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# BLACK MASK



**DASHIELL HAMMETT**  
**Woman, Politics & Murder**  
**A Tale of the Continental Op**

**ABOMINABLE**  
by **FREDRIC BROWN**



**DONOVAN'S BRAIN**  
by **CURT SIODMAK**

# BLACK MASK

**SOMETHING SPECIAL**

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**T**he magazine you hold in your hands is unique. Just look at the drawings and your eyes will tell you that. Read some of the stories. *Black Mask* is something special.

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*Donovan's Brain*

ONLY BLACK MASK has  
*Dashiell Hammett's*  
*"Women, Politics, and Murder"*

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the man who did all those  
covers for *The Shadow*,  
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and *Black Mask* and a hundred  
other fantastic titles—  
*Raphael DeSoto*, our own cover artist.



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*Burroughs*, and *Erle Stanley Gardner*.

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Introduced *Dashiell Hammett*, *Erle Stanley Gardner*, *Raymond Chandler*.  
We will stake our fiction against any magazine's

**SMASHING STORIES, RARE AND UNCOLLECTED  
THE ONLY MAGAZINE OF ITS KIND  
BLACK MASK**



# THE BLACK MASK

A MAGAZINE OF SMASHING STORIES, RARE AND UNCOLLECTED  
KEITH DEUTSCH, Editor

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Rafael De Soto.

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# BLACK MASK?



## INTERVIEW

**R**afael DeSoto was born in 1906 in Barta Rolta, a small town in Spain on the border of Portugal. He came to the United States to study architecture at Columbia University in New York. The depression forced him to quit school and support himself by drawing. He studied anatomy under George Bridgeman at the Arts Students League and eventually went to Pratt Institute and higher degrees.

But Mr. DeSoto will tell you that he picked up his real training in his first two years as a dry brush illustrator for Street and Smith's western, mystery and adventure pulps. By 1934 he had done his first magazine cover for one of their "less advanced" pulps, *Top Notch*. He was soon Street and Smith's most versatile cover illustrator, doing covers for *Western Stories*, *Doc Savage*, *The Shadow*—in time over two hundred other titles.

Because he could work more than twice as fast as anyone else in the business (he could knock out two to three covers a week) and because he was an innovative illustrator in demand by every publisher, Mr. DeSoto holds the record for doing covers in the 30's and 40's.

In time, Popular Publications, one of the great pulp publishing houses and the publishers of *Black Mask* in the 40's, dominated his time. But no one owned him.

He did covers for *Argosy*, *Adventure*, *Cosmopolitan*, *Redbook*, and *The Saturday Evening Post*. In the fifties he worked for the paperback houses. "All of 'em," he tells us, including Dell, Ace, Signet.

Rafael DeSoto also did some notable advertising work. He did a series of illustrations for the first Frigidaire campaign. He also did White Owl and Canadian Club advertisements.

Mr. DeSoto, who now teaches anatomy and composition at Farmingdale College on Long Island, feels that the magazine illustration of the pulp era is as close as commercial work has ever come to a fine art in America.

"In the old days everything was done for impact," he said. "Nowadays it's all design. The old drawings that jump off the page at you, the illustrated initials, the fine line work—that is an art that is almost lost and I wish that they would revive it."

*BLACK MASK* is reviving it. This is the first interview Mr. DeSoto has granted to the press. Usually he lets his covers speak for themselves.

Were you reading the pulps? What made you try out for them? For Westerns?

"I used to see them on the stands. Constantly. There seemed to be hundreds of them. And naturally I used to buy them. They were fascinating. I read them. And soon enough I pursued them. It was the depression. I had never done any work. Somehow I prepared a quick Western for a sample and went to good old Street and Smith. The Art Director was Mr. James. The assistant Art Director was Harry Laury.

"When I was in the waiting room and looked at all the beautiful paintings hanging around I got cold feet. When my time for an interview came I left my painting outside. I wouldn't show it because I knew how bad it was.



"So the inevitable happens and the Art Director says, 'I can't give you any work until I see something you've done.' So I went back out and brought my painting in to him. He looked at it awhile and said: 'You know, this is the most Spanish cowboy I ever saw.'

"So I went to the library and I studied about Western life. About heels and boots and chaps and ten gallon hats and six gun holsters and so forth. I will say the second drawing I made was a little better. He hired me to do dry brush illustrations. Dry brush is when you get your brush filled up with ink, but you dry it up a little and work with it. You can get very fine lines and sometimes double lines as you go along. You get very nice effects. It's not used too much nowadays.

"So he started me on dry brush drawings and I learned more doing those things than at any point in my career. I learned about composing a story. I learned about composition. After a while they became easy. It was those two years that prepared me for my later illustration. After those first years I got so busy doing covers I had much more work than I could do."

**When did you start doing *Black Mask* covers?**

"Well I wasn't doing them at first. That was the top magazine. First I did mostly Street and Smith titles. I did *The Shadow*. After I started on the important magazines, I always thought that I should do something different with *Black Mask*. To make it stand out. So I decided to work with very dark backgrounds. So I decided to put jet black backgrounds around the shadows right into the black. Only the light part would show.

"When I brought the first one into Mr. Steeger, the publisher of Popular Publications, he hit the top. 'Golly, that's good,' he said. 'That's what I want.'

"Naturally I had reduced the whole scene into a close up because it is hard to work, to get too many things into the dark backgrounds. I think they were very effective.

"Harry Steeger knew what he wanted. If he liked something, he bought it. If not, you couldn't sell it to him.

"It really brings back memories. I had a lot of fun doing those things.

"Now Terrell, who was the editor of *Black Mask* at that time, always thought that I was a little meek about drawing the gun. He'd tell me, 'The gun is very important. Make it look big. Make it look like a cannon. And give it some flesh contact between the villain and the girl. Not exactly hurting her. Maybe his hand across her mouth. Some physical contact to show that the girl is in danger. Without being hurt. She's not screaming because she's hurt, but because she's scared.' And I played on those things."

**How did you meet Mr. Steeger?**

"I just went there. He was the publisher. He either liked it or he didn't. I approached the Art Director and he brought me to the editors and the publisher. The very first example I brought to Popular Publications they bought. Left me without a sample. Before I went to Popular I was working for Dell doing Western and Detective covers.

"Street and Smith bought my first cover for \$60. I remember I would get up early in the morning to go out and see if my cover was on the stands yet. In a short time my price was up to \$150 and then \$250. I could do two or more a week. Pulp were very much in demand, very much in style. With no TV you had to read then. Every month. Mr. Steeger called me in and told me I shouldn't do anybody else's covers. Four years after Street and Smith had started me I was straight Popular. I worked for them for 10 years. But he couldn't stop me from doing whatever titles I wanted to do outside."

**What about horror covers? I noticed among the many cover paintings you showed me one with a Mummy in it. Popular Publications had quite a few horror titles. Did you work any of them?**

"Yes, of course. I have one in my studio of a man that was half metal and half flesh. And nobody could shoot him down. I still have the cover. His arm and one of his eyes and part of his face is metal."



**Did they tell you to use girls with most of their clothing missing for the horror titles?**

"Ah, yes. Even in detective covers they would tell me to reveal as much as possible. I don't know how they published some of them. I used to rip them up, you know. Show half the breast. The legs. Just enough to cover what you couldn't show. Yes, I was told.



"One time I did this spicy detective cover. I was told to show a lot of leg, so I decided to show a woman sitting down and putting her stockings on. I did a rough sketch and thought I really had it. I ended up showing it to Mr. Steeger and he wouldn't have it. 'It is not what you've exposed,' he said to me. 'You could even reveal more thigh. You've drawn it wrong. That's all. Looks like she's taking her stockings off. Can't have that. Study someone putting 'em on. It is ok if the lady is almost naked if she's putting her clothes on. But it's no good, even if she's hardly removed anything, to show a woman getting undressed on a cover.' Sure enough, I had my wife practice taking her stockings off and there was a difference. I redid the painting and Mr. Steeger loved it.

"There was a lot of censorship in those days, but there were rules like that and an awful lot of pretty raw stuff went through. And when pocketbooks first started in the early 40's, well most of that stuff was even stronger. I didn't even read the books after I did a few. All you had to do was show a half-naked woman and a bed. That was a whole other era."

**What about the demise of the pulps?**

"I saw the writing on the wall in the early 40's. There was the war, a paper shortage, but most of all it was the pocketbooks. So I went into pocketbooks. I did a slew of them in the 40's and 50's. Until 10 years ago I was still doing 'em. And I also did a lot of work

for Magazine Management after the pulps died. After the war most pulp artists went to the men's adventure books like *Stag* and *Men's*. Adventure and war stories. I used to do both the covers and the inside illustrations. Duotones, mostly blues. The men's books never used straight line drawings."

**This is the age of pocketbooks. The most exciting area of publishing today.**

"Yes. I agree. They try everything now."

**You don't see many line drawings nowadays though, do you?**

"Well pocketbooks didn't have them to begin with."

**Do you think that's a mistake?**

"Yes. Very much."

**Some pocketbooks do have illustrations, notably Ace's science fiction and Tarzan books. But not too many or too much. The appeal of the pulps depended quite a bit on their covers and line drawings. Dramatic. Vivid illustrations. Sort of a cross between comic books and fiction.**

"Yes, that's right. That is an art that has almost died and I wish that they would revive it. You see, many readers love the stories, but they haven't the imagination to visualize the scenes. To picture it. We learned how to approach a situation so that it was not confusing. And so it has impact. Just like the stories."

**What procedures were used in planning a cover?**

"Well, this is what happened. As a rule they had the stories written. I used to read them to pick up a scene for the cover. Not every story was suitable so I asked the editor to give me a little leeway to change things around. So I used to give my own version of what the story was to be. Then I gave them pencil sketches, maybe one or two, and I'd do the covers from them. In time they were asking their authors to do their stories from my covers! Reversed the procedure."



