the time is ripe. His gambling gives me an idea. Keep dating him."

"We're to meet again tomorrow night," Carol said. "He wants to show me the hottest crap game in town . . . Tony, do you want me to take care of Silk?"

"No, he's all right. And Butch is handling the Foley boy. I'm more certain than ever that that child knows the secret but is too young to recognize the significance of his knowledge. I'm hoping he may spring it on Butch."

"If only Butch recognizes it," Carol sighed. "I'm going home. My feet hurt. It's six miles walking from gambling

table to gambling table. Besides, I lost ten dollars."

CHAPTER X

Strange Inheritance



RUNNING at Carol, Quinn helped her down into the secret exit. When she was gone he sat alone in the laboratory, smoking and trying to find some clue which might point to what this was all about.

J. Perry Wade had called him in. The stalling Eldon had done could have been deliberate or coincidental. At any rate Quinn had not seen J. Perry Wade. Then Tom Foley and his wife had been murdered in such an amazingly clever fashion that it was believed to be murder and suicide. An autopsy on J. Perry Wade had dispelled any theory that he had been murdered, but Hughes, his butler, had been knifed in the back.

So at least three murders had been committed because one old man had died a natural death.

An attempt had been made to kill the Foley boy so he was a cog in this murder machine. And two attempts had been made on Quinn's life—without apparent reason. It was the only case Quinn recalled where the motive had been completely hidden.

Tom Foley had been the last person, except for Dr. Knapp and perhaps Eldon Wade, to see J. Perry Wade before he died. Why should a man be murdered because of that?

And where did that strange nursery at the Wade home fit in? Why had Dr. Dale, such a professed enemy of J. Perry Wade, been willed fifty thousand dollars for his home for crippled children?

Somewhere among all these things was buried the reason for murder but so deeply covered that not even a wisp of it showed. Quinn had two working points, both indefinite. Bob Mason might reveal some secret to Carol or give way under the questionings of the Black Bat. But would a murderer trust a weakling like

Mason with such information?

Then there were the hoodlums hired to kill the Foley boy and Tony Quinn. Quinn determined to have Silk look over Rogue's Gallery as soon as he was able to be about. And Quinn still had to face the action which Eldon Wade was bound to inaugurate against the D.A. who refused to bow to the wishes of the Wade family. . . .

In the morning, Silk insisted upon getting up, preparing breakfast and accompanying Quinn to the office. They were

a police car to the Wade estate. It was followed, at some distance, by a large car in which two detectives sat with guns in their laps.

"I found the picture of one of those monkeys, sir," Silk said. "An all-around strongarm man and crook named Jensen. I didn't let on to McGrath that I identified him, though. I thought the Black Bat might want to handle the details."

"He will," Quinn assured. "It may be that the Black Bat will operate without the help of the D.A.'s office from now on,



CAROL

ready for the routine business of the day when Tony Quinn had a phone call.

"This," the caller said curtly, "is Oliver Broderick of the law firm representing the Wade estate. It is absolutely essential that you be at the Wade home at noon, Mr. Quinn."

"I'll be on deck," promised Quinn.

He hung up, leaned back and gave Silk a grin. "Well, they've started the ball rolling and I've an idea the ball has a nice big figure eight on it."

Quinn sent Silk to Headquarters for an inspection of the Rogue's Gallery, then he did his best to attend to the regular affairs of his position.

Shortly before noon Silk was driving

but the Wades can't make the Black Bat stop. . . Hmm—looks as if the inquisition will take place before quite an audience."

Four cars were parked at the entrance to the mansion. Silk pulled up to the head of the line and helped Quinn into the house. Eldon Wade saw them enter and glared for Silk's benefit. Rufus sat in a corner, smoking his atrocious pipe and acting bored. His jaw was a trifle lopsided, proof that there must have been at least one moment when the boredom had been lifted.

Bob Mason, whom Quinn recognized from Carol's description, sat on the edge of a table, swinging one leg and nursing

a tall drink of straight whisky. He was rather nice-looking with the clean-cut appearance of men of his type. His clothes had been fashioned by an expensive tailor and his black hair was slicked down. Quinn could see why Carol disliked him.

THERE was no sign of Orella Wade, the recluse sister of the deceased, but in one corner sat a man quite alone and apparently trying to keep that way. He was about sixty-five, professional-looking with half-frightened eyes. His clothes were cheap, his shoes scuffed slightly, yet he seemed like an intelligent person slightly worried at the moment.

Mrs. Gandy, the housekeeper, entered and took up a position at the rear of the room. Oliver Broderick, the lawyer for the estate, was zipping open a brief-case and laying papers on a table. He cleared his throat, rapped for attention, and unfolded a legal document.

"This," he announced, "is the last will and testament of the late J. Pery Wade. You people have been assembled here because each of you has an interest in what this will contains. I will not read the preamble, which is purely legal, but get down to bedrock, and also skip all the dull parts."

He looked around in an important manner and went on:

"To Orella Wade goes the income on a fund of a quarter of a million dollars. Upon her death this fund is to be liquidated and turned over to the main heir. To Rufus Wade goes the income from a similar trust which is to be disposed of in a similar manner upon the death of Rufus Wade. To the housekeeper, Mrs. Gandy, goes the sum of twenty-thousand dollars in cash, with no restrictions. To Robert Mason goes—nothing. It is specifically stated that Robert Mason does not understand the value of money and therefore he is cut off. To Eldon Wade, the son of the deceased, goes the remainder of the estate with its controlling interest in the Wade industrial enterprises."

Broderick laid the will down and peered around the room. Quinn, though his blank eyes gave no indication of it, had been doing the same thing. He saw

Rufus nod happily. His way of life would not change. Mrs. Gandy dabbed at her eyes, but showed no surprise.

Bob Mason had turned pale, then crimson. He downed what was left in his glass and went to the sideboard for more liquor. The way he banged decanters and glasses around indicated how he felt.

Eldon Wade acted as if falling heir to one of the largest fortunes in the nation, was an everyday occurrence.

Suddenly Bob Mason hurled his empty glass at the fireplace and stalked out. Silk bent and whispered in Quinn's ear as if to tell him what caused the crash. Broderick picked up another document.

"The original will was made four years ago," he announced. "I drew it up personally and there is no loophole. Now, however, I find that there are two new clauses which must be included. These were written by Attorney Thomas Foley and properly witnessed. The first clause gives directions as to the burial. These orders have already been carried out with a defection for which we have not been responsible."

He referred, of course, to the autopsy which Quinn had ordered. Broderick studied the document once more.

"The final clause directs that from the bulk of the estate fifty thousand dollars in cash be withdrawn and willed to Dr. Paul Dale for any use he sees fit. That, gentlemen, is all."

Quinn arose, leaning on his white cane. "This has been interesting, Mr. Broderick, but why was I brought here?"

"I'm coming to that," the lawyer said. He reached into the briefcase and kept his hand there. "One week ago, after Mr. J. Perry Wade knew that he could not live much longer, he summoned me to this house. It was all done rather secretly. I was told how to enter without being seen, through a side door. I went to Mr. Wade's sick room. There he swore me to silence and directed me to turn over to Anthony Quinn of the District Attorney's office an object which the said Mr. Quinn was to have for his own. Mr. Quinn, this now becomes your property."

Broderick withdrew an old stereoscope from the brief-case, one of those double lenses devices into which cardboard slides are fitted and which were popular some thirty-five years ago. Alongside

the stereoscope Broderick placed a stack of the pictures that went with it.

For a moment nobody said a word, then Rufus let out a bellow of laughter. Bob Mason had returned and stood in the doorway. He glanced at Quinn and vanished again. Eldon Wade had no expression on his face at all.

"Silk," Quinn said, "what in the world is it? Why did someone laugh?"

"It's one of those old-fashioned stereoscopes, sir," Silk replied. "I haven't seen one in years but J. Perry Wade willed you one, with the pictures for the instrument."

"A stereoscope for me?" Quinn's surprise was not simulated. "But—but what on earth good is that to me? Didn't Mr. Wade know I'm blind?"

BRODERICK picked up the pictures and the stereoscope and deposited them in Quinn's lap.

"No matter what he knew or what he thought, this is now yours. Mr. Wade sometimes thought things were extremely funny, when no one else could see the humor in them."

"And I'm not wanted here for anything else?" Quinn asked.

"What did you expect—a share in the family fortune?" Rufus roared with laughter.

"Good day, Mr. Quinn," Eldon Wade said crisply. "But don't think I have forgotten the insult to my father. I'm not finished with you yet."

Silk helped Quinn arise, took the stereoscope and the pictures and they walked out together. In the car Quinn made no move to touch his new possession but when they were safely away from the place he seized the pictures and studied them.

"What the devil!" he cried, half-angrily. "These are shots of Niagara Falls. It's a set, numbered so you take a trip through the Falls."

"Do you suppose he was off the beam?" Silk asked. "If he was anything like the rest of the family he must have been stark mad."

"He never knew me," Quinn replied musingly. "So far as I know, I never laid eyes on the man. The only picture I ever saw of him was the one printed in his obituary. Now he wills me a silly thing

like this. No, Silk, he wasn't mad. Few shrewder men ever lived than J. Perry Wade, and giving me this has a special meaning."

Instead of going back to the office, Quinn had Silk drive him home where he could have more leisure to study this odd bequest. In the security of the lab, he ran the pictures through the machine. Some were so badly cracked that the subject could hardly be seen.

Quinn laid down the instrument. "I can't understand it," he said. "The pictures are ordinary. The stereoscope is a simple device and contains no secret messages, and yet I think J. Perry Wade meant to tell me something. A matter he couldn't even confide to his own family, because he took elaborate pains that they should know nothing about this."

"And otherwise," Silk said, "the will seemed exactly what everyone expected. The industrial empire went to Eldon who has been running it for years anyway. Rufus and Orella were both well provided for, and in a manner as to assure them the steady income they have always enjoyed. Bob Mason was left out because he didn't know how to handle money. Mrs. Gandy received a generous sum for her years of service."

"And where did the butler, Hughes, come in?" Quinn asked. "He was alive when J. Perry Wade died, and had served the family as long as Mrs. Gandy had. Leaving him out also means something. Every time things happen in this case, Silk, they quickly arrive at a dead end."

"Young Mason reacted somewhat violently when he learned he no longer had an income," Silk observed, "but I'd expect a man like him to go into tantrums over it. He seemed more annoyed than worried."

"You noticed that, too," Quinn said. "See if you can reach Carol on the phone."

Quinn took the instrument a moment later, told Carol what had happened.

"I'm wondering if Mason will keep his date with you tonight, Carol," he said.

"He called half an hour ago," she told him. "It's still on."

"I'll call you back shortly. I may find a way to lay a little trap for whoever is behind this. I've an idea that Mason doesn't care if he was cut off, because he

knows how to get all he wants anyway. Call you later, Carol."

Quinn hung up and turned to Silk. "Do you think it's possible to round up two or three of your old-time buddies? Real con-men who'd like to make a soft touch?"

"It could be done."

"Then get enough to fill out a good poker game. You are pretty good at disguising yourself. Well enough to get by Mason. Suppose you attend the poker party, too, and I'll have Carol steer Mason to it. I want Mason separated from every dime he owns—and more. Take I.O.U.s. Bleed him white."

Silk chuckled. "I've done it to smarter men than Mason, sir. It will be a pleasure."

"Then that is your assignment for tonight. I'm going after those men who have been trying to kill me and who beat you up. I know how much you'd like to be present, but it can't be this time. If we don't move with speed and break this, I'm liable to have an unpleasant interview with the D.A. and be out of a job."

"Yes sir," Silk nodded. "I know a hotel where gamblers can hire rooms. I'll give Carol all the dope she needs to bring Mason there. It should be an interesting evening."

While Silk made his preparations and called his friends, Quinn examined the stereoscope again. He spent an hour studying the instrument and looked at the group of pictures so often that he felt as if he had just visited Niagara. But J. Perry Wade's secret remained intact.

CHAPTER XI

Surprised Heir



EARLY that evening a man in a wide-brimmed hat entered the side door of a drug store in a suburban section, went to the phone booth, and dialed a number. Shadowed by the brim of his hat, were bright, pleasant eyes surrounded by ugly acid-induced

scars. The Black Bat spoke into the phone.

"This is Mr. Grey, in the last house on your street. My little girl has been taken ill. I need a doctor at once so I thought, there being a home for crippled children in the neighborhood, you could spare a physician. I'm willing to pay handsomely."

Someone said he would be right over. The Black Bat left the store unobtrusively, crossed the street and suddenly vanished. What he had really done was to vault a hedge, crouch behind it and study the neighborhood. He felt certain he had not been observed.

In a few moments a car pulled up, an old and sadly battered one. From it stepped Dr. Paul Dale who had inherited fifty thousand dollars from a man who had hated him for almost half a century.

Dale was a furtive figure. His shoulders drooped and he seemed much older than he was. The Black Bat knew the explanation for that. The man had been beaten so often, every plan he made blown up in his face so regularly that he had practically given up hope of ever living a normal life.

Dale rang the bell of the house to which he had been called. There was no answer. Not a surprise for the Black Bat, because he had made certain the Grey family was away.

Finally Dale shrugged, and returned to his car. He started the motor, held the wheel to make a wide U-turn, then suddenly lifted both arms so high his knuckles cracked against the roof of the car.

A soft laugh came from behind him and the gun which was touching the back of his ear was removed.

"Sorry to have alarmed you, Doctor Dale," a voice said. "I'm the Black Bat. Drive straight ahead two blocks, turn left and then go on until I tell you to stop."

"But—but . . . but I don't know anything!"

"We'll talk about it later," the Black Bat interrupted. "Just begin driving."

When the Black Bat told him to stop it was on a little used road off the main highway.

Dr. Dale turned around and shuddered at sight of this man in black.

"Please don't hurt me," he pleaded. "I can't help you. I—I realize something is



BUTCH

wrong at the Wade place but I've had nothing to do with them. They hate me."

"So I understand," the Black Bat said. "J. Perry Wade persecuted you from the time you were a young man—right up to the moment of his death. Then he willed you fifty thousand dollars. I'd like to know all about it, Doctor Dale."

"You seem to know all there is, now. I was shocked beyond speech to know of the bequest. It comes at a time I need money desperately for my little hospital."

"The details, Doctor—from the beginning," the Black Bat purred.

Dale was a badly frightened man and the Black Bat knew from long experience that men so filled with terror have something to hide.

"I first knew the Wades when J. Perry was well along on his career," Dale said. "His wife was having a baby and I took care of her. When the child was born, prematurely, I happened to be so far away—"

"Lie Number One. You were at a poker party and a little the worse for wear. Go ahead, Doctor, and don't be tempted to lie again."

"I arrived too late. Mrs. Wade was

dead. They couldn't find another physician in time. Wade blamed me. He cursed me and said I'd never rest again, and he carried out that promise. I found I had no patients, so I moved away. I built up a fair practice and Wade bought the building where I had my offices. I moved again. That kept on until I gave up. I worked for banana plantations in Central America—until Wade found me and had me fired. I worked on steamships and once Wade actually bought the line to have me dropped at some forsaken port."

HE PAUSED, and seemed to fall into painful retrospect.

"Go on," the Black Bat urged.

"Two years ago I discontinued my career and began again under a false name. Finally I got the chance to start this small home for crippled children, something I had specialized in. I thought Wade had at last lost track of me. Then came—this. Fifty thousand dollars! He must have been sorry for what he did to me."

"I doubt it," the Black Bat said flatly. "J. Perry Wade dealt in millions. If he felt sorry for having crushed you, he'd

have willed you a lot more, especially since it would go to a worthy cause. I've investigated you, Doctor. I know you're a good man, and that J. Perry Wade was wrong in persecuting you. Now tell me how it happened you were picked as Mrs. Wade's physician when you were so young. Wade could have afforded a more experienced man."

"I—knew his wife before she married him. I attended her first. . . That is, I—"

"Say it. You attended Mrs. Wade's first husband. That's what you mean, isn't it?"

"Yes. He'd been my friend. He died of pneumonia. Ann—Mrs. Wade—knew how hard I'd worked to save him and she wanted me when she needed a doctor."

"What was her first husband's name?"

"Lucas. Henry Lucas. We'd gone to school together."

"All these facts you have given me will be checked on, Doctor," the Black Bat said. "If any of them are lies, I'll be back and you won't enjoy my next visit. Further, if you inform anyone at the Wade house about this interview, you will find yourself in precisely the same position in which J. Perry Wade placed you."

"I haven't lied. I've no reason to lie. Why I was given that bequest is as much a mystery to me as it must be to you. I assure you the money will be put to excellent use. I can install a special pool for the paralytics. I can hire nurses. For the first time in my life I'm really on my way."

The Black Bat stepped out of the car. "Then I won't delay you, Doctor. Frankly, I think you're a man with the best of intentions and I hope I keep my regard for you. Good night."

One moment Dr. Dale saw the figure in black, then there was nothing. The darkness had swallowed him up.

The Black Bat returned to Tony Quinn's home with a new plan of action. He drove the coupé to a street behind the house and cut through yards to reach the tunnel in the garden house. With one of McGrath's detectives keeping the front door under scrutiny, the Black Bat had to operate with more than usual care.

Once in the house he quickly switched

to Tony Quinn's clothes and hurried into the library. Silk had already departed to set the stage for the taking of Bob Mason. Quinn went to the phone and called Captain McGrath at Headquarters.

"Mac," he said, "I need your help. This afternoon Silk looked over your Rogue's Gallery and found a familiar face. One of those men who came to kill me last night. I suggest that you and I try to pick him up."

"I'll be right over," McGrath agreed. "Tell me the name of the mug so I can start things rolling to round him up."

"He is Jerry Jensen of the old Sullivan mob. He shouldn't be hard to find. I think he's on parole, so whatever address he gave must be a true one. Check, then come out here. I'm going to make Silk go to bed. He shouldn't have been out of bed all day, but he insisted."

McGrath arrived in half an hour to find Quinn fully dressed and waiting on the front porch. The detective across the street strolled over.

"I'll just stay here even though you're gone," he said. "Those lugs might come looking for you."

"If we're lucky tonight," McGrath said, "those lugs will be where they belong. In the cell room at Headquarters. Tony, rounding up Jensen will be easy. He got out of stir four months ago and his parole terms are tight. He'll be around."

McGrath drove to a squalid section of the city and pulled to the curb.

"Jensen lives down this street a bit. I'm not taking you along, Tony. No telling what might happen when Jensen realizes he's going back to prison. If he pulls a gun, you won't even know when to duck."

"Mac, you really have come to the conclusion that my blindness is real."

"I told you why. If you could see you'd never have stood by while Silk took such a terrific beating."

McGRATH left him and returned in five minutes to report that Jensen wasn't in his room but was expected shortly. They settled down to wait.

McGrath lit a cigar and puffed contentedly. "You know," he said, "it's a relief being certain you aren't the Black Bat. On a few occasions, I could have

had the drop on the Black Bat but I held off. Know what made me lose him? I was afraid if I did kill him or wound him, he'd turn out to be you."

"The sentiments"—Quinn grinned—"are highly appreciated. Now, I suppose, you'll start shooting at the sight of a black-hooded figure."

"What do you think?" McGrath replied smugly. "There is a warrant out for his arrest. And in this case all he has done is kidnap the Foley boy, and maybe knife the Wade butler in the back."

"Do you really believe he did that?" Quinn asked.

"Well, he usually *does* brand his kills. But I want him for a hundred other jobs. Tony, have you the faintest idea yet what this case is all about?"

"No, and I'm even more confused because J. Perry Wade arranged in secret that after his death I was to be given a stereoscope and a set of slides for it."

"A what?" McGrath's mouth hung open.

"One of those old-fashioned devices you look through at pictures of famous places. J. Perry Wade must have owned it for half a century. It means something, Mac, but I don't know what."

"Boy, do I want a look at that! Tony, did the old boy know you were blind?"

"I haven't the faintest idea, but if he did that certainly was a strange inheritance. Of course you may look at it. Tomorrow—any time after office hours. I keep the thing locked up."

"You have no idea why these hoods were hired to knock you off?"

"It may be that somebody thinks I noticed some incident at the Wade home when I was first called there, but Silk was along and we've tried to think back for a clue, without the slightest success. Perhaps when I ordered the autopsy, our killer believed I knew more than I pretended. There is even a chance he thinks J. Perry Wade was in contact with me and that I'm just waiting to pounce when the time is ripe. Whatever the reason, it spells disaster to the killer unless I'm out of it."

McGrath never took his eyes off the house down the road. "We'll know pretty soon who paid the mugs. Jensen had a break when he got out on parole. He still

had eleven years to do and I don't think he'd like to go back. Perhaps we'll scare the truth out of him."

A full hour went by before McGrath threw away the stub of his third cigar, opened the car door and got out.

"He just went in," he told Quinn. "Be right back and I'll have Jensen in tow. When he spots you, he may crack."

CHAPTER XII

Dead Man's Murder Plans



JENSEN was a lanky, sandy-haired man with a mousy mustache and furtive manners. He looked as dejected as a lost puppy and McGrath kept yanking on the handcuffs clamped around his wrist. Jensen started to get into the car and McGrath helped him with his

foot.

"Well," McGrath told Quinn, "here is Jensen. You heard his footsteps on the sidewalk. Do they match the steps you heard as those mugs sneaked up to your house?"

"Precisely," Quinn nodded. "Jensen, what's the matter with you? Four months out of prison and you are fool enough to sell yourself as a killer."

"I don't know what you're talking about," Jensen growled. "You can't put me back in stir."

Quinn laughed harshly. "You're on the first leg of your trip back already. Jensen, I was in my home when you attacked and killed my servant."

"Killed?" Jensen lost his bravado.

"Stop it," Quinn chided. "You, or one of your gang, beat him up so he'd tell where I was hidden. I heard every word. Did you ever know that a blind man can hear exceptionally well and remembers sounds better than most people? My servant refused to talk. On your way out, one of you stuck a knife in him."

Jensen looked bleak and scared. Quinn let him stew awhile.

"Let me work on him," McGrath begged.

"Skinning your knuckles on a rodent

like this is hardly necessary, Captain," Quinn argued. "I can swear he was in the group and even if he didn't wield that knife, he's still as guilty as the man who did. Drive to Headquarters and lock him up. Without bail. We'll land the others soon and they'll start accusing one another. I wouldn't be surprised if they all claimed Jensen did it."

Jensen's voice turned into a wheedle. "What's there in it for me if I tell what happened? You're the D.A., Mr. Quinn. You can make deals. If I'd known it was you I wouldn't have gone along but there was supposed to be twenty grand in it, to be divided among us. Honest, I didn't know what I was doing. I can take the rap for busting parole, but I couldn't take Death Row. You gotta help me."

"Suppose you begin by telling me who hired you and the others?"

"What's the deal?" Jensen asked cautiously.

Quinn took a long shot. "We're not after you little fellows. Tell the truth, Jensen, and I'll see that you don't face trial for murder, no matter if every one of your pals puts the finger on you. I might even forget that I recognized your footsteps."

Jensen drew a long breath. "If anybody else made that proposition I'd laugh in his face, but I know you're a right guy. Okay, here it is. Night before last, this guy comes to see Nicky Gramadge who long time ago used to supply goons to bust strikes. If he was paid enough he sold out to the strikers and for ten grand he'd have anybody knocked off. Well, I was in Nicky's joint that night. It's a café way downtown."

"Keep it honest," McGrath warned, "or I'll knock your teeth in."

"I'm telling the truth," Jensen whined. "So this scarecrow comes in and sits down. He tells Nicky he wants a kid and a man bumped. There's twenty grand for each bump-off and he slices a big stack of C notes in half with a butcher knife we borrowed from the chef. He says when the kid gets it, he'll mail half of the sliced bills. When Quinn croaks, the rest will arrive."

"And this man?" Quinn demanded. "Nicky Gramadge never worked blind because half his racket is blackmail."

"His name was J. Perry Wade," Jen-

sen said.

For a moment neither McGrath nor Quinn could utter a sound. Then Quinn found his voice.

"How do you know it was J. Perry Wade?"

"On account of Nicky had one of the boys pick the guy's pocket. We got his wallet. And that ain't all. His picture was in all the papers next morning. He croaked."

QUINN'S hands tightened on the crook of his cane.

"Jensen, J. Perry Wade was dead hours before you say he came to Nicky's place. You're lying."

"Honest, it's the truth. I know what you could do to me. It was J. Perry Wade. You can ask any of the other boys. And that night he said if he should die, the missing half of the bills would be delivered to us anyway."

"Fantastic," Quinn murmured.

"It's more than that," McGrath chimed in. "It's impossible."

"But next morning," Jensen said hastily, "Nicky got one grand of the missing halves and a little note saying it was because we tried, and to keep right on trying. Two of the boys went after the kid but one of them got gunned and the other one died later of a bullet wound. The Black Bat got to the kid first."

"Captain," Quinn said, "has the body of J. Perry Wade been removed from the morgue yet?"

"Shall I find out?"

"Yes. We'll go to the nearest precinct where you can phone while Jensen is under guard. Then we'll take Jensen to the morgue. Right now there's one more thing I must know. Jensen, this question also requires the truth."

Jensen shrugged. "I went so far there ain't no point in lying now."

"I'm glad you realize that. Do you know if Nicky and his men have any trace of the Foley boy yet?"

Jensen shook his head. "They been scouring the town, but no soap. So Nicky got a letter with some more of those missing halves of bills and a note. The note told him how to find the kid but Nicky wasn't telling just how it was to be done. Nicky did say it was the smartest idea he ever heard of."

Quinn showed none of the worry that entered his heart. Butch was a mountain of a man, strong as a bull, and one of the best fighters he'd ever seen. But even Butch couldn't cope with the killers Nicky Gramadge would send out.

Quinn concentrated on the matter at hand and prayed that Butch was all right. . . .

Quinn's worries were by no means exaggerated. Butch O'Leary had no idea that a plot was being hatched to make him reveal that he had the Foley boy. Quite naturally, Butch kept his radio tuned in on news flashes to learn if any clues to the boy's whereabouts had been discovered and how the hunt was progressing. Such a broadcast wouldn't give much information, but Butch listened anyway.

The nine o'clock broadcast was handled by a columnist who was noted for his exclusive stories, and who seized upon any item which made news. Little Don was playing with a mechanical train set, yawning prodigiously, but reluctant to give up and go to bed.

Butch suddenly sat erect. The broadcaster had mentioned Don Foley's name. Then he went on:

"The Black Bat is believed to be in possession of this child and we do not believe the Black Bat is vicious. If he is listening now, I have some vital information. If he does not have the child, then whoever is holding him, please listen if you have a spark of humanity in your soul. Donald Foley suffers from a disease which requires that he take a certain drug. If he does not get this medicine there is danger that he may die. So whoever has Donald, go to your drug store and ask for insulin. The dose is one-third that given to adults and any druggist will know how to fill the prescription. There is no danger that a druggist will apprehend anyone asking for this medicine because it is in constant demand."

Butch hurriedly got a pencil and some paper, noted down the name of the drug. Then he shut off the radio and went over to Donald. He lifted the boy and squinted at him as if the ailment from which he suffered would reveal itself by outward signs.

Donald yawned again, put his head

against Butch's shoulder and closed his eyes, like any exhausted little boy might do. But little boys were no great part of Butch's life. He instantly believed Donald was showing symptoms.

HHE PUT the boy to bed, carefully tucked him in and gave him instructions not to get up or let anybody in. Then Butch raced out of the apartment, looking for a drug store.

He had to walk three blocks before he found one and hurried inside. The pharmacist looked startled when Butch asked for insulin in one-third the usual dose.

"Yes," he told Butch, "I can get it for you. This may take a few moments. We must have your name and address. Government regulations."

Butch decided this must be an ordinary procedure. He gave his name and address, then tried to remain calm. The pharmacist disappeared in the back room.

The minutes crawled by. Butch was on the verge of hurrying back to see how Donald was and returning for the medicine when the pharmacist emerged carrying a small pill box. He wrapped this, gave Butch a stern look and glanced toward the windows.

Butch paid him, seized the package, and ran as fast as he could travel. Almost an hour had elapsed since he'd left Don.

Butch felt his heart miss a beat when he saw the door to his apartment. It had been forced open. He bolted inside, rushed to the bed where Donald had been sleeping. The bed was empty. Like a maniac, Butch went through the apartment until he was certain Donald was gone.

Then he began to realize he had fallen for some sort of a trick. He stood in the middle of the floor, gigantic fists hard and knotty, veins standing out on his neck like ropes. At that moment Butch was as dangerous as a truckload of T.N.T. running wild.

But he was helpless. He cursed his stupidity and forgot that what had happened was only the result of his feelings for the boy. He barged out of the place, half expecting to be met by a squad of police. There would have been a riot if anything less than a score of cops had tried to stop him.

He made certain he was not being

trailed and hurried to the garden house at the rear of Quinn's home, by a devious route taken only in times of danger.

The lab was empty. Butch went to the secret door, opened it a crack and listened. He peered out, and finally called Silk's name. There was no answer. He searched the house before going back to the lab where he must wait. He tried to phone Carol, and received no answer.

Butch had never felt more helpless in his life of excitement and adventure.

CHAPTER XIII

Counter Attack



OVER two hours went by before Butch heard someone inside the house. That meant Quinn had gone out as Tony Quinn and not the Black Bat. Butch could hardly contain himself until Quinn opened the lab door.

"He's gone!" Butch shouted. "Donald—they got him. Honest, I'm the biggest dope who ever lived, but I'm going to find that kid and if they hurt him I'll bust the heads of everybody who had anything to do with it! I don't care what happens to me, but I got to save Donald!"

Quinn sat down limply. "I was afraid of that, Butch. Because I knew some scheme was in the works. Tell me what happened."

Butch explained. Quinn kept nodding and when Butch paused for breath, Quinn took it up.

"It's a diabolically clever idea. It took time to handle it, but they could afford it. You're not to blame, Butch. Anybody with a heart would have fallen for it. The man we're after hired a gang of thugs. They circularized every drug store in town and, perhaps, in surrounding areas. Then they tipped this radio broadcaster to send that message without telling him it was part of a trap. The crooks could even have posed as private detectives and offered a substantial reward to the druggist who notified them when anyone asked for insulin in a one-

third dose. The usual child's dose is one-half or one-quarter, but rarely a third."

"I get it now," Butch groaned. "That druggist phoned somebody and gave my address. Then he kept me waiting while those mugs went to see if Don was there."

Quinn nodded. "If he hadn't been, they'd have come for you at the drug store. Well, Donald is gone. Perhaps they'll kill him. Maybe not. Before Nicky Gramadge carries out his orders he'll be certain to demand payment. Especially since he believes the man who hired him is dead."

"Dead? You mean you know who paid this Nicky to kill the kid and try to knock you off?"