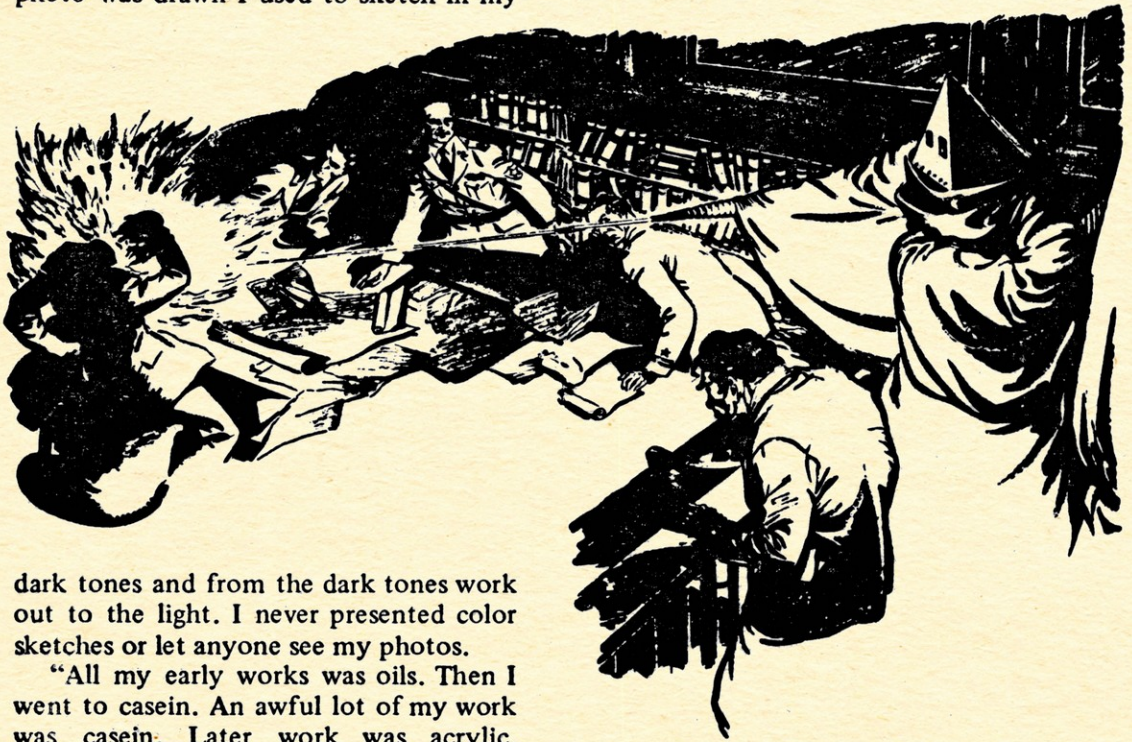
**How did you make the paintings from the sketches?**

"Well I proceeded to take photographs. I built my own studio and took my own photographs. I posed the models. These things have to be done fast. I took many many photos and then I laid 'em out on the table and chose the best or the best parts of a few and made a composite. Always had to distort something. For effect or to make room for the titles. I used to arrange for those in my sketch, but they didn't always fit. Everything was planned out from the beginning. Once the photo was drawn I used to sketch in my

work. We used to call him the Salvador Dali of pulp. Fantastic illustrator, but his cover work wasn't very good. He was a poor colorist."

***Black Mask* was something special?**

"Ah yes. Of all of them it was the best. I worked very hard to make it distinctive. After awhile I got the dark backgrounds and I worked all close up as I explained to you. Look at the gun on your cover. It looks like a cannon. I went to a place where they made props for the theater and I had them build me a .45,



dark tones and from the dark tones work out to the light. I never presented color sketches or let anyone see my photos.

"All my early works was oils. Then I went to casein. An awful lot of my work was casein. Later work was acrylic. Everything was done for impact."

**Who were some other illustrators you admired?**

"Iggenhoffer was a great dry brush illustrator at Street and Smith when I was just starting. His best work was Westerns. I remember a great cover man. Scott. W. Scott. Also Walter Bonhoffer. He did an awful lot of *Doc Savage* covers. Harries. Bok Harries. Arther Bowker, I remember he did fine work."

**What about Virgil Finlay?**

"Ah yes. He was a great genius in line

exactly authentic to the last detail, out of wood. And he painted it so you couldn't tell the difference.

"Due to the shape of the handle, the grip of the hand was different from any other revolver with a .45. And I did sketches of hands holding it in all positions.

"And one thing I hated to see was a gun not being held right. It looks like an amateur shooting. If an amateur is going to shoot, he's not a gangster. He's not a criminal. One thing you've got to say about my *Black Mask* covers. My villains can shoot!"



# INTRODUCTION

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**DASHIELL HAMMETT.** His work is part of the fabric of 20th century American literature, and of American popular entertainment. Gertrude Stein ranked Hammett in American writing with "Emerson, Hawthorne, Walt Whitman, Mark Twain, Henry James, Myself . . ."

The French critic and Nobel Laureate, Andre Gide, said: "Dashiell Hammett's dialogues, in which every character is trying to deceive all the others and in which truth slowly becomes visible through the haze of deception, can only be compared with the best in Hemingway."

**But enough highbrow praise.** Erle Stanley Gardner, the man who sold more volumes than just about any other American author, wrote of Hammett in "The Case of the Early Beginning": "I think of all the early pulp writers who contributed to the new format of the detective story, the word 'genius' was more applicable to Hammett than to any of the rest."

**Hammett's earliest pen name** was Peter Colinson, a term used in the criminal slang of the 1880's and 90's for a "nobody," a John Doe. This knowledge of underground language is a key to Hammett's and *Black Mask's* greatness. Hammett wrote about people he knew and he let them speak in the language of the street; and *Black Mask* encouraged this kind of honest reporting. See Hammett's correspondence with *Black Mask* editors in "Our Readers Private Corner." Hammett, Raoul Whitfield, and Erle Stanley Gardner were all friends in California trying to write, in part, about things the way they really were.

**By 1933 Hammett had stopped writing fiction** for magazine publication. In 1934 he originated the famous comic strip *Secret Agent X-9*. Alex Raymond, who went on to a pulp fame of his own with his Flash Gordon strip, illustrated Hammett's story line.

**Hammett also did work for the movies.** Not his own fiction, but he did do an excellent script of Lillian Hellman's play *Watch On The Rhine*. (In later years,

Raoul Whitfield was known to remark at performances of Ms. Hellman's plays, "That's Dash's line." Perhaps.) We will have to ask Ms. Hellman, who has written the most memorable accounts of Hammett's post-*Black Mask* days (*The Big Knockover*, 1962; *Pentimento*, 1973).

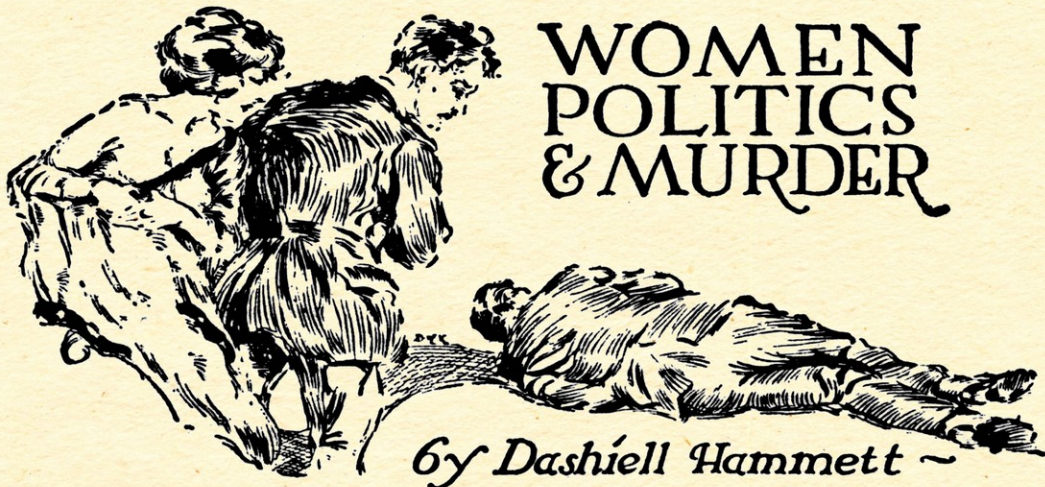
**Hammett also did radio scripts.** He did "The Thin Man" series in 1942. He created and did early scripts for "The Fat Man," a variation on the Continental Op. And although Hammett had no connection with the project, William Spier, the genius of radio horror, produced and directed the radio "Adventures of Sam Spade" in 1946.

**One final word.** Ellery Queen (Fred Dannay), our finest historian of detective fiction, must be credited with keeping Mr. Hammett's short stories in print. He edited seven excellent anthologies for Dell paperbacks from 1945 through 1950.

In the introduction to the first volume, Mr. Dannay made *the* statement on Hammett's contribution: "He broke away—violently—from the overpowering influence of the polished English writers. He divorced us from effete, namby pamby classicism; he gave us 100 per cent American, the first truly *native* detective story. He is our most important modern *originator*. He did not invent a new kind of detective story—he invented a new way of telling it."

We are indebted to Lillian Hellman and to Don Congdon of Harold Matson Company for their assistance in bringing you this too-long unpublished example of Hammett's early classic form.





# WOMEN POLITICS & MURDER

By Dashiell Hammett ~

*Mr. Hammett's San Francisco Detective is on the job again, working on a mystery the solution of which is so simple that you'll be ashamed of yourself for not figuring it out. And take our word for it, you won't come within a thousand miles of the explanation—yet this is the most realistic and probable story in the issue.*

**A** PLUMP maid with bold green eyes and a loose, full-lipped mouth led me up two flights of steps and into an elaborately furnished boudoir, where a woman in black sat at a window. She was a thin woman of a little more than thirty, this murdered man's widow, and her face was white and haggard.

"You are from the Continental Detective Agency?" she asked before I was two steps inside the room.

"Yes."

"I want you to find my husband's murderer." Her voice was shrill, and her dark eyes had wild lights in them. "The police have done nothing. Four days, and they have done nothing. They say it was a robber, but they haven't found him. They haven't found anything!"

"But, Mrs. Gilmore," I began, not exactly tickled to death with this explosion, "you must—"

"I know! I know!" she broke in. "But they have done nothing, I tell you—nothing. I don't believe they've made the slightest effort. I don't believe they want to find h-him!"

"Him?" I asked, because she had started to say *her*. "You think it was a man?"

She bit her lip and looked away from me, out of the window to where San Francisco Bay, the distance making toys of its boats, was blue under the early afternoon sun.

"I don't know," she said hesitantly; "it might have—"

Her face spun toward me—a twitching face—and it seemed impossible that anyone could talk so fast, hurl words out so rapidly one after the other.

"I'll tell you. You can judge for yourself. Bernard wasn't faithful to me. There was a woman who calls herself Cara Kenbrook. She wasn't the first. But I



learned about her last month. We quarreled. Bernard promised to give her up. Maybe he didn't. But if he did, I wouldn't put it past her—A woman like that would do anything—anything. And down in my heart I really believe she did it!"

"And you think the police don't want to arrest her?"

"I didn't mean exactly that. I'm all unstrung, and likely to say anything. Bernard was mixed up in politics, you know; and if the police found, or thought, that politics had anything to do with his death, they might—I don't know just what I mean. I'm a nervous, broken woman, and full of crazy notions." She stretched a thin hand out to me. "Straighten this tangle out for me! Find the person who killed Bernard!"

I nodded with empty assurance, still not any too pleased with my client.

"Do you know this Kenbrook woman?" I asked.

"I've seen her on the street, and that's enough to know what sort of person she is!"

"Did you tell the police about her?"

"No-o." She looked out of the window again, and then, as I waited, she added, defensively:

"The police detectives who came to see me acted as if they thought I might have killed Bernard. I was afraid to tell them that I had cause for jealousy. Maybe I shouldn't have kept quiet about that woman, but I didn't think she had done it until afterward, when the police failed to find the murderer. Then I began to think she had done it; but I couldn't make myself go to the police and tell them that I had withheld information. I knew what they'd think. So I— You can twist it around so it'll look as if I hadn't known about the woman, can't you?"

"Possibly. Now as I understand it, your husband was shot on Pine Street, between Leavenworth and Jones, at about three o'clock Tuesday morning. That right?"

"Yes."

"Where was he going?"

"Coming home, I suppose; but I don't know where he had been. Nobody knows.

The police haven't found out, if they have tried. He told me Monday evening that he had a business engagement. He was a building contractor, you know. He went out at about half-past eleven, saying he would probably be gone four or five hours."

"Wasn't that an unusual hour to be keeping a business engagement?"

"Not for Bernard. He often had men come to the house at midnight."

"Can you make any guess at all where he was going that night?"

She shook her head with emphasis.

"No. I knew nothing at all about his business affairs, and even the men in his office don't seem to know where he went that night."

That wasn't unlikely. Most of the B. F. Gilmore Construction Company's work had been on city and state contracts, and it isn't altogether unheard-of for secret conferences to go with that kind of work. Your politician-contractor doesn't always move in the open.

"How about enemies?" I asked.

"I don't know anybody that hated him enough to kill him."

"Where does this Kenbrook woman live, do you know?"

"Yes—in the Garford Apartments on Bush Street."

"Nothing you've forgotten to tell me, is there?" I asked, stressing the *me* a little.

"No, I've told you everything I know—every single thing."

## CHAPTER II

**W**ALKING over to California Street. I shook down my memory for what I had heard here and there of Bernard Gilmore. I could remember a few things—the opposition papers had been in the habit of exposing him every election year—but none of them got me anywhere. I had known him by sight: a boisterous, red-faced man who had hammered his way up from hod-carrier to the ownership of a half-a-million-dollar business and a pretty place in local politics. "A roughneck with a manicure," somebody had called him; a man with a lot of



enemies and more friends; a big, good-natured, hard-hitting rowdy.

Odds and ends of a dozen graft scandals in which he had been mixed up, without anybody ever really getting anything on him, flitted through my head as I rode downtown on the too-small outside seat of a cable-car. Then there had been some talk of a bootlegging syndicate of which he was supposed to be the head. . . .



left the car at Kearny Street and walked over to the Hall of Justice. In the detectives' assembly-room I found O'Gar, the detective-sergeant in charge of the Homicide Detail: a squat man of fifty who goes in for wide-brimmed hats of the movie-sheriff sort, but whose little blue eyes and bullet head aren't handicapped by the trick headgear.

"I want some dope on the Gilmore killing," I told him.

"So do I," he came back. "But if you'll come along I'll tell you what little I know while I'm eating. I ain't had lunch yet."

Safe from eavesdroppers in the clatter of a Sutter Street lunchroom, the detective-sergeant leaned over his clam chowder and told me what he knew about the murder, which wasn't much.

"One of the boys, Kelly, was walking his beat early Tuesday morning, coming down the Jones Street hill from California Street to Pine. It was about three o'clock—no fog or nothing—a clear night. Kelly's within maybe twenty feet of Pine Street when he hears a shot. He whisks around the corner, and there's a man dying on the north sidewalk of Pine Street, halfway between Jones and Leavenworth. Nobody else is in sight. Kelly runs up to the man and finds it's Gilmore. Gilmore dies before he can say a word. The doctors say he was knocked down and then shot; because there's a bruise on his forehead, and the bullet slanted upward in his chest. See what I mean? He was lying on his back when the bullet hit him, with his feet pointing toward the gun it came from. It was a .38."

"Any money on him?"

O'Gar fed himself two spoons of chowder and nodded.

"Six hundred smacks, a coupla diamonds and a watch. Nothing touched."

"What was he doing on Pine Street at that time in the morning?"

"Damned if I know, brother. Chances are he was going home, but we can't find out where he'd been. Don't even know what direction he was walking in when he was knocked over. He was lying across the sidewalk with his feet to the curb; but that don't mean nothing—he could of turned around three or four times after he was hit."

"All apartment buildings in that block, aren't there?"

"Uh-huh. There's an alley or two running off from the south side; but Kelly says he could see the mouths of both alleys when the shot was fired—before he turned the corner—and nobody got away through them."

"Reckon somebody who lives in that block did the shooting?" I asked.

O'Gar tilted his bowl, scooped up the last drops of the chowder, put them in his mouth, and grunted.

"Maybe. But we got nothing to show that Gilmore knew anybody in that block."

"Many people gather around afterward?"

"A few. There's always people on the street to come running if anything happens. But Kelly says there wasn't anybody that looked wrong—just the ordinary night crowd. The boys gave the neighborhood a combing, but didn't turn up anything."

"Any cars around?"

"Kelly says there wasn't, that he didn't see any, and couldn't of missed seeing it if there'd been one."

"What do you think?" I asked.

He got to his feet, glaring at me.

"I don't think," he said disagreeably; "I'm a police detective."

I knew by that that somebody had been panning him for not finding the murderer.

"I have a line on a woman," I told him. "Want to come along and talk to her



with me?"

"I want to," he growled, "but I can't. I got to be in court this afternoon—in half an hour."

### CHAPTER III

IN the vestibule of the Garford Apartments, I pressed the button tagged Miss Cara Kenbrook several times before the door clicked open. Then I mounted a flight of stairs and walked down a hall to her door. It was opened presently by a tall girl of twenty-three or-four in a black and white crepe dress.

"Miss Cara Kenbrook?"

"Yes."

I gave her a card—one of those that tell the truth about me.

"I'd like to ask you a few questions; may I come in?"

"Do."

Languidly she stepped aside for me to enter, closed the door behind me, and led me back into a living-room that was littered with newspapers, cigarettes in all stages of consumption from unlighted freshness to cold ash, and miscellaneous articles of feminine clothing. She made room for me on a chair by dumping off a pair of pink silk stockings and a hat, and herself sat on some magazines that occupied another chair.

"I'm interested in Bernard Gilmore's death," I said, watching her face.

It wasn't a beautiful face, although it should have been. Everything was there—perfect features; smooth, white skin; big, almost enormous, brown eyes—but the eyes were dead-dull, and the face was as empty of expression as a china door-knob, and what I said didn't change it.

"Bernard Gilmore," she said without interest. "Oh, yes."

"You and he were pretty close friends, weren't you?" I asked, puzzled by her blankness.

"We had been—yes."

"What do you mean by *had been*?"

She pushed back a lock of her short-cut brown hair with a lazy hand.

"I gave him the air last week," she said casually, as if speaking of something that

had happened years ago.

"When was the last time you saw him?"

"Last week—Monday, I think—a week before he was killed."

"Was that the time when you broke off with him?"

"Yes."

"Have a row, or part friends?"

"Not exactly either. I just told him that I was through with him."

"How did he take it?"

"It didn't break his heart. I guess he'd heard the same thing before."

"Where were you the night he was killed?"

"At the Coffee Cup, eating and dancing with friends until about one o'clock. Then I came home and went to bed."

"Why did you split with Gilmore?"

"Couldn't stand his wife."

"Huh?"

"She was a nuisance." This without the faintest glint of either annoyance or humor. "She came here one night and raised a racket; so I told Bernie that if he couldn't keep her away from me he'd have to find another playmate."

"Have you any idea who might have killed him?" I asked.

"Not unless it was his wife—these excitable women are always doing silly things."

"If you had given her husband up, what reason would she have for killing him, do you think?"

"I'm sure I don't know," she replied with complete indifference. "But I'm not the only girl that Bernie ever looked at."

"Think there were others, do you? Know anything, or are you just guessing?"

"I don't know any names," she said, "but I'm not just guessing."

I let that go at that and switched back to Mrs. Gilmore, wondering if this girl could be full of dope.

"What happened the night his wife came here?"

"Nothing but that. She followed Bernie here, rang the bell, rushed past me when I opened the door, and began to cry and call Bernie names. Then she started on me, and I told him that if he didn't



take her away I'd hurt her, so he took her home."

Admitting I was licked for the time, I got up and moved to the door. I couldn't do anything with this baby just now. I didn't think she was telling the whole truth, but on the other hand it wasn't reasonable to believe that anybody would lie so woodenly—with so little effort to be plausible.

"I may be back later," I said as she let me out.

"All right."

Her manner didn't even suggest that she hoped I wouldn't.