"Apparently it was J. Perry Wade. We rounded up one member of the gang who even identified him at the morgue without the slightest hesitation. But, Butch, when J. Perry Wade made contact with that gang he was supposed to be already dead."

"And if he ain't, he will be," Butch growled.

"Try to relax," Quinn urged. "Forget how much you liked the boy and think of this from a purely impersonal angle. We know that Donald held some secret which could expose the man who killed his mother and father. But Donald is too young to realize this. Butch, did he say anything?"

Butch shook his head disconsolately. "Just kid stuff."

"Think hard," Quinn urged. "Tell me everything you and Donald talked about. No matter whether it sounded important or not."

Butch began a long account. "He was the cutest kid you ever saw. I guess he had a lot of toys, but not outdoor stuff. I bought him a basketball and he didn't know what it was. Imagine that! And the jump rope I bought him—he looked at it and thought I ought to take hold of one end, he the other and we'd start pulling like a tug o' war."

Quinn sat bolt upright. "He didn't know how to use a jump rope? You're positive? Wait! Butch, I inspected his box of toys where he lived. There was a jump rope right on top of all the other toys."

"Yeah?" Butch gasped.

"Don't you see? Donald told us when he was awakened he left his room. He found that jump rope, recognized it as a toy and placed it right in the box with all his other things. That's one of the things the murderer is after."

"What's a killer doing with a kid's jump rope?" Butch asked.

"It could have been brought as a murder weapon. It should be excellent as a strangler's rope. At any rate he left it there accidentally. Butch, we're going into action and fast. You go to the Foley apartment and get that rope. You may run into trouble. If Donald is asked about it he'll tell, and our murderer will also be after it."

"I'm on my way," Butch said. "And I'm busting inside to smash a guy or two."

"All we can do, Butch, is keep praying that the boy won't be harmed until his kidnapers are paid off. We have no other hope. . . ."

SOON afterward Silk and Carol returned to the lab. Silk was highly amused by his night's experience.

"Carol steered young Mason as good as any professional bunco man," he told Quinn. "We let him win, then landed on his neck. You never saw so many high cards suddenly appear and we'd hand him something big, like four aces, then keep building the pot up. He couldn't drop, and one of us would lay down a royal flush."

"How much did you take him for?" Quinn asked

"His shirt. All the dough he had—six grand—and we made him write checks to the tune of fourteen grand more. We told him we wanted the dough tonight. He hedged until we showed some guns and said we weren't to be stalled. He's gone after the money."

"At least part of our plans are working," Quinn approved. "But little Don Foley was snatched."

"No!" Carol cried. "Tony, how did it happen?"

"Butch was tricked. Cleverly. Any of us might have fallen for it." Quinn went on to explain. "This leaves us rather high and dry but that's nothing compared to the danger Donald is in. We can't pick up Gramadge because all he does is issue

orders and Donald won't be with him."

"Then what is to be done?" Carol asked. "We can't let them kill that child."

Quinn spoke slowly. "This is an unholy hour to gather information, Carol, but it might be done by the proper application of enough cash. I want all public statistics on Ann Lucas Wade. She was J. Perry Wade's young wife. She'd been married before to a man named Henry Lucas."

"I might be able to dig it up," Carol said doubtfully. "I'll certainly try."

"Silk, your job is simpler. Go to the Wade estate and steal one of their cars. Meet me in an hour. . . . Where did you say you had an appointment with Bob Mason?"

"Grant and Sherwood Avenues. At two in the morning."

"Then pick me up two blocks west of there half an hour before your appointment time. That's all. Both of you get going now. Phone here as soon as you have any information, Carol."

"But nothing has to do with saving Donald Foley," Carol protested.

Quinn nodded. "I know—but soon now I intend to dicker directly with the murderer. When Butch returns, I'll have something that killer wants so badly he'll be willing to exchange Donald for it."

"You know who he is then?" Silk asked.

"Yes. As the Black Bat I can make him deal with me, but as Tony Quinn, of the D.A.'s office, I haven't much on him—yet. However, saving Donald comes first and even if this killer never is convicted, it will be worth it to rescue the boy."

"You mean," Carol asked incredulously, "you'd actually let him go free? After he killed Tom and Marge Foley and that butler at the Wade home?"

"Speaking as Tony Quinn, yes. As the Black Bat, I intend to see him punished if I have to take justice in my own hands. Something I never thought I'd say. Now suppose you two get started. We haven't much time."

After they were gone, Quinn carried the stereoscope and its slides over to the laboratory divan. He looked at all the pictures again. If he could only figure out why J. Perry Wade had willed this

strange object to a man he never even knew! A man whom Wade must have known was supposed to be blind.

Blind! Quinn gave a start. All along he'd tried to solve the riddle of the inheritance by handling it as a man with normal sight would do. The fact that Tony Quinn was blind was well known. J. Perry Wade must have known about it.

"J. Perry Wade meant this to be in the hands of a totally blind man," Quinn thought. "Therefore, whatever secret it contains won't be visible to the naked eye."

Quinn promptly closed his eyes, held the stereoscope up and carefully let his fingers move lightly over its surface. There was nothing. He groaned. It must be all part of a dead man's brand of humor. Then he picked up the pictures, one by one. He took them by their right hand corners, the only place they could easily be grasped as they were inserted into the slots provided for them.

A SLOW smile touched Quinn's lips. He opened his eyes and lined the slides in the order they were numbered. Closing his eyes again, he handled each slide.

Someone was entering through the tunnel. Quinn waited expectantly and Butch, coming up the ladder into the lab, triumphantly held up the red wood-handled jump rope.

"I got it!" he proclaimed. "Now do I get a crack at finding Don?"

Quinn took the rope, held the handles under the light and read the words "Little Gem" stamped on each.

"In about one minute I'll tell how it will be done," he said. "First I want to phone the F.B.I. in Washington."

He got the F.B.I. laboratory and identification division on the wire. He was known there and was given all the cooperation he needed.

"You keep a file of trade marks," he said. "There is one called 'Little Gem' and applies to a toy manufacturer. It may be in your dormant file, because I think they may be out of business. They were active some forty-five or fifty years ago though."

He hung up and paced the lab floor, thinking out carefully all the moves he

had to make. The phone rang. The F.B.I. was calling him back. There had been a toy manufacturer who labeled some of his products with the trade mark 'Little Gem,' but the firm had ceased to exist more than thirty years ago.

Quinn went to a steel locker in the lab and took out of it his somber regalia. He started removing his tweeds.

"You'll find the coupé parked a block north," he told Butch. "Meet me there. I won't be ten minutes. . . ."

They saw Silk, in a stolen sedan from the Wade garage, parked near the deserted corner where he had a date with Bob Mason. The Black Bat and Butch quickly transferred to the sedan. The Black Bat handed Silk a homburg hat, a pair of light brown kid gloves and a pair of rimless glasses.

"Put them on," he said. "When you see Mason on the corner, roll past him and fire three or four shots. Put them close. I want Mason scared out of his wits. Stick your head out of the car window so he can have a good look at the hat, gloves and glasses. It will be too dark to recognize you, but he won't miss those."

Silk grinned. "I'd like to frighten some of the smugness out of that character."

"First though," the Black Bat said, "drop Butch and me. Butch, you hide at the east corner of the block and I'll take the west. When Mason starts running one of us will grab him. All set"

The Black Bat took refuge behind a tree in the corner yard where he could observe everything. Fifteen minutes before the appointed time, Mason arrived and began smoking cigarettes chain fashion. It was clear that Silk and his old-time pals in the confidence racket had convinced Mason they were important gamblers and wanted their money or else.

The Wade sedan came along the street. Mason glanced at it nervously without showing any signs of recognition. Then from the car window came gun flashes, and it was easy to see a man in a homburg, wearing rimless glasses and holding a gun in a hand covered by tan gloves.

Mason screamed, nose-dived to the sidewalk. Silk chipped away concrete inches from Mason's head. He had the

car slowed to a mere crawl now. Mason tried wriggling and Silk showered him with fragments of the sidewalk. Mason got up and started to run wildly. He ran straight into the Black Bat's waiting arms.

In all, about two minutes had been consumed. Then Mason was in the coupé, being prodded with the Black Bat's gun and sobbing out a full confession. Silk circled the block, picked up Butch, and followed the coupé.

CHAPTER XIV

The Rope



DESPITE the lateness of the hour, Eldon Wade sat at a desk in his home. Only the desk light was on and he was drawing up plans he had made long ago but which could not be placed into operation until J. Perry Wade was dead.

Eldon was intent upon his interesting task. Suddenly a rope curled around his throat and tightened. He raised both hands to tug at it, but the rope was tight enough to choke his voice.

Over his shoulder a black gloved hand reached to slide open the desk drawer and extract a gun from it. That same hand deftly passed over Eldon's clothes and removed another gun from an inner pocket holster. Then the rope loosened and he could breathe again.

Eldon's swivel chair was spun around until he stared in horror at a black-hooded man who was slowly passing a rope between his fingers. A rope with red wooden handles on either end.

"You wanted this jump rope badly enough," the Black Bat said, "so I thought I'd deliver it in person."

Eldon Wade was too horror stricken to reply.

"Accept my compliments, Mr. Wade," the Black Bat went on smoothly. "You're the slickest murderer I've ever encountered. As of now there isn't a clue nor bit of evidence by which I could have you convicted."

"You're in no position to accuse me!" Eldon Wade said hoarsely. "You can't testify against me."

"Quite true. Therefore I have decided to resort to the only method left. I can't convict *you*, but you can't kill *me*. And if a judge and jury doesn't send you to the chair where you belong, I'll take it upon myself to administer the proper justice."

"You wouldn't dare!" Eldon said.

"Wouldn't I?" the Black Bat laughed. "We're in the same boat, Eldon. I get away with murder too. So I'll dicker. You took this jump rope to the Foley apartment intending to use it as a murder weapon but were forced to use a gun instead. You forgot the rope and little Donald Foley picked it up. The rope has been traced. Right to your home. You believed that Donald might have seen you—which he didn't. So Donald had to die. Eldon, is he already dead?"

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

[Turn page]

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"Soon now I'll know if Donald has been killed. If so, Eldon Wade, you will also die. Right here in this room."

"He is alive," Eldon muttered.

"Very well. I'll swap you this rope for the boy. A friend of mine is waiting at the corner of Twentieth Avenue and Orchard Street. If he is not shown the boy within thirty minutes he will signal me—and your death certificate will show that time as the approximate hour of your death."

"And if I do show the boy is safe?"

"I shall give you this rope, not around your neck where it belongs, when you order the boy freed. I never thought I'd bargain with a killer, but the boy's life is more important than yours, Eldon."

Eldon Wade reached for the phone and dialed a number. He spoke to someone and issued orders. The Black Bat sat down to wait, smiling slightly behind his mask. Gramadge's men would produce Donald but when they did an avalanche named Butch would fall on their necks, backed up by Silk and Carol. It should be an interesting battle, with a number of cracked skulls. Butch would be in a cold fury and Carol's rage no less hot.

Forty minutes went by while Eldon Wade fretted and perspired. The Black Bat held a gun on him with one fist and toyed with the rope with the other gloved hand. The phone rang. Eldon moved to answer it and was slapped back into his chair. The Black Bat lifted the phone, heard Silk report that the boy was safe and that three hoodlums were wrapped up for delivery to Captain McGrath.

The Black Bat hung up. He placed the jump rope on Eldon Wade's desk. Deliberately he put the automatic back into its holster.

"Here is your rope," he said in a chilly voice. "It might be well if you hung yourself with it because if you don't, the authorities will clamp you in the electric chair. I know why your father willed Tony Quinn such an odd gift and sooner or later Quinn will also discover its secret."

"Look here!" Eldon sounded like a business man again. "You and I both go after things in any way we believe it necessary. I'll give you a million dollars if you get that stereoscope from Quinn. Two million if you kill Quinn."

The Black Bat seemed impressed. "Hmm—not a bad offer. A man could do a great deal with two million dollars. You want an immediate answer, of course. Here it is, Mr. Eldon Wade."

TWO gloved fists started work. Wade tried to put up a fight but it was useless from the start. When the Black Bat left that house, Eldon Wade had trouble seeing out of badly swollen eyes. He fumbled around the desk, picked up his rimless glasses which the Black Bat had removed before the fight began. They refused to stay on his nose and he couldn't figure out why until he looked in a mirror. The glasses had been built for a nose only half the size of the one Eldon Wade sported.

But there was deliberation in Wade's movements. He cleaned up as best he could and got another gun from an upstairs room. He drew on tan gloves, adjusted his homburg and went to the garage for a car. He was too excited to notice that a sedan was missing.

He drove to the vicinity of Tony Quinn's home, parked, and crept toward the house. It was in total darkness. He wanted to smile in satisfaction but his lips hurt too much and he contented himself with a grunt.

From the back of the car he extracted a tire iron, stealthily made his way to a window and pried it open. He clambered over the sill, stood erect in Quinn's living room and drew the gun.

The lights flashed on. Captain McGrath yelled and brought Wade down with a flying tackle. The gun went off but its bullet smashed harmlessly into the wall. McGrath yanked Wade to his feet and shoved him into a chair.

That chair stood in the center of the room facing a row of seats occupied by Dr. Paul Dale, Bob Mason, Rufus Wade, and Loren Joyce, the man who had started the fight between Tom and Marge Foley. Little Donald Foley was there, too, and so was Gramadge, an ugly-looking racketeer. Mrs. Gandy sat apart from the others, looking at Eldon severely. Dr. Knapp nervously tried to smoke a cigarette.

Tony Quinn, eyes blank, tapped his cane as he crossed the floor to the center of the room. Silk remained close by him.

"Eldon Wade," Quinn said, "you are under arrest for the murder of Tom and Marge Foley and for the murder of Hughes, your father's butler. Before you begin your denials, let me explain a few things. First, I have been in contact with the Black Bat so there is little I don't know about this.

"It begins when your father, on his deathbed, asked for me. I was sent for because to have done otherwise would only have aroused suspicion, since others had heard him ask for me. But you did manage to stall long enough for your father's condition to grow worse. When he woke again you talked him into accepting Tom Foley, and Foley was sent for. Meantime your father died."

"But he couldn't have," Mrs. Gandy spoke up. "He was alive when that young lawyer arrived."

"He was dead," Quinn said. "The man Foley saw, and who signed and dictated the codicils to the will was Hughes, the butler. Both bodies are at the morgue, and I am told told that, side by side, they looked like brothers. With a little make-up, Hughes could easily have doubled for J. Perry Wade. Which is what he'd been doing for years. J. Perry Wade never left his home. When his presence was called for, he sent Hughes. Eldon knew this. So did the rest of the Wade clan. Then came the plot. It would have worked if Tom Foley hadn't grown suspicious of dealing with a man capable of signing his name and dictating a legal statement, when he had been told that J. Perry Wade lay dying of a paralytic shock. Isn't that the truth, Dr. Knapp?"

Dr. Knapp nodded glumly. "I should have thought of that. J. Perry couldn't have signed anything."

"Tom Foley found this out," Quinn went on. "Possibly through someone who knew of J. Perry's condition and that he'd been helpless for days. Foley wondered about it and phoned Eldon. Eldon realized Foley might upset the whole plan so he arranged with Gramadge to have the stage set for the murder of Foley."

Gramadge rose to his feet. "Listen, right is right, but that ain't the guy who paid me to get Joyce, and rub out the kid and you, Mr. Quinn. The guy who paid me was an old geezer who looked like a

walking skeleton."

"Eldon sent Hughes," Quinn explained, "made up to look like J. Perry Wade. If an investigation was made it would seem that J. Perry had arranged all this—after he was dead. Joyce—state your part, truthfully, because if you lie it will go against you when you are brought to trial.

JOYCE curled his lip.

"You got nothing on me," he snarled. "What if Gramadge did ask me to shine up to Marge Foley? I knew her. Could I help it if her husband had a temper like a bull?"

"That will be all," Quinn told him coldly. "Hughes was part of the scheme, of course. But Hughes was a cautious man and he wrote, or tried to write, a full story of the whole matter to be placed in a safe spot as a precaution against Eldon. But Eldon knifed him before he could secrete the confession. There is your motive for the Hughes kill."

"What about the motive that started all this?" McGrath demanded. "You're not saying that Eldon murdered his own father?"

"No," Quinn replied. "For two reasons. First, because J. Perry Wade died a natural death. Second, because if Eldon had buried a knife in J. Perry Wade's heart he wouldn't have been murdering his own father. Eldon Wade is not the son of J. Perry. Dr. Dale can tell us that story."

Dr. Dale arose slowly, ill at ease and nervous.

"Ann Lucas Wade was J. Perry's wife," he said. "Her first husband died. Eldon is the son of that union. Eldon was sickly, and I placed him in a children's hospital. Ann married J. Perry soon afterwards. Again a child was born to her. A girl. She died an hour after birth and Ann also died. J. Perry Wade withdrew from his former way of life, began persecuting me, and I became angry. I arranged for Eldon to be sent to his home. Instead of being affected by the knowledge that his wife had borne a son by a former husband, J. Perry took the boy as his own. He hired Mrs. Gandy to take care of the boy and raised him as a Wade. That's all I know."

"It's enough," Quinn said. "One thing

J. Perry never permitted, however, was for anyone to violate the sanctity of the nursery he'd fashioned for the daughter he knew was being born. Eldon went there, though, and took a jump rope from among the toys. Like all prospective fathers J. Perry purchased toys no infant could use and the jump rope was among them. Eldon intended using the rope on Mrs. Foley, after he'd killed Tom. But something happened and he had to use the gun. Donald found the jump rope, and put it among his own toys. The rope could be traced.

"Eldon knew Captain McGrath and I were suspicious of the Foley deaths. He saw McGrath take Donald away and figured Donald must have seen him. I imagine Eldon never even knew there was a child in the house. So Eldon ordered the boy killed and when I became active he ordered my death too."

"But what about that stereoscope?" McGrath demanded. "And when are you going to get at the reason behind all of this?"

"Right now," Quinn replied. "You have a detective at the Wade home?"

"He's waiting at the phone," McGrath announced.

"Good. J. Perry Wade asked for me because he sensed, or knew, that Eldon was going to take over the industrial empire created by J. Perry and built up by him through good judgment and skillful handling of employees. Years ago, J. Perry learned that contented employees are the best and when he did realize that he had no further labor troubles. He did not mean for Eldon to take over because Eldon's methods were harsh. Knowing Eldon, he took steps to provide me with information even if Eldon went so far as to murder him. That's where the stereoscope came in."

"I'd like to hear about that," McGrath grumbled.

"Eldon kept me from J. Perry. He had summoned Foley but when Foley arrived, J. Perry was dead, his body removed from the room and Hughes was there in his place. Two purposes were served by that. Dr. Dale was taken care of so he'd shut up about Eldon's birth. And it was legally established that J. Perry Wade had made two codicils to the will on his death bed. If he'd wanted

to change the will he had made four years ago, he would have so instructed Foley. Therefore it was legally established that J. Perry did not wish his original will altered except for those codicils."

"The stereoscope," McGrath pleaded.

Quinn smiled. "When I was bequeathed that I wondered why J. Perry would give a blind man such an object. Then I realized that he gave it because I was blind, that only a blind man could get from it the secret he wanted to impart. . . . Captain McGrath, will you hand me the stereoscope and the slides? Then go to the phone and relay what I tell you to the detective at the Wade house."

McGRATH obeyed with alacrity. Quinn picked up the first of the slides.

"These pictures are numbered," he explained. "They are usually handled by taking them by the upper right hand corner. In each corner, J. Perry had used a sharp pin to prick a single letter of the alphabet. He knew a blind man, fooling around with the slides, was eventually bound to feel these letters. They are so faint eyes could not see them. Only the first five slides are so marked and on them, when assembled, is the word 'Atlas.' McGrath, have your man at the Wade home search for an atlas."

McGrath relayed the message, then kept the receiver away from his ear so he could keep listening to Quinn.

"Dr. Dale is a pathetic figure in this case," the blind lawyer said. "I shall ask leniency for him. J. Perry Wade made him a beaten man, and when Eldon offered him fifty thousand dollars to keep his mouth shut, Dr. Dale at last saw a chance to put the money to use in his hospital and home for crippled children. He accepted, but he was wise enough to make a full confession."

"With reference again to the Foley kill, I surmise that Tom Foley was given some sort of a story by Eldon and promised the whole thing would be explained. Eldon agreed to meet Foley at his home. That is why Mrs. Foley was found wearing a robe, with her hair brushed, and her face still made up. Eldon went to the Foley apartment by appointment and

killed them both.

"There were clues. Eldon knew Gramadge and knew he'd sell himself to do murder. The Black Bat provided other clues. When Hughes was killed, the report of the murder was delayed so that Eldon would have time to go to the Foley apartment after the jump rope. But the Black Bat was in the Wade home when Hughes' body was discovered and the only member of the family not present was Eldon."

"There's better evidence than that," McGrath called, from beside the phone. "When Eldon broke into this house he queered himself."

Quinn nodded. "And for that we are indebted to J. Perry Wade who was a better detective than any of us. He not only used the stereoscope to tell me something, but to arouse Eldon's suspicions and force him to try and get the stereoscope and destroy it. A dead man sent a murderer into a trap."

McGrath spoke into the phone, looked up and said, "The detective at the Wade home found two atlases but there's nothing in either of them."

Quinn inhaled sharply. So much depended on this. Perhaps Eldon had discovered and destroyed the secret. Then Quinn's face lighted up.

"Ask your man if there are any statues of Atlas, the man who holds up the world."

McGrath relayed the message. "He says there is a bronze statue that looks like a man holding up a big globe . . . wait a minute." McGrath spoke into the phone. "Certainly you can smash that globe. This is murder. I'll hold on."

There was another two minutes wait. Then McGrath listened intently. When he hung up he was smiling broadly.

"Inside that globe Atlas was holding up is a will dated a month ago. It gives every share of stock to J. Perry Wade's employees. It specifically states that Eldon would destroy what J. Perry had built up and he was to have nothing. It also says Eldon is not his son and that he thinks Eldon is planning to kill him."

Suddenly Bob Mason jumped to his

feet. "He was planning to kill us all! He wanted the whole estate. The old man cut me off, but Eldon said I'd be taken care of if I kept my mouth shut. I asked him for a lot of money tonight. He gave it to me, then trailed me. He tried to shoot me. I saw him! I'll admit everything I know! I'm not much good but Eldon is a lot worse!"

"You incredible fools," Eldon said slowly. "You assorted group of half-wits. Oh, the game is up now. That blasted will the old man made does it. But we might have fought. Instead you backed out. Rufus, you were ready to admit everything, too. You're as scared as Mason, and Orella who locked herself in her room because of fear. I'll take you down with me. All of you! We agreed to stick by one another. I *should* have killed you all!"

AN HOUR later Eldon, Rufus, Bob Mason and Dr. Dale had been removed. Orella Wade had been pried out of her locked room. There was an assortment of signed statements on Quinn's desk which would send Eldon to the chair.

McGrath shook Quinn's hand. "It worked out nicely," he said.

"Thanks to the Black Bat's help," Quinn reminded.

The detective's face clouded. "Just the same I'm not going to stop hunting him. I'm glad, though, that you're not hiding under that hood."

McGrath marched out to his car. He saw the odd stickers on the windshield. They were fashioned in the shape of a bat in full flight. The brand of the Black Bat. McGrath opened his mouth to emit some choice curses. Then he turned and glanced at the house. He slowly smiled as he started prying off the stickers. Somehow McGrath had never wanted the situation changed anyway.

Tony Quinn and Silk guessed what must have happened when McGrath reached the car but they didn't bother to observe him. They were too busy in the secret lab, telling Carol and Butch about the whole affair.

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NEXT ISSUE'S NOVEL

THE BLACK BAT in MURDER'S PLAYGROUND

Shorty's fist whipped to the
point of Jeff's chin



NOTHING BUT THE TRUTH

By WILLIAM DEGENHARD

Jeff Blake knew he was innocent of the first kill, but he almost became a double murderer when he tried to prove it!

IF ANYBODY told Jeff Blake two hours earlier that he was going to kill a man, he'd have passed it off as a pretty funny joke. Jeff's biggest complaint in life was that nothing ever happened to him. He was thirty-two, unmarried, a real estate salesman, and he had a little apartment of his own over on the west side. He got around a lot,

but never much outside his own circle of friends.

About the nearest he ever came to brushing with the law, were those infrequent times when he put down a two-dollar bet with the bookie who hung around the barber shop in his neighborhood. All he knew about the criminal element was what he read in the news-

papers. And usually, he skipped that in favor of the sports section.

Every Saturday night, regular as clockwork, somebody in the gang threw a party. This one had been a little better than average, for besides the usual quota of laughs, he'd met a new girl he promised himself he'd see more frequently in the future.

It was close to four A.M. when he finally got around to going home. He was tired and he was feeling his drinks a little, but he would have denied vigorously that he was drunk. He was a careful driver. He obeyed every traffic light, even though the streets were almost deserted and the cops few and far between.

He was clipping along at a good, fast rate, perhaps a bit too fast for that narrow, dingy sidestreets. He was humming and feeling very good inside. As he approached Central Avenue, he saw that the light was in his favor. It was almost an automatic reaction to put on an extra burst of speed to get across the avenue before the light changed.

Then, it happened. A gray figure lurched out from between two parked cars and was pinned momentarily in the glare of the headlights. Instantly, Jeff slammed on the brakes. Too late! Even as his foot hit the pedal, he could feel the sickening bump. The tires squealed and he was thrown violently forward. The car bucked and stopped.

He snapped open the door, jumped out and started back. Not a soul in sight, only that crumpled, shapeless heap lying in the center of the street.

For a moment, the full implication of what he had done didn't seep in. He stared at the figure, his mind a hideous jumble. He couldn't—wouldn't—believe his eyes.

Numbly, he moved closer to the motionless form. At any moment, he expected the man to get up and walk away. But the man didn't. He just lay there, very still, so terribly still.

Then, Jeff was standing over the body. It was a horrible sight. The man was on his back, but he had no face, only a grewsome smear of blood. His arm was twisted away from him at a grotesque, impossible angle. His clothes had been ripped and torn. Jeff didn't have to

touch him to know he was dead.

He stood there, unable to move for what seemed an eternity. But it only could have been a very few seconds. The man's hat, a black homburg, was still rocking on its brim. A cigarette, still glowing, was within inches of the clawing fingers. Jeff absently picked up the cigarette. It had a gold tip and smelled of strong Cuban tobacco. He almost put it to his lips before he realized what he was doing. He dropped it as if it were a hot rivet, fighting against the feeling of nausea that was swirling through the pit of his stomach.

LITTLE by little the shock wore off and his mind began to thaw. Cars whooshed by on the avenue, but none slowed or turned in. There wasn't a bar in sight or an open store from which he could call for help. But this had to be reported at once. He half turned, stopped, remembering. He had been drinking. A swift vision passed before his eyes, the picture of himself in prison gray. Slowly, he edged away from the body.

A shout made him whirl. A big, barrel-chested man with spindly legs was running toward him. He could hear the motor of his car ticking over and the impulse was strong to make a break for it. But his legs seemed paralyzed. Deep down, he knew it would be foolish to run, anyway. Whatever came, he would have to stand and face the music. The beefy man snatched up the hat, looked at the sweatband, then came on again, his swarthy face contorted with rage.

"You killed him," he said hoarsely.

Before Jeff could open his mouth to say anything, the big man's fist lashed out. By instinct, Jeff sidestepped, his own fist snapped up and sent the other man staggering back. The swarthy man stumbled against the curb and went down. Swiftly, he rolled, crabbed over to one side, scrambled to his knees. Jeff's eyes widened slowly. In his huge fist, the swart man was holding a gun.

"Turn around," the beefy man said in a low voice.

Jeff blinked, hesitated. He shuddered suddenly, as if in the grip of a nightmare. There was something strange and distorted in this situation. But he was

too confused to think straight. All he knew was that this man was not a policeman.

"Turn around," the man repeated. Jeff turned. Even if he was baffled, he was not foolish enough to argue with a gun. "We'll take your car," the man said.

Woodenly, Jeff walked over to his car. He slowed down, felt the muzzle jab him in the back. "You're driving," the man insisted softly. "Get in."

Jeff slid in behind the wheel. The bulky man settled in the seat beside him and the door slammed with unnerving loudness. "Across to Division Street," the bulky man ordered. "Then turn right."

The car moved off slowly. Jeff glanced up at the rear view mirror. Not a soul in sight. He caught a glimpse of the still form lying in the middle of the street, jerked his eyes away, gave his full attention to his driving. A thousand questions seemed to boil up into his throat. But his lips felt numb, unable to move. He drove in silence.

The car headed deep into the South Side slum section. The bulky man spoke only to give directions. Jeff was completely bewildered. He could feel that gun pressed at his side. All he could think, over and over, was that this man was not a cop.

Their destination proved to be a garage in the middle of a block of shabby tenements. Jeff knew the city pretty well, but he had never been here before. He didn't know the name of the street. He doubted he'd be able to find it easily again. Obediently, he pulled in to the entrance of the garage and honked his horn. A short, moonfaced man came out of the office.

"Maury come in yet?" the bulky man asked.

"Long ago. Who's this?"

The bulky man ignored the question. "Put this car downstairs, then call Maury and tell him to come to the cigar store."

"Call him yourself," the moonfaced man said. "He must be in bed by now. I ain't gonna—"

"I said call him!" the bulky man broke in harshly. He waved his gun at Jeff. "Get out."

Jeff snapped open the door on his side and got out stiffly. He felt tense, trem-

bling slightly as he weighed his chances for a getaway. He knew he didn't have a prayer. The street was deserted. He would surely be shot down before he could reach a doorway or a sheltering alley.

The swarthy man came around the car, poked Jeff in the side. "Across the street. The candy store."

There was a dim light glowing somewhere in the back of the grimy store. The door was unlocked, but no one was behind the counter. The gun poked Jeff's back again and he walked in.

The place was filthy. The air was musty and heavy with stale tobacco smoke. The back room was even dirtier, if possible. Cards and chips were scattered over the round, well scarred table. The floor was littered with cigar and cigarette butts. The place couldn't have been swept out for a week at least. Jeff noticed that some of the cigarette butts were gold tipped, gleaming like nuggets through the rest of the dirt.

At the far end of the room was another door leading down to a cellar. For the first time, a feeling of panic went through Jeff. He half turned. "Listen! I don't know what—"

"Shut up," the bulky man growled. "Downstairs."

Jeff hesitated. The man reached out and gave him a hard shove. Jeff scrambled down the stairs, lurching and grabbing at the cold concrete wall for support. A single yellow bulb glowed feebly in the damp cellar below.

At the bottom of the stairs was a cleared space about ten feet square, blocked off from the rest of the basement by piles of packing cases. The bulky man waved his gun toward the lone, straightbacked chair in the center of the floor. Jeff sat down. The bulky man seated himself on the railless staircase.