#### CHAPTER IV

FROM this unsatisfactory interview I went to the scene of the killing, only a few blocks away, to get a look at the neighborhood. I found the block just as I had remembered it and as O'Gar had described it: lined on both sides by apartment buildings, with two blind alleys—one of which was dignified with a name, Touchard Street—running from the south side.

The murder was four days old; I didn't waste any time snooping around the vicinity; but, after strolling the length of the block, boarded a Hyde Street car, transferred at California Street, and went up to see Mrs. Gilmore again. I was curious to know why she hadn't told me about her call on Cara Kenbrook.

The same plump maid who had admitted me earlier in the afternoon opened the door.

"Mrs. Gilmore is not at home," she said. "But I think she'll be back in half an hour or so."

"I'll wait," I decided.

The maid took me into the library, an immense room on the second floor, with barely enough books in it to give it that name. She switched on a light—the windows were too heavily curtained to let in much daylight—crossed to the door, stopped, moved over to straighten some books on a shelf, looked at me with a half-questioning, half-inviting look in her green eyes, started for the door again, and halted.

By that time I knew she wanted to say something, and needed encouragement. I leaned back in my chair and grinned at her, and decided I had made a mistake—the smile into which her slack lips curved held more coquetry than anything else. She came over to me, walking with an exaggerated swing of the hips, and stood close in front of me.

"What's on your mind?" I asked.

"Suppose—suppose a person knew something that nobody else knew; what would it be worth to them?"

"That," I stalled, "would depend on how valuable it was."

"Suppose I knew who killed the boss?" She bent her face close down to mine, and spoke in a husky whisper. "What would that be worth?"

"The newspapers say that one of Gilmore's clubs has offered a thousand-dollar reward. You'd get that."

Her green eyes went greedy, and then suspicious.

"If *you* didn't."

I shrugged. I knew she'd go through with it—whatever it was—now; so I didn't even explain to her that the Continental doesn't touch rewards, and doesn't let its hired men touch them.

"I'll give you my word," I said; "but you'll have to use your own judgment about trusting me."

She licked her lips.

"You're a good fellow, I guess. I wouldn't tell the police, because I know they'd beat me out of the money. But you look like I can trust you." She leered into my face. "I used to have a gentleman friend who was the very image of you, and he was the grandest—"

"Better speak your piece before somebody comes in," I suggested.

She shot a look at the door, cleared her throat, licked her loose mouth again, and dropped on one knee beside my chair.

"I was coming home late Monday night—the night the boss was killed—and was standing in the shadows saying good night to my friend, when the boss came out of the house and walked down the street. And he had hardly got to the corner, when she—Mrs. Gilmore—came



out, and went down the street after him. Not trying to catch up with him, you understand, but following him. What do you think of that?"

"What do *you* think of it?"

"I think that she finally woke up to the fact that all of her Bernie's dates didn't have anything to do with the building business."

"Do you know that they didn't?"

"Do I know it? I knew that man! He liked 'em—liked 'em all." She smiled into my face, a smile that suggested all evil. "I found *that* out soon after I first came here."

"Do you know when Mrs. Gilmore came back that night—what time?"

"Yes," she said; "at half-past three."

"Sure?"

"Absolutely! After I got undressed I got a blanket and sat at the head of the front stairs. My room's in the rear of the top floor. I wanted to see if they came home together, and if there was a fight. After she came in alone I went back to my room, and it was just twenty-five minutes to four then. I looked at my alarm clock."

"Did you see her when she came in?"

"Just the top of her head and shoulders when she turned toward her room at the landing."

"What's your name?" I asked.

"Lina Best."

"All right, Lina," I told her. "If this is the goods I'll see that you collect on it. Keep your eyes open, and if anything else turns up you can get in touch with me at the Continental office. Now you'd better beat it, so nobody will know we've had our heads together."

Alone in the library, I cocked an eye at the ceiling and considered the information Lina Best had given me. But I soon gave that up—no use trying to guess at things that will work out for themselves in a while. I found a book, and spent the next half-hour reading about a sweet young she-chump and a big strong he-chump and all their troubles.

Then Mrs. Gilmore came in, apparently straight from the street.

I got up and closed the doors behind her, while she watched me with wide eyes.

"Mrs. Gilmore," I said, when I faced her again, "why didn't you tell me that you followed your husband the night he was killed?"

"That's a lie!" she cried; but there was no truth in her voice. "That's a lie!"

"Don't you think you're making a mistake?" I urged. "Don't you think you'd better tell me the whole thing?"

She opened her mouth, but only a dry sobbing sound came out; and she began to sway with a hysterical rocking motion, the fingers of one black-gloved hand plucking at her lower lip, twisting and pulling it.



stepped to her side and set her down in the chair I had been sitting in, making foolish clucking sounds—meant to soothe her—with my tongue. A disagreeable ten minutes—and gradually she pulled herself together; her eyes lost their glassiness, and she stopped clawing at her mouth.

"I did follow him." It was a hoarse whisper, barely audible.

Then she was out of the chair, kneeling, with arms held up to me, and her voice was a thin scream.

"But I didn't kill him! I didn't! Please believe that I didn't!"

I picked her up and put her back in the chair.

"I didn't say you did. Just tell me what did happen."

"I didn't believe him when he said he had a business engagement," she moaned. "I didn't trust him. He had lied to me before. I followed him to see if he went to that woman's rooms."

"Did he?"

"No. He went into an apartment house on Pine Street, in the block where he was killed. I don't know exactly which house it was—I was too far behind him to make sure. But I saw him go up the steps and into one—near the middle of the block."

"And then what did you do?"

"I waited, hiding in a dark doorway across the street. I knew the woman's apartment was on Bush Street, but I thought she might have moved, or be meeting him here. I waited a long time,



shivering and trembling. It was chilly and I was frightened—afraid somebody would come into the vestibule where I was. But I made myself stay. I wanted to see if he came out alone, or if that woman came out. I had a right to do it—he had deceived me before.

“It was terrible, horrible—crouching there in the dark—cold and scared. Then—it must have been about half-past two—I couldn’t stand it any longer. I decided to telephone the woman’s apartment and find out if she were home. I went down to an all-night lunchroom on Ellis Street and called her up.”

“Was she home?”

“No! I tried for fifteen minutes, or maybe longer, but nobody answered the phone. So I *knew* she was in that Pine Street building.”

“And what did you do then?”

“I went back there, determined to wait until he came out. I walked up Jones Street. When I was between Bush and Pine I heard a shot. I thought it was a noise made by an automobile then, but now I know that it was the shot that killed Bernie.”

“When I reached the corner of Pine and Jones, I could see a policeman bending over Bernie on the sidewalk, and I saw people gathering around. I didn’t know then that it was Bernie lying on the sidewalk. In the dark and at that distance I couldn’t even see whether it was a man or a woman.”

“I was afraid that Bernard would come out to see what was going on, or look out of a window, and discover me; so I didn’t go down that way. I was afraid to stay in the neighborhood now, for fear the police would ask me what I was doing loitering in the street at three in the morning—and have it come out that I had been following my husband. So I kept on walking up Jones Street, to California, and then straight home.”

“And then what?” I led her on.

“Then I went to bed. I didn’t go to sleep—lay there worrying over Bernie; but still not thinking it was he I had seen lying in the street. At nine o’clock that morning two police detectives came and told me Bernie had been killed. They

questioned me so sharply that I was afraid to tell them the whole truth. If they had known I had reason for being jealous, and had followed my husband that night, they would have accused me of shooting him. And what could I have done? Everybody would have thought me guilty.

“So I didn’t say anything about the woman. I thought they’d find the murderer, and then everything would be all right. I didn’t think *she* had done it then, or I would have told you the whole thing the first time you were here. But four days went by without the police finding the murderer, and I began to think they suspected *me*! It was terrible! I couldn’t go to them and confess that I had lied to them, and I was sure that the woman had killed him and that the police had failed to suspect her because I hadn’t told them about her.

“So I employed you. But I was afraid to tell even you the whole truth. I thought that if I just told you there had been another woman and who she was, you could do the rest without having to know that I had followed Bernie that night. I was afraid *you* would think I had killed him, and would turn me over to the police if I told you everything. And now you *do* believe it! And you’ll have me arrested! And they’ll hang me! I know it! I know it!”

She began to rock crazily from side to side in her chair.

“Sh-h-h,” I soothed her. “You’re not arrested yet. Sh-h-h.”



didn’t know what to make of her story. The trouble with these nervous, hysterical women is that you can’t possibly tell when they’re lying and when telling the truth unless you have outside evidence—half of the time they themselves don’t know.

“When you heard the shot,” I went on when she had quieted down a bit, “you were walking north on Jones, between Bush and Pine? You could see the corner of Pine and Jones?”

“Yes—clearly.”



"See anybody?"

"No—not until I reached the corner and looked down Pine Street. Then I saw a policeman bending over Bernie, and two men walking toward them."

"Where were the two men?"

"On Pine Street east of Jones. They didn't have hats on—as if they had come out of a house when they heard the shot."

"Any automobiles in sight either before or after you heard the shot?"

"I didn't see or hear any."

"I have some more questions, Mrs. Gilmore," I said; "but I'm in a hurry now. Please don't go out until you hear from me again."

"I won't," she promised; "but—"

I didn't have any answers for anybody's questions, so I ducked my head and left the library.

Near the street door Lina Best appeared out of a shadow, her eyes bright and inquisitive.

"Stick around," I said without any meaning at all, stepped around her, and went on out into the street.

## CHAPTER V

I RETURNED then to the Garford Apartments, walking, because I had a lot things to arrange in my mind before I faced Cara Kenbrook again. And, even though I walked slowly, they weren't all exactly filed in alphabetical order when I got there. She had changed the black and white dress for a plush-like gown of bright green, but her empty doll's face hadn't changed.

"Some more questions," I explained when she opened her door.

She admitted me without word or gesture, and led me back into the room where we had talked before.

"Miss Kenbrook," I asked, standing beside the chair she had offered me, "why did you tell me you were home in bed when Gilmore was killed?"

"Because it's so." Without the flicker

of a lash.

"And you wouldn't answer the doorbell?"

I had to twist the facts to make my point. Mrs. Gilmore had phoned, but I couldn't afford to give this girl a chance to shunt the blame for her failure to answer off on central.

She hesitated for a split second.

"No—because I didn't hear it."



ne cool article, this baby! I couldn't figure her. I didn't know then, and I don't know now, whether she was the owner of the world's best poker face or was just naturally stupid. But whichever she was, she was thoroughly and completely it!

I stopped trying to guess, and got on with my probing.

"And you wouldn't answer the phone either?"

"It didn't ring—or not enough to awaken me."

I chuckled—an artificial chuckle—because central could have been ringing the wrong number. However. . .

"Miss Kenbrook," I lied, "your phone rang at 2:30 and at 2:40 that morning. And your doorbell rang almost continually from about 2:50 until after 3:00."

"Perhaps," she said; "but I wonder who'd be trying to get me at that hour."

"You didn't hear either?"

"No."

"But you were here?"

"Yes—who was it?" carelessly.

"Get your hat," I bluffed, "and I'll show them to you down at headquarters."

She glanced down at the green gown and walked toward an open bedroom door.

"I suppose I'd better get a cloak, too," she said.

"Yes," I advised her; "and bring your toothbrush."

She turned around then and looked at me, and for a moment it seemed that some sort of expression—surprise maybe—was about to come into her big brown



eyes; but none actually came. The eyes stayed dull and empty.

"You mean you're arresting me?"

"Not exactly. But if you stick to your story about being home in bed at 3:00 last Tuesday morning I can promise you you *will* be arrested. If I were you I'd think up another story while we're riding down to the Hall of Justice."

She left the doorway slowly and came back into the room, as far as a chair that stood between us, put her hands on its back, and leaned over it to look at me. For perhaps a minute neither of us spoke—just stood there staring at each other, while I tried to keep my face as expressionless as hers.

"Do you really think," she asked at last, "that I wasn't here when Bernie was killed?"

"I'm a busy man, Miss Kenbrook." I put all the certainty I could fake into my voice. "If you want to stick to your funny story, it's all right with me. But please don't expect me to stand here and argue about it. Get your hat and cloak."

She shrugged and came around the chair on which she had been leaning.

"I suppose you *do* know something," she said, sitting down. "Well, it's tough on Stan, but women and children first."

My ears twitched at the name *Stan*, but I didn't interrupt her.

"I was in the Coffee Cup until one o'clock," she was saying, her voice still flat and emotionless. "And I *did* come home afterward. I'd been drinking *vino* all evening, and it always makes me blue. So after I came home I got to worrying over things. Since Bernie and I split

finances haven't been so good. I took stock that night—or morning—and found only four dollars in my purse. The rent was due, and the world looked pretty damned blue.

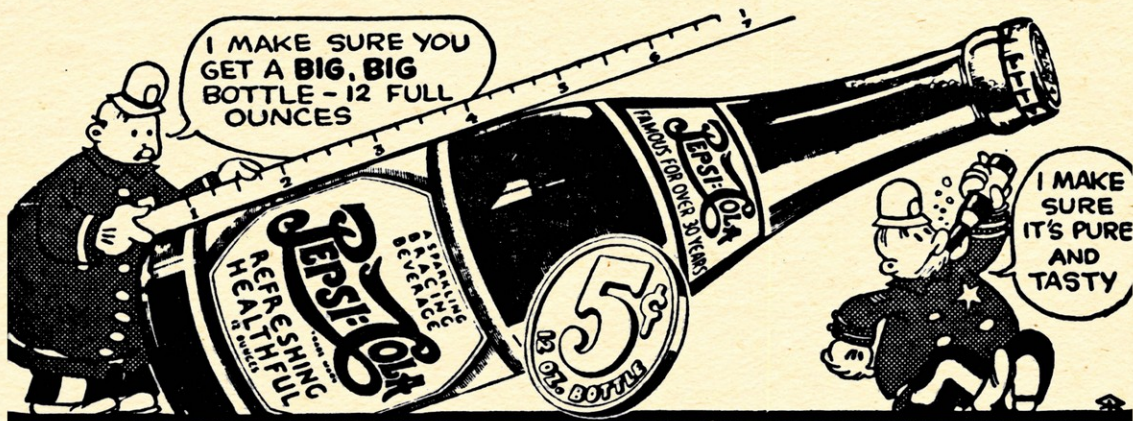
"Half-lit on Dago wine as I was, I decided to run over and see Stan, tell him all my troubles, and make a touch. Stan is a good egg and he's always willing to go the limit for me. Sober, I wouldn't have gone to see him at three in the morning; but it seemed a perfectly sensible thing to do at the time.

"It's only a few minutes' walk from here to Stan's. I went down Bush Street to Leavenworth, and up Leavenworth to Pine. I was in the middle of that last block when Bernie was shot—I heard it. And when I turned the corner into Pine Street I saw a copper bending over a man on the pavement right in front of Stan's. I hesitated for a couple of minutes, standing in the shadow of a pole, until three or four men had gathered around the man on the sidewalk. Then I went over.

"It was Bernie. And just as I got there I heard the copper tell one of the men that he had been shot. It was an awful shock to me. You know how things like that will hit you!"

I nodded; though God knows there was nothing in this girl's face, manner, or voice to suggest shock. She might have been talking about the weather.

"Dumfounded, not knowing what to do," she went on, "I didn't even stop. I went on, passing as close to Bernie as I am to you now, and rang Stan's bell. He let me in. He had been half-undressed





when I rang. His rooms are in the rear of the building, and he hadn't heard the shot, he said. He didn't know Bernie had been killed until I told him. It sort of knocked the wind out of him. He said Bernie had been there—in Stan's rooms—since midnight, and had just left.

"Stan asked me what I was doing there, and I told him my tale of woe. That was the first time Stan knew that Bernie and I were so thick. I met Bernie through Stan, but Stan didn't know we had got so chummy.

"Stan was worried for fear it would come out that Bernie had been to see him that night, because it would make a lot of trouble for him—some sort of shady deal they had on, I guess. So he didn't go out to see Bernie. That's about all there is to it. I got some money from Stan, and stayed in his rooms until the police had cleared out of the neighborhood; because neither of us wanted to get mixed up in anything. Then I came home. That's straight—on the level."

"Why didn't you get this off your chest before?" I demanded, knowing the answer.

It came.

"I was afraid. Suppose I told about Bernie throwing me down, and said I was close to him—a block or so away—when he was killed, and was half-full of vino? The first thing everybody would have said was that I had shot him! I'd lie about it still if I thought you'd believe me."

"So Bernie was the one who broke off, and not you?"

"Oh, yes," she said lightly.

## CHAPTER VI

**I**LIT a Fatima and breathed smoke in silence for a while, and the girl sat placidly watching me.

Here I had two women—neither normal. Mrs. Gilmore was hysterical, abnormally nervous. This girl was dull, subnormal. One was the dead man's wife; the other his mistress; and each with reason for believing she had been thrown down for the other. Liars, both; and both finally confessing that they had been near the scene of the crime at the time of the

crime, though neither admitted seeing the other. Both, by their own accounts, had been at that time even further from normal than usual—Mrs. Gilmore filled with jealousy; Cara Kenbrook half-drunk.

What was the answer? Either could have killed Gilmore; but hardly both—unless they had formed some sort of crazy partnership, and in that event—

Suddenly all the facts I had gathered—true and false—clicked together in my head. I had the answer—the one simple, satisfying answer!

I grinned at the girl, and set about filling in the gaps in my solution.

"Who is Stan?" I asked.

"Stanley Tennant—he has something to do with the city."

Stanley Tennant. I knew him by reputation, a—

A key rattled in the hall door.



he hall door opened and closed, and a man's footsteps came toward the open doorway of the room in which we were. A tall, broad-shouldered man in tweeds filled the doorway—a ruddy-faced man of thirty-five or so, whose appearance of athletic blond wholesomeness was marred by close-set eyes of an indistinct blue.

Seeing me, he stopped—a step inside the room.

"Hello, Stan!" the girl said lightly. "This gentleman is from the Continental Detective Agency. I've just emptied myself to him about Bernie. Tried to stall him at first, but it was no good."

The man's vague eyes switched back and forth between the girl and me. Around the pale irises his eyeballs were pink.

He straightened his shoulders and smiled too jovially.

"And what conclusion have you come to?" he inquired.

The girl answered for me.

"I've already had my invitation to take a ride."

Tennant bent forward. With an unbroken swing of his arms, he swept a chair up from the floor into my face. Not much force behind it, but quick.



I went back against the wall, fending off the chair with both arms—threw it aside—and looked into the muzzle of a nickeled revolver.

A table drawer stood open—the drawer from which he had grabbed the gun while I was busy with the chair. The revolver, I noticed, was of .38 caliber.

“Now,” his voice was thick, like a drunk’s, “turn around.”

I turned my back to him, felt a hand moving over my body, and my gun was taken away.

“All right,” he said, and I faced him again.



He stepped back to the girl’s side, still holding the nickel-plated revolver on me. My own gun wasn’t in sight—in his pocket perhaps. He was breathing noisily, and his eyeballs had gone from pink to red. His face, too, was red, with veins bulging in the forehead.

“You know me?” he snapped.

“Yes, I know you. You’re Stanley Tennant, assistant city engineer, and your record is none too lovely.” I chattered away on the theory that conversation is always somehow to the advantage of the man who is looking into the gun. “You’re supposed to be the lad who supplied the regiment of well-trained witnesses who turned last year’s investigation of graft charges against the engineer’s office into a comedy. Yes, Mr. Tennant, I know you. You’re the answer to why Gilmore was so lucky in landing city contracts with bids only a few dollars beneath his competitors’. Yes, Mr. Tennant, I know you. You’re the bright boy who—”

I had a lot more to tell him, but he cut me off.

“That will do out of you!” he yelled. “Unless you want me to knock a corner off your head with this gun.”

Then he addressed the girl, not taking his eyes from me.

“Get up, Cara.”

She got out of her chair and stood beside him. His gun was in his right hand, and that side was toward her. He moved around the other side.