THERE was silence now, broken only by the scampering of mice somewhere in the distance. Jeff was sweating. He squirmed, looking around nervously.

"Listen, I admit I ran down—"

"Shut up," the swarthy man said tonelessly.

"Can't you even tell me your name?" Jeff asked.

"I'm Shorty Boyle—as if you didn't know."

The name rolled around in Jeff's head. Somehow, it seemed vaguely familiar. He had seen it in the newspapers not so long ago. He wished now he had read the papers more carefully.

Then, suddenly, his mind clicked over. "Shorty Boyle! You work for Red Sharron.

Shorty didn't say anything, but his smile was ugly. Jeff felt cold inside. Red Sharron. That must've been the one he had killed. Red Sharron, big time gambler, presently head of a syndicate reaching out for control of the city's bookmaking business. Jeff felt weak and dizzy as he thought of it. Of all the people in the world to run down, it would have to be a gangster, a racketeer, a man whose friends would move more swiftly and ruthlessly than the law to mete out retribution.

There was a stir at the head of the stairs and Shorty looked up. He rose and moved away, keeping his gun pointed at Jeff. A long, thin man came down the steps. He had a lean face, drooping eyelids, lines graven deep into his sullen mouth. This would be Maury Holberg, Sharron's right hand man.

"What's the idea pulling me outta bed?" he asked churlishly.

"The boss is dead," Shorty replied in a low voice.

"How did it happen?"

Shorty shrugged. "We went up to Mary's. I was having a last drink with that new babe Mary brought in last week. The boss told me to take my time. He was going around the corner to Happy's for cigarettes. He told me to be downstairs in ten minutes. When I came out, he was in the middle of the street—dead. This guy was standing over him."

"It was an accident," Jeff blurted. "He stepped out from behind a parked car and—"

Holberg waved. "Shut up. Did you frisk him, Shorty?"

Shorty handed his gun to the other and went over to the prisoner. Expertly, he emptied Jeff's pockets, handed the stuff to Holberg, taking his gun back. The lean man sat down on the steps and went through the stuff carefully.

Suddenly, he sucked air. "How about

this, Shorty?" He handed a slip of paper to the bulky man. Shorty squinted at it, then smiled slowly.

"Yeah, that's the answer, all right." His thick lips tightened. "Okay, sucker, who ordered the rub?"

Jeff didn't understand at once. Then, his eyes widened slowly. These two men believed he had been hired by a rival to murder their leader. The idea was so fantastic he felt like laughing. Yet, to these men, whose lives were based on violence, it was only logical to suspect every violent death was murder. The grimness in their faces showed only too clearly how convinced they were of Jeff's guilt.

"Now look," Jeff said earnestly. "You've got me all wrong. My name is Blake, Jeff Blake. I'm in real estate. I never saw Red Sharron before tonight. I don't know any of his friends, or enemies. I admit I ran him down. It was an accident. You've got to believe that. It was an accident."

Holberg's eyes were cold. "How about this?" He held out the slip. Jeff peered at it for a moment, then recognized it.

"That's a slip for the horse I played Friday."

"There are two books in this town that use that code," Holberg said coldly. "Smiley White's and Panelli's. Which one of them do you work for?"

Jeff jumped up. "That's crazy. You got it backwards. I don't work for a bookmaker. I play the horses once in a while. That's how I happen to have that slip."

The two men stared at Jeff without expression. He felt sweat breaking out in the small of his back. "You've got to believe me," he said desperately. "I'm admitting it. I ran down Red Sharron. But it was an accident. He staggered out from between two parked cars. I couldn't stop in time. He must have been drunk. That's it! He was dr—"

Shorty took two steps forward, his fist whipped out and cracked on the point of Jeff's chin. Jeff flew backward, hit the floor with a bone shaking jar. He lay there, stunned but not unconscious. A hellish pain spread across his face.

Shorty picked up the fallen man and slammed him into the chair. "The boss never took a drink in his life. So, don't

give us none of that malarkey. Now, stop stallin'. Who paid you?"

"No one," Jeff moaned. "It was an accident."

Shorty's fist lashed out again. Jeff felt a tooth snap and blood filled his mouth. His head hit concrete and stars exploded before his eyes.

NEXT thing he knew, water was pouring over his face. He was sitting in the chair again. He felt weak and dizzy and sick to his stomach. Instinctively, he cringed back a little as he made out the wavering blur of the big man in front of him.

"Red was a lot more to me than just my boss," Shorty said in a low, husky voice. "He was the best pal I ever had." His breath was hot and sharp against Jeff's cheek. "I'm gonna get the guy who rubbed him. Not you. You're small fry. I want the guy who ordered the rub. Gonna give?"

Jeff shook his head miserably. "I can't. I told you the truth. It was an accident."

His head exploded again and he blacked out. Slowly, his senses returned. His whole body felt as if it were one mass of fiery pain. Vaguely, he could feel the muzzle of a gun digging into his stomach. Vaguely and as if from a great distance, he could hear Shorty's harsh voice.

"You got your choice, sucker. Talk or take hot lead in the breadbasket. It's a hard way to die."

Jeff's stomach felt as if some vile giant insect were gnawing at the flesh. The blood pounded in his head. He didn't want to die. He had to talk, say something, anything, to stave off more pain. If he wanted to live, even for a little while longer, he'd have to give them a story, a story that would seem more reasonable than the truth.

"Who paid for the kill?" Shorty asked impatiently.

"I don't know," Jeff Blake replied huskily. "I mean, I'm not sure. He called himself Walter Mills, but I think the name is a phony. I met him at a bar downtown a week ago. He knew I needed money. He offered me a thousand dollars to run down a man."

"A grand," Shorty said disdainfully.

"This Mills guy," Holberg put in softly. "What did he look like?"

Jeff squirmed uncomfortably, groped for words. "Well—he was short, I guess, and—"

"Short," Holberg repeated in a hard, flat tone. "A little guy with a paunch, bald, and with a head shaped like an egg."

A few moments passed before Jeff realized he was condemning another man to death. No matter what he was, he was still an innocent man. The thought revolted Jeff.

"No!" he blurted. "He was—short and thin."

There was considerable silence. Then, Shorty laughed.

"He can't lie worth a darn, can he?"

"No," Holberg agreed. "I told the boss that Panelli guy was dangerous."

"Yeah," Shorty grunted. "Okay, now we know. I'll take care of the rat personally."

"Don't be a dope, Shorty," Holberg said softly. "Why stick your neck out? Suppose we give it back to him the way he gave it to Red?"

Shorty puzzled over the idea for a moment, then grinned broadly. "Yeah, why not? Maury, I got to hand it to you. You got brains. We make this chump have another accident."

Jeff Blake leaped up from his chair. "Go to blazes! I won't—"

Shorty laughed, took a step forward, his huge fist diving up like a piston. Jeff felt himself falling backward and he clawed air, desperately trying to hold onto his senses. He didn't remember hitting the floor. He could only feel himself slipping into a deep, black pit of oblivion.

The cellar was very quiet. Jeff groaned and stirred. He knew where he was. But, curiously, the cellar seemed to go up endlessly, like a dark, dank well. Several times, he had the feeling he was clawing, clawing, trying to climb his way out into the open air. Each time, he fell back, exhausted. He lay there, breathless and pain wracked, suspended between unconsciousness and wakefulness.

Pictures whirled before his eyes like a kaleidoscope gone mad. Several times, he had a vivid picture of that instant when Red Sharron had staggered out

from between those two cars. It came again and again, as if his mind was trying to tell him something. He tried to hold it in focus, tried to figure out what there was in that picture that bothered him. But it always dissolved into another, more terrifying one. He could see himself at the wheel of a car, running down another man, this time deliberately murdering a man his own lies had condemned to death.

Finally, the illusions faded and his senses cleared. He opened his eyes and stared at the bright yellow bulb overhead. Then he realized he was flat on his back on a packing case.

He sat up, every nerve and muscle screaming. A wave of dizziness went over him and the room rocked and rolled. In a little while, the feeling passed and he could focus his eyes. Maury Holberg was no longer there. But Shorty was sitting on the cellar steps, a gun in his lap.

Jeff swallowed twice before he could find his voice. "What time is it?"

"What difference does that make," Shorty growled. "You ain't going nowhere—yet."

JEFF realized the statement was all too evident. Two boxes and a chair had been placed between him and Shorty. If Jeff had any ideas about jumping his guard, he could just as well forget them. If he jumped over those boxes, he'd be off balance just long enough to enable Shorty to get his gun into action. No, Jeff could see there was no chance of him trying any tricks.

"There's something to eat over there," Shorty said. "If you feel like eating."

Jeff was ravenously hungry. He found the food which consisted of sandwiches and cold coffee, at the foot of the packing case on which he had been stretched out. He needed food. He was weak. But when he started to eat, he felt those broken teeth in his mouth. He softened the bread with the cold coffee and swallowed as much as he could. He didn't understand why he wanted his strength back. Bitterly, he knew he was trapped, hopelessly trapped.

He noticed a pile of Sunday papers at Shorty's feet. "Can I look at the papers?"

Shorty gathered them up and tossed

them across the barrier. "There's nothing in them about Red. It happened too late to get in today's papers." Then, after a pause, he added, "We found out the cops think they have a clue. You musta been careless."

Jeff thought back. The car must have been damaged. Perhaps the police had found a piece of glass or a speck of paint. It could be that they were just saying this in the hope that it would work on the killer's mind and—

Jeff's eyes narrowed suddenly. A nebulous hope began to take hold. He couldn't hope to get out of this by jumping Shorty or any other violent means. But he did have one weapon. Perhaps if he worked on Shorty's mind. Perhaps he could shatter the fixed ideas Shorty had. The swarthy man was susceptible to suggestion, all right. He had accepted what Maury Holberg said without question. If Jeff could implant suspicion in his mind—

He cleared his throat. "Shorty, I've been thinking."

"Yeah?"

"I told you a guy named Mills had hired me. Maury said Mills was Panelli. That's not so. I've seen Panelli and I'd know him if I met him. Mills was acting for someone else."

"Who?"

"Ask yourself some questions, Shorty," Jeff said softly. "Maury shot me up before I had a chance to tell you this. Why? Who takes over Red's book now that he's gone? Could Panelli take over the syndicate? He's a small man—small fry. Who's top man now? Ask yourself, Shorty, who would want to get Red out of the way most?"

Shorty was staring at Jeff, his mouth open a little, making him look as if snarling. Jeff watched him breathlessly. It didn't matter now that he was piling lie upon lie. The truth hadn't served him before. Shorty turned his gun over and over in his hand. He looked up the stairs, rubbed his hand along his thigh, half rose.

He sank back again. "You think you're pretty cute, don't you?"

Jeff groaned inside. He felt another wave of weakness go through him. He stretched out on the packing case, tried to sleep. But the hope refused to die

completely. He had planted the seed. It was possible that— His mind ground to a halt and he sank into a fitful doze.

Vaguely, he became aware of heavy footsteps coming down the stairs. He opened his eyes, sat up, swinging his legs off the packing case. His head felt heavy and dull, but his pain had almost gone away. He felt as though he'd slept a week. His vision cleared and he saw Maury Holberg coming down.

He glanced quickly to Shorty. But the hours Shorty had had to think hadn't changed him. His face was grim and cold.

Maury dropped his cigarette, ground it out with the toe of his pointed shoe. "Before we go, let's have an understanding. Do the job right and you go free. I checked up on you this afternoon. I know who you are, where you live and where your folks live. Doublecross us and we get nasty, understand?"

Jeff felt the blood rush to his face. He understood what Holberg meant, all right. His fist clenched. But he knew he could do nothing. He was trapped, so completely trapped.

"Now, here's the set-up," Holberg went on. "I'm gonna meet Panelli in a half hour. You'll be parked across the street. When I give the signal, do your stuff. Only this time, keep going. We'll be all square. Okay?"

Jeff's mouth felt dry and he wanted to say "Thanks for nothing." It was a neat, slick scheme to get him to do their dirty work with no risk to themselves. Jeff had no illusions. When the police caught up with him, he'd be charged with murder.

"Let's go," Holberg said quietly. "I'll ride uptown with you."

WOODENLY, Jeff Blake walked on ahead of the two. As he passed Shorty, he sent him an appealing look. Shorty's expression didn't change. What Jeff had said had had no effect. Shorty was still of the same mind. He believed what he wanted to believe.

The night air was sharp and brisk and Jeff's head cleared a little. The car was parked at the curb. As he got in, he glanced at the dash clock. One o'clock. One A.M., Monday. He must have slept most of the afternoon and all evening.

Maury got in beside him and the door slammed. Jeff started off slowly, glanced up into the rear view mirror and saw that Shorty, in a black sedan, was directly behind him.

Strangely, he wasn't frightened any more. He guessed that was because a man could remain frightened so long and then the edge dulled. He was thinking, groping for a way out, as he drove across town. He thought of crashing the car, of calling out to the police. He knew that wouldn't get him in the clear. He felt a burning resentment gathering inside of him. He resented that lean, emotionless face, the freshly barbered smell, the stench of Holberg's cigar.

Again and again, that picture of Sharron staggering out from between the cars came back to mind. It irritated him, annoyed him, as if his unconscious was trying to point out what was wrong in that picture. The answer seemed so exasperatingly near, yet so far!

As they crossed Central Avenue, Jeff thought they were going to the same spot where Sharron had been killed. No, it was in the same neighborhood, but several blocks to the south. Near the end of the long block, Holberg ordered him to pull into the curb. As he was obeying, he glanced up at the rear view mirror and saw that Shorty was parking directly behind him. There was plenty of room, for the hour was late and few cars were parked along this street of dingy brownstone houses. It was one-twenty now.

Holberg got out, looked around carefully, flipped his cigarette over the hood of the car. Fascinated, Jeff watched it arch through the air and hit the pavement in a splatter of sparks.

"I'll be along at one-thirty sharp," Holberg said. "Keep the motor running. Be ready to move fast."

Jeff only half heard him. He was staring at that cigarette butt. A moment ago, he had thought Holberg was smoking a cigar. The sparks were dead, yet it still seemed to be glowing.

The answer hit him like a quick, sharp blow. He grabbed at the doorhandle, paused, waited until Holberg had disappeared around the corner. He snapped open the door, got out slowly, waving Shorty to join him. That scared feeling

was coming back and his stomach was tied in a knot. He expected at any moment that Shorty would shoot. He made no sudden move. He took two slow steps to the side and snatched up that cigarette butt. Triumph welled up in him. It was oval—a gold tipped Cuban cigarette.

Shorty reached him, his lips thinned with anger. "Get back in that car."

"Take it easy, Shorty," Jeff said in a low, tight voice. "We got ten minutes yet. Look at this and tell me. Did Red Sharron smoke cigarettes like this?"

An oath exploded on Shorty's lips. "Of all the fool questions at a time like this. Get back in that car."

Jeff stood fast. "He didn't smoke these, did he? Maury's the only one around who smokes them. Shorty, I found one of these butts by Red Sharron's body. Don't you see what it means?"

Shorty's eyes wavered and his mouth hung open.

"Get smart," Jeff went on more strongly. "Remember what I was telling you before? What would Panelli gain by killing Red? Could Panelli take over the syndicate? Who's top man now? You know. It's Maury—Maury Holberg. Maury says he was home in bed at the time Red Sharron was killed. Was he? Think about it. Red staggered out in front of my car. I thought he was drunk. Now, I remember you told me Red Sharron never took a drink in his life. See it now, Shorty? Red Sharron didn't stagger out. He was pushed out by Maury Holberg."

Shorty's eyes were narrowed and he was silent for a long time. It was plain that he was befuddled.

He straightened finally. "Get back in that car! I'll give you two seconds to get back in that car."

Jeff felt helpless rage welling up in him. The fool! It was so plain. He could see that his words had touched Shorty. He could see Shorty had been thinking along those same lines. But Shorty was still trapped by what he wanted to believe. If Jeff had only found this out sooner, if he only had a little more time to work on Shorty!

It was too late now. Jeff got in the car. His hands were damp against the

wheel. No, it wasn't too late. He hadn't killed anyone yet. He wasn't a murderer yet. He glanced nervously at the dash clock. Three minutes to go. He was determined now. He was not going to become a murderer.

AT THIS moment, Jeff's eye caught two men approaching the corner opposite him. Holberg, tall and lean, was on the right, the inside. Panelli, short and fat, was on the left, the curb side. Jeff felt a bit sick. He knew what he was going to do, what he had to do.

The two men stopped at the corner, waited for the light to change. Jeff put the car in gear and his foot went down on the gas pedal, slowly, gently. The motor's whine rose to a low growl. The light turned green and the little man stepped off the curb. Holberg turned him to cross in front of Jeff. He waved behind the shorter man's back. It was almost like a shout: "Come on!"

Jeff did. He rammed his foot down on the gas. The car shot across the street, heading in toward the curbside. Closer and closer the car roared on. That one split second seemed to stretch out into infinity. Jeff's hands were steady on the wheel and the scared feeling had shriveled to a hard lump in his chest.

Holberg swiveled suddenly, gave Panelli a mighty shove. The fat man spun around, his pudgy hands clawing for air. Then he lurched right into the path of the car. Jeff laughed, a bit off-key. He slammed the wheel over hard—to the right!

He hit. He could see Holberg spinning back over the sidewalk. He could hear the shrill, terrified shriek. Jeff tried to brake but couldn't. The front end crashed into the house, the storefront collapsing in a mighty shattering and clinking. The motor raced like a dynamo gone mad.

A shot pinged on the body of the car. Jeff, shaken and slightly dizzy, could see Panelli coming toward him, a small revolver in his fist. With a yell of alarm, he snapped open the door and jumped out.

"Don't shoot, you fool!" he shouted. "Behind you! Watch out behind you!"

Panelli whirled, a bit confused. Shorty had stopped his car in the middle of

the avenue and was getting out. Two guns blasted at the same instant. Jeff half turned to run. Then, he saw it had been Shorty who had been hit. Panelli was holding the gun on him, waiting for him to topple. Somewhere far in the distance, a siren was wailing.

Shorty was standing very straight, legs astride, staring; but neither at Panelli nor Jeff. Maury Holberg was getting to his feet. He went toward Shorty, stopped, and the two men stared at each other. Then suddenly, Holberg turned and started running with a queer, limping gait.

Shorty raised his gun, aimed deliberately. Fire spat from his muzzle and Holberg stiffened. He took one more step, then collapsed on his face and was still.

The gun fell from Shorty's limp fingers and clattered to the pavement. He staggered back to his car, but he couldn't quite make it. He folded over his fender, lay there, breathing hard.

"I'm getting outta here," Panelli said suddenly.

"You'd better not." Jeff's voice was calm now. "You're in the clear, except

for that gun. Shorty knows the truth now. He'll tell what happened. You'll be picked up later, anyway."

Panelli looked down at his nickel-plated revolver.

"I got a license for this. Maybe I'd better stay."

A moment later, the first of the squad cars came screaming down the avenue. To his everlasting chagrin, Jeff got sick.

The police didn't hold him long. They actually did have a clue to the killer of Red Sharron—that gold tipped cigarette butt Jeff had picked up and dropped at the scene. They suspected all along that Maury Holberg had murdered his boss. But it was Jeff's testimony that gave them the proof and the answers to their questions.

Jeff slept in his own bed that night. And he had the same dream—that vision of Sharron staggering out from between the cars. He realized afterward that his unconscious had been trying to push through the lies, trying to bring out the truth. And he saw that, without knowing it, he hadn't been lying to Shorty at all. He had been telling nothing but the truth.



The Sudden Murder of a Young Gangster Puts Tony Quinn
on the Trail of a Sinister Wave of Juvenile Crime Set
in Motion by a Diabolical Dealer in Death!

MURDER'S PLAYGROUND

An Exciting Black Bat Mystery Novel

By G. WAYMAN JONES

Featured Next Issue!

BURY ME in the SAME GRAVE



Sheila Sands knew who was going to be killed next, and by whose hand—for she planned to do the killing herself!

a Satan Hall Novelet by
CARROLL JOHN DALY

CHAPTER I

Girl With a Gun

IT WAS one of the toughest sections of lower New York. Detective Satan Hall plodded along the filthy sidewalk. He wondered too why the city didn't clean it up. He didn't wonder why they didn't make the tenants clear it

away. He had been raised in the lower part of the city himself. It was hard to be even decent there, yet many were. He marveled that anyone from that teeming network of crime and murder ever became honest, respectable citizens.

The saloon he turned into was dirty and dingy. The bartender knew him of course. Everyone even on the seamy side

A Tough Private Eye Faces His Toughest Fight

of life knew him, or at least recognized him from his pointed chin to his slanted green eyes, even his tapering ears. His likeness to the devil had given him his name—Satan.

The fat swarthy bartender lost his smile and slowly turned pale. Satan said easily.

"Stay where you are, fellow—no button pushing." And coming close to the bar, "Is Jake Ryan in the back room? Don't stutter, man. If you can't talk, nod or shake your head. I'm not going to wreck the joint."

The bartender gulped, said. "He's in the back—with friends—door locked." And as Satan turned toward the back room, "He's armed and he's tough."

"He's been kidding you." Satan smiled. At least the bartender saw his lips part though his eyes remained the same hard green.

TO SATAN this was a simple job. He bent, put his pocket flash on the key hole and the lock of the door. His foot shot forward. The lock snapped as if it had been made of paper. The door crashed open and struck hard against the wall. Satan stepped into the room. The room was filled with smoke for a fire burned in the grate and the smoke from a defective flue seeped into the room.

Four men, only one of whom he knew. That was Jake Ryan. And the boy Danny too—Satan knew him. Saw the blood on his mouth; the look of fear and pain in his eyes.

One of the men jerked to his feet, a gun in his hand. Satan's right hand shot under his left armpit and out again. His gun crashed against the man's jaw. The man was hurtled back into the chair, carried that chair with him across the room against the wall where he fell in a heap.

Jake Ryan's eyes bulged. His lips formed the words: "Hall—Satan Hall." And then a little louder, "You gotta have a warrant."

"You saw my warrant." Satan jerked a thumb toward the unconscious man on the floor. Turning to the boy, "Okay, Danny. Jake thought you gave me some

information and was doing the fix. Is that it?"

"No, no." Jake spoke hurriedly, frantically. "We were talking it out. I guess I could be wrong."

"You were wrong," Satan told him. "I take care of my friends. Beat it, Danny." And as Danny came to his feet and hesitated, "Don't worry. Danny. Jake won't be wrong about you again." Danny turned and scuttled out of the room.

The man in the corner did not move. The two men remained seated at the table, their hands plainly showing. Satan leaned across the table and grabbed Jake Ryan by the throat.

Jake was dragged across the barroom to the open door, then hurled out into the street, skidded the last few feet along the sidewalk and brought up in the gutter. He didn't try to get up. He saw Satan standing above him. Saw Satan dusting his hands. Then Satan turned and walked down the street.

Jake had been wrong about Danny. The boy had told Satan nothing. Now, Jake was through—through for good. Tough guys tossed into gutters by cops do not retain their toughness.

It was as small a thing as that which took Satan Hall into the lower East Side and plunged him into the events that followed.

He walked a couple of blocks, turned and started across town. At a corner he saw a uniformed officer stop, listen, look up at a small tenement ahead of him and start to run. Satan followed on his heels before he heard the voice of a woman, yelling, "Murder, murder!" over and over until a hand was clapped across her mouth.

A person or two stopped to listen then moved quickly on. Others looked neither to right nor left as they went about their business. Long experience had taught them not to get mixed up with the police.

It was one flight up, dim stairs, dirt stained windows. The cop reached the turn first and Satan saw the man and the woman struggling. The man was powerfully built. The woman was young and

When He Pits Himself Against Killer Rattigan!

slender and fought hard.

Satan saw the knife in the man's hand, saw it descending. He jerked out his gun, just as the broad shoulders of the cop shifted and blocked both his vision and his aim.

Then the shot came. Satan nodded his approval at the quickness of the patrolman with his fire. The burly man clutched at his stomach and slipped slowly to the floor.

It was then that Satan realized that the cop did not have a gun in his hand at all. It was the girl who held the gun—dangling in her right hand, her left hand pulling her torn dress together at the throat. She was breathing heavily. Her eyes were large and certainly black, but they were not frightened eyes. The girl was not going to faint. The cop was kneeling down beside the man. He spoke over his shoulder.



Satan recognized the boy—and those dead expressionless eyes

"He's dead all right. I'll have your name and address as a witness. The girl got that gun out of her shoulder bag just in time. You'll stay until—"

"Bah!" Satan cut in. "How would you know that he's dead—that's the medical examiner's job."

The cop cursed, swung around. His mouth opened to speak. He finally said,

"Hall—isn't it? Satan Hall."

"Detective Hall, yes," Satan spoke sharply. "Better call an ambulance. I'll wait here until you come back." And turning to the girl, "Do you want to make a statement now?"

The cop turned and was gone. Satan faced the girl. She was breathing better now.

"You live here?" he asked, taking in the shabby hall.

"Yes." She breathed hard and looked toward a door behind her. "You're Satan Hall, aren't you? Do I have to make a statement to you?"

"No." Satan looked at her. "You don't." He opened a little book and held a pencil over it. "But I like to make notes. Something might connect this shooting up with something else later."

"Satan Hall." There seemed to be a touch of repugnance in her voice. "All right. Take this for your book. His name is Biff Blane. He tapped and I opened the door. He tried to force his way in and I fought him out, locked the door, and then he had me by the throat. I knew him to see him, that's all."

"What did he want?"

"What does his kind always want?"

"You sorry you killed him?"

The girl looked down at the silent form on the floor. There was nothing of fear or horror in her face. Yet it was a good face, strength and character in it. She must have been—well, twenty-three—no dissipation. He saw her eyes go out of focus and look through or beyond the body.

"Are you sorry you killed him?" he asked again. "It's not for the book."

"I don't know." The girl spoke in a far away voice. "Others will be better off for his death of course—many others. I saw the knife. It was my life or Biff's—"

"You're Sheila Sands, aren't you?" Satan asked suddenly.

"So you knew. You knew all the time," she lashed out at him. "Yes, I'm Sheila Sands—I stuck a knife in a man when I was thirteen. All my life I've carried some weapon when I came up those stairs at night—even as a child."

"And the way I saw it." Satan nodded and as feet beat upon the stairs, "You're Harry Rattigan's girl, aren't you?"

"No, no." She straightened now and her hands came out in a gesture of anger, her face flushed. Her blouse dropped open unnoticed by her, but Satan saw the gash and the blood upon her chest. "That's a lie!" There was feeling in her words now. "I suppose I was his girl, as they want to call it. I was a kid then—hardly eighteen. I dropped him before he ever took the rap."

"Officer Craig is the name, sir." The cop had returned and was addressing Satan now. "I know the girl. She's never been convicted of a crime but she's given plenty of trouble to the police and the—"

"That," said Satan coldly, "had nothing to do with her shooting this man. I'd report facts if I were you. I have an appointment with the Commissioner. The boys can find me easily if they want me."

CHAPTER II

Political Angle



OMEBODY did want Satan. When Satan, who always worked directly out of the Commissioner's office, entered it the next morning he found Assistant District Attorney Peter H. Van Gordon there. Van Gordon was a tall handsome man not over thirty-five. A cane swung over his arm and a tiny bud adorned the lapel of his expensive blue suit.

The Commissioner said,

"You've met Mr. Van Gordon before, Satan. He wants a little assistance from the police. We always cooperate." He got up from behind his desk and moved toward the door. "I'll leave you alone, gentlemen." The Commissioner smiled and walked out of the office.

The assistant district attorney was a career man. He could use Satan. He spoke rapidly, confidently, with an apparent great sincerity.

"We need quick, alert men in the city's service, Detective Hall. Patrolman Craig, in the affair of the shooting of Biff Blane last evening, is not over bright. We're holding the girl for the grand jury—that is we expect to hold her. The trouble is that she works for a firm up town. A tony little place, and they hired a lawyer, a good one too. And he's after the girl now with a writ of *habeas corpus*. I've got her down in Judge Benson's chambers. Certainly we should be able to hold her on assault and battery with a deadly weapon—and attempted murder."

"He didn't die then?" Satan said.

"No—worse luck. We thought the girl would talk more if she thought him dead. But no, he's going to get better. But the point is to hold her. As a matter of fact I don't believe Judge Benson had too

much faith in Craig's report. Craig got rattled. Craig slipped it out that you were there and Judge Benson wants to see you."

The assistant district attorney laughed heartily.

"Of all things, Satan! You with your hatred of crime and criminals. So I want you to come down and clinch it." He frowned. "She's given us a lot of trouble. Wants the streets cleaned up and—well she gets a hold of things and uses them. There are always these reformers who listen. She's a political headache—a bad actor."

"And the gun?"

"She had a license. They got it for her uptown, the firm she works for. Had her carrying money—but between you and me I think the boss is soft on her, though that is simply a guess. A cold, shrewd chap—Randolph Manners. His father has money. I think he got her the gun license so she could protect herself down where she lives." He laid a hand on Satan's shoulder. "You'll come down boy and give us a hand." His laugh was quite genuine.

Satan entered Judge Benson's chambers accompanied by the assistant district attorney.

JUDGE BENSON was alone in his office. He was not cordial to Satan.

"I've heard about you," he said simply. "I never liked the way you take the law into your own hands." And turning to the smiling assistant D.A., "You know, Van Gordon, I can't see your point at all. Four times, yes, she has defended herself. That dark hallway is the only exit and entrance to her living quarters. Yes, yes. I know her past. I took occasion to call up her firm. Of course Detective Hall, here, says, as you claim, that she shot this man down in cold blood, called for help in a voice free from fear, but it does seem preposterous. Bring the girl in." He turned to the clerk. "Send the officer with her."

Satan looked at the girl. Certainly she made a good impression. A far better impression than the cop, Craig, who followed her.

Judge Benson motioned Satan to a chair and spoke slowly.

"This is a private hearing in a way,

Detective Hall. You are not under oath but I expect you to tell the truth. I dislike your methods, but I don't recollect anyone accusing you of untruthfulness." And with a little smile, "Quite the contrary. Are you willing to answer questions?"

"If I answer them at all—and in my own way."

"Certainly, certainly." The judge was still courteous but he reddened slightly, then said, "What would you say if I told you that officer Craig here has told us he saw no knife?"

"I'd say he lied."

The judge was startled. The girl jerked erect. Van Gordon's smile disappeared. Craig jumped to his feet, cried out.

"I said I didn't—I didn't think I saw



it—but now—I—well—the man was shot!"

"I see," said Judge Benson. "Mr. Hall, will you tell me what happened—what you saw?"

Satan spoke abruptly. "I followed the officer up the stairs. "When I reached the turn I saw both the girl and the man. The man had a knife raised. I drew my gun but this officer's body got in my way. Then the shot came. The man dropped. The knife clattered down ahead of him."

"Would you say that the shot was necessary to save her from grave bodily harm?"