The fingers of his left hand hooked themselves inside of the girl’s green gown where it was cut low over the swell of her breasts. His gun never wavered from me. He jerked his left hand, ripping her gown down to the waistline.

“He did that, Cara,” Tennant said.

She nodded.

His fingers slid inside of the flesh-colored undergarment that was now exposed, and he tore that as he had torn the gown.

“He did that.”

She nodded again.

His bloodshot eyes darted little measuring glances at her face—swift glances that never kept his eyes from me for the flash of time I would have needed to tie into him.

Then—eyes and gun on me—he smashed his left fist into the girl’s blank white face.

One whimper—low and not drawn out—came from her as she went down in a huddle against the wall. Her face—well, there wasn’t *much* change in it. She looked dumbly up at Tennant from where she had fallen.

“He did that,” Tennant was saying.

She nodded, got up from the floor, and returned to her chair.

“Here’s our story.” The man talked rapidly, his eyes alert on me. “Gilmore was never in my rooms in his life, Cara, and neither were you. The night he was killed you were home shortly after one o’clock, and stayed there. You were sick—probably from the wine you had been drinking—and called a doctor. His name is Howard. I’ll see that he’s fixed. He got here at 2:30 and stayed until 3:30.

“Today, this gum-shoe, learning that you had been intimate with Gilmore, came here to question you. He knew you hadn’t killed Gilmore, but he made certain suggestions to you—you can play them up as strong as you like, maybe say that he’s been annoying you for months—and when you turned him down he threatened to frame you.

“You refused to have anything to do with him, and he grabbed you, tearing your clothes, and bruising your face when you resisted. I happened to come along



then, having an engagement with you, and heard you scream. Your front door was unlocked, so I rushed in, pulled this fellow away, and disarmed him. Then we held him until the police—whom we will phone for—came. Got that?”

“Yes, Stan.”

“Good! Now listen: When the police get here this fellow will spill all he knows, of course, and the chances are that all three of us will be taken in. That’s why I want you to know what’s what right now. I ought to have enough pull to get you and me out on bail tonight, or, if worst comes to worst, to see that my lawyer gets to me tonight—so I can arrange for the witnesses we’ll need. Also I ought to be able to fix it so our little fat friend will be held for a day or two, and not allowed to see anybody until late tomorrow—which will give us a good start on him. I don’t know how much he knows, but between your story and the stories of a couple of other smart little ladies I have in mind, I’ll fix him up with a rep that will keep any jury in the world from ever believing him about anything.”

“How do you like that?” he asked me, triumphantly.

“You big clown,” I laughed at him, “I think it’s funny!”



ut I didn’t really think so. In spite of what I thought I knew about Gilmore’s murder—in spite of my simple, satisfactory solution—something was crawling up my back, my knees felt jerky, and my hands were wet with sweat. I had had people try to frame me before—no detective stays in the business long without having it happen—but I had never got used to it. There’s a peculiar deadliness about the thing—especially if you know how erratic juries can be—that makes your flesh crawl, no matter how safe your judgment tells you you are.

“Phone the police,” Tennant told the girl; “and for God’s sake keep your story straight!”

As he tried to impress that necessity on the girl his eyes left me.

I was perhaps five feet from him and his level gun.

A jump—not straight at him—off to one side—put me close.

The gun roared under my arm. I was surprised not to feel the bullet. It seemed that he *must* have hit me.

There wasn’t a second shot.

I looped my right fist over as I jumped. It landed when I landed. It took him too high—up on the cheekbone—but it rocked him back a couple of steps.

I didn’t know what had happened to his gun. It wasn’t in his hand any more. I didn’t stop to look for it. I was busy, crowding him back—not letting him set himself—staying close to him—driving at him with both hands.

He was a head taller than I, and had longer arms, but he wasn’t any heavier or stronger. I suppose he hit me now and then as I hammered him across the room. He must have. But I didn’t feel anything.

I worked him into a corner. Jammed him back in a corner with his legs cramped under him—which didn’t give him much leverage to hit from. I got my left arm around his body, holding him where I wanted him. And I began to throw my right fist into him.

I liked that. His belly was flabby, and it got softer every time I hit it. I hit it often.

He was chopping at my face, but by digging my nose into his chest and holding it there I kept my beauty from being altogether ruined. Meanwhile I threw my right fist into him.

Then I became aware that Cara Kenbrook was moving around behind me; and I remembered the revolver that had fallen somewhere when I had charged Tennant. I didn’t like that; but there was nothing I could do about it—except put more weight in my punches. My own gun, I thought, was in one of his pockets. But neither of us had time to hunt for it now.

Tennant’s knees sagged the next time I hit him.

Once more, I said to myself, and then I’ll step back, let him have one on the button, and watch him fall.

But I didn’t get that far.

Something that I knew was the missing revolver struck me on the top of the



head. An ineffectual blow—not clean enough to stun me—but it took the steam out of my punches.

Another.

They weren't hard, these taps, but to hurt a skull with a hunk of metal you don't have to hit it hard.

I tried to twist away from the next bump, and failed. Not only failed, but let Tennant wiggle away from me.

That was the end.

I wheeled on the girl just in time to take another rap on the head, and then one of Tennant's fists took me over the ear.

I went down in one of those falls that get pugs called quitters—my eyes were open, my mind was alive, but my legs and arms wouldn't lift me up from the floor.

Tennant took my own gun out of a pocket, and with it held on me, sat down in a Morris chair, to gasp for the air I had pounded out of him. The girl sat in another chair; and I, finding I could manage it, sat up in the middle of the floor and looked at them.

Tennant spoke, still panting.

"This is fine—all the signs of a struggle we need to make our story good!"

"If they don't believe you were in a fight," I suggested sourly, pressing my aching head with both hands, "you can strip and show them your little tummy."

"And you can show them this!"

He leaned down and split my lip with a punch that spread me on my back.

Anger brought my legs to life. I got up on them. Tennant moved around behind the Morris chair. My black gun was steady in his hand.

"Go easy," he warned me. "My story will work if I have to kill you—maybe work better."

That was sense. I stood still.

"Phone the police, Cara," he ordered.

She went out of the room, closing the door behind her; and all I could hear of her talk was a broken murmur.

## CHAPTER VII

TEN minutes later three uniformed policemen arrived. All three knew Tennant, and they treated him with respect. Tennant reeled off the story he

and the girl had cooked up, with a few changes to take care of the shot that had been fired from the nicked gun and our rough-house. She nodded her head vigorously whenever a policeman looked at her. Tennant turned both guns over to the white-haired sergeant in charge.

I didn't argue, didn't deny anything, but told the sergeant:

"I'm working with Detective-Sergeant O'Gar on a job. I want to talk to him over the phone and then I want you to take all three of us down to the detective bureau."



Tennant objected to that, of course; not because he expected to gain anything, but on the off-chance that he might. The white-haired sergeant looked from one of us to the other in puzzlement. Me, with my skinned face and split lip; Tennant, with a red lump under one eye where my first wallop had landed; and the girl, with most of the clothes above the waistline ripped off and a bruised cheek.

"It has a queer look, this thing," the sergeant decided aloud; "and I shouldn't wonder but what the detective bureau was the place for the lot of you."

One of the patrolmen went into the hall with me, and I got O'Gar on the phone at his home. It was nearly ten o'clock by now, and he was preparing for bed.

"Cleaning up the Gilmore murder," I told him. "Meet me at the Hall. Will you get hold of Kelly, the patrolman who found Gilmore, and bring him down there? I want him to look at some people."

"I will that," O'Gar promised, and I hung up.

The "wagon" in which the three policemen had answered Cara Kenbrook's call carried us down to the Hall of Justice, where we all went into the captain of detectives' office. McTighe, a lieutenant, was on duty.

I knew McTighe, and we were on pretty good terms; but I wasn't an influence in local politics, and Tennant was. I don't mean that McTighe would have knowingly helped Tennant frame



me; but with me stacked up against the assistant city engineer, I knew who would get the benefit of any doubt there might be.



My head was thumping and roaring just now, with knots all over it where the girl had beaned me. I sat down, kept quiet, and nursed my head while Tennant and Cara Kenbrook, with a lot of details that they had not wasted on the uniformed men, told their tale and showed their injuries.

Tennant was talking—describing the terrible scene that had met his eyes when, drawn by the girl's screams, he had rushed into her apartment—when O'Gar came into the office. He recognized Tennant with a lifted eyebrow, and came over to sit beside me.

"What the hell is all this?" he muttered.

"A lovely mess," I whispered back. "Listen—in that nickel gun on the desk there's an empty shell. Get it for me."

He scratched his head doubtfully, listened to the next few words of Tennant's yarn, glanced at me out of the corner of his eye, and then went over to the desk and picked up the revolver.

McTighe looked at him—a sharp, questioning look.

"Something on the Gilmore killing," the detective-sergeant said, breaking the gun.

The lieutenant started to speak, changed his mind, and O'Gar brought the shell over and handed it to me.

"Thanks," I said, putting it in my pocket. "Now listen to my friend there. It's a good act, if you like it."

Tennant was winding up his history.

"... Naturally a man who tried a thing like that on an unprotected woman would be yellow; so it wasn't very hard to handle him after I got his gun away from him. I hit him a couple of times, and he quit—begging me to stop, getting down on his knees. Then we called the police."

McTighe looked at me with eyes that were cold and hard. Tennant had made a

believer of him, and not only of him—the police-sergeant and his two men were glowering at me. I suspected that even O'Gar—with whom I had been through a dozen storms—would have been half-convinced if the engineer hadn't added the neat touches about my kneeling.

"Well, what have *you* got to say?" McTighe challenged me in a tone which suggested that it didn't make much difference what I said.

"I've got nothing to say about this dream," I said shortly. "I'm interested in the Gilmore murder—not in this stuff." I turned to O'Gar. "Is the patrolman here?"

The detective-sergeant went to the door, and called: "Oh, Kelly!"

Kelly came in—a big, straight-standing man, with iron-gray hair and an intelligent fat face.

"You found Gilmore's body?" I asked.

"I did."

I pointed at Cara Kenbrook.

"Ever see her before?"

His gray eyes studied her carefully.

"Not that I remember," he answered.

"Did she come up the street while you were looking at Gilmore, and go into the house he was lying in front of?"

"She did not."

I took out the empty shell O'Gar had got for me, and chucked it down on the desk in front of the patrolman.

"Kelly," I asked, "*why did you kill Gilmore?*"

Kelly's right hand went under his coat-tail at his hip.

I jumped for him.

Somebody grabbed me by the neck. Somebody else piled on my back. McTighe aimed a big fist at my face, but it missed. My legs had been suddenly kicked from under me, and I went down hard with men all over me.

When I was yanked to my feet again, big Kelly stood straight up by the desk, weighing his service revolver in his hand. His clear eyes met mine, and he laid the weapon on the desk. Then he unfastened his shield and put it with the gun.

"It was an accident," he said simply.

By this time the birds who had been manhandling me woke up to the fact that maybe they were missing part of the



play—that maybe I wasn't a maniac. Hands dropped off me; and presently everybody was listening to Kelly.

He told his story with unhurried evenness, his eyes never wavering or clouding. A deliberate man, though unlucky.

"I was walkin' my beat that night, an' as I turned the corner of Jones into Pine I saw a man jump back from the steps of a buildin' into the vestibule. A burglar, I thought, an' cat-footed it down there. It was a dark vestibule, an' deep, an' I saw somethin' that looked like a man in it, but I wasn't sure.

"'Come out o' there!' I called, but there was no answer. I took my gun in my hand an' started up the steps. I saw him move just then, comin' out. An' then my foot slipped. It was worn smooth, the bottom step, an' my foot slipped. I fell forward, the gun went off, an' the bullet hit him. He had come out a ways by then, an' when the bullet hit him he toppled over frontwise, tumblin' down the steps onto the sidewalk.

"When I looked at him I saw it was Gilmore. I knew him to say 'howdy' to, an' he knew me—which is why he must o' ducked out of sight when he saw me comin' around the corner. He didn't want me to see him comin' out of a buildin' where I knew Mr. Tennant lived, I suppose, thinkin' I'd put two an' two together, an' maybe talk.

"I don't say that I did the right thing by lynin', but it didn't hurt anybody. It was an accident; but he was a man with a lot of friends up in high places, an'—accident or no—I stood a good chance of bein' broke, an' maybe sent over for a while. So I told my story the way you people know it. I couldn't say I'd seen anything suspicious without maybe puttin' the blame on some innocent party, an' I didn't want that. I'd made up my mind that if anybody was arrested for the murder, an' things looked bad for them, I'd come out an' say I'd done it. Home, you'll find a confession all written out—written out in case somethin' happened to me—so nobody else'd ever be blamed.

"That's why I had to say I'd never seen the lady here. I did see her—saw her

go into the buildin' that night—the buildin' Gilmore had come out of. But I couldn't say so without makin' it look bad for her; so I lied. I could have thought up a better story if I'd had more time, I don't doubt; but I had to think quick. Anyways, I'm glad it's all over."

## CHAPTER VIII

KELLY and the other uniformed policeman had left the office, which now held McTighe, O'Gar, Cara Kenbrook, Tennant and me. Tennant had crossed to my side, and was apologizing.

"I hope you'll let me square myself for this evening's work. But you know how it is when somebody you care for is in a jam. I'd have killed you if I had thought it would help Cara—on the level. Why didn't you tell us that you didn't suspect her?"

"But I did suspect the pair of you," I said. "It looked as if Kelly had to be the guilty one; but you people carried on so much that I began to feel doubtful. For a while it was funny—you thinking she had done it, and she thinking you had, though I suppose each had sworn to his or her innocence. But after a time it stopped being funny. You carried it too far."

"How did you rap to Kelly?" O'Gar, at my shoulder, asked.

"Miss Kenbrook was walking north on Leavenworth—and was half-way between Bush and Pine—when the shot was fired. She saw nobody, no cars, until she rounded the corner. Mrs. Gilmore, walking north on Jones, was about the same distance away when *she* heard the shot, and she saw nobody until she reached Pine Street. If Kelly had been telling the truth, she would have seen him on Jones Street. He said he didn't turn the corner until after the shot was fired.

"Either of the women could have killed Gilmore, but hardly both; and I doubted that either could have shot him and got away without running into Kelly or the other. Suppose both of them were telling the truth—what then? Kelly must have been lying! He was the logical suspect anyway—the nearest known person to the murdered man when the shot was fired.



"To back all this up, he had let Miss Kenbrook go into the apartment building at 3:00 in the morning, in front of which a man had just been killed, without questioning her or mentioning her in his report. That looked as if he *knew* who had done the killing. So I took a chance with the empty shell trick, it being a good bet that he would have thrown his away, and would think that—"

McTighe's heavy voice interrupted my explanation.

"How about this assault charge?" he asked, and had the decency to avoid my eye when I turned toward him with the others.

Tennant cleared his throat.

"Er—ah—in view of the way things have turned out, and knowing that Miss Kenbrook doesn't want the disagreeable publicity that would accompany an affair of this sort, why, I'd suggest that we drop the whole thing." He smiled brightly from McTighe to me. "You know nothing has gone on the records yet."

"Make the big heap play his hand out," O'Gar growled in my ear. "Don't let him drop it."

"Of course if Miss Kenbrook doesn't want to press the charge," McTighe was saying, watching me out of the tail of his eye, "I suppose—"

"If everybody understands that the whole thing was a plant," I said, "and if the policemen who heard the story are brought in here now and told by Tennant

and Miss Kenbrook that it was all a lie—then I'm willing to let it go at that. Otherwise, I won't stand for a hush-up."

"You're a damned fool!" O'Gar whispered. "Put the screws on them!"

But I shook my head. I didn't see any sense in making a lot of trouble for myself just to make some for somebody else—and suppose Tennant *proved* his story. . .

So the policemen were found, and brought into the office again, and told the truth.

And presently Tennant, the girl, and I were walking together like three old friends through the corridors toward the door, Tennant still asking me to let him make amends for the evening's work.

"You've *got* to let me do something!" he insisted. "It's only right!"

His hand dipped into his coat, and came out with a thick bill-fold.

"Here," he said; "let me—"

We were going, at that happy moment, down the stone vestibule steps that lead to Kearney Street—six or seven steps there are.

"No," I said; "let me—"

He was on the next to the top step, when I reached up and let go.

He settled in a rather limp pile at the bottom.

Leaving his empty-faced lady love to watch over him, I strolled up through Portsmouth Square toward a restaurant where the steaks come thick.

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# GONE GIRL

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Macdonald



A thrilling  
short novel starring  
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**I**t was a Friday night. I was tooling home from the Mexican border in a light blue convertible and a dark blue mood. I had followed a man from Fresno to San Diego and lost him in the maze of streets in Old Town. When I picked up his trail again, it was cold. He had crossed the border, and my instructions went no further than the United States.

Halfway home, just above Emerald Bay, I overtook the worst driver in the world. He was driving a black fishtail Cadillac as if he were tacking a sailboat. The heavy car wove back and forth across the freeway, using two of its four lanes, and sometimes three. It was late, and I was in a hurry to get some sleep. I started to pass it on the right, at a time when it was riding the double line. The Cadillac drifted towards me like an unguided missile, and forced me off the road in a screeching skid.

I speeded up to pass on the left. Simultaneously, the driver of the Cadillac

accelerated. My acceleration couldn't match his. We raced neck and neck down the middle of the road. I wondered if he was drunk or crazy or afraid of me. Then the freeway ended. I was doing eighty on the wrong side of a two-lane highway, and a truck came over a rise ahead like a blazing double comet. I floorboarded the gas pedal and cut over sharply to the right, threatening the Cadillac's fenders and its driver's life. In the approaching headlights, his face was as blank and white as a piece of paper, with charred black holes for eyes. His shoulders were naked.

At the last possible second he slowed enough to let me get by. The truck went off onto the shoulder, honking angrily. I



braked gradually, hoping to force the Cadillac to stop. It looped past me in an insane arc, tires skittering, and was sucked away into darkness.

When I finally came to a full stop, I had to pry my fingers off the wheel. My knees were remote and watery. After smoking part of a cigarette, I U-turned and drove very cautiously back to Emerald Bay. I was long past the hot-rod age, and I needed rest.

The first motel I came to, the Siesta, was decorated with a vacancy sign and a neon Mexican sleeping luminously under a sombrero. Envyng him, I parked on the gravel apron in front of the motel office. There was a light inside. The glass-paned door was standing open, and I went in. The little room was pleasantly furnished with rattan and chintz. I jangled the bell on the desk a few times. No one appeared, so I sat down to wait and lit a cigarette. An electric clock on the wall said a quarter to one.

I must have dozed for a few minutes. A dream rushed by the threshold of my consciousness, making a gentle noise. Death was in the dream. He drove a black Cadillac loaded with flowers. When I woke up, the cigarette was starting to burn my fingers. A thin man in a gray flannel shirt was standing over me with a doubtful look on his face.

He was big-nosed and small-chinned, and he wasn't as young as he gave the impression of being. His teeth were bad, the sandy hair was thinning and receding. He was the typical old youth who scrounged and wheedled his living around motor courts and restaurants and hotels, and hung on desperately to the frayed edge of other people's lives.

"What do you want?" he said. "Who are you? What do you want?" His voice was reedy and changeable like an adolescent's.

"A room."

"Is that all you want?"

From where I sat, it sounded like an accusation. I let it pass. "What else is there? Circassian dancing girls? Free popcorn?"

He tried to smile without showing his

bad teeth. The smile was a dismal failure, like my joke. "I'm sorry, sir," he said. "You woke me up. I never make much sense right after I just wake up."

"Have a nightmare?"

His vague eyes expanded like blue bubblegum bubbles. "Why did you ask me that?"

"Because I just had one. But skip it. Do you have a vacancy or don't you?"

"Yessir. Sorry, sir." He swallowed whatever bitter taste he had in his mouth,



and assumed an impersonal obsequious manner. "You got any luggage, sir?"

"No luggage."