"I would say—from my long experience in dealing out lead and receiving it—that if the girl had waited a second, she'd be cold turkey now."

That was that! Judge Benson turned to the Assistant D. A.

"I think Van Gordon," the judge said, "since you are holding the girl without any charge she might walk out of here now. Then—I'd like a few words with you."

Outside in the hall Craig said to Satan in subdued indignation:

"You made a monkey out of me inside there—and Van Gordon too."

"You made a monkey out of yourself," Satan told him. "What did he promise—to make you an inspector?"

The cop walked away muttering. Satan turned and walked to the street entrance. He heard quick steps behind him, felt the girl's hand on his wrist. He turned around and faced her.

"Satan, Satan," she said. "You are quite a man. All of us down on the East Side don't think you are the worst of the Cossacks. Please come and see me to-night."

Satan stared down at her for a long time.

"You are a pretty woman, Sheila," he said slowly, "but if you had been the homeliest dame who ever walked the avenue I'd have said exactly the same thing. I am the law."

The girl recoiled. Then she laughed.

"I haven't got a temper, Satan. I don't think I ever had one. I know that thanks to you would be silly. You come to my rooms tonight and I'll tell you about a man who's going to—to die. I'll tell you who's going to kill him." She looked back down the corridor and spoke hurriedly. "Tonight, then."

She turned and ran. Satan looked back. Judge Benson's door had opened and shut.

The assistant D. A. was hurrying toward him. Satan said, almost as soon as the man opened his mouth:

"I know, Van Gordon. If the truth surprised you—better forget it. I'm hard. I'm tough. I'm ruthless. But I've never sent a man to prison or shot a man into hell who didn't deserve it."

"All right, Satan." The assistant D. A. was rather taken aback at the vehemence of Satan's words. "I make a better friend than an enemy!"

"That could be a threat," Satan said vehemently. "But I'll forget it—and you'll do well to forget—for if you ever cross my path again in dirty political crookedness, I'll strike you down as I would any other criminal."

He waited for a moment but the D. A. did not speak. Then Satan Hall turned and walked slowly away.

Sheila's Warning



THAT night, just before eight-thirty, Satan again entered the dark dirty hallway of the tenement house. He knew what there was to know about Sheila Sands from a police standpoint. He knew that she had stirred up an interest of a so-called woman's club to

help the children of the poor. And he knew that these women had gotten in the assistant district attorney's hair.

Her father was killed while robbing a bank—shot in the back by the cops when she was ten. Her mother had died when she was seventeen and she stayed on living there.

Although he made no noise in mounting the stairs, her door opened before he could knock. She was not dressed to "lure him." There was no makeup. She wore a simple white dress. But Satan was not looking at the girl as the door closed. For a moment he thought he had entered a Park Avenue apartment. Then he knew better. The walls were painted cream color; there were plenty of books. The chairs, he saw now, were not expensive—simply comfortable and carefully chosen from some second-hand shop. His sharp eyes took in the home painting job which was excellent.

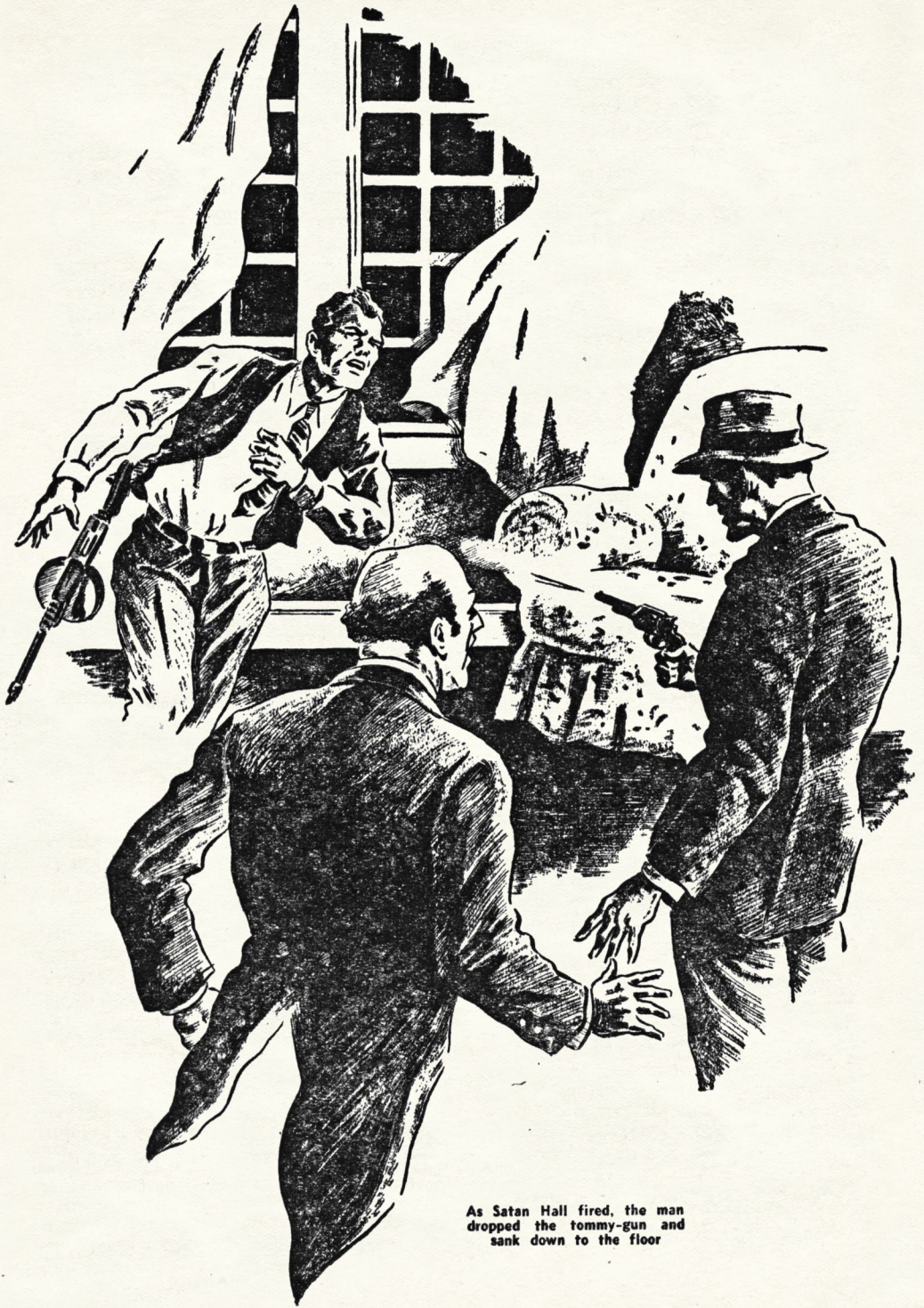
"I fixed things up myself," she said. "I'd like to show you the bedroom and kitchen. I did all the decorating." She laughed then. "Besides, you'll know we are alone."

"Would that matter?" Satan looked at her sharply.

"To one who's wanted bad enough by the underworld to be shot in the back." She shrugged as he followed her through the apartment. For a while she was like a kid, especially when he looked at a painting over her bed.

"I did it," she said. "It's rather good."

Back in the living room again she handed him an ornate box, several brands of cigarettes in it. Satan lighted one, held the match.



As Satan Hall fired, the man
dropped the tommy-gun and
sank down to the floor

"I don't smoke," she said. "I used to but I stopped."

"When I came in?" he asked.

She laughed pleasantly. "I can see now," she said, "how you aggravate gunmen into drawing on you and then—shooting them."

"You were going to say killing them, weren't you?"

"Perhaps I was." She sat down in an easy chair and directed him to another under the soft glow of a lamp. "It's common talk. Please sit down."

"No," Satan told her. "I'm here on business. You were to tell me of a man who was going to die—and the one who was to kill him."

"Oh, I'll kill him," she said. "Won't you sit down?"

Satan looked steadily at her. He didn't say aren't you joking or anything like that. Somehow he felt that she wasn't. He sat down.

"It's like this, Satan. Five years ago I suppose you would call me Rattigan's girl. He was tough. He moved out of the gutter into the big-time stuff. He had liked me since I was a kid. I grew older and he was always going to go straight. My father was shot robbing a bank. Rattigan was big. Rattigan was getting in uptown with the smart money—and we made a deal. I'd marry him if he went straight. I thought he would amount to something. Then we would be married.

"Well, he pretended to go straight. Then I found out. I was Rattigan's girl for six months. He was a crook and a killer. I was through. Then he took the jolt. I think for someone else—for a job he didn't do. I went to see him once in prison. He gave me his last word. Rattigan's girl or else."

THE GIRL came to her feet, walked over to Satan. She pulled her blouse down slightly and Satan saw the bandage, half came to his feet as she ripped it from her chest. Blood started to come.

"Biff was sent by Rattigan. He wanted to brand me. That cut was the beginning of an R. Don't you understand? Rattigan comes out next week. He says he'll brand me—brand me as he did another girl—R. G.—Rattigan's girl. Understand? He'll brand me with an iron just like any cowboy brands cattle. You've

been around, Satan. Rattigan means it."

And when Satan would have spoken she suddenly cut loose. Her voice was slightly higher, broke at times.

"Don't tell me the law will punish him afterwards. All I want you to do is to go to Sing Sing—take a message from me to Rattigan. Tell him if he lays a hand on me, if he so much as comes near me, I'll shoot him dead." She went over and leaned against the mantel.

Satan got up, stood behind her. He stretched out both hands, and swung her around so that she faced him. Her body trembled beneath his fingers, but her eyes were dry and steady.

Satan knew a truth when he heard it. He said to the girl.

"Just like that, eh?"

"Just like that." She nodded.

Satan said slowly, "I understand. I'll tell him. Good night."

Satan had little difficulty in seeing Rattigan. Even to a strictly private meeting in the warden's office.

Rattigan was a big man with a good-natured face in an animal like sort of way. His cheeks sagged in a pleased expression down to a broad mouth. Though his eyes were small, they were piercing, and glistened like glass. His nose was sort of spread out as if at some time the bones had been removed.

Satan said, "I want to talk to you, Rattigan—off the record."

"Or on the record—it's all the same to me," Rattigan told him. "You can quote me for all I care. I'm not kicking that I took this jolt. You should know that I wasn't guilty. I took the jolt for someone else. I'll be fifty times as big when I come out as when I went in."

"That isn't exactly what I came to see you about. I have a duty to the law, Rattigan. I want to warn you of your danger of being killed, and how to avoid it."

"Yes?" Rattigan looked at him a long moment. "It sounds like a new line to me. I don't need any tips from a copper, Satan. You and I are of the same breed. We do our own killing. You know a lot of guys I've knocked over. But you can't prove it. I'll be running big things in a week. I'll do my talking with lead."

"Yes." Satan nodded. "But I promised to make this visit to you. It's about a girl, Rattigan. She don't want to see

you any more. It will cost you your life to see her."

"How's that?" Rattigan swung sharply. His features were still animal-like. His jaw seemed to tighten up. "What girl?"

"Sheila Sands. She hasn't been your girl in a long time. There's talk about a brand."

Rattigan looked quickly around the room, and then stuck his face close to Satan.

"I'll put the brand on her all right," he said. "Why the little rat came up here, peered at me through bars and told me off. So it will cost me my life? It will—it—" He stopped suddenly. Then blurted, "This from you—for a woman! That's rich. Satan Hall with a woman. And of all things—my woman. Rattigan's girl!"

Satan hesitated. The girl's threat would not impress Rattigan. It would only make it worse for the girl. But he could not leave it that way either.

He said, "She's nobody's girl, Rattigan. I'm just letting you know how things stand."

CHAPTER IV

Big Shot's Return



RATTIGAN calmed down. Satan having a girl, Sheila having Satan—stranger things had happened. Sheila was a beautiful woman. She was a clever woman. Still—he blinked and blinked. He didn't exactly come to another conclusion. He felt his way.

"She's been stooling for you—is that it?"

"No. She's not a girl who would rat out." Satan pressed the button for the guard outside. "I just told you how it is. Go looking for her and it will cost you your life."

Satan stopped. Two guards came in. The warden followed them closely, a ledger under his left arm.

"We've had our talk," said Satan. "Thank you."

"Thank you, sir, too." Rattigan's smile was pleasant.

Yes. Rattigan was a dangerous criminal. Satan knew that. But Satan had not known that he was going to be misunderstood.

Rattigan would be power as soon as he hit the city. Satan had always believed he took the rap for someone. Certainly there was no doubt that Rattigan was already operating from behind the bars of the state prison itself. Well. Many had done that before him.

Yet the girl Sheila was still alive. Why? The answer seemed simple. Rattigan didn't want her—dead.

Ten days later Satan received a complimentary ticket to a political dinner. Satan seldom attended and was less seldom invited to such dinners. But the invitation reached him the day of the dinner itself. He was unable to gather any real information as to what the dinner was for. He knew that the usual politicians and ward heelers and ward leaders of the East Side would attend. The underworld itself would be well represented of course.

The invitation aroused his sense of duty. He felt that something was in store for him personally—and therefore in store for the law. Since he never avoided trouble and was always willing to meet any issue on the other fellow's terms, Satan went.

It was a rather large affair, and at the speaker's table on the platform at the end of the room were some notable faces. But one seat next to the toastmaster remained vacant. The toastmaster was the big political boss Morgan Rutland.

Satan knew all there was to know about him and none of it was good. Rutland was of the old school, heavy and pompous, with a loud booming voice. But others had different opinions of Rutland. He could bring warring factions together. He was a fine organizer. And in the final analysis, he got out the vote.

He made a short speech before dinner thanking so many for attending. Then he looked at his watch finishing with:

"Our guest—whom we have gathered to honor here tonight—has been delayed. We have tried to keep his appearance a secret, but his prominence has caused it to leak out. Gentlemen, I thank you."

Satan grinned. If it were true that the guest of honor's prominence had leaked out, all the diners there were very good actors or very good liars, for Satan couldn't find a single one who knew who the guest was. The dinner was good—surprisingly good. There was steak—good steak—and plenty of it. It was a man's dinner.

Many of the guests recognized Satan. Old Honest Larry O'Tole, whose little saloon had grown into a fine eating establishment now, came down from the speaker's table and slapped Satan on the back.

"The tough kid—now a tough man." His round face beamed. "And honest too. I'm still proud to know you."

"And I'm still proud to know you." Satan looked up at him. O'Tole never bragged about the good and the charitable things he had done all his life.

THE MEAL was over. Certain guests had received orders to shout and stamp their feet. Morgan Rutland walked across the room, extended a hand to the man who took the empty seat at the speaker's table.

"Gentlemen! Gentlemen!" Rutland rapped for order. "A toast to the guest we honor tonight. A man who is to take a big part in affairs of this city. Returned again to us. I give you my friend and your friend—our own Harry Rattigan."

Everyone stood up. All but Old Larry O'Tole. He remained seated and staring unbelievably at Rattigan. His face was red, his lips opened and closed. Then his fist pounded upon the table.

Many noticed it. There was a sudden silence. Rutland turned sharply. O'Tole was an old man now. His friends still trusted and believed in him. The color went out of his face. He came slowly to his feet.

"A special toast," he shouted so all could hear. Then he raised his glass high and said, "To Harry Rattigan—a disgrace to the Irish!" O'Tole smashed his glass down upon the table and turning walked from the room.

Others left of course, but quietly and without fanfare. In the dead hush following O'Tole's departure, Rattigan spoke simply.

"A toast to O'Tole. He never had a bad word for a friend nor a good one for an enemy. Like an elephant he never forgets. I tripped him up in the alley once when I was nine. Go to it, boys. I'm glad to be back with you."

Yes, thought Satan, Rattigan was a dangerous man. He spoke two languages. One for himself—and one for the record. This was a new Rattigan. He had learned a lot in prison.

CHAPTER V

Cold Is the Grave



EARLY the next morning O'Tole was shot to death behind his own bar. Even Satan was surprised at the suddenness of the vengeance.

They gave him a big funeral and Morgan Rutland was there and others and Rattigan stood by his side and watched the body lowered into the grave.

Everyone stood a minute with heads bowed except the few detectives from headquarters who watched the crowd.

An hour later Satan was in the Commissioner's office.

The Commissioner had all the facts before him now. The dinner. The toast. Satan who worked alone marveled at the efficiency of the New York Police Department.

"Well—" The Commissioner leaned back in his chair. "You were there, Satan. What happened?"

Satan said, "It was two hours exactly after O'Tole left the dinner that he was shot to death."

"Too fast for you to act." There was a hint of irony in the Commissioner's voice. "Rutland was in to see me. He let me know that Rattigan was with him, drove to his house and spent the night there. He didn't offer it as an alibi, Satan. Just let it slip out casually. Now, who killed O'Tole?"

"Rattigan," Satan said without hesitation. "I mean personally and alone."

"Oh, come now. That would be too raw. Why they could have gotten a hun-

dred different men to do it. They have organization."

"You can't organize a death—a murder—that fast." Satan shook his head. "The boys plan a rubout ahead. Rattigan just drove across town, walked in the back window and shot O'Tole dead. O'Tole wouldn't be expecting it. I wouldn't be expecting it—not that fast. It was a smart move."

"Well, what do you think about Morgan Rutland taking Rattigan under his wing like that? Like many other people, I never believed Rattigan guilty. Now with Rutland to guide him and—"

"Rutland isn't to guide him. Rattigan is going to guide Rutland."

"Good Heavens!" The Commissioner came to his feet. "I never looked at it that way. I can't see Rutland being mixed up in homicide—not letting Rattigan run him."

"I can see any man mixed up in homicide," Satan said. "But Rutland may have orders from higher up."

"I don't like it, Satan. With Rutland's organization and Rattigan's passion for violence, Satan, it will be worse than prohibition. If we were sure he did this—killed O'Tole."

"Everyone is supposed to know it," Satan said. "O'Tole hardly stepped out of line before he was shot dead. Anyway, Commissioner, I can ask Rattigan if he did it."

The Commissioner's laugh was not hearty nor sincere.

"You think he'll tell you?"

"Yes," said Satan, "I think he will."

But it was some time later before Satan got a chance to ask Rattigan that question. As far as he could ascertain Rattigan had gone South for a rest. But things were moving for Rattigan in the city. He was going into the brokerage business. He had taken over a big night club—was going to have a chain of them. He had bought an old established midtown realty company. Satan didn't know. Some of it might be true.

Satan visited the girl but once. She was very stiff and formal and received him in the hall outside her door.

She said, "I suppose I can never thank you sufficiently. The message I asked you to deliver must have appeared ridiculous to you. I was a frightened and ex-

cited girl. I didn't think you'd force yourself upon me—"

Satan thrust her aside and walked into the lighted room. He thought he knew the answer. Someone was in her apartment, someone who gave her orders. Someone she feared and someone who listened. But there was no one there—except a slender boy, sitting with his back to Satan. He whirled around, spilled the soup he was eating, then grinned. It was Danny.

"You came in anyway," he said, "and—"

The girl was right behind Satan. But she didn't see him slip the card into Danny's pocket nor hear him say, "Call me at midnight tonight at that number."

She stood tensely as he turned and walked out of the apartment. She took a step after him but did not call him back.

It was almost twelve to the minute that night when Satan's phone rang. It was Danny.

"She needs you, Satan. She's afraid and—she's afraid."

Satan said, after a moment, "I thought she was a woman without fear."

"She is—for herself that it. But she can fear for—others."

"Fear for you, Danny?"

"Oh, no," Danny laughed. "I wasn't to tell anyone, Mr. Hall, but she's afraid—of what might happen to you."

This time Satan couldn't speak. The laugh died on his lips. After a bit he said.

"Afraid for me? Impossible. She tell you that?"

"No," Danny said. "She's like you. You are not afraid of anything, but you are afraid for her. Well, she is afraid for you."

Satan told Danny to call him every night—after he'd made sure she was safe. Every night at midnight.

"Are you fond of her, Danny?" Satan asked.

Danny said simply, "She's done a lot for me."

"Just what?"

"Well, I think she called you when you came and tossed Jake Ryan into the gutter. They haven't bothered me since."

"So." Satan had often wondered who had called him about Danny and told him where to go. He had known only that it

was a woman's voice speaking.

"I think of lots of things, Mr. Hall," Danny went on. "I've thought of a lot of ways of getting—you know who!" And before Satan could snap in he hung up.

CHAPTER VI

Hand That Trembled



NEXT morning the Commissioner told Satan that Rattigan was back in the city. He pointed out to him an announcement in the real estate section of the paper. An old established real estate firm had been bought, Shaffer Henderson and Shaffer Co. And H. A.

Rattigan was the new president.

"Now," the Commissioner said, "You see what we have, Satan. An old reliable firm on a side street. A hideout or a legitimate meeting-place for a gangster mob. Rattigan has assumed an air of respectability." After a pause, "He's your case, Satan. He'll be drifting into politics now—and then—he'll kill you like that, Satan."

"Afraid for me." Somehow the words formed themselves on Satan's lips and slipped out unconsciously.

The Commissioner laughed. "I have been afraid for you since the first day I took you into the office—when no one else would have you."

Satan's teeth parted and he grinned.

Satan said simply, "I'm interested in real estate. Good day."

The real estate office was not bad. In fact it was in the process of being painted. Satan turned to the desk behind which a girl sat behind an *Information* sign. When Satan asked for Rattigan, she shook her head.

"In conference," the girl said. But Satan insisted so she buried her face in a box from which no words came out to Satan. Then she looked up.

"You're the law," she told Satan. "He'll see you. He said he always wants to aid law and order."

"He's a fine man." Without changing his expression, Satan followed the girl

through a door and down a long hall and into Rattigan's office.

"Detective Hall, Mr. Rattigan," she said.

The door closed. Satan looked around the spacious room. It was certainly a surprise to him. Comfortably furnished. A fireplace—real. Well chosen books.

"I'm building up a past for the newcomers," Rattigan said. "What's on your chest?"

"Well," Satan answered. "About that O'Tole killing." And when Rattigan nodded, "I wanted to ask you a question."

"And your question?"

"Did you kill O'Tole?"

If Rattigan was surprised he did not show it. Leaning forward, he looked pleasantly at Satan.

"I have never heard a more straightforward question," he said. "It deserves an honest answer. Yes, Satan. I went over the few blocks, shot the dirty little rat to death, and spent the night at Morgan Rutland's. I know Morgan says differently, and naturally I wouldn't make a liar out of my best friend." His teeth gleamed viciously. "So I'd have to swear I wasn't there. Maybe you don't believe me."

"Oh, I believe you all right." Satan came to his feet.

"And you'll trace it down and hang it on me."

"No," Satan said. "I'll get you on something else."

"I'm not too sure of that, Satan." Rattigan sat back now and eyed him. "You and I are built very much the same way. When we get tangled up in red tape we cut it. It didn't take me very long to find out that the Commissioner rules the roost in his own department—one couldn't get you broke. I doubt even if the mayor could for the mayor of this city was elected because he promised the voters to keep the same Commissioner in office. But I'd like to get you out of my hair. When a guy bothers me too much, I go after him personally."

"Go on," Satan nodded. "You interest me."

"Well, I'm not wound up in red tape," Rattigan said. "The aces are all in my hand. You are the law, and the law does not shoot men to death on dark nights."

What do you think of that?"

"Off the record," Satan said slowly, "I think it's swell." And when Rattigan just stared at him, "Any time a hood like you wants to take a shot at me—take it. Be sure you don't muff it though, Rattigan. Just one shot, understand?"

RATTIGAN looked down in his desk drawer, "You can take it now if you want, Rattigan."

Satan spread empty hands far out. "A quick dive into the drawer, an upward jerk of the hand, and a single shot—a single shot, Rattigan." Satan leaned forward. "A single shot, you dirty yellow coward!"

Rattigan's face went livid. His hand flashed into the drawer and stayed there. His lips trembled. But he got control of himself and grinned. His hand was shaking, but in anger not in fear.

Rattigan reached for his cigar, noticed his hand was trembling—still in anger—and he left it on the ash tray.

"Up in stir—you don't get a lot of gun practice."

"Baloney!" said Satan, "I thought Rattigan could lift a gun up and fire it. The boys will be disappointed in you, Rattigan."

"The boys? Why?"

"Oh, they haven't had a first class funeral since O'Tole died." And swinging toward the door, "I'll be looking for you, Rattigan. Up an alley, behind any garbage can. Only one shot, remember!"

Rattigan sat for a long time after Satan left. He was a good man with a gun, a fast man with a gun. The past weeks had convinced him that he hadn't lost any of his speed or sureness. He thought too of other men. Did their hands tremble? He didn't know. One shot Satan had said—one shot.

He poured himself a drink. There was another thing Satan had not mentioned. His slapping guys around with both hands while they were armed. If they took it, he struck them to the floor. If they drew a gun—Well, Satan was alive—and they were dead.

What of those he slapped down. They were ridiculed off the avenue. They disappeared into oblivion.

Rattigan made up his mind. He pressed a button underneath his desk. A stocky

man came in, a stocky man with a mean fat face. Rattigan said.

"I'll want the car. I'll be going out of town for a bit."

Rattigan had guessed right. But Satan did not know that until he called at six or seven of the most famous night spots that Rattigan frequented without finding him. Yes, Satan had decided on a show-down. He had decided to slap the great Rattigan down. Bad politics that. Well, the Commissioner would have been against it. Anyone would have warned him that Rattigan was too big a man, that his friends would raise the roof right off the City Hall.

Satan doubted it. When he slapped a man down that man was through.

Satan was disappointed, but his respect for Rattigan's shrewdness went up. He nodded his head. It would be a tough fight, but he liked tough fights.

He was worried a bit too. Rattigan couldn't afford to disappear from the city any length of time—not with the little innuendos that Satan had passed around. Nothing that the Commissioner could call him on.

He had simply asked here and there if Rattigan was around—and slipped out the suggestion that what Harry Rattigan needed was a good slapping around. But he didn't add that he was the man to give it to him. He didn't need to. The boys would know what he meant, all right.

He was worried about Sheila Sands. She was entitled to the protection of the law. Rattigan might strike at him—the law—through her. It was after half past eleven now, and he should be hearing from Danny.

IT wasn't far to his small mid-town modest walk-up apartment, so he went straight home.

Time passed. It was twenty minutes of one. Danny had not called. Danny had never been late before.

Satan waited until five minutes after one. Then he walked out of the house, caught a taxi there and went downtown—over to the East Side—a block from Sheila's house.

There was a gun in his right hand and a premonition of horror. Horror is different from terror, for Satan had no feeling of danger to himself. Before he

reached the girl's door he found himself thinking: "It might have been better if I had shot him to death this afternoon."

He rapped on the door and called. If other tenants heard him they made no sound. People in that part of the city mind their own business. They don't get mixed up with other persons' troubles.

Satan grasped the doorknob, turned it, and was surprised when the door opened. His flash covered the room. His gun covered himself.

There was no shot. Nothing but stillness. Satan stepped inside, closed the door behind him, clicked on the wall switch. The room was bathed in light.

The room was empty. He searched the apartment quickly. Things were not right. A lamp was close against the wall slightly atilt. A chair looked as if it had been moved. He sniffed the air. A gun had been fired in that room.

He went to the hall door, opened it. The lock was broken. It had been forced. Not a hard job. A jimmy shoved in close beside the lock had done the trick easily enough.

Holes in the door too—bullet holes. Then he noticed blood on the floor. Not much—a few drops only in the center of the room, more as he neared the door. He avoided the small wet splashes of red in the room and used his flash in the hall.

Blood was there too. It led to the stairs. His flash brightened the wall. There was blood on the wall too, and on the stairs.

The picture was clear enough. Someone had been shot and then carried down the stairs. The girl. Someone must have fired wildly, so that the shots had gone through the door. But that wasn't like Sheila. But then if Rattigan had been to blame, Satan could understand the need for haste.

Satan went down the stairs again. He wouldn't report this at the station house. If the girl had been taken by Rattigan, Satan intended to make it a personal matter to get her back. Satan smacked his lips. His green eyes narrowed. He'd find out where she was all right. Even if he had to shoot it out of Rattigan—bullet for bullet.

What had happened to Danny? It would be no use trying to comb the avenue that time of night. But he did walk

straight down to Danny's place—a little windowless back room where Danny lived with his sister.

He awakened the sister—an honest hard working woman. She was alarmed about Danny. Hoped he wasn't mixed up with the police again, and then recognized Satan.

"He spoke of you, just to me," she told him. "The rest—" She looked up and down the dirty hallway, even at the stairs, and whispered. "The rest of them think you are the worst of the dicks, but Danny said no—you are the best." She began to wipe her eyes then. "Oh, Mr. Satan, you'll take care of him."

Satan said gruffly that he would and hurried straight back to his apartment. Trouble certainly. Danny might be phoning frantically even now. He might even be waiting in Satan's apartment house with news of Sheila.

Quick sure glances on either side of the street before his own apartment convinced Satan that Danny was not there. It convinced him also that no death car was following him. Yes, he thought one might be. Rattigan was a fast worker and he must know now that the chips were on the table, for Satan had put them there. Satan had told him bluntly enough he would die if Rattigan bothered Sheila Sands.

Satan went down his narrow hall, snapped on the lights in his little living room—froze. A man sat in his own armchair, under the light of the lamp. Not a man but a boy. A dead boy!

CHAPTER VII

Satan Dreams



OF COURSE Satan knew the boy. Those dead glassy, expressionless eyes of Danny stared back at him. There were nasty cuts about the boy's throat and the fingers of his hands were black and swollen from burns. His shirt was thrown open and there was a single hole in his chest. Things had been done to the boy before he died—things to make him

talk. About Satan or the girl. Yet what could he disclose, except that he had rung Satan up each night to say that the girl was safe?

There was a little envelope lying under the boy's right arm that rested on the arm of the chair. Satan lifted it, opened it, read the contents quickly, read it again. It was simply:

With my best wishes to Satan. Sorry I couldn't meet the twelve o'clock dead line.—An old friend.

Instinctively Satan lifted the phone and called Homicide.

He finally got Lieutenant Grady on the phone. He told Grady there was a dead boy in his apartment, brutally murdered.

"I didn't shoot him, no. He's been tortured." And then when Lieutenant Grady spoke crisply, "No, I won't wait here with the body. That's your job. Mine is to catch the murderer."

He banged up the phone then. Turned toward the door. Then he swung back. It was always a mean chore, but this time especially distasteful. He went through the dead boy's pockets, and found the same thing in each pocket, a small bit of paper with Satan's telephone number on it. So that was to be the story the newspapers got. He had been under Satan's protection and he was dead. Dead in Satan's apartment.

Satan hesitated a long time. It would be simpler to tear up each slip of paper. Matters wouldn't look so bad then. Bad for whom? For himself of course. For not protecting those who aided him.

Okay. Satan nodded grimly. He put each bit of paper back where he had found it and stepping into the hall closed the apartment door behind him. Already the sirens were sounding in the street. He smiled with astisfaction.

He didn't work with the boys. Didn't get along too well with the boys. But he was proud of the great system of which he was a part—the police department of the city of New York. He turned back from the main stairs, went to the end of the hall and climbed out onto the fire-escape.

It was close to three o'clock when Satan walked into the lobby of Rattigan's swanky apartment house. There was even an all-night doorman. Satan

shouldered by him, let his green eyes flash at the man, went to the elevators, found an automatic lift and rode to the twelfth floor.

His thumb was on the bell less than a minute when the door opened. The butler was still fully dressed. He had not gone to bed. Satan pushed him aside and stepped into the huge living room.

"Where's Rattigan?" he asked, and as the man stiffened he turned and looked directly at him. "Detective Satan Hall," he said, pushing his hat back.

The curtains by the window to Satan's right parted. A man stood there, a tommy-gun in his hands.

He said: "Wise dick. Turn around and face me. A false move and I'll kill you."

Satan said slowly, "You can't mean that—I'm the law. You don't mean that." He was turning very slowly.

The voice laughed. It said, "Make a false move and you'll find out. It's a tommy-gun. Why not find out?"

SATAN turned the full way and shot the man once in the chest. The man staggered back, clutched at the curtains, the tommy-gun fell with a thud to the floor. The man sank slowly.

Satan said to the butler: "You heard the threat." And walking over to the man he looked down at him. "I saw you the moment I came in the room. The gun too. Ah, a stranger in town! I thought so." He glanced back at the butler. "No Rattigan?"

The butler was shaking. He stammered, "Mr. Rattigan is not home! This—the man—he wants a doctor."

"We all want things in life," Satan answered slowly. "But we don't always get them. Show me through the place, every closet. Point out the smallest hiding-place."

There was no one in the apartment. Satan had even looked under the beds, and all the time, so far as the butler knew, Satan showed no gun.

Before leaving, Satan walked over to the man on the floor, knelt down, stood up a minute later.

"He's all right." Satan nodded. "I suppose you know what doctor to get." And when the butler stared at the machine-gun by the gunman's hand, "Yes,

he could have picked it up, but he just didn't want to. He wanted to live."

"And—and—what will I tell Mr. Rattigan?"

"Nothing. You won't be seeing him again. At least, not alive!"

As a bluff that was all right, Satan thought. He just wanted to drive Rattigan from the city.

Satan walked in on the assistant medical examiner and Lieutenant Grady down at the morgue. The lieutenant started to tell Satan about the bits of paper and the phone number on it.

"We'll look that number up," he suggested.

"Don't," Satan told him. "It's my number. No, he wasn't stooling for me. He was casing a place." And before the lieutenant could speak he gave him the boy's full name and address, adding "Send Clancy down to break the news to his sister. Clancy's good at that. He can call on me for all expenses."

Satan went home. He knew that in the morning word of his "interest" in Rattigan would be all over the Avenue, all through the Police Department. Maybe he did jerk to a stop when he reached his own apartment and looked at his easy chair. Maybe it did run through his head: "That was where Danny sat—dead!"

Rattigan had tossed everything into the one play—a double play. The boy Danny and the girl Sheila. That play should have been followed up. But no death car had followed Satan. No machine-gun had spouted lead from an alley.

Certainly he had given anyone who wanted to throw lead, a chance to throw it. And somehow he thought that one would be Rattigan, not a hired killer. Rattigan did his own killings. He'd want everyone to know that he had killed Satan. But no one could prove it. Rattigan would have an alibi.

Satan was getting into bed when the phone rang. It was Fergerson, who had a big night club and was honest too.

"Listen, Satan," he whispered the words, "Don't ask me where it came from. I don't know. Rattigan lined things up for a showdown but something went wrong. So get in youricks before he's ready. I'm not sure yet what they want,

but Rattigan's friends are hunting through the city frantically for something. I don't think they know exactly what it is themselves or I'd have had it out of them."

"It's not me," Satan told him. "I'm not hard to find. Thanks, Fergerson." He banged down the phone.

USUALLY Satan could go to sleep at once, for he had trained himself that way, but this time his training didn't work. Satan couldn't sleep. He knew exactly what bothered him too. It was the girl, Sheila, whom the law should protect, whom the law should find now. Satan was that law.

He felt a new sensation. He knew he was cold, cold with rage. A quiet, all-consuming rage.

He dozed off. He awoke with a start. The dream was so vivid, and he seldom dreamed. It was almost a vision. Maybe a warning. Suddenly it struck him that it was not a thing to be avoided but to be faced and met—and—well, a man had to die sometime. Even Satan Hall.

The telephone rang and the Commissioner said: "Now look here, Satan, I—"

"Wrong number," Satan said, and jammed down the phone. He took in his morning paper, ran through it. Nothing about the death of Danny in it. Well, it would strike the stands later. No, he didn't work in with the cops. They didn't especially like his independence, taking orders from no one but the Commissioner himself. But after all a cop was a cop. And cops went a long way for each other—a very long way against the criminal.

Satan ate his breakfast in the same little restaurant. The Greek owner treated him as usual, asked no questions. Then Satan went straight down to the real estate office where Rattigan was president. At all events he'd duck the Commissioner.

Maybe it would come there, he didn't know. The girl would tell him that Rattigan was out or that Rattigan was busy and he'd kick open the door and tramp down that hall to Rattigan's private room. And the lead would spit—or would it? That wasn't like his dream.

He had to grin when he reached the entrance to the building. He had seen the hand stretch out and felt it fold

BURY ME IN THE SAME GRAVE

through his arm and he was walking along with the Commissioner of Police. The Commissioner had on his gloves, a neatly pressed suit that looked as if it had just come out of a tailor shop window, and carried a cane.

The Commissioner was saying: "So I have to read your mind too. Rattigan isn't there. I've made certain of that. So you're letting everyone know you are going to kill Rattigan."

"I never said that to a soul."

"Come, come, Satan!" The Commissioner's voice was low. "I didn't say you said it. I said you were letting everyone know. Even if I condoned such an act, you must admit it's a bad way to get rid of a man. The law works swiftly at times but without advance publicity. Oh, yes. There was a bit of shooting down at Sheila Sands' place last night. We have people who'll admit hearing shots, but no one who'll admit opening a door. The boys at Homicide think Danny was killed there, and carried to your place. What do you think?"

"I was down there," Satan told him. "Before Homicide. Someone else could have been carried out."

The Commissioner nodded, said, "Early this morning they picked Tommy Saunders out of the East River. He had some lead in him, but he died of drowning. There was talk about that he was being built up as Rattigan's top killer. Rattigan's getting respectable now."

"I didn't shoot Saunders," Satan said. "And I didn't toss him in the river."

"And the girl, Sheila Sands? You haven't been looking for her? We'll have every officer on that job in half an hour."

"What?" Satan turned and looked at the Commissioner. "I didn't look for her because I know who has her. Better call off that order fast, Chief. Even Rattigan might find things too hot with a live girl, but a dead girl can be left any place."

"I thought that he liked her."

"Not better than his life."

THE Police Commissioner thought that over, then smiled grimly.

"I see. Listen, Satan. Why the fireworks? Why all the publicity you're giving yourself? Yes, I know—to smoke Rattigan out of hiding. If he killed you

he'd have evidence enough from your talk around that it was his life or yours. You kill him and there will be a lot of explaining to do." And after a short pause, "I do all the explaining, you know. This time I'll need some from you."

"No," Satan told him, and he looked straight at the Commissioner. "This is my last case."

"That will make it harder to explain. You've bitten off more than you can chew?"

"No." Satan put a hand on the Commissioner's shoulder. "I can chew it all right, but it will kill me. Rattigan and I are going out together."

"Like that?" The Commissioner tried to make his voice light but the words hung heavy in his throat. "A suicide pact, eh?"

"Rattigan wouldn't commit suicide." Satan grinned, and then because the thing was so real to him, "We're going to kill each other, Commissioner. I don't know how—but you'll find me dead—hanging to his throat."

"A new gift—precognition, eh? Or is it planned?"

"Everything in life is planned—even death. I suppose it might be called a dream. To me it was a vision." And before the Commissioner could say anything, "Don't you worry about me. I can't find Rattigan so he'll have to find me." He took the Commissioner by the hand. "Forget it for a bit. I'm going to dig into this thing."

The Commissioner shrugged his shoulders. He had known Satan for years. In fact, he was the only friend Satan had. He never got any place arguing with Satan. And he might as well dismiss him as to give him direct orders contrary to what Satan felt was right and just. Satan had but one code, one answer to every thing, simple and direct: "I am the law."

"Well, Satan," he said, "anything I can do."

"Sure." Satan's voice was as light as it ever was. "Bury us in the same grave, but put me on top of Rattigan."

And Satan was gone. The Commissioner didn't know if Satan had joked or not. The Commissioner ran a hand across his forehead. It came away warm

and wet. Had he ever heard Satan joke?

CHAPTER VIII

One Shot for Rattigan



AFTER leaving the Commissioner, Satan went back to his apartment. Something must break. He had an idea it would come over the phone. There was a single letter in his box down in the hall. He tore the envelope open. The note was a short one and signed simply

with the letter S.

Go to Clancy's home and wait for a call—S.

He thought of Sheila at once, but he could not tell as he had never seen her handwriting. Forced to write it by Rattigan perhaps, or even written by Rattigan himself so Satan would go to Clancy's. Why not his own apartment? He could think of many reasons from the girl's point of view. He could think of as many from Rattigan's. The girl might even think it was dangerous for him to be at his own house.

It was ten minutes to twelve. Clancy would be on duty at twelve. He took a taxi uptown over Kingsbridge way where Clancy had his bachelor apartment. Clancy was still a patrolman, and a good one, and an honest one—up for retirement soon. Man and boy Satan had known him.

At twelve o'clock exactly Satan stopped the car before a drug store and made a call. He connected with Clancy right away.

Clancy had already seen the sister and he would telephone his landlady to let Satan into his apartment.

It was there in Clancy's tiny apartment that shortly before dark Satan got the phone call. Rattigan said: "What do you hear from Sheila, Satan? I'm worried about her?"

Satan said simply, "You can't get away with it, Rattigan. You can't alibi all the time. If anything happens to the girl, I'll find a way to break your alibi."

"Come, come, Satan!" Rattigan's voice

sounded a little relieved, Satan thought. "That's not the law talking. That is not the machine you claim to be. Okay, you can have the girl with my compliments—and stay out of my hair—always. Just your word—and you can come and see me."

"I'll come and see you. You can be sure of that."

"Now that's nice of you, Satan. You don't mind the girl having a few marks? Excuse me a second."

SATAN waited and the scream came, a scream of agony, the scream of a woman in pain—torture. A man's voice cursed. Then came the cry:

"No, no, don't come. He'll kill you. Don't come for me—I—"

Dead silence.

Rattigan spoke again. "With the compliments of Rattigan, Satan. Not too high up to read if she wears a high neck. Just R. G. You know—*Rattigan's Girl*. I swore to that for five years in prison. If you won't give your word now, why, come ahead and we'll talk. I never was afraid of any man."

Rattigan's voice got a little rough. "Look, brother. You spoke of one shot. Well, I'm ready to take it. I'll see you alone. I'll even send a car for you. You can sit in the back seat with a couple of cannon in your hands. You can step out of the car and come and meet me. I'll see you and talk to you alone—both of us armed. My word on it."

There was a queer sound in Satan's throat that might have been a laugh.

"Your word? What would that be worth?"

"Well, I've got something to tell you, a chance to give you," Rattigan snapped. "Then you take orders from me or you are out of the city forever. It's good, Satan. Good enough to face you with both your guns—and the guys who bring you here will know you are armed. Yes, I have something to tell you and show you, Satan. That will shake even you. So bring your guns."

"It—" and Satan stopped. Alone with Rattigan. Both of them armed. That sounded good to Satan.

He'd gun-whip Rattigan until he begged to talk, make him tell where the girl was.

OF COURSE, Satan thought it was a trick. But there never had been, never would be, any place Satan wouldn't go with a gun in each hand—or in each holster for that matter. Sure, he was for the girl. Justice for the girl. But that wasn't it. It was the law—Satan's law—for Satan was the law.

"Send your car, Rattigan. I'll meet you any place, any time, alone or with a room full of gunmen."

"Okay." Rattigan hesitated and then, "The car will be with you in a half hour. Walk down to the corner. It will be dark then."

Satan spoke only once to the man who drove the car and the man who sat beside him. They said nothing.

Satan said, "If things go wrong, if a car comes alongside, it's a bullet in the back of your heads. After that, you won't worry. You understand?"

Both nodded. The car moved from the curb. One of the men was a stranger to Satan, the other man was Nick Davis—not so tough any more. A couple of federal bullets in the spine had lowered his enthusiasm.

They drove him back to the street that led to Rattigan's office, stopped the car, and one of them got out and opened the door. He didn't speak. There was a man leaning against a wooden door by the building. Satan got out and the car drove away. He stood with his back against a pole and watched it go.

The man by the door was a stranger. He flinched slightly when Satan put a flash on him.

The man said only, "He's in his office. This is a rear entrance."

He jerked a bit as Satan frisked him. He was as clean as a whistle. Then he went on: "My orders are to let you in." He opened the door, reached in and pressed a light button. There were rickety wooden stairs—an open door at the top.

The man said, "I am to lock this door after you, so you can't be followed and won't change your mind."

"I wasn't followed, and I won't want to change my mind."

Satan stepped into the lighted hall, saw the staircase and the opening above. He saw a light there too. Everything was on the up and up. The door closed

behind him. Satan pressed his back against it and touched cold steel. He half turned—but watched above—his guns were in his hands now. His eyes narrowed. The door was lined with thick steel.

He didn't wait then. He started up those old wooden steps two at a time. He was too late, as he knew he would be too late. He raised his gun and his finger tightened but he saw the uselessness of that. A door was closing above. Steel was facing him. He held his fire and walked the rest of the way slowly.

When he reached the top a voice spoke. There was a metallic sound to it. At his left, on a small shelf, stood a box of an intercommunication system.

"Fine, Satan, fine!" Rattigan said. "Now you will note a bit of steel sliding back. Take both your guns and drop them through the hole." And as Satan looked at the door and hesitated, "Don't waste your time shooting. It wouldn't pierce the door and, besides if it did, it wouldn't hit me."

Satan hesitated a moment but he decided against questioning Rattigan further. He'd be shot to death on that narrow stairway through some small opening before he could see where the shot came from. Better a little longer life—a bit of indifference.

HE TOSSED both his guns through the opening.

"Why all the trouble, Rattigan?" he said. "I'd have come unarmed if you wanted it that way."

"Would you really?" Rattigan didn't show surprise. "But then you see I want it to be known that I was the man who faced the dreaded Satan Hall guns and shot it out. Stick your hands through the opening. Come, come, Satan—just handcuffs."

"Handcuffs?" Satan said. "Are you sure even the great Rattigan is safe against a handcuffed man? A whiff of chloroform might be better. Surely you'll chain me in a chair—an iron chair—then have a man with a machine-gun go to work."

But he thrust his hands through the hole. The man with the gun gives the orders. Satan knew that. He knew too that he was very close to death.

Rattigan fastened the handcuffs on Satan's wrists. Then he threw open the door and laughed.

"Really, Satan, the handcuffs are simply to prevent you from committing suicide," he said. "Come in. I'm expecting a telephone call in my office." And as Satan entered the office, Rattigan pointed with his gun in his left hand. A phone with the receiver off was close to the box of an intercommunication system. "You came here to save her life or simply to prevent a few little letters from being burned into her chest. I was wondering if she would come here to save you."

"Where is the girl now?" Satan asked.

"I haven't the faintest idea," said Rattigan. "Must I kill you now or will she come?"

"I'll come," said a girl's voice. "As you instructed, I will come."

To Satan it seemed like two voices, and both of them the voice of Sheila Sands. Then he knew that one voice came from the telephone which was close to the intercommunication system, the other quite distinct from the little box itself.

Rattigan's office looked about the same, Satan found, as he sat before Rattigan's desk, smoking a cigarette and watching the gun in Rattigan's left hand. Rattigan's right arm was in a sling. He had not seen that at first.

"I don't think she knows about my wounded arm," Rattigan was saying as, with the gun still held in his hand, he leaned over and turned on a phonograph record. Again Satan heard the cries of the girl as he had heard them over the phone—the same words. Rattigan shut it off.

"You see, Satan, I was worried about that girl. I didn't know where she was but I had an idea she might come here to help you. I also had an idea she would get in touch with you. That was why the little note sent you to Clancy's. I didn't kidnap her. I didn't shoot her. Sure I went to her flat all right."

Rattigan set his teeth hard. "I had another man with me, Tommy Saunders. I warned her outside—outside her rooms." He smacked his lips. "I told her what would happen to her and it will now, thanks to you. But she put two shots through the door before ever I

kicked it open." He jerked his head toward the arm in a sling. "She put a shot through Saunders' throat and he bled like a pig. Then she buried lead in my shoulder, splitting the bone."

"Sheila—she—" Satan's eyes brightened. "It wasn't she who was carried down the stairs?"

"No," said Rattigan. "It was Saunders. He was delirious." And after a pause, and in a sort of wistful tone, "I liked Tommy, but he didn't know what he was saying. The cops might come and he might talk. So I dumped him in the river."

RATTIGAN remained behind his desk, Satan before him, the cuffs on his hands holding them tightly in front of him. Rattigan pointed toward the fireplace. It burned brightly—coal not wood.

"Keeps it cozy, doesn't it?" Rattigan said.

Satan burst out laughing. He couldn't help it. Rattigan had never heard him laugh before—most people didn't believe he could laugh. Rattigan stared, his eyes bulging.

Finally Satan said, "Sheila—a girl—a mere kid. She shot you and another punk—right out of the room—right out of the tenement house. I'd have given my life to have seen that!"

"You're giving your life to hear about it." Rattigan's lips curved. "I didn't know who her friends were but someone notified her. She called me up. She's in love with you all right." Rattigan laughed unpleasantly. "Sheila's close by now. She'll come."

"Coming to you—because she thought it would save me," Satan gasped. "You told her you had me. Lied to her."

Rattigan pointed with his gun directly toward the fire. "See that iron on the coals? I thought of nothing but that for over four years. I'd put my mark on her—R. G. for *Rattigan's Girl*. Sounds stupid, doesn't it? But I mean it."

Satan looked from the fire to Rattigan's bandaged right shoulder and the gun in his left hand.

"No use, Satan. I'll chain you to the wall over there. I'll strap her down before the fire. You can see her squirm. She can see you die."

CHAPTER IX

Grip of Death

"And the girl? After that?" Satan's voice was very calm.

Rattigan laughed. "I don't know, Satan. She won't be apt to talk after I'm through with her. It sort of breaks them—like you slapping the hoods down. As for you—well, I never had trouble with an alibi. High class too. But I'll want the boys along the avenue to know you met me—armed. And you shot, and you died." Rattigan grinned. "It wouldn't be a bad story even for the police and the newspapers. You had first shot—but you saw my gun out. Your hand shook, and you turned yellow and you hit me in the shoulder."

They sat in silence for ten minutes, then a buzzer sounded over Rattigan's desk.

"The girl!" Rattigan said. "She'll be searched down stairs and then come up. Get up, Satan. I have a chain against the wall which will lift your manacled hands above your head but not obstruct your vision. Not that way!" Rattigan was on his feet as Satan neared the desk. "Over here."

They were close together, Rattigan's thirty-eight against his side when Satan turned toward the wall. A few feet across the room. No more than that and then the end. No fight. No struggle. The horror of the girl's agony, then oblivion. This would be the end of his life!

Satan whirled and smashed the handcuffs up straight at the gun-hand of Rattigan.

He knew that the gun would go off before he could reach it. Left hand or right hand, Rattigan was not that bad.

The gun did go off. Though Satan was spinning the lead went through his side and dug deep into his stomach. His knees buckled, but his hands kept going up. The pain was terrific. He had never felt pain like that before when he was shot.



FROM far-off a voice was speaking — his own voice:

"One shot, Rattigan," Satan heard himself saying. "One shot." Then his manacled hands cracked bone and skin and—

A gun exploded again but this time Satan did not feel it.

Somehow he knew that the gun was gone from Rattigan's grasp, that the thud of a heavy object was not just in his brain. He couldn't stand. He couldn't move.

One effort, one last effort! Satan lunged forward. His fingers clawed at Rattigan wildly. They tore at the right shoulder for Rattigan cried out in pain.

Then the dream. Vivid—clear—Satan's dream—his death, and somehow his hands reached Rattigan's throat and Rattigan tore at them with one hand—just one hand—trying to tear Satan's fingers away. But only one hand—the good left hand as Rattigan's body fought to go backward, then sideways, and ever nearer to the gun that he saw upon the floor.

This was death, thought Satan. Death for Rattigan and for him. His hanging weight dragged the powerful Rattigan to his knees, and always Rattigan tore at the hands upon his throat and always he tried to crawl toward that gun—move toward that gun.

There seemed to Satan to be no strength in his body. Just a dead weight. No strength in his mind either, no coordination. Strength in just one place. Those powerful hands. Those fingers of steel which seemed stronger now, seemed to fasten ever tighter upon Rattigan's throat. No pain. It was over now!

But his fingers bit deeper and Rattigan's breath rasped in his ear and his tongue was coming out from between blue lips and still he swayed and swayed, all his remaining strength in the one direction toward that gun. His didn't even try any more to tear at the fingers upon his throat.

COMING NEXT ISSUE

**Thubway
Tham's
Raffle
Ticket**

by JOHNSTON McCULLEY

Death to Satan. Life for the law. Yes, and life for the girl. In a dazed way Satan thought that he saw her in the doorway, but he did hear her voice. He saw a blurred figure dash across the room fast—and sure action—the certainty of every move as she swept Rattigan's gun up from the floor.

He knew that she talked to him, knew that her arm was around him, supporting his body.

He heard her say:

"All—right—his gun—I—I have it. You can let go." Then it was as if she screamed it in his ear. "Let go! Let go!" Just as the two bodies crashed to the floor, side by side, and Satan could not move.

"Let go. Let go." The words rang in Satan's ears. But he couldn't let go. He tried to let go. He couldn't. His fingers were fastened there, bound there with bands of steel that kept them grasping tighter and tighter and tighter.

The girl supported his head now. Her arm was under it. He felt—was it hair against his face, soft skin of a cheek, and—tears? He didn't know, didn't care. Blackness for a while and then semi-darkness.

A blue uniformed figure took shape. A cop was saying:

"What do you want me to do, sir? Cut his hands off at the wrist?" And then, "What is the harm in it? The guy's dead, ain't he? You know, it's Satan Hall, Doctor."

"Yes." The assistant medical examiner was saying. "Yes. It's Hall I'm thinking of. I've dug ten slugs out of him before, and this is one slug. I tell you, Sergeant, he's done for this time."

And a feminine voice: "Let me try, Doctor. Satan, your fingers—easy now. There they come—easy—slowly—see—there—there—you can do it. Don't try—let me—see—see—see— There!" . . .

THE Commissioner of Police looked down over the end of the hospital bed at Satan, said:

"Well, well! Here we are again, Satan,

and the doctor was wrong. How do you feel?"

"Never better," Satan told him. "I'm getting out tomorrow. Never mind who said so. I say so."

"Hanging to his neck—well yes. But not dead like in the dream, eh? Won't believe in bad dreams any more?"

Satan grinned slightly. "It was a good dream," he said. "It gave me the idea of getting my hands on his throat."

"Right," said a doctor's voice. "Your subconscious mind, boy, was a great power. It kept your grip there. Understand that? The psychology of it?"

"No," snapped Satan. "I thought it was my fingers, and I still think so."

"But you wanted to take them off and couldn't. The subconscious, see?"

"Okay," said Satan. "But they're pretty strong fingers."

"But—" the doctor started and the Commissioner cut in.

"If he's well enough to argue with, he's well enough to have a visitor." When Satan shook his head, "But, man, you lauded her to the sky in your delirium, roared with laughter about her shooting Rattigan out of her room, out of her house."

"You didn't hold her?"

"Hardly. The Commissioner took a real laugh. "You got right out of bed and made a speech of what you would do to anyone who touched her—even the whole force. It took four men to get you back in bed. Banged your chest like Tarzan and said you represented the morgue."

"And was she—she didn't hear?"

"We didn't touch her of course." The Commissioner put a hand down on Satan's shoulder and smiled. "We had a look at Rattigan. Yes, she heard you. You better see her. The hospital don't like girls shooting their way into private rooms."

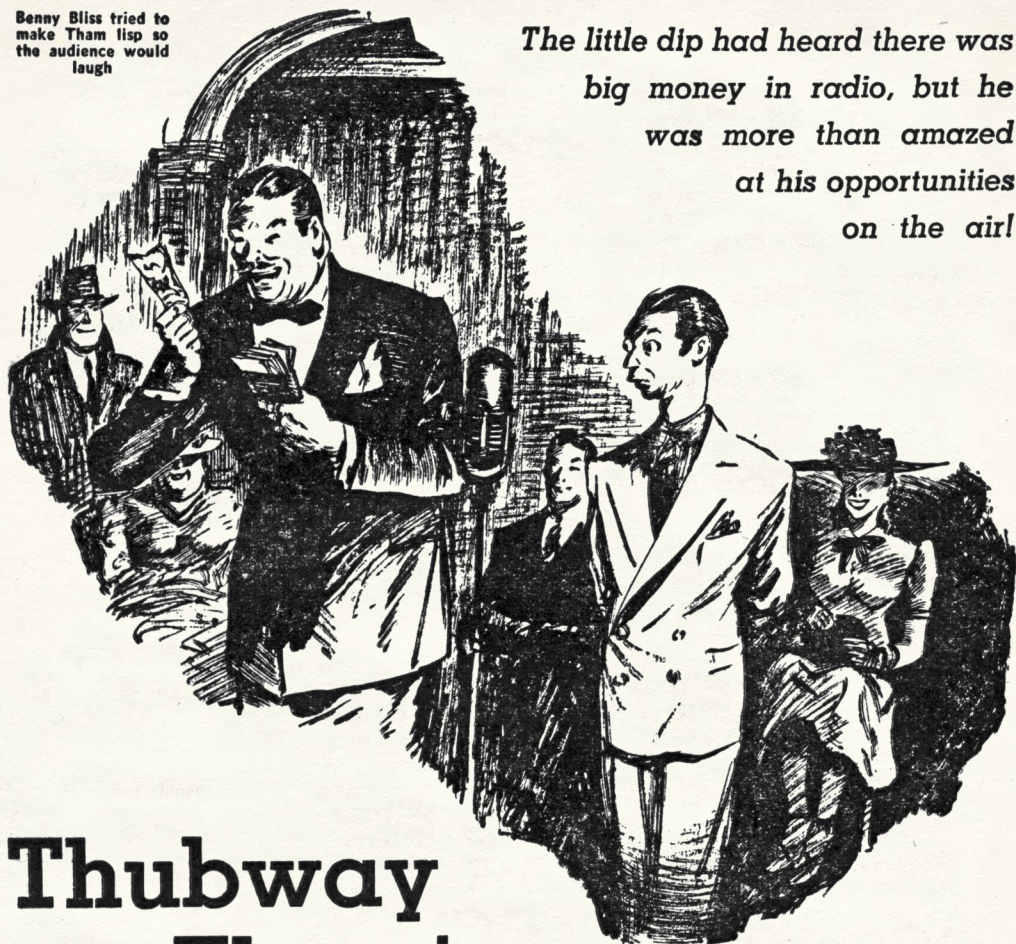
"Okay," said Satan. "Send her in. I'm not afraid of her."

The Commissioner's eyes widened. For the first time in his long association with Satan, he wondered if he was afraid.

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Benny Bliss tried to
make Tham lisp so
the audience would
laugh

*The little dip had heard there was
big money in radio, but he
was more than amazed
at his opportunities
on the air!*



Thubway Tham's Quiz Program

IF ALL the unfortunate days he had encountered, this day seemed to Thubway Tham, the little lisping pickpocket, to be the worst.

He got out of bed in his room at the lodging house conducted by Mr. "Nosey" Moore, retired burglar, with a slight cold and an aggravating headache. He cut his chin while shaving. Due to an unlucky poker game the night before, he found

he was down to a dollar and twenty cents.

Nor was that all! As he descended the stairs, Nosey Moore reminded him that his rent would be due tomorrow, Nosey having a gentle way of hinting at such things. He went to his favorite restaurant for a frugal breakfast, since he was so low in funds, only to find that the coffee was stale, which was enough to ruin

By JOHNSTON McCULLY

the entire day.

That wasn't all, either. He fared forth from the restaurant to stroll toward Madison Square as usual. As he crossed the street, he encountered Detective Craddock, between whom and Tham was continual warfare.

And Craddock seemed to be in a sour mood, too.

"Tho I thee your ugly fathe again!" Tham told him. "Why do you hang around thith part of town all the time, Craddock? New York hath many lovely thpoth to attract one."

"Why don't you keep out of the subway and enjoy some of them?" Craddock asked. "Tham, I've been watching for you. The next few minutes will decide me whether I'll take you in for questioning."

"About what?" Tham asked, alarmed though he did not reveal it. "Whatever it ith, I am innothent."

"Tham, last evening during the subway rush hour, a substantial citizen who is able to throw some weight around, was compelled to ride in the subway like an ordinary person because his chauffeur got his limousine tangled up in a smash on the Avenue."

"That ith too bad," Tham sympathized. "For thuch a man to rub elbowth with the common herd ith too bad—for the common herd." Tham chuckled.

"No levity, Tham—this is a serious business," Craddock warned. "While he was in that subway jam, some dip lifted the man's wallet. It contained approximately a thousand in currency and a couple of valuable papers. The papers caused his big howl. He could lose the money without winking."

"Why come to me about it?" Tham asked. "I do not know many men like that perthonally. One mutht draw the line thomewhere."

"You're a dip, Tham, and you work in the subway on ninety percent of the tricks you turn."

"Why, how dare you inthnuate—!"

"Forget the comedy, Tham."

Tham looked Craddock straight in the eyes. "Craddock, I did not get that wallet," he declared. "Nor any other wallet. I am down to a buck and twenty thenth. Thearch me! When did thith horrible crime take plathe?"

"About five-fifteen last evening, Tham."

"Then I have an alibi, Craddock. About four yethterday afternoon, I got thtarted in a poker game. They took me at firtht, tho I thtayed in the game tryin' to get even. It wath about eight when I left the game—with a dollar and twenty thenth. To be ekthact, Craddock, I now have ekthactly one buck even. I thpent twenty centh for coffee and doughnuth."

"A poker game alibi! Do not make me collapse with merriment, Tham. Those poker games in Nosey Moore's back office have been alibi set-ups so many times, crooks swearing another was there at a certain time and all that—"

"But thith game wath not in Nothey'th back room," Tham broke in. "Let that make you collapth with merriment. It wath in the back room of a thigar thtore, jutht a friendly game with not a crook in the plathe, and it jutht tho happened that they wanted a fifth man in the game and the clerk athked me if I wanted to play a hand."

"So? Where's the place, Tham?"

"If I tell, you'll raid 'em for havin' a little poker game, and that'll make me look like a thkunk."

"The heat's not on small back room poker games just now, Tham. So you may speak freely."

UNDER protest, Tham gave Craddock the details, and the detective knew he was speaking the truth.

"All right, Tham," he said. "Seems like you're clean. That settles this matter as far as you're concerned."

"It doth not!" Tham declared. "The very idea of thomebody liftin' leatherth in the thubway!"

Craddock grinned. "You can't keep the entire subway system for your exclusive playground, Tham. It's too big. We'll get him, whoever he is! The heat's on subway pocketpicking since this roar at Headquarters. Which means we'll probably get you, too. I'll make that my personal pleasure, Tham."

"Down to a dollar, are you? Then this is a good time to keep an eye on you, boy. And that's just what I'll do. I think wherever you go I'll just trail along. I'll not intrude, Tham. I'll even keep a few feet behind you. But I'm going to stick

to you until you're tucked into bed tonight. 'Whither thou goest, I go,' and all that."

Tham was alarmed. Tham knew Craddock was stubborn enough to do that very thing. Tham might, if willing to run a risk, lift a wallet from somebody right under Craddock's nose, as it were. But there was another danger.

Suppose he did such a thing, extracted currency from the wallet while holding it in his pocket and managed to ditch the leather without being seen? Ordinarily, that would be all. He would have the money in his clothes if searched, but common currency is difficult to identify unless purposely marked.

But, if Craddock grew suspicious and searched him and found money on him, what then? Tham had been fool enough to tell Craddock that he was down to a dollar. How could he explain sudden affluence?

There remained only one thing for him to do if he wanted to be in a position to lift a leather and replenish his supply of cash without placing himself in grave danger. He must shake off Craddock, get away from him, and do his work in comparative safety.

Tham tried it. He strolled uptown until his feet ached, and Craddock kept at his heels. He broke his dollar bill and went into the cheapest picture show he could locate, and Craddock followed and sat through the program three times with him. That showed the detective's determination, for the program was foul.

Tham tramped the streets again with the relentless shadow behind him. He was irked because he realized Craddock was having a lot of fun out of this. Tham went where there were jostling crowds and attempted every dodge he knew, but he could not get away from Craddock.

Though he had broken his last dollar to get into the movie theater, Tham felt he had to eat something. He indulged in a hamburger and coffee at a little stand, and Craddock sat three stools away, between Tham and the door, and indulged in coffee and what passed for pie.

Outside as night descended upon the city, Thubway Tham was feeling utter desperation. He turned into a cross street, thinking he might dodge Craddock in some dark spot between build-

ings, but the wily shadow crept up on him and remained only a few feet away.

As they walked on, Tham without definite objective and Craddock only following Tham, the latter kept reminding himself that he was about flat broke. He would need money on the morrow for rent and other things, and that between now and midnight, he had better do something about it.

While he was trying desperately to think of a solution to his problem, he came to the vicinity of Radio City.

Strange though it may seem, Tham was a devotee of radio. He had a small inexpensive set in his room, had his favorite programs and almost every night enjoyed one or more. And into his mind now flashed remembrance that this was the evening for "Are People Real?" a humorous quiz program presided over by a breezy master of ceremonies known to the public as Benny Bliss.

They had a riddle on the program, too, and whoever guessed it was due to receive a heap of valuable prizes, including a motor car, radio-phonograph, airplane, fur coat, shaving cream for a year, a watch, diamond ring, eight hundred pounds of putty for every member of the family, and many other items. Tham had listened to the riddle half a dozen times and had tried to guess it, but had given up in disgust.

He wondered if he could get into the studio and listen to the program. Lines of people were waiting to get in for that and other programs, lucky ticket-holders! Perhaps, Tham thought, he could at least lose Craddock in this crowd, get away from him, take a subway ride and find a victim.

He started on along the walk. He saw a group of men in tuxedos watching the passersby. And suddenly they barred Tham's progress, and one spoke to him.

"Pardon me, sir, but I am Benny Bliss, emcee for the 'Are People Real?' program. We are looking for contestants for tonight's show. There have been lies spread that our contestants are coached. So this evening we are finding them on the street. You'll be sure to pick up a little money—"

So this was the famous Benny Bliss! Tham scrutinized him. He looked and acted breezy, all right, but Tham did not

like him. He was arrogant, thought well of himself. "Thwelled head," Tham thought. But here was a chance to dodge Craddock!

"You want me to be a contethtant?" Tham asked.

Benny Bliss blinked at Tham's lisp. He exchanged glances with another bright young man who also wore a tuxedo.

"You'll do, sir," Bliss replied. "This gentleman is Harry Strong, our announcer. Come along with us. We have the other contestants picked."

ALMOST before Tham realized what was happening, they had him in the great building and were ascending with him in a private elevator with several other men and women they had picked up off the street. Craddock had been left behind!

Tham rejoiced at that. He had got away from Craddock, and he would get to see and hear one of his pet programs, and would even be a contestant. He had only a hazy idea of the usual procedure at such events—but he was to learn.

Tham and the other contestants were taken in charge by attendants and herded out upon the side of a great stage. Tham blinked and gulped. The auditorium was jammed with people. Tham never had been on a stage before a big crowd, and it shocked him. He felt a sudden weakness. He sat down with the others in a row of chairs, and waited.

The audience was being warmed up by a famous comedian. Tham began laughing at the comedian's jokes himself, after getting over his first nervousness. He was thinking principally of being sure to Dodge Craddock when he left the big building, hoping he could do it by keeping in the midst of the crowd.

He heard men off stage behind him talking in low tones:

"Almost time for the light, Benny." That was the voice of Harry Strong, the famous announcer. "Looks like we might have a hot show tonight."

"Hope she's lively," Benny Bliss replied. "That little guy who lisps—I can have some fun with him. His knees are knocking together now. That lisp will get a big laugh."

Thubway Tham began burning. So

Benny Bliss was going to have some fun with him? In front of all that crowd? Tham felt like getting up and dashing offstage, taking a wild swing at Benny Bliss and then making a run for the nearest elevator. But attendants stood behind the seated contestants, and the comedian was leaving the stage. Harry Strong was now going to the microphone and smiling at the audience.

The applause signals had been explained to the audience. A warning buzzer sounded. A light gleamed. Tham heard Harry Strong's well known voice:

"The show of shows! Are People Real? Brought to the great American public each week at this time over this network, by the makers of Nicostinko cigarettes—"

Tham had heard the introduction scores of times. And now he listened as Harry Strong introduced the breezy Benny Bliss in his usual manner. Benny made a few jokes, and an attendant herded the first trembling contestant forward.

Hearing the program over the radio and actually watching the show, were entirely different things, Tham found. The mike-frightened, giggling contestants seemed in a daze. They stammered over the riddle they could not guess, got tangled in answering questions, and gave the big audience a good laugh.

The renowned Benny Bliss made fools of them. Tham began hating the man. He was so arrogant, so well satisfied with himself, so cocksure about everything that he nauseated Tham. And he had a wallet!

Tham took a personal interest in that wallet. It was new and shiny, and from the top of it stuck the ends of bills of various denomination. As he worked, Benny Bliss extracted a bill now and then and waved it under a contestant's nose and offered the bill for a correct answer. He offered fives, tens, twenties, and a couple of times a fifty.

Stage fright began inflicting itself upon Tham again. He wished he could dodge away before it was his turn to be led to the microphone in front of all those people. He glanced around furtively to see if a road to freedom was clear.

He found none. The road, in fact, was

blocked effectually. Just offstage, standing there and grinning at him, was Detective Craddock!

Tham gulped. Yes, this was an unfortunate day for him, and had been since he had opened his eyes that morning. He understood, naturally. Craddock was here because he had merely flashed his official badge and had been allowed to enter the studio and take up his present position. Tham could not make a dash for freedom now.

Benny Bliss was flourishing the wallet again, extracting a bill and returning the wallet to a side pocket of his coat. It made Tham's mouth water, in a manner of speaking. He almost chuckled, though, at the bare thought of getting that wallet from Benny Bliss' pocket in front of all those people, under bright lights, and with stern Craddock's eyes upon him.

And at that instant an attendant touched Tham on the shoulder and whispered:

"You're next, sir I'll conduct you to Mr. Bliss."

MOVING as if in a fog, Tham finally found himself standing beside Benny Bliss. Bright lights bathed him. Out in front, the audience crowd rustled and settled itself for Bliss' baiting, like bloodthirsty spectators at the old Roman games.

"And what is your name, if I may ask?" Bliss demanded, with a smirk and a wink at the audience.

"Tham Wigginth."

"Sam Wiggins, you say?"

"Yeth, thir."

Tham's lisp was commencing to get the audience already. He could hear people in the front of him giggling.

"And where do you live, Mr. Wiggins?"

"New York," Tham replied, proudly.

Bliss laughed. "You have quite a large home," he commented. "What is your business, Mr. Wiggins?"

Tham gulped at that. "Well, thir, I—I'm not doin' anything at prethent."

"Living on your money. I see. Do you ever listen to our program, 'Are People Real?'"

"I have lithtened to it almotht every week for a long time," Tham replied.

"Repeat after me, 'He is sure his son

is simple.' Five dollars, sir, if you can repeat it."

Benny Bliss waved a five-dollar bill in front of Tham's face, which now depicted rage. Tham knew the object—Benny Bliss was trying to make him lisp and get an audience laugh. But Tham could use the five. He said:

"He ith thure hith thon ith thimple."

The audience roared, and Benny Bliss laughed with complete abandon. Rage engulfed Tham and inclined him to homicide. How he would like to get that stuffed wallet from Benny Bliss' pocket! And not only for the money it contained—for revenge also.

"And now, sir, you have you great opportunity," Benny Bliss declared. "You have a chance to guess the answer to our great riddle. If you have been listening to our program, you know that nobody has been able to guess it in seven weeks. Listen while Mr. Strong, our handsome announcer, reads the list of prizes."

The announcer read the list: A new Packlac sedan, a two-seater airplane, a radio-phonograph, a fur coat, a watch, diamond ring, shaving cream enough for a year if a man or toilet soap if the winner is a woman, two outfits of clothing, an electric washing machine, a food freezer, your house decorated inside and out by a paint manufacturer, a set of living room and bedroom furniture, everything west of the Rockies, and a few extra small items, not forgetting the putty.

Tham had heard the riddle before, and long since had ceased to think he could guess it. He wanted to say he didn't know and have Benny Bliss continue with him. Perhaps he could pick up a couple of ten-dollar bills before he was through.

His mind really was on the problem of dodging Craddock after the program ended and lifting a leather in the subway.

"Pay close attention, now!" Benny Bliss said. "I am going to recite the riddle. Brace yourself so you won't faint if you guess correctly and win the valuable prizes—ha, ha!" That 'ha, ha' was sarcastic. Bliss appealed to the audience. "Isn't he cute?"

The audience howled with laughter

and Tham felt rage again. He heard Bliss recite the riddle:

In all the world there's only one,
Yet there are many; when you're done
With thinking, may you see the light!
You are wrong if you guess right,
But I'm right if I guess the same;
Tell me now, what is my name?

"Aw, be yourthelf!" Tham muttered to Benny Bliss.

"What's that?" Bliss howled. "You say 'Yourself'? My dear sir, you are absolutely right! That is the correct answer to the riddle—Yourself!"

The wild applause of the audience smashed against walls and ceiling, and Bliss let it smash. This was the big moment of the program to which he had been building for weeks. But finally he lifted his hands and quieted the crowd. He threw an arm around Tham and hugged him.

"He did it—he did it!" Benny Bliss screeched. "Our little friend, how do you feel?"

"Thwell!" Tham admitted.

"Hear that, good people? He says he feels thwell." Benny Bliss' mockery of Tham's lisp caused the audience to go into a storm of merriment again, and despite his good fortune Tham became enraged once more.

"Yourself!" Bliss howled at the audience. "See it? In all the world there's only one, yet there are many. If I say 'yourself' to a person, there's only one of him, yet there are many yourselves if I address many persons—ha, ha!"

"Thilly ath!" Tham growled.

"If you guess right and say the answer is 'yourself' that is wrong because it would be 'myself', and, as the riddle says 'but I am right if I guess the same'. If I tell you that you are yourself, I am right, but if you tell me I am yourself you're wrong because I am myself—ha, ha!"

"Jutht a plain thimble fool," Tham muttered.

Benny Bliss embraced Tham again. "Now, my fortunate friend, the attendants will take you to a rear room and discuss what you would like to do with the prizes you have won—approximately ten thousand dollars' worth. Any you do not wish may be converted into cash at wholesale rates of the articles. Thanks for coming to the program. You are a lucky lad!"

THAM was still in a daze as they led him away. He had a glimpse of Craddock standing offstage scratching his head, and the detective looked as if he was struggling mentally to understand things. Possibly he had a feeling that but for him Tham would not have been driven to go to Radio City and get into all this.

In the rear room, Tham found three serious-looking men. Businesslike men, he decided. They congratulated him quietly and asked him to take a chair. Craddock came into the room with an attendant, shook hands with Tham, then left the room again to stand outside the door and listen to the remainder of the "Are People Real?" program.

Inside, Tham's attention was attracted by a gray-haired man who sat behind a desk upon which was spread a bunch of papers.

"I congratulate you, Mr. Wiggins," he told Tham. "I am William Carson, of the Collector of Internal Revenue's office."

Anybody official was a suspicious person to Tham. "I ain't done anything," Tham said.

They all laughed at that, giving Tham credit for being a wit.

"Mr. Wiggins," Carson explained, "the total value of the prizes you have won is ten thousand five hundred dollars."

"My goodneth!" Tham ejaculated.

"The United States income tax on that is two thousand, eight hundred thirty dollars, which must be paid immediately. In addition, this gentleman here will collect at once the state income tax, which will be a little smaller. Are you prepared to pay this tax immediately?"

With a five-dollar bill and a few cents in his pocket, obviously Tham could not.

"I—I am broke," he confessed.

"Ah? In that case, I suggest you retain the particular presents you want and sell the remainder back at wholesale to defray your income taxes. Of course when you do that there'll be state sales taxes in addition."

"Thay, what do I get out of thith if anything?" Tham demanded.

"What prizes do you wish to retain?" Carson asked him.

"The radio, fur coat, watch, diamond

ring, thavin' cream, clotheth, my room painted inthide, and thome of the new furniture for it," Tham replied, checking the prize list.

"The fur coat, watch, ring and carton of shaving cream are here for you to carry home," a radio executive told him, smiling. "We'll sell the other things for you to pay your taxes, and you may call in a few days and collect the money remaining."

"If they do not think up thome new tacketh before then," Tham said.

He put the watch and ring into a pocket, got into the coat, and picked up the carton of shaving cream. Due to nervousness, he handled the carton roughly, and it came open. Tham fussed with it and got it closed again.

Then there came a knock at the door, and Craddock entered. The Headquarters man introduced himself and flashed his badge.

"Tham, there's a commotion on the stage," Craddock said. "Benny Bliss went to give a ten-spot to a contestant and can't find his wallet."

"That thilly ath couldn't find hith own nothe with hith own fingerth," Tham lisped. "Makin' fun of me like he did!"

"You should care! With the swag you're taking out of this game. When will you take me for a ride in your airplane, Tham?"

"Time theth tax folkth get through with me I'll be owin' mythelf money."

"To return to Mr. Bliss' wallet—"

"Craddock, ith it nethethary to thpoil my moment of good fortune?" Tham asked. "Mutht you ruin everything? I know what you are inthinuatin', Craddock. But I athk you—would I be fool enough to lift a wallet from anybody, anywhere, right under your eyeth? Do you think I could do that, Craddock, even if I ever tried it?"

"I certainly do not!" Craddock declared.

"There you are, then. But, even tho, would I try to do thuth a thing in front of hundredth of perthonth and under bright lighth."

"Even you wouldn't be such a fool as to try that," Craddock admitted.

"Pleath hold thith carton of thavin' thoap for me, Craddock. Thankth! Now

I am goin' to take off thith coat I won, and I want you to thearth me."

"Forget it, Tham! The fool probably let the wallet drop out of his pocket while he was rushing around the stage. Maybe somebody picked it up and got away with it. Well, Tham, congratulations! The devil cares for his own, and all that. With all the swag you won tonight, even minus taxes, I take it I'll not have to worry about you for some little time. You can live on the fat of the land for a few weeks and leave other people's purses alone."

GRINNING widely, Tham turned back to the big desk. "When can I get my money?" he asked the man behind it. "I'm down to five dollarth and have to pay room rent tomorrow."

They roared at that, especially a couple of newspapermen who had invaded the room. A light bulb flashed. Tham would have his photo in the public prints come morning.

"Here's my card. Drop in tomorrow afternoon and I'll fix you up," the radio official said.

"Currently, no checkth," Tham informed him.

Craddock went with him to the elevator, and down to the street. Tham strutted in his new coat and clutched the carton of shaving cream. He always had wanted a watch like the one he had in his pocket, and the diamond ring would always come in handy when he was pressed for funds, there being a reputable open-all-night loan office near Nosey Moore's establishment.

Just for the heck of it, Tham engaged a taxicab, told Craddock goodby, and started home. He paid the fare out of the five Benny Bliss had given him. As he ascended the rickety stairs to Nosey Moore's office, he was thinking of Benny.

"Benny Blith, the thilly ath!" he growled. "Makin' fun of me!"

Tham's good fortune had been heard over the radio, and Mr. Moore and several of the tenants were waiting. Because Tham had potential wealth, a celebration was insisted upon, Mr. Moore supplying the ready cash after an agreement that Tham would repay him when he got his radio money.

Tham arranged with Nosey to have his

room repainted and to place in it the new furniture he had won. He excused himself to go to his room and leave his expensive coat, saying he would be back by the time the refreshments arrived from the corner delicatessen.

Tham was grinning as he unlocked and opened the door of his room. He turned on the light, locked the door on the inside, and hung his new coat carefully in the closet. He fastened the new watch around his wrist and put on the diamond ring, which was a good fit.

All this, and what was coming from the radio people—it was splendid! But not the best.

Tham opened the end of the carton of shaving soap where it had been broken in the radio studio office. From between the layers of packages of soap, he extracted Benny Bliss' wallet.

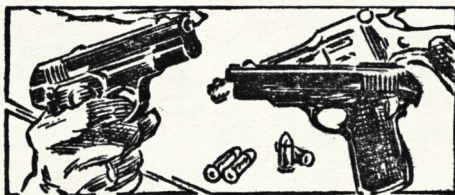
"Thith ith the betht of all," Tham muttered, smiling as he examined the wallet and took about three hundred dol-

lars from it. "To get thquare with that thilly ath of a Benny Blith—that ith thomethin'. And Craddock, another thilly ath, held that carton for me. Had it right in hith handth."

Tham chuckled. "And I got that leather right while Craddock and a few hundred other folkth were watchin' me, and me thtandin' in the bright light. That ith what that thimp of a Benny Blith getth for huggin' me the thilly way he did, and havin' that leather in hith thide coat pocket when he did it. Boy, am I good!"

He put the currency into his vest pockets and hid the wallet on a ledge outside the grimy window of his room. He would get rid of that incriminating "leather" tomorrow.

Throwing back his shoulders, Thubway Tham left his room and locked the door carefully, then descended the stairs to Nosey Moore's private apartment, where the feast would be spread.



THE CRIME QUIZ

HERE'S your chance to see how much you know about crime! Give yourself 10 points for each question you answer correctly. A score of 60 is good. 80 ranks you as an amateur detective. If you are 100 per cent correct—you're a super-sleuth! The answers are on Page 130—if you must look!

1. Carrying a concealed gun without a permit is a violation of—a. The Sullivan Law? b. The Smith-Macomber Act? c. Statute 606?
2. What is the name of England's famous detective bureau?
3. Name one state in which the death penalty is by lethal gas.
4. If you receive a check in the mail for \$100 and you endorse and cash it, and then it turns out the check was intended for someone else with your same name, are you guilty of forgery?
5. True or false—the deadly poison gas, carbon monoxide, has a strong, acrid odor.
6. A convict in a federal penitentiary once ran for president of the United States. What was his name?
7. There is one form of murder for which the perpetrator can never be punished. What is it?
8. Is it a more serious crime to counterfeit ten dollar bills than it is to counterfeit nickels?
9. Alcatraz is a famous American island prison. With what country is the equally famous Devil's Island prison associated?
10. True or false— If a crime is committed on an American ship in American waters, the New York police department investigates.



Maul's second shot found its mark

TIME for Murder

A killer plans a perfect crime, but finds the game

By RAY CUMMINGS

is not worth the candle!

TOM MAUL stood hidden by the living room portieres, watching, listening. The big hall clock was striking. It was eight o'clock in the evening, of old man Rance's birthday. He was sixty-five today.

The Widow Clara Joyce had come from her home about a mile away, to cook his birthday supper and celebrate it with him. They were moving back and forth from living room to kitchen—

Robert Rance, tall, thin, gray-haired, a little shaky on his feet after his recent illness, and Clara, plump and pretty, with hair that would quickly turn gray if she would let it, but since she didn't it still glistened golden. She was fifty, and somehow managed to look in her forties—under forty, she probably thought.

Young Tom Maul's thin mouth twitched with an ironic smile as he watched them—the old man so excited and happy, and Clara pampering him with her affection. Love in December.

Grotesque at their age.

"I remembered we must have candles on the table," Rance was saying. "Got a new box of them, see? I didn't forget, Clara."

"Oh, Robert, that's fine!" she exclaimed.

She lighted the six big white candles in the silver candelabra, and put it on the supper table, which she had set for two. Rance dimmed the living room lights. Romantic stuff. Tom Maul certainly hadn't wanted to butt in on it. Anyhow he had eaten his supper in the kitchen an hour ago, before Clara arrived, and he was going to the movies.

For a moment more, Maul stood listening. Then suddenly he tensed. As he had expected, sooner or later they had come around to discussing him. And what he heard was worse even than he had feared.

Maul was a big, handsome, sun-tanned fellow. In a couple of weeks he would be twenty-one. He had his future figured out. He knew exactly what he wanted to do, had known it for a year. Maybe he could have put it over with Rance, if this widow hadn't butted into it.

"You're right of course, Clara," Maul heard Rance saying.

The old man and the widow were in the candlelit living room now. Their supper was just about ready.

"Of course I'm right, Robert," Clara said. "The boy is worthless—lazy, shiftless, crooked, has bad companions. He thinks he knows everything, too, and wants everything handed to him on a silver platter."

MAUL wouldn't bother himself to be angry at her. He just stood behind the shadowed portieres with his faint ironic smile. He had known for quite a while that he would have to fix this situation. The revolver that would settle it was locked in his bureau drawer upstairs. A rotten thing to have to do. He had hoped he could avoid it. But it seemed to be inevitable.

"What he wants," Rance said, "is for me to give him a third interest in the store, now that he's twenty-one."

"So he can take the profits without working for them," Clara snapped. "Robert, that boy's made a fool out of

you ever since his father died."

Maul's father and Robert Rance had been cousins. They had owned and operated the big retail hardware store of Rance & Maul for some twenty years. Tom Maul had been nineteen when his father died, leaving old man Rance as his guardian. For two years now he had been utterly dependent upon Rance.

By now he should have been made manager of the store. But he wasn't. He had tried what Rance called starting at the bottom, to learn the business. It hadn't worked. That sort of stuff was not in Tom Maul's line. And he had constantly had trouble with the other clerks, so that two months ago—at Clara Joyce's suggestion, Tom was sure—Rance had fired him.

"What you ought to do now," Tom heard Clara saying now, "is stop his allowance and tell him to go get a job. If you're ever going to make a decent, self-respecting man out of him, Robert, you've got to start sometime."

And fire him out of the house here, too, Tom thought wryly. Of course! She would be mistress here, after she and Rance were married next month. How different it would have been without this accursed woman butting in!

Tom Maul didn't bother to listen to any more. With his lip curling and a queer, tense coldness inside him, he turned away, went silently upstairs to his bedroom. He opened his locked bureau drawer.

In a month, he and Gracie would be married. With old man Rance dead, he would be half owner of Rance and Maul. That would be only fair anyway. It had been his father's share, and would bring an income of maybe ten thousand a year. He would make Gracie's brother manager of the store. That was fair enough, too.

It was all so clear. Maul could see himself swaggering around town, squaring up his debts—and some of them were pretty annoying right now—and taking over the store. He would be the boss, with no arguments about anything because the rest of Rance's ownership would be distributed to a dozen different distant relatives, most of whom were out west. This widow would be out of the picture, because she hadn't got her

hooks on the store yet.

As Maul quietly came back downstairs, he was telling himself that what he meant to do was just something that had to be done. And simple, too. There would be no danger attached because his alibi would be uniquely clever—so clever that no one could ever suspect him. He had planned too carefully for that.

As Maul reached the bottom of the stairs, the telephone rang in the living room. He stopped in the hall and again he stood there listening. It was a phone call for Clara. Maul gathered the gist of it. A neighbor woman who lived near Clara's home, had come in as baby-sitter this evening with Clara's little four-year old daughter. And the child had suddenly become ill.

"Yes, yes—I'll come right away," Tom Maul heard the frightened Clara saying. "You phone for the doctor."

The unexpected hitch in Maul's plans had come so suddenly that he could only stand undecided in the shadows of the hall. And in another moment Clara was hurrying out to her car.

"It may not be serious, Robert," she called back from the veranda. "I'll phone you. Maybe I can come back in an hour."

An hour! Why, that would be just exactly right. Maul suddenly realized that it had been his hatred of Clara that had made him feel she must be included in his murder plan. Why, maybe this way would be even better. There were things he could tell the police when old man Rance was found dead which would make them wonder about Clara.

The big old house, on its lonely hill-top a mile from town, was silent as Clara Joyce drove away. Peering into the living room, Maul saw Robert Rance bending over the table which was set for his birthday supper. Evidently he was about to take some of the food back to the kitchen. The glow of the candles from the big silver candelabra edged his tall thin figure with a flickering yellow light.

PROBABLY the old man never knew what happened to him, though Maul's first shot missed him. A cup and saucer on the big table splintered with a thudding crash. But the second shot must have ripped into Rance's heart

when he straightened, and spun around toward the door. With the bullet in his chest, for an instant he seemed to stand queerly balanced on crumpling legs. Then he fell back, away from the table onto the rug—dead, with an arm flung out almost under the big radio nearby.

That was all there was to it. For a moment, there in the dark doorway, the panting Maul stood still, recovering his breath. He made sure no fingerprints were on the revolver, and tossed it to the floor.

Now for his clever alibi, which he had figured out more than a week ago. Rance's nearest neighbor, Smithers, who lived quite a distance away down at the crossroads, owned a big mongrel dog which he let run loose. Frequently the dog came up at night, overturning garbage pails, digging in the garden here.

Once, though Rance hadn't actually seen it, and had no definite proof, the dog had killed a couple of their chickens. And on moonlight nights he would sometimes sit out on the brow of the hill, baying at the moon for hours. A public nuisance. Rance had remonstrated with Smithers. But that had got him nothing, even when he threatened to complain to the police.

Maul's voice was steady as he sat before the telephone in the living room, calling the Hammondsville police. Chief Bannon answered.

"This is Tom Maul," he said quietly. "Remember that dog of Ben Smithers' that Mr. Rance and I mentioned? Mr. Rance hesitated about signing a formal complaint, but I suppose we'll have to. I'm at home now. I'll walk over to the station—be there in fifteen minutes. Going to the movies anyway."

"Come ahead," Bannon said. "I'll be here."

Maul hung up. Pretty neat stuff. There was just one more thing to do here now. An electric clock stood on the radio. Its cord looped down and into a base socket. An excited killer could easily have tripped over the cord, Maul had figured. Now by luck the body had fallen here by the radio, making Tom Maul's plan doubly plausible.

Carefully he twitched the cord out of the base socket. The clock stopped—at ten minutes after eight. Careful to avoid

fingerprints, Maul set the clock ahead. Eight thirty-five—that would do it.

Tom Maul turned to the living room door, and there he stood transfixed. The telephone was ringing! Was it Clara? He answered it, and it was Chief Bannon.

"Oh, you, Maul? Tell Mr. Rance I'm sorry I won't be here. Sergeant Drake can make out your complaint, or you or Mr. Rance can see me in the morning."

Maul put his hand over the mouthpiece for a moment.

"Mr. Rance says it's okay," he told Bannon then. "I'm just leaving. I'll see Sergeant Drake."

Maul walked over. It was about eight-thirty when he entered the police station and greeted Sergeant Drake. What could be neater? At eight thirty-five Drake was questioning Maul, and filling out the complaint form on a typewriter. In Maul's mind was the thought that in a minute or two now, he would trump up some excuse to phone home, telling Drake he wanted to ask Rance something about the charges in the complaint. Rance wouldn't answer. Then Maul would be worried. Rance's heart, he would say, hadn't been too good lately.

Maul didn't have to go to that trouble. One of the police station phones rang. Drake went out to the big desk in the main room to answer it. Maul could only hear indistinctly, but Sergeant Drake quite evidently was startled. In a moment he was shouting into the phone, then violetly flashing the operator, and phoning Dr. Johns, the County Medical Examiner. In a moment more he was back with Maul.

Two other policemen had come into the inner room now.

"What's up?" one of them asked the excited Drake.

"Robert Rance, out on Sunny Hill—found with a bullet in him!"

Maul jumped to his feet, gasping, horrified. Then he just stood still, staring blankly. "Woman named Clara something—seems she just drove over there to call on him and found him," Drake was saying. "She grabbed Rance's phone—called us. She's hysterical—maybe fainted at the phone. Anyways, it went dead . . . You, Pete, see if you can locate the Chief. We gotta hop right out there.

. . . Hey, Jake, tell Mrs. Clancy she'll have to come with us. Need her to handle this dame till Dr. Johns gets there. . . . A murder here in Hammondsville! Holy cats!"

Quite naturally, Tom Maul rode out with them—Drake and three or four of his men, and Mrs. Clancy, the police matron. Maul had managed to choke out his shocked horror in a natural enough manner. But inside, he was triumphant. Clara had said she would likely return in an hour. Her kid evidently was all right, so she had come even sooner.

WHAT luck! That electric clock would set the time of the killing for eight thirty-five. Clara had come back at just exactly the right time. And Maul himself had been a mile away, sitting quietly in the police station with Sergeant Drake!

They found Clara collapsed on the living room floor beside the body. She had fainted at the phone as Drake had suspected. Now she was regaining consciousness, babbling hysterically, so wild and hysterical that nobody could talk to her. They could only get her upstairs and leave her on a bed with Mrs. Clancy sitting beside her.

The whole thing was a hundred times better than Tom Maul could possibly have hoped! The hysterical Clara had certainly done everything up swell—for him. He kept on looking shocked, and as if stricken mute while Drake and his men moved around the candlelit living room.

The body, with a crimson wound in the chest, lay where it had fallen by the radio. The revolver was not where Maul had dropped it. Evidently Clara had picked it up, then cast it away from her. They found fingerprints on it, evidently hers.

Her handbag, with blood on it, lay beside the body. Clara had flung herself down, babbling over the man she had loved. Blood had been on her also. And blood smears were on the telephone receiver.

One of the policemen presently came down from upstairs. Clara had been sobbing answers to Mrs. Clancy's questions. She remembered picking up the revolver in horror; throwing herself

down beside the body, lifting the head; and telephoning. Then everything had gone black.

"Sure," Drake commented. "Everything went black. That's what they all say. Lover's quarrel or something. She rips the gun out of her handbag and everything goes black. Finds she's killed him—babbles over him, phones us, and everything goes black again." Drake was cynical. Everybody knew of killings like that. "So what'll the jury give her?" the Sergeant added. "Good lookin' dame, newspaper sob-sisters writin' her up, big headlines, and in the windup the sympathetic jury turns her loose."

It was, in Drake's opinion, an open and shut case. Especially since he had spotted the electric clock at once.

"It sure all hooks together," one of the policemen exclaimed. "Rance fell against that clock cord, or the dame did. Killed him at eight thirty-five—and it was eight thirty-eight when she phoned us!"

Nothing, in all his life, had ever made Tom Maul feel so gloatingly triumphant. Revenge on Clara Joyce—what could be sweeter! And he was able now to clinch the thing even more tightly. Quietly he explained to Sergeant Drake how Clara and Rance had been engaged. But Rance really had wanted to get out of it. He had been telling Clara that tonight, on his birthday. Maul explained how he had had an early supper, had come downstairs to go to the movies.

"At about eight o'clock," Maul said, "I stood here in the doorway, listening to them quarreling."

He described how Clara had set the supper table. Then the quarrel, he said, had become more heated. In the midst of it, Clara was called home, because her little daughter was supposed to be sick, but she had flung out at Rance that she would be back.

"Right after she left, I went in to Rance," Maul went on. "He didn't want to discuss his troubles with Clara. Then he suggested I phone you about that complaint. So I did. And I walked over to the police station at once."

It was all so neat; absolutely perfect. If ever a murder had been solved, with no argument at all, this was it.

But suddenly Tom Maul was bothered

to see that Sergeant Drake didn't look relaxed, as though the thing was all over. He looked puzzled.

"Sit over there, will you, Maul?" he said abruptly. "Thanks for the dope you've given us!"

"Why, you're welcome, Sergeant."

Maul sat quietly smoking in a chair across the room. The central electrolier in the ceiling was lighted now, its glare mingling with the candlelight from the supper table.

What was this? Drake seemed suddenly busy. He whispered with a couple of his men. He gestured to the little clock on top of the radio.

They went over to the buffet across the room. A little box was there. Their backs blocked Maul's view, but they seemed to be taking things out of the box and putting them back in again. Then they came back to the supper table.

"First shot missed him," Maul heard Drake saying. "It hit the table here. Had a downward course. Smashed this cup and saucer and buried itself in the end of the tabletop."

SO WHAT? Maul remembered all that. He remembered how Rance had been stooping over the table.

"You say there's an extension phone upstairs?" the Sergeant asked. "C'mon up, Pete. And maybe Mrs. Clancy can make that dame talk better now. You stay here, Jake. Be back in a few minutes."

The time they were gone seemed an eternity to Maul. What in heaven's name did this fool Sergeant think he was after now? Then at last Drake and his companion came downstairs. They looked queerly grim. Somehow it made Maul's heart pound.

"Wh—what is it, Sergeant?" Tom Maul stammered. "Something interesting?"

"Yes," Drake said. "Shut up now, and then I'll sure tell you!"

They went over to the supper table again. Drake took out his watch, glanced at it. Then they went over to the buffet. Maul could see them better now. The little box there held new candles. Maul recalled how Rance had told Clara that he had bought it for the birthday table.

Drake was taking out one of the new candles now. He set it up, lighted it. For a long time he and Pete stood watching it.

So much time went by that Maul could stay silent no longer.

"What's the idea, Sergeant?" he said suddenly. "If there's anything I can do to help—"

"That does it, Pete!" Drake said suddenly. "You can't miss it!"

Miss what? Maul saw Drake shove his watch back into his pocket. He whirled around.

"Got you puzzled, eh, Maul?" the Sergeant said. "Well, this thing looked pretty straight, an' then it didn't! That Mrs. Joyce upstairs is talkin' clearer now. I've checked on the time she was settin' the supper table, and the phone call from her sick kid. I phoned that woman who called her. She remembers the time. After Mrs. Joyce left, you phoned Chief Bannon about the complaint. That was at eight-nine. We know you were here. It happens Chief Bannon called back at eight eleven, and you answered."

"Of course I was here," Maul said. "I told you yes I was."

"The time on everything you told me is exactly right," Drake retorted grimly.

"Of course it is," Maul said. "I remember it well. I left soon after Chief Bannon called back, walked over to see you. And the killing was at eight thirty-five. You said so yourself."

"But it wasn't!" Drake retorted. "That electric clock business looked too phony for me to bother with it much!"

"Phony?" Maul stammered. "Why—why, I thought—"

"Sure," Drake retorted. "The corpse or the woman could have fallen on the cord. That would pull the plug out of the socket, but it would also pull on the clock, slue it around in the direction of the pull! But it didn't. The clock is sittin' straight in the middle of the radio top. It couldn't be there, if somebody had fallen on the cord or stumbled over

it. It's there because this killer reached down and carefully twitched out the plug with a straight pull! And then set the clock ahead. Easiest thing in the world to do."

So what? Maul tried to hold himself firm. This didn't prove what time the murder was committed.

"Why—why," he stammered, "that's mighty interesting, Sergeant."

"Happens we got a much better time-piece," Drake said grimly. "Mrs. Joyce put six new candles on the supper table and lighted them. You mentioned that you saw her do it. That was eight o'clock. She remembers hearin' the hall clock chime. You mentioned that same time, too."

"Sure I saw her do that," Maul agreed. "Eight o'clock—I was right there at the door near the hall clock. Heard it chime. But what's that got to do with it?"

"Six candles," Drake cut in. "Five of them are still there, still lighted on the table. But the sixth one got hit by the bullet that missed Rance!"

For the first time, Maul noticed that there were now only five lighted candles. The other lay on the table beside the smashed cup and saucer.

"That one the bullet nicked," Drake said, "fell over and went out. It was lighted at eight o'clock. How long had it burned before it was extinguished at the time of the murder? That's easy. Those long, thin, holiday candles change length fast as they burn, and there's no draft in here, so they burn evenly. So all we had to do was light another new one and let it burn down to the length of the one the bullet hit! Six or eight minutes does it. Maybe about seven as a good average. The murder time was seven minutes after eight! That was after Mrs. Joyce left, and just before you phoned Chief Bannon! We got you, Maul!"

Mute with horror, Maul stood still as the room whirled around him. And he had been so sure that they had an open and shut case, pinning it all on the woman he hated!

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ROBIN HOOD of BLACKHEATH



"You won't live long!" said Peace, and shot the constable

*The amazing true story of Charles Peace,
who made burglary a fine art—and
fooled the police twenty years!*

JOHN THOMPSON of 5, Evelina Road, Peckham, that most respectable London suburb of 1878, seemed as nice a neighbor as one could want. Aged forty-six and comfortably off, the word genteel fitted him perfectly.

True, the little man, barely five feet three and slightly bowlegged, was so

ugly he frightened children. But he more than made up for it by the things he was forever doing for them, and for the old and unfortunate of the community. He had a heart as big as all outdoors, folks said, and a wallet to match. Had they known how he filled it, and that fantastic flat of his, they wouldn't have slept so easily.

Thompson kept a pony and trap, a

by STACY KENT

constant source of delight to Peckham kiddies, once they overcame their fear and accepted his almost daily invitations to ride around the shady streets of the quiet little suburb. Nothing delighted him more than to pile it full of them and go gaily along, joining in their happy shouts and laughter.

He maintained, too, a perfect menagerie of dogs, cats, rabbits and parrots, all of which were fair sport for the boys and girls who overran his grounds with bubbling enthusiasm.

Nor did the little man limit his friendliness to the children of Peckham. It gave him equal pleasure to show their elders through his sumptuous menage. Particularly he liked to have them linger in his chintz-and-plush music room, with its ivory-inlaid harmonium, its rose-tinted, super-grand piano and, above all, its amazing collection of violins.

Lovingly Thompson would select one of these, play off some difficult piece with the éclat of a virtuoso. Then, adjusting to a jaunty angle the skull-cap he always wore on his very bald pate, he would grin like an oaf, and pick out some ribald tune on one string.

The more serious-minded of his guests were sometimes privileged to visit his laboratory. There they were shown working models of certain inventions, which sufficiently explained the odd noises that had been heard in his flat late at night and accounted for his mysterious goings and comings.

A Strange Little Man

A local man named Henry Brion had worked with John Thompson on the projects, one or two of which were quite impressive. For example, they had patented (Gazette No. 2635) a mechanism "for raising sunken vessels by the displacement of water by air or gases," and the Hon. Sam Plimsoll, M.P., had displayed a mild interest in it. Also, they had contrived a device "for providing firemen with pure air when buildings are aflame," and one "for washing railway carriages, by means of hydraulic tank and improved brush."

It was fortunate that both Mr. Thompson and Mr. Brion were men of sub-

stance, folks said, shaking their heads over these gadgets, for none of them seemed likely to provide anything in the way of steady income.

Still another facet of little John Thompson's startlingly varied talent was revealed to visitors he chose to show through his art gallery. This contained not only some excellent works by contemporary artists, but a number of unsigned pieces he would modestly admit were his own.

"John does quite well for an amateur, don't you think?" the decorative Mrs. Thompson had been heard to say on more than one occasion, adding some such remark as, "Mr. Frith of the Royal Academy was telling me just the other day—*eep*—that he has the true flair of the artist."

The *eep* was caused by the good woman having imbibed a bit too much of her husband's sherry. But no one thought very ill of her for that, in those lush mid-Victorian days. Many a fashionable lady was a confirmed bottle-nipper, despite the good queen's temperate example. So folks didn't think it particularly amiss if Sue Thompson chose to go around in a mild winey haze—not when she had such a charming and talented husband.

There was no doubt, they felt, that despite his puny stature and pock-marked face, this versatile gentleman could have made a substantial success in any one of a number of lines. But the one he had chosen, and at which he had long since become preeminent, was one no Peckhamite even remotely suspected. For "John Thompson" was the No. 1 burglar of the day, and probably of all time—the notorious, almost mythical Charles Peace!

This Mr. Hyde of the "Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde" team was born at Sheffield, in May of 1832, the son of a shoemaker. After a precocious childhood that showed marked ability at music, painting and tinkering, Charlie tried his father's trade for a while. But making shoes was too tiresome and there seemed no future in it, so he apprenticed himself to a firm of portico-robbers in the Darnall area, near Leeds.

The way these fellows worked was to find a house on a quiet street, on a

dark night, and climb to a second-story window that looked as if it might lead to something interesting. More often than not, it led to jail. During the next few years, Charlie saw the inside of many of these establishments. But for his dexterity in getting out of most of them, he might never have put in enough time at his trade to become good at it.

A Suburban Dilettante

Finally, in 1857, Charlie decided that he had served his apprenticeship and was now a master burglar. As such, he considered it beneath his dignity to get caught. Besides, he was twenty-five now and a man. Time to be settling down. A nice wife and a little home in the suburbs—that was the thing. It would not only give him the respectability he craved, from having robbed so many of the best houses and seen how pleasantly the gentry lived, but would throw the police off his trail for good.

So he disguised his face and moved to Greenwich, took a flat in one of the better sections, under the name of John Thompson, posing as a man of inherited means. Furnishing the flat proved easy, being in the line he was. Also getting a wife wasn't too hard.

But no children came. Sue did her bit of drinking. Well, never mind. He was prospering. Maybe the youngsters would come later. In the interim, there were plenty of neighborhood kids to toss sixpence to and pat on the head, if only they wouldn't take fright over his still ugly face and run away.

Something more would have to be done about that face, particularly when he went out to his work o' nights. Otherwise, sooner or later, some bobby of the old days might run into him and the game would be up.

So it comes about that Charles Peace, already a fair hand at make-up, studied further ways to protect his John Thompson alias. Meanwhile, his decision to take to the suburbs was paying dividends. Vainly, as his raids became more daring and lucrative, the police searched his old haunts. No longer could they pick him up on suspicion to force a confession.

So, as the years went by, the name

Charles Peace became a legend. Nightly he went out and robbed—made of it a fine art, as with his other talents. So John Thompson prospered! First in Greenwich, later in Peckham, the little ogre prospered.

However, no short life and a gay one was to be his, like those of most of his old cronies, now either dead or in jail for life. A long life and a sedate one, as a gentleman of means, in a fashionable suburb, surrounded by the niceties of life. For instance, such things as violins and paintings, so easy to steal, so pleasant to have and enjoy. And it was agreeable to dream that some day, perhaps, one of his inventions might be of some use to mankind.

Charlie, in short, was a romanticist. He liked the human race, particularly the young, the old and the unfortunate. Children he came to favor more and more because, through the years, Sue never gave him any. And their unlucky elders he sympathized with increasingly, as age crept up on him, because he could never see one without thinking, "There, but for the grace of God, go I."

That made him a soft touch for beggars and tramps. Folks said he went around with a pocket full of guineas, tossing them here and there with reckless abandon. And at Christmas and Easter time, great baskets of food went out from his sumptuous flat to the needy of Peckham and its environs.

"Like Robin Hood, I rob the rich to pay the poor," he would say with a laugh, when one of his Peckham friends would ask where he got all his money. And that night he would sally forth once more into the dark streets of some nearby city or suburb. If Sue held her winey breath each time, wondering if her bald little outlaw would ever come back to her, at least no one else did any worrying—except those he robbed, and of course the police.

As the years went by, Scotland Yard in particular became frantic over the number of unsolved burglaries within its jurisdiction. Many bore the mark of a master, *the master*. It got to a point where any exceptionally clever bit of second-story work was said to be a Peace Job. Possibly Charlie got credit for

quite a few he didn't commit.

Elaborate traps were set to catch this clever rascal, particularly in the Blackhearth area of southeast London, which became his favorite looting-grounds. Charlie liked the region because he associated it with Robin Hood's Sherwood Forest, in Nottinghamshire, not far to the north, where he also operated.

Blackhearth had been a bad spot, too, in the old days. When crossing it, merchants would gather as they did on the edge of Sherwood Forest, and wait until they were in sufficient strength to get over safely.

Master of Disguise

So, in robbing the flats of the rich of this area and sharing his loot with the poor of Peckham, Charles Peace likened himself to Robin Hood of old. To his very great satisfaction, and largely because of his own advertising, he became known as Robin Hood of Blackheath. But try as they would, the bobbies could never catch him.

With the passing of years, fabulous tales grew up around the little man, master of a hundred disguises and slippery as an oiled eel.

One time he rode clear from London to Manchester, sitting right alongside an officer from Scotland Yard and chatting with him volubly all the while. He wasn't recognized however, despite that giveaway five feet three inches and goblin face. Another time, riding on another train with another policeman, Detective Sergeant Parrock of Sheffield, he pulled from his pocket a handbill and read aloud where it offered £100 for the body of Charles Peace, dead or alive.

"Then, by a curious twist of his elastic mouth," as Parrock recalled it long afterward, "he brought his jaws into a peculiar form, disclosing a fine set of teeth. Then, lying back in his seat, he brought out a series of distinct and harmonious notes, by striking his teeth with his fingers. In this strange manner I heard him play a selection from *Il Trovatore* through from beginning to end, never missing a note."

This same Detective Sergeant Parrock liked to recount another exploit of the famous Charles Peace, one he was

sent to investigate. Charlie had called on a Sheffield jewelry firm, posing as the representative of a London house manufacturing a new type of burglar-alarm.

Peace and the senior partner of the firm had gone through the premises, inspecting the present system and noting places where additional units might well be installed. Charlie booked an order for six of his alarms—then returned that night and rifled the shop. Only when it was too late did the Sheffield jewelry firm learn that the London burglar-alarm house had sent no representative to call on them.

On another occasion, the little man robed himself as a cleric, called at Scotland Yard to complain that his parish house had been looted by someone who signed himself "Robin Hood of Blackheath" and added; "See to it that in future you take better care of your poor."

Then there was the time when Charlie visited a chemist's shop on Evelina Road, Peckham, near his residence. "That's a nice cigar you're smoking," said the chemist. "Where did you get it?" "Oh, I stole it," Peace told him. So the young man laughed and said, "Well, I wish you'd steal me some like it." Charlie proceeded to do just that and brought them to the young chemist the next night.

But the one folks liked the most to tell in later years was about the time Charlie met the famous London hangman, James Marwood, on a train journey to Leeds. They got to talking about Marwood's gruesome trade and Charlie said, "Well, if ever you have to do the job for me, mind you grease the rope properly." "That I'll do" Marwood assured him.

The Yard Is Nettled

It seemed there was no end to the little man's roguish jests and folks could recite dozens of them. But he had his serious moments, too. Though reluctant to shoot, he was prepared to do so if hard pushed in the practise of his exacting profession. The one occasion when it became necessary was in March of 1876, at Whalley Range, Manchester, where a constable named Cook followed

him into a house and caught him hot-handed.

"Go away!" said Peace. "Not while I live!" said Cook. "In that event, you won't live long!" said Peace, and shot him dead. An Irishman of ill repute named William Habron was arrested for the crime, sentenced to be hanged, though he swore and rightly that he hadn't been anywhere in the area. He swore so convincingly that his sentence was commuted to life imprisonment. Charlie felt badly about Habron and in due course was able to have the fellow released and compensated.

That same year, in November, the little man shot again. This time it was in anger. A friend of his, Arthur Dyson, who was living in Sheffield at the time, claimed Peace had paid obnoxious attentions to his wife. Peace resented the aspersion and denied it but Dyson insisted.

So John Thompson slipped out of his luxurious Peckham flat one night and, instead of going on one of his usual Robin Hood jaunts to Blackheath, hastened up to Sheffield. Entering the Dyson home, he faced his erstwhile friend, demanded a retraction. When Dyson refused, Peace shot him. Then, with quiet dignity, he returned to his Peckham flat.

Now the police had something more to want Charley Peace for. Not just burglary but murder—two murders. But wanting this elusive character and having him were two quite different matters. Though they contrived the most intricate stratagems in the history of Scotland Yard, Peace fell into none of them. Each evening he kissed his tipsy Sue goodnight, sallied forth, returned in the wee sma' hours laden with loot.

But one night, in the fall of 1878, one of those wee sma' hours, rather—John Thompson failed to return to his Peckham flat.

"He has gone to the Continent on important business—*eep*—in connection with his inventions," Sue told the neighbors next day. "No, I don't—*eep*—expect him soon."

Nor did she, and was right in feeling so. For the best of luck must turn at last. Little Charlie Peace had had a long run of it—twenty years. For two

whole decades the police of a dozen English cities, aided by the long arm of Scotland Yard, had sought this nimble-witted outlaw, with his endless pranks and, lately, his way of shooting people. Now they had found him. Robin Hood of Blackheath was in their hands at last.

Who Is John Ward?

The capture of Charles Peace brought fame to Police Sergeants Tate and Robinson of Blackheath and gave England its top news item of the year. The most famous burglar of all time had walked into a booby-trap so simple it might well have been set by a child.

"It was our custom to take special measures with empty houses, to give warning if any entry had been made," Tate began, in his long-winded way, when interviewed by police reporters. "In one instance, that of a stylish semi-detached dwelling, we put cotton thread across the doors and windows, a thin line that weren't likely to be noted in the dark and would easy be broken. It was well after midnight when Robinson and myself examined our handiwork, seen that the thread was gone."

What happened then, as Tate went on to narrate in great detail—and as London and other papers ran by the column—was that they drew their weapons, went in and found what was apparently a little mulatto kneeling in one of the bedrooms. He was examining, by the light of a bullseye lantern, his haul of jewelry, silver and other loot.

A bit slowly, perhaps a bit wearily, the mulatto reached for his revolver, lying on a nearby dressing-table, but before he could get it, Tate tapped him on the head with his truncheon, "as hard as I dared, without breaking the little fellow's head." It was sufficient. The mulatto passed out. When he came to, he was wearing some police jewelry—handcuffs. They took him to Blackheath Road Police Station, where he gave his name as John Ward. He was booked on a burglary charge.

There, but for Charlie's deeply ingrained habits of domesticity, the matter might have rested. For no one dreamed that the little mulatto was anyone important. But Charlie was think-

ing of that nice Peckham flat, and of his poor tipsy Sue. She always drank worse when he was late coming home. If he didn't get some message to her that he was safe, or almost, she might get really tight and blab. So he smuggled a note to Henry Brion—something about how their business on the Continent was a bit delayed but not to worry, and to so inform Sue.

Though daring, that note was not necessarily foolhardy. The famous Charles Peace felt quite safe in his disguise as John Ward, the little mulatto. He had been in worse spots than this, on more than one occasion, mostly by reason of certain risky pranks he had played on the police. But what tripped him up in the present instance was his failure to rightly assess the character of his message-bearer.

Brion had long been waiting for some such opportunity. Those inventions, which John Thompson didn't seem to push with much energy or success, were to him matters of very great moment. He fully expected to realize a fortune from them and now saw the chance of having it all to himself.

There was something funny about this Thompson, his mysterious goings and comings, and now was as good a time as any to get to the bottom of it. So he handed the note to the police. A general alarm, with full description, was issued for the apprehension of the missing John Thompson.

Meanwhile the dark stain on the face of little John Ward, that had given him the appearance of a mulatto, was fading. The police took a closer look, smiled grimly, as they matched descriptions. John Ward was John Thompson! Then they went out to Peckham, called on his Missus. She had been nipping, as usual, but it would have made little difference. The end of the long trail was at hand. She merely confirmed what they more than suspected. John Thompson was Charles Peace!

The contents of the Thompson ménage further proved it, producing an amazing assortment of loot, in addition to what is perhaps the most complete kit of burglar's gear ever to fall into the hands of the English police—everything from dark-lantern and skeleton keys and scis-

sors-ladder, to a make-up set that would have done credit to a Shakespearian actor.

When confronted with this mass of evidence, Charlie confessed and was quickly brought to trial, sentenced to life imprisonment, amid the most clamorous press ever seen in England. Even world news of prime significance got shoved off the front page in favor of the famous Charles Peace trial in Old Bailey.

An amusing sidelight is the singular behavior of Henry Brion. Not satisfied with having played Judas to his old friend, he fussed and threatened until finally Peace signed a release relinquishing all interest in the inventions. It is pleasing to note that they never yielded any profit.

Marwood Grease the Rope

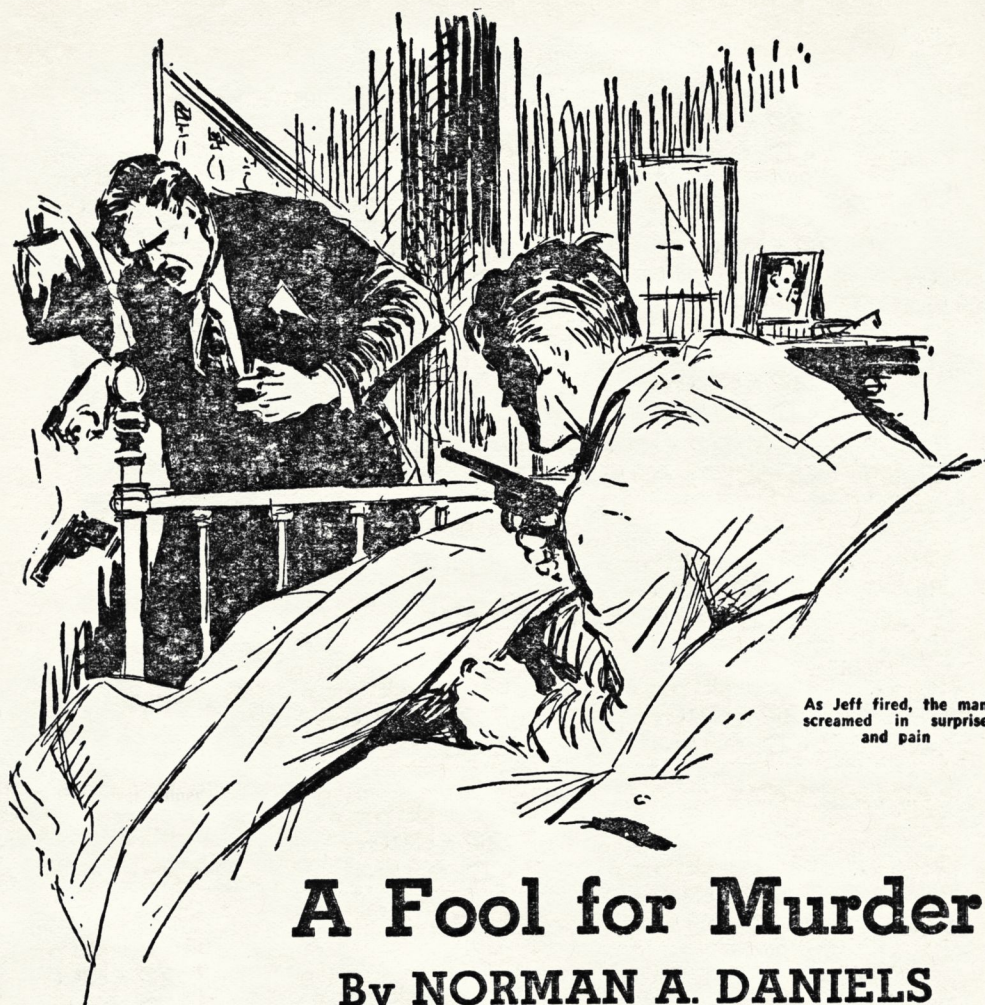
Following his conviction on the burglary charge, Charles Peace was ordered to stand trial at Leeds for the murder of Arthur Dyson. With press and public clamoring for further vengeance, it would be quickly over, the little man felt quite sure, as he sat morosely in his London cell. Gone were the good old days of Greenwich and Peckham, practising the profession of burglary by night but living the life of a decent gentleman by day—driving the kids around in his trap, doing a bit of good here and there. And poor Sue—who would look after her now?

The guards said Charlie's lips were trembling, as they put him on the train for Leeds. But somewhere along the line they went firm. And as the train was racing past Darnall, scene of his apprenticeship with the portico-robbers, he made a wild leap through the window.

In Charlie's coat, when they picked him up terribly battered, was a note reading, "Bury me at Darnall. God bless you. Charles Peace."

But he survived, and was brought to trial in January of 1879. It was brief and fatal. For he had shot Dyson, and killed him, and it was against the law, even though his clever and quixotic counsel, Frank Lockwood, Q. C., argued self defence, to which Charlie added the

(Concluded on page 128)



As Jeff fired, the man
screamed in surprise
and pain

A Fool for Murder

By NORMAN A. DANIELS

JEFF LEONARD, Detective First Grade, removed his coat, slipped the shoulder harness off and hung his service gun around the back of a chair. Then he sat down to relax and wonder if being a detective was any whit better than pounding a beat, so far as the effect on the feet was concerned.

The old home still seemed empty since his mother's death. Only he and Pete were left now. Pete was a bit older.

He'd stayed home during the war and ran the hardware store which their father had started years ago.

Jeff was an ex-marine sergeant, twenty-nine, rangy and alert. Therefore it is not surprising that he became a policeman in this middle-sized city where he had lived all his life. Pete, on the other hand, was quieter, slower. The plugger type.

That is why Jeff was considerably

When he suspects that his brother is a slayer, Detective Jeff Leonard faces the most difficult problem of his life!

startled when Pete came home around ten that night, looking gaunt, red-eyed and down at the mouth. He kept running fingers through his hair and one foot beat a ceaseless tattoo on the bare floor in front of the old fireplace.

Jeff said, "Pete, what's eating you? Listen, is it that girl?"

Pete attempted a wan smile. "Paula? Jeff, you know darned well she's a swell girl. What if she is only a maid for a rich family. She's okay, I tell you."

Jeff didn't like the vehemence Pete was putting in those words. He said, "Out with it. After all, we're brothers."

Pete lit a cigarette with fingers that shook slightly. "That's just it," he said slowly. "Which comes first, Jeff—the fact that you're my brother or the fact that you're a cop?"

Jeff grew serious. "There's something wrong. What is it?"

Pete crushed the cigarette out after a puff or two. He arose and began pacing the floor.

He said, "I asked you a question. I'm waiting for your answer."

Jeff whistled softly. "It is bad, isn't it? Okay, you want an answer. I'm a cop, with a sworn duty to perform, but before I was a cop, I was your brother. Pete, I want to help you. Tell me what this is about."

Pete stared into space for a moment. "How far would you go to help me, Jeff?"

"There are no limits. You know that. For anything short of murder I'd—"

"Short of murder." Pete said the words very slowly. "That was what I've been afraid of. I'll be seeing you, Jeff."

HE started for the door. Jeff went after him, spun him around by a twist of his arm. "Pete, if you killed anybody, say so. Face it. You just don't walk out on murder."

Pete brushed the sleeve which Jeff had seized. As he did so, the sleeve of his right arm pulled up a little. The shirt cuff looked as if he'd brushed against a

rusty object. Only Jeff knew that wasn't rust. It was dried blood.

Jeff said, "Sit down. I'm talking as a cop now, not a brother."

Pete passed a hand over his forehead. He looked incredibly old. "Thanks, Jeff," he said, "for putting me straight."

Then his fist came up. Jeff was totally unprepared for it. The blow caught him on the point of the jaw, snapped his teeth together and sent him reeling backwards. His hand came down on the back of the chair where his gun was hanging.

Instinctively he yanked the weapon out of its holster and leveled it. He knew he couldn't shoot. Pete was—Pete, solid, slow, careful, the guy who taught him most of what he knew now. It was Pete who had showed him how to hunt and fish, follow trails through the woods. How to tie a bow tie, fight, play, and even meet a girl.

The door slammed shut. Pete never even turned around. Jeff started to follow him but gave up. He could get Pete later if he had to—or wanted to.

Of course it all had something to do with that ash blonde maid who'd come to open the Overton place, that monstrosity of cement and brick towering above the city and seeming to lord over it. Jeff had seen the girl only twice and never been introduced.

For some reason or other Pete never had brought her home. At first Jeff was sure it was nothing more than a passing fancy but then the look in Pete's eyes grew different. He dreamed a lot, started planning how to expand the hardware business and he was interested in real estate ads.

Jeff sighed deeply, went into the bathroom and checked his jaw for lacerations. There was nothing but a lump, slowly increasing in size. Jeff grinned tightly. Pete had pulled that punch. No matter how sore he was or how badly he'd wanted to get away, he hadn't put full steam behind the blow or Jeff would have still been sleeping it off.

Jeff got out the old sedan and drove it to the bluff where the Overton house

was located. He found the gate barred and locked, but that didn't stop him. He went over the fence. The house was darkened, also locked up and again Jeff resorted to the tricks of his trade. He knew enough about locks to open the back door.

He switched on the lights. There was an odor of cigarette smoke in the living room and a pile of fresh butts in an ash tray. Some showed traces of lipstick. There was perfume too, expensive stuff, Jeff guessed. But that was all. Whoever had been here had cleared out.

Jeff went through the house, starting with the cellar, and found nothing out of the way. The place was dusted, polished and ready for its tenants. He located Paula Norris' room on the third floor, mainly because he recognized the perfume that filled the small room. Paula, it seemed, had packed all her possessions. There was very definitely something wrong.

Downstairs again Jeff entered the study. It was a medium-sized room, fully equipped for comfort. He looked around, shrugged and headed back toward the door. Passing the desk, he created breeze enough to send a small bit of paper wafting to the floor. He bent to pick it up. The paper seemed to grip to the bare floor. It gave a slight ripping sound as he pulled it free.

Jeff put the flat of his hand against the floor. It had been freshly varnished. He carried over a bright floor lamp and in its brilliant ray he studied the floor. He'd been raised in a hardware store and knew these things backwards. The floor had been planed, carefully cleaned up and then varnished. Not just this spot, but the entire floor. If it had been left to dry another few hours, all trace of the job would have been gone.

Jeff used the phone in the house and called his own home. There was no answer. Pete hadn't returned. He tried the hardware store next with the same negative results. Then Jeff drove to the store. He'd always had a key so he let

[Turn page]

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himself in. He went first to the office. It took a little time, but he finally remembered the combination of the old fashioned safe and opened it. The cash box was empty.

THAT, in itself, was no crime. Pete couldn't steal his own money, but it indicated that Pete must have needed a lot of cash and fast. On a hunch Jeff went out into the store, hurried to the case where guns and ammunition were on display and checked the revolvers and automatics against the inventory sheet and the duplicate report blanks which had to be filled out every time a gun was sold. The guns checked in quantity and in serial numbers.

Jeff sat down on one of the high stools, thrust his hat to the back of his head and tried to puzzle it out. Pete had certainly been alarmed. Just as certainly his fears concerned murder, either accomplished or about to be done. Jeff was in favor of the first idea because of the bloodstains on Pete's shirt cuff.

For a moment he was tempted to call the Chief of Police and put the whole thing up to him. He decided against that because as yet, he hadn't much evidence of a crime. The floor at the Overton place had been planed and varnished. That indicated something had been spilled on it. Something which could be detected even though washed away, so Pete had resorted to more complete devices and actually planed away the stain. All that trouble indicated blood had been shed.

But nobody was dead that Jeff knew of. On a hunch he phoned the desk lieutenant and asked if things were quiet. They were. A murder in this city would have created plenty of excitement.

Half tempted to forget the whole thing, Jeff actually reached the front door before he checked himself. He had to know. Pete wasn't the type to put on an act. There had been a murder committed. Jeff started searching the store. If Pete had taken a plane to remove

bloodstains, perhaps he'd taken other articles. Like weights which could be fastened to a corpse and the whole business dropped into Lake McGuire.

Jeff recalled a dozen anvils, purchased by his father years ago and never sold. Anvils had simply passed out of the picture and they'd been a standing joke in the family. Jeff hurried to the basement. He knew exactly where those anvils were kept. In three minutes he knew that four of them were gone. He also discovered a coil of barbed wire from which a piece had been snipped very recently.

There was sweat on his forehead when he slowly climbed the basement steps, put out the lights and left the store. This was inland country. There was only one place to dispose of a weighted corpse. Lake McGuire had been used for that purpose before. Jeff himself had helped to use the hooks which went searching for cadavers.

He wondered if Pete could have murdered the girl. After all, she wasn't well known here. It was her first time in the red house. She'd been very pretty, very demure and quiet. Yet, beneath that ash-blond loveliness she could have been a she-devil. Pete was slow to anger but when he got sore there was no stopping him.

Jeff never hesitated in his next move. He drove to the home of a man who rented boats for use on the lake. This man also had the necessary grappling hooks. No questions were asked. The man knew Jeff was a detective and accepted his assignment as usual.

There were only the two of them in the boat. The kicker chattered gently and the lines went out as their hooks fastened into objects at the lake's bottom. It was dawn when Jeff's hook grasped something. He pulled slowly and felt the tell-tale dead weight of a corpse.

In twenty minutes they had the body ashore. Jeff waded out into the lake to secure a grip on the corpse and tow it to dry land. It was a man of about forty. Of

average height and weight. His clothing was neither cheap nor expensive and it didn't even carry a maker's label.

Now Jeff realized his solo work was done. He hated himself as he sat on the running board of the car and waited for the boatman to summon help, hated himself because what he was doing would make his own brother a murderer. Everything pointed to that fact.

By noon very little had been accomplished. The corpse was unidentified. There was no one missing, no one to attempt even a tentative identification. The autopsy gave no pertinent information. The dead man had been cold sober when he died and there were no traces of any old injury which might be traced.

BY evening they knew the dead man's prints were not on file anywhere. The F.B.I. had no record of him. Dental impressions were taken but they were useless without a chart to check them against. There was only one bit of positive information.

The man had been shot twice through the chest and once through the back of the head. The wound in the head had completely eradicated the man's features, but in the chest were two slugs.

With mixed determination and terror, Jeff did his work as a detective. He went to the hardware store and removed every gun. He carried these to the police labs where test bullets were fired from each.

The ballistics expert came into Jeff's office with the two murder slugs and a pair fired from a .45 automatic which he placed on Jeff's desk.

"The last gun did it, Jeff," he said. "I can swear this gun fired the two bullets which we found lodged in the dead man's chest."

Jeff nodded dully. He slowly cleaned out his desk, carried his badge, gun, cuffs and sap to the Chief's office.

"I'm quitting," Jeff said. "You can understand how I feel."

The Chief was old, white-haired and

[Turn page]

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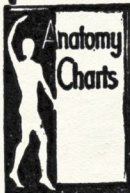
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wise. "Whatever you wish, Jeff. But if that's a resignation in your hand, just drop it on my desk. I won't accept or reject it. I'll just hold onto the thing. Maybe you'll want the badge back, but right now I don't blame you for not wanting any part of the search for your brother.

Jeff said, "Thanks, Chief, but you're not quite right. I'm bringing Pete back if I can. Not as a cop, but as his brother. If he killed that man, I'll stand by him no matter what happens, but I can't be on both sides of the fence. That is why you have my resignation."

The Chief offered his hand. "Good luck, Jeff. But frankly, I hope we find him before you do."

Jeff took a sleeper plane to New York that night and by morning he was ringing the bell to the Overton Apartment in one of the most fashionable residential hotels in the city. A sour looking woman in a housekeeper's uniform firmly blocked the door.

She took a single look at Jeff. "Another cop. I told the others and I'll tell you, I don't know where Carl Overton is and I don't know where his wife Margery is either. They don't take me into their confidence. I just work here."

Jeff got one shoulder through the door. "I'm not interested in Mr. or Mrs. Overton," he said. "I want to know when they hired Paula Norris to open the big house in Cedar City."

"Never heard of her," the housekeeper answered promptly. "As for the big house, you must be on the wrong track. They'd never open that tomb. Mr. Overton's been trying to sell it for years. He can't even give it away."

Jeff sighed deeply and turned away. But once the door closed he sped for the elevators and kept a finger on the button until a car stopped.

"Police," he told the operator. "This is now an express to the lobby. Drop it fast."

In the lobby, he raced around the main desk to the tiny room where two telephone operators were at work. He

studied the switchboard a moment and saw that the Overton apartment was plugged in. Once again he identified himself as a policeman without showing a badge.

"I want to know if the Overton apartment put through this call or received it."

"It was put through, by that crabby housekeeper," one operator told him. "Brother, if you hauled her off to the clink you'd do us a favor."

"Maybe I will," Jeff said. "What number did she call?"

The operator liked Jeff's looks and was carried away by his intensity of manner sufficiently to answer his questions without demanding to see a badge.

She said, "It's a number I know by heart. The Heather House, a big apartment hotel."

JEFF bent over beside the girl. "There'll be one dozen pair of the sheerest nylons you ever saw if you contact the Heather House operator as soon as the call is completed and find out to whom it was made."

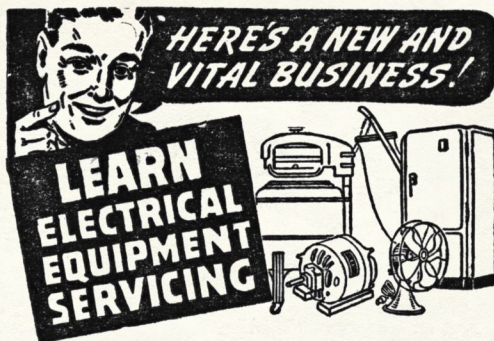
The girl gave him a quick smile. "For a dozen nylons—denier fifteen, gauge fifty-one, size ten, I'd cut in on an F.B.I. call. Wait a minute."

It was a long minute, stretching to five before the operator scribbled on a bit of paper.

"The first line is my name and address," she said. "So you can send the stockings. The second line is the name and apartment number to which that call went. Good luck, officer. And don't forget, if you drag that old harridan out, put cuffs on her."

Jeff sped for the street and a taxi. It was a long haul uptown and then east where the towering apartment building overlooked the river. Jeff went straight to the apartment numbered on that slip of paper. He pushed the doorbell and wondered which made the most noise, his heart or the chimes he could hear behind the door.

[Turn page]



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Someone said, "Who is it?"

The voice was a woman's, soft but worried. Jeff didn't have to imitate Pete's voice. They'd always talked so much alike it was hard to distinguish them from another room or over the phone.

He said, "Open up, quickly. Something has happened."

A bolt slid back to the accompaniment of a sharp cry from the woman. A burglar chain rattled and the door was flung wide. Jeff looked at Paula Norris, much lovelier than when she'd worn a simple maid's uniform back in Cedar City. Now she was dressed in a silver and blue hostess gown. Her hair was carefully arranged in a neat halo. Her makeup was better and more complete. A pair of gold slippers shone dully on her feet.

"You—you're—Jeff!" she said slowly.

"I'm Jeff. I'm coming in, so start screaming if you like. I intend to wait for Pete. You expect him."

"But I—don't know where he is. I haven't seen him."

"Tell that to someone less susceptible," Jeff told her sourly. "You thought I was Pete. You expect him all right."

She stepped aside, ashen under her rouge. "What—are you going to do?"

"That depends on Pete," Jeff told her. He looked around the fashionably furnished apartment. "Nice place you have here, Mrs. Overton."

She gasped and Jeff knew his shot in the dark was a bull's eye. "How did you find that out?"

Jeff sat down and for one of the very few times in his life he wished he had a drink. "I guessed it. That housekeeper of yours keeps you well posted. Want to tell me everything?"

She sat down too, as if she couldn't stand any longer. She shook her head slowly. "Not until Pete comes." She leaned forward slightly. "Jeff, please try to understand. Think like a brother, instead of a policeman. Pete told me how you reacted. I've been afraid of you

ever since. Things are very bad but they could be worse."

"Where is your husband?" Jeff asked.

She swallowed hard. "I don't know."

"I do," he retorted. "I fished him out of the lake yesterday morning. That's the truth, isn't it?"

She nodded slowly and then began to sob. Jeff picked up a magazine and tried to understand what the pictures meant and what the words spelled out. It was all a blur. He cursed himself for going this far. Pete might have gotten away with it and there'd been no evidence of murder until he'd horned in. The body might not have been found for months and then never be traced to the Overton family. Jeff could have made excuses for Pete's absence, handled the store in his spare time or even disposed of it. Not a soul would have been suspicious.

He was still subjecting himself to all these doubts when the door chimes sounded. He beat Mrs. Overton to the door and opened it. "Come in, Pete," he said. "We've been waiting for you."

PETE'S already rigid face grew sterner. "So you found me," he said bitterly. "I might have known the cop instinct was too strong in you. When it comes to a choice between me and your badge—"

"I haven't any badge, nor even a gun, Pete," Jeff said. "I'm not here as a cop. But you do need help. I found clues enough and guessed enough more to follow the trail. It brought me here. I know that Paula, the maid you fell in love with, is really Mrs. Overton. I know that Overton is dead, murdered, and that if you didn't kill him, you had some part in disposing of his body. All I want from you is the truth."

Margery Overton suddenly stood erect and then rushed to Pete. Her arms went around him.

"Let me tell the truth!" she implored. "Pete, it can't go on."

Pete gently led her back to the chair and helped her into it. Then he turned

[Turn page]

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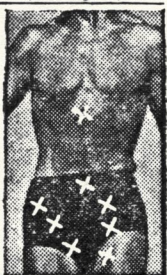


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and faced his brother.

"All right," he said with icy calm, "you asked for it. Carl Overton was a rat. Margery came to the red house to get away from him. She pretended to be the maid so Carl wouldn't be tipped off by his friends in town. Nobody ever saw Mrs. Overton there. They were only married a year."

"Who killed him?" Jeff asked stonily.

"I did," Pete answered. "I shot him three times. Through the chest twice and then through the back of the head as he lay on the library floor. I killed him and I'm glad of it."

Margery Overton was on her feet again. "Pete, please!" she implored.

"Keep quiet," Pete ordered brusquely. "You're in this too deep now. Well, Jeff, seeing you're not a cop any longer, what do you intend doing about this?"

Jeff took a long breath. "How would you like to go back to Cedar City? With me, or chained to some detective?"

"Oh, no," Pete cried. "You're not taking me."

Jeff moved in very fast. It was a sucker punch, but there was steam enough behind it so that Pete never felt the pain. His eyes turned glassy and he fell slowly, stiffly, as if he were being unhinged.

With a scream Margery Overton leaped at Jeff. Her nails clawed his face. She avoided his grasping lunge, raced across the room and before he could reach her, she had a bureau drawer open and lifted a small gun out of it.

"If you come a step closer, I'll shoot," she warned.

Jeff didn't move. "It won't work, Margery," he said. "Not in a million years. What I found out, any good detective can repeat. Sooner or later they'll catch up with you. Now suppose you shoot me. What will happen then? Pete will hate you to his dying day. Have you forgotten we're brothers?"

"A lot you care about that," she stormed. "You could have arranged things so Pete would never be found. You could have—"

Pete groaned then. With a dry sob she flung the gun from her and hurried to his side. She pillowed his head against her lap and looked up at Jeff.

"Go ahead and call your police. I can't stop you. Jeff—I was wrong." Her voice became gentle. "Awfully wrong. Pete is right. We've got to face it. Will you let me tell you the story?"

"I'm listening," Jeff said softly.

"I married Carl a year ago. I was warned not to. I knew what he was, but I thought I loved him. He was the cruelest man who ever walked this earth. I ran away from him. I went to Cedar City because I didn't know where else to go. I wanted to stay there, in the peace and quiet of that enormous house. I pretended to be the maid, took another name. Then I needed some supplies. I went to Pete's store and I met him. I knew then what a ghastly mistake I'd made. I told Pete the whole story. He's in love with me, Jeff. You can see that. You can also see what I think about him."

"I do see. Go on."

"We had about decided what to do. A divorce, of course, and if Carl made any trouble, Pete said he could handle him. But we didn't realize just how crafty Carl was. He'd been watching us all the time. I even think he was hidden in that house. The night it—happened, he was drunk. He barged into the room. Pete had given me a gun just in case Carl came. Carl even knew where it was and he got it first."

Slowly Jeff nodded his head. There was a grim set to his lips.

"And the rest was just as those things usually turn out," he sighed. "Margery, if Pete backs up your story, it isn't a murder rap. Pete was all wrong from start to finish, but if he was protecting you from a crazy, drunken idiot of a husband who had a gun, no jury is going to find a first degree verdict."

"What will happen to him?" Her eyes were brimming.

"I don't know. Five years—ten. Maybe fifteen. Running away, hiding the

[Turn page]



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body, putting that final slug through your husband's head—they all add up against Pete. But he must go back. Do you understand that?"

She nodded dismally. Jeff reached for the phone and ordered a taxi.

During the next three months he tried to keep busy at the store, but there was no solace in burying himself in figures and hardware. Margery faced things squarely. She checked in at a local hotel and cooperated with the District Attorney. No death penalty was demanded.

Jeff heard his brother sentenced to prison for twenty years by a judge who wasn't inclined toward mercy. Not with the facts as they'd been presented. The bullet through the back of the head added ten years to the sentence.

Jeff and Margery visited Pete in his local cell for the last time. They did their best to cheer him up and things went all right until the two detectives came for him and Margery watched the handcuffs close around his wrists.

Jeff gently broke up her embrace of Pete and led her out of the cell room. They got into Jeff's car and he drove her home. There he mixed a drink—a stiff one and she accepted it gratefully.

She said, "I think even Pete knows how right you've been all along, Jeff. I know what happened to him is ghastly, but it's better than running away, and I'll be waiting. Forever if necessary."

"Sure," Jeff agreed. "I know you will and so does Pete."

"What are you going to do?" she asked.

He shrugged. "Run the hardware store. There's nothing else left. And I'll keep busy enough because I intend to devote every spare moment of my time in getting Pete out of prison."

She gave him a startled glance. "Do you think you can, Jeff?"

"There are two things necessary to beat the law in a legal way. A lot of patience and—a lot of money. We must use psychology and tact. I know these things. I've seen them work out from the other side of the fence. As a cop I used

to resent it when relatives tried to get somebody out. Now I know how they feel."

"But what can we do?" Margery asked.

Jeff grinned. "Two things. First of all you are now Carl Overton's widow and, as such, you come into his father's estate of a million and a half. Carl's father was smart enough to realize that Carl was no man to handle such a sum so he left it all in trust and Carl had only the income. But now that he is dead, the trust is dissolved and you get it all. Am I right?"

She nodded. "I—hadn't thought much about it, but I suppose you must be right."

"Good. We're going to need some of that money to spring Pete. The other thing I have in mind is even more important."

"Yes, Jeff?" she asked, her eyes round and trusting.

"You've got to marry Pete right away, Margery."

"Marry him?" She almost dropped her glass. "Why of course, Jeff. But if he doesn't get out for twenty years—"

"You were going to wait forever. Remember that? It won't be necessary. As the widow of the victim, your marrying Pete will prove your love for him and that all you and he said on the witness stand must be the truth. A parole board would go for that. Don't you see, Margery?"

"Yes," she said. "Yes, Jeff. I wish we could have come to you for advice before all this happened. You'd have thought of a way out. I'll marry him. I'll devote every penny of Carl's estate to getting Pete out. I'll do—anything."

He patted her arm. "Good. Pete picked 'em right when he found you. One more thing. Our plans must be kept secret. No one must know of them. You'll marry Pete quietly and let the news leak out so it won't look as if this was part of a scheme."

She began to cry. "It isn't part of any scheme."

[Turn page]



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Jeff said, "Okay. I'll make the arrangements. I know the warden very well and he'll cooperate. We'll have the ceremony next week. And Margery, think of what it will do for Pete's morale."

SHE COULDN'T answer. Her sobs were too frequent. Jeff left her there until the tears had subsided. Then he drove her back to the hotel where she was staying. After that he went to the hardware store, occupied himself with business until eight-thirty at night. He finally extinguished most of the lights, went over to the gun counter and carefully selected a .38 revolver. He slid bullets into the chambers, rotated the cylinder to be certain the action was smooth and finally drove home.

He read until midnight, undressed and washed up. Then he read in bed for awhile. Finally he turned out the bed lamp, slid down beneath the covers and gave a good imitation of a man going to sleep. The hours were endless. Now and then he dropped into a doze and woke up to find his grip of the gun had gone slack. His life depended on staying awake and keeping the gun ready for fast action.

Downstairs the old grandfather's clock struck four and on the heels of the last note, Jeff heard the stairs squeak. He threw the blanket down so that his gun hand was covered only by the sheet. He slitted his eyes and waited. There was a little moonlight filtering through the window, enough dimly to illuminate the door, and Jeff lying there with his eyes open, had grown so used to the darkness that he could see fairly well.

The door knob turned. Slowly and under an intense grip meant to prevent any undue noise. The door opened a crack and stayed that way. Jeff's breathing was slow, deep and steady. If only his heart would stop those smashing beats. The door opened a little further. A man stood there with a gun in his fist.

He took one slow step into the room. The gun came up, steadied. Then the

man stepped even closer, so that it would be impossible for him to miss. Jeff didn't wait any longer. He fired once. The man gave a scream of surprise and pain. He pulled the trigger but Jeff had thrown himself to one side of the bed as soon as he had fired.

Jeff was aiming for a second shot, the one that would kill, when he saw the man slowly double up. The man's gun thudded to the floor. Jeff leaped from the bed and brought the man down in a heap. He snapped on the lights, backed away and kept his revolver aimed.

The man was still doubled up and cursing lustily. There was blood staining the right side of his shirt. Jeff picked up the telephone beside his bed. He dialed Police Headquarters.

"Mac, send a radio car over to my place," he said calmly, "I've just shot Carl Overton. No, I'm not crazy. Overton never was dead, but unless you send an ambulance, I think he will be."

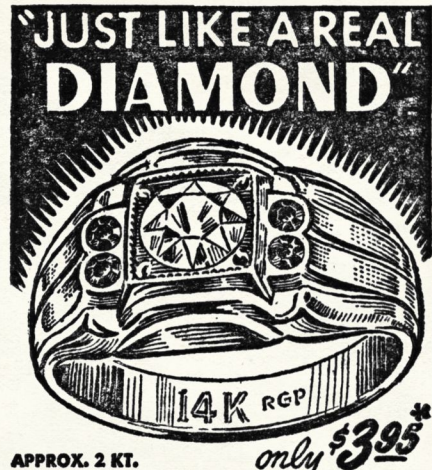
The radio car rolled up first. Jeff snapped orders to the men in it and they obeyed as if Jeff still carried his gold badge. While they watched Overton, Jeff used their car to hurry to the hotel where Margery lived.

This time he only knocked once and then attacked the door with his shoulder. Margery would probably be armed and speed was more essential than craft. The door was flimsy anyway and the lock shattered. Margery took one look at Jeff and tried to lift the gun she held. He jolted her off balance with a straight jab to the chin, wrenched the gun away and pushed her into a chair.

An hour later Jeff was pinning his old badge back into its leather case. He let Overton and Margery watch him do this. Overton was bandaged, still blistering the air with curses, most of which were directed at Margery.

Jeff said, "I knew all along that Overton wasn't dead. That is, ever since the autopsy was held on the man who took his place and I had talked to Margery in New York, after tracking her and Peter down."

[Turn page]



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The Chief's head bobbed up and down. "This case never did smell right to me. My hunch was that Margery knocked off the guy and Pete took the rap."

"That's exactly what did happen," Jeff said. "Pete, of course, thought the dead man was Margery's husband. She and Overton got some stranger, killed him and blew half his face off. Then Margery went to Pete for help and fooled him into making a complete sap out of himself. If I hadn't caught up with Pete, Margery would have anonymously tipped off some police department where he was hiding. Because she wanted him caught."

"But why?" the Chief asked.

JEFF LEANED forward and spoke in slow impressive tones.

"It starts with the fact that Overton had to live on the income of his estate," he said. "He'd never get the principal. But if he died, his widow would automatically come into the fortune, and that was what they were angling for. Overton couldn't simply vanish. Seven years would have to pass before Margery could claim the money. And it wasn't as easy as burning up a corpse and saying it was Overton's. That would have been too suspicious. But if Overton apparently was murdered as a result of a love triangle, not much attention to identification would be made. Pete was the type to admit the whole thing and he thought his victim was Overton. Margery legally identified the corpse, but I'd still like to know how. The man didn't have any face left and there were no distinguishable marks on him."

Margery suddenly sat bolt upright. "Listen, you stupid cop. Your brother maybe didn't kill my husband, but he



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killed that other man, whoever he was. I'll swear to that. He was given twenty years for that job and I hope he serves every one of them."

Jeff shook his head. "He won't and I'll tell you why in a moment. First, Chief, you want to know how I suspected Overton might not be the victim. Well, I attended the autopsy. It was very thorough. The dead man's brain and stomach showed no traces of alcohol. But Margery said Overton was roaring drunk when he died. And we knew Overton was an habitual drinker. There'd have been some traces of alcohol in him. So Margery lied about that, as she lied about everything."

"Tell them why Pete is already out of prison and on his way home," the Chief suggested.

Jeff grinned. "Certainly. It should be very obvious. He was found guilty of killing Carl Overton, but obviously there

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was a miscarriage of justice because Overton isn't dead. I smoked Overton out of whatever rat-hole he was hiding in by insisting that Margery marry Pete. That forced their hand because, while she didn't mind becoming a bigamist, she would be unable to disappear as she intended to do—with Overton of course. Pete could have tied up her money. They had only one out. If I was killed by a burglar, for instance, nobody else would think of trying to get Margery to marry Pete.

"Pete was just a fool—for murder. The world is full of saps like him. Gallant saps because they mean well. I've an idea that Pete won't get himself involved again, not unless he knows the girl pretty well."

The Chief glanced at the clock on his desk. "Pete's train is due in shortly. Better get down there to meet him, Jeff. I'll have this precious pair locked up. I'm sick of looking at them anyhow."

Robin Hood of Blackheath

(Concluded from page 110)

plea of moral justification. So the jury found him guilty and the judge sentenced him to be hanged.

Now it was truly all but over for the little man. But Robin Hood of Blackheath could still do one good deed. He confessed to the slaying of Patrolman Cook at Whalley Range, adding with a touch of the old pride that he had been in court the very day William Habron was condemned. So the long-suffering Irishman was released and compensated.

Now Charlie had done his last good deed. It was time for someone else to do one, to ease the little man's pain a bit on his last long journey. And someone did, in February of 1879. It was James Marwood, the hangman. Recalling that conversation of long ago, he greased the rope—and Charles Peace went to his death fast.

"Professionally speaking," said Marwood, "he was the best subject I ever handled."

And the best burglar England ever had, many people thought—and still think.

OFF THE RECORD

(Continued from page 10)

First we have a letter from a California reader.

May I add my sincerely meant approval to the many fan letters you receive in appreciation for the most entertaining fiction character of them all—The Black Bat. Since having found an early copy of BLACK BOOK DETECTIVE and dubiously sampling it, to my delight I discovered it to be genuinely excellent. Because I do a little writing myself—in a totally different medium of juvenile stories—I am continuously surprised and, yes, even envious, of G. Wayman Jones powers. His inventiveness and skill in maintaining a well plotted, swiftly paced, and absolutely engrossing tale is sheer genius in my humble opinion.

Oh, once in a while, a single adventure of our beloved Black Bat doesn't particularly arrest me—that's due to my own peculiarities and dislikes. But it happens rarely. For instance, the recent MURDER MAKER wasn't quite so good, to me, as most of them. But, even so, I get keen pleasure from all the adventures. In these troubled and all too uncertain days, to be able to lose oneself completely for a couple of hours takes some sort of magic. And the redoubtable Black Bat possesses that kind of magic. Incidentally, let Carol alone. She is the "spice" that keeps the Black Bat human.

The array of "short subjects," too, helps to fill out a varied and worthwhile bill.—Howell Shepard, Los Angeles, Calif.

Thanks for that fine letter, Howell. And here's a letter that takes a different view of our short stories.

I just finished reading the Black Bat novel, CITY OF HATE, and I enjoyed reading it. But I wish there were two Black Bat novels in each issue instead of one because I don't care for the short stories very much. I only read the Black Bat novels.

And, say. I keep looking for Tony Quinn's portrait picture on the cover so I can frame it and have it on the wall. When will you have a big picture of him, suitable for framing, on the cover?—Johnny J. Hamtramck, Detroit, Mich.

We'll have it as soon as enough readers request it. Many have written us that they prefer the action-type cover which we now have. What do YOU think of the idea? Write us and let us know.

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PHANTOM DETECTIVE and **BLACK BOOK DETECTIVE**, which I believe would be swell as a series of radio programs, too, as well as a series of novels in your book.

I agree with Vernon Jerrold, of St. Louis, Mo., that the **Black Bat** and the **Phantom** should, at least once or twice a year, be placed together in a mystery which will keep the readers in suspense and will, as you say, chill, thrill and entertain them. A situation which would place both in a case would give the case an almost impossible solution.

I hope to see a portrait of the **Black Bat** on the cover, and I know other readers also would. Keep up the good work.—**Willie Bell, Wilson, N. C.**

The **PHANTOM DETECTIVE**, as many of you readers already know, is one of our companion magazines, and is available at the same place you bought this copy of **BLACK BOOK DETECTIVE**. Here is another reader who is interested in the **Phantom!**

I would like to know if you could send me **THE PHANTOM DETECTIVE** and **BLACK BOOK DETECTIVE**. I would like to know if you take subscribers. Please give me some information on how I could get these books.—**E. Hendricks, Chicago, Ill.**

Yes, you can subscribe for either of these magazines. Subscription information is given at the bottom of the contents page in each issue.

That's all for now, but we'll be back next time with many more letters. Hope yours is among them. Please address them to The Editor, **BLACK BOOK DETECTIVE**, 10 East 40th Street, New York 16, N. Y. See you all next issue, and until then—good luck, everybody!

—THE EDITOR.

Answers to THE CRIME QUIZ

(See Page 98)



1. The Sullivan Law.
2. Scotland Yard.
3. If you named one of these, you are correct: California, Colorado, Missouri, Nevada, North Carolina, Oregon, Wyoming.
4. No—unless you had criminal intent. It is intent that counts.
5. False. It has no odor.
6. Eugene V. Debs.
7. Self murder or suicide.
8. No. Counterfeiting is counterfeiting.
9. France.
10. False. Crimes on ships are under the jurisdiction of the FBI.



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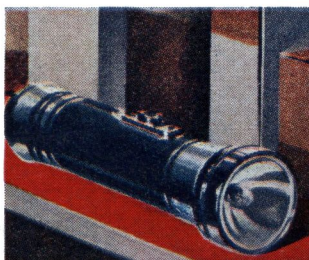


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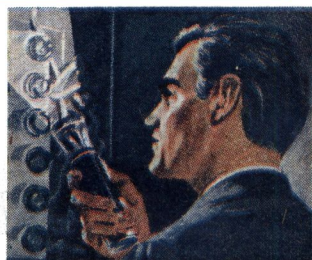
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