Moving silently in tennis sneakers like a frail ghost of the boy he once had been, he went behind the counter, and took my name, address, license number, and five dollars. In return, he gave me a key numbered fourteen and told me where to use it. Apparently he despaired of a tip.

Room fourteen was like any other middle-class motel room touched with the California-Spanish mania. Artificially roughened plaster painted adobe color, poinsettia-red curtains, imitation parchment lampshade on a twisted black iron stand. A Rivera reproduction of a



sleeping Mexican hung on the wall over the bed. I succumbed to its suggestion right away, and dreamed about Circassian dancing girls.

Along towards morning one of them got frightened, through no fault of mine, and began to scream her little Circassian lungs out. I sat up in bed, making soothing noises, and woke up. It was nearly nine by my wristwatch. The screaming ceased and began again, spoiling the morning like a fire siren outside the window. I pulled on my trousers over the underwear I'd been sleeping in, and went outside.

A young woman was standing on the walk outside the next room. She had a key in one hand and a handful of blood in the other. She wore a wide multi-colored skirt and a low-cut gypsy sort of blouse. The blouse was distended and her mouth was open, and she was yelling her head off. It was a fine dark head, but I hated her for spoiling my morning sleep.

I took her by the shoulders and said, "Stop it."

The screaming stopped. She looked down sleepily at the blood on her hand. It was as thick as axle grease, and almost as dark in color.

"Where did you get that?"

"I slipped and fell in it. I didn't see it."

Dropping the key on the walk, she pulled her skirt to one side with her clean hand. Her legs were bare and brown. Her skirt was stained at the back with the same thick fluid.

"Where? In this room?"

She faltered. "Yes."

Doors were opening up and down the drive. Half a dozen people began to converge on us. A dark-faced man about four and a half feet high came scampering from the direction of the office, his little pointed shoes dancing in the gravel.

"Come inside and show me," I said to the girl.

"I can't. I won't." Her eyes were very heavy, and surrounded by the bluish pallor of shock.

The little man slid to a stop between us, reached up and gripped the upper part

of her arm. "What is the matter, Ella? Are you crazy, disturbing the guests?"

She said, "Blood," and leaned against me with her eyes closed.

His sharp glance probed the situation. He turned to the other guests, who had formed a murmuring semi-circle around us.

"It is perfectly hokay. Do not be concerned, ladies and gentlemen. My daughter cut herself a little bit. It is perfectly all right."

Circling her waist with one long arm, he hustled her through the open door and slammed it behind him. I caught it on my foot and followed them in.



he room was a duplicate of mine, including the reproduction over the unmade bed, but everything was reversed as in a mirror image.

The girl took a few weak steps by herself and sat on the edge of the bed. Then she noticed the blood spots on the sheets. She stood up quickly. Her mouth opened, rimmed with white teeth.

"Don't do it," I said. "We know you have a very fine pair of lungs."

The little man turned on me. "Who do you think you are?"

"The name is Archer. I have the next room."

"Get out of this one, please."

"I don't think I will."

He lowered his greased black head as if he were going to butt me. Under his sharkskin jacket, a hunch protruded from his back like a displaced elbow. He seemed to reconsider the butting gambit, and decided in favor of diplomacy.

"You are jumping to conclusions, mister. It is not so serious as it looks. We had a little accident here last night."

"Sure, your daughter cut herself. She heals remarkably fast."

"Nothing like that." He fluttered one long hand. "I said to the people outside the first thing that came to my mind. Actually, it was a little scuffle. One of the guests suffered a nosebleed."

The girl moved like a sleepwalker to the bathroom door and switched on the



light. There was a pool of blood coagulating on the black and white checkerboard linoleum, streaked where she had slipped and fallen in it.

"Some nosebleed," I said to the little man. "Do you run this joint?"

"I am the proprietor of the Siesta motor hotel, yes. My name is Salanda. The gentleman is susceptible to nosebleed. He told me so himself."

"Where is he now?"

"He checked out early this morning."

"In good health?"

"Certainly in good health."

I looked around the room. Apart from the unmade bed with the brown spots on the sheets, it contained no signs of occupancy. Someone had spilled a pint of blood and vanished.

The little man opened the door wide and invited me with a sweep of his arm to leave. "If you will excuse me, sir, I wish to have this cleaned up as quickly as possible. Ella, will you tell Lorraine to get to work on it right away pronto? Then maybe you better lie down for a little while, eh?"

"I'm all right now, father. Don't worry about me."

When I checked out a few minutes later, she was sitting behind the desk in the front office, looking pale but composed. I dropped my key on the desk in front of her.

"Feeling better, Ella?"

"Oh. I didn't recognize you with all your clothes on."

"That's a good line. May I use it?"

She lowered her eyes and blushed. "You're making fun of me, I know I acted foolishly this morning."

"I'm not so sure. What do *you* think happened in thirteen last night?"

"My father told you, didn't he?"

"He gave me a version, two of them in fact. I doubt that they're the final shooting script."

Her hand went to the central hollow in her blouse. Her arms and shoulders were slender and brown, the tips of her fingers carmine. "Shooting?"

"A cinema term," I said. "But there might have been a real shooting at that. Don't you think so?"

Her front teeth pinched her lower lip. She looked like somebody's pet rabbit. I restrained an impulse to pat her sleek brown head.

"That's ridiculous. This is a respectable motel. Anyway, father asked me not to discuss it with anybody."

"Why would he do that?"

"He loves this place, that's why. He doesn't want any scandal made out of nothing. If we lost our good reputation here, it would break my father's heart."

"He doesn't strike me as the sentimental type."

She stood up, smoothing her skirt. I saw that she'd changed it. "You leave him alone. He's a dear little man. I don't know what you think you're doing, trying to stir up trouble where there isn't any."

I backed away from her righteous indignation—female indignation is always righteous—and went out to my car. The early spring sun was dazzling. Beyond the freeway and the drifted sugary dunes, the bay was Prussian blue. The road cut inland across the base of the peninsula and returned to the sea a few miles north of the town. Here a wide blacktop parking space shelved off to the left of the highway, overlooking the white beach and whiter breakers. Signs at each end of the turnout stated that this was a County Park, No Beach Fires.



The beach and the blacktop expanse above it were deserted except for a single car, which looked very lonely. It was a long black Cadillac nosed into the cable fence at the edge of the beach. I braked and turned off the highway and got out. The man in the driver's seat of the Cadillac didn't turn his head as I approached him. His chin was propped on the steering wheel, and he was gazing out across the endless blue sea.

I opened the door and looked into his face. It was paper white. The dark brown eyes were sightless. The body was unclothed except for the thick hair matted on the chest, and a clumsy



bandage tied around the waist. The bandage was composed of several blood-stained towels, held in place by a knotted piece of nylon fabric whose nature I didn't recognize immediately. Examining it more closely, I saw that it was a woman's slip. The left breast of the garment was embroidered in purple with a heart, containing the name, "Fern," in slanting script. I wondered who Fern was.

The man who was wearing her purple heart had dark curly hair, heavy black eyebrows, a heavy chin sprouting black beard. He was rough-looking in spite of his anemia and the lipstick smudged on his mouth.

There was no registration on the steeringpost, and nothing in the glove compartment but a half-empty box of shells for a .38 automatic. The ignition was still turned on. So were the dash and headlights, but they were dim. The gas gauge registered empty. Curlyhead must have pulled off the highway soon after he passed me, and driven all the rest of the night in one place.

I untied the slip, which didn't look as if it would take fingerprints, and went over it for a label. It had one: Gretchen, Palm Springs. It occurred to me that it was Saturday morning and that I'd gone all winter without a week end in the desert. I retied the slip the way I'd found it, and drove back to the Siesta Motel.

Ella's welcome was a few degrees colder than absolute zero. "Well!" She glared down her pretty rabbit nose at me. "I thought we were rid of you."

"So did I. But I just couldn't tear myself away."



he gave me a peculiar look, neither hard nor soft, but mixed. Her hand went to her hair, then reached for a registration card. "I suppose if you want to rent a room, I can't stop you. Only please don't imagine you're making an impression on me. You're not. You leave me cold, mister."

"Archer," I said. "Lew Archer. Don't bother with the card. I came back to use your phone."

"Aren't there any other phones?" She pushed the telephone across the desk. "I guess it's all right, long as it isn't a toll call."

"I'm calling the Highway Patrol. Do you know their local number?"

"I don't remember." She handed me the telephone directory.

"There's been an accident," I said as I dialed.

"A highway accident? Where did it happen?"

"Right here, sister. Right here in room thirteen."



ut I didn't tell that to the Highway Patrol. I told them I had found a dead man in a car on the parking lot above the county beach. The girl listened with widening eyes and nostrils. Before I finished she rose in a flurry and left the office by the rear door.

She came back with the proprietor. His eyes were black and bright like nailheads in leather, and the scampering dance of his feet was almost frenzied. "What is this?"

"I came across a dead man up the road a piece."

"So why do you come back here to telephone?" His head was in butting position, his hands outspread and gripping the corners of the desk. "Has it got anything to do with us?"

"He's wearing a couple of your towels."

"What?"

"And he was bleeding heavily before he died. I think somebody shot him in the stomach. Maybe you did."

"You're loco," he said, but not very emphatically. "Crazy accusations like that, they will get you into trouble. What is your business?"

"I'm a private detective."

"You followed him here, is that it? You were going to arrest him, so he shot himself?"

"Wrong on both accounts," I said. "I came here to sleep. And they don't shoot themselves in the stomach. It's too



uncertain, and slow. No suicide wants to die of peritonitis."

"So what are you doing now, trying to make scandal for my business?"

"If your business includes trying to cover for murder."

"He shot himself," the little man insisted.

"How do you know?"

"Donny. I spoke to him just now."

"And how does Donny know?"

"The man told him."

"Is Donny your night keyboy?"

"He was. I think I will fire him, for stupidity. He didn't even tell me about this mess. I had to find it out for myself. The hard way."

"Donny means well," the girl said at his shoulder. "I'm sure he didn't realize what happened."

"Who does?" I said. "I want to talk to Donny. But first let's have a look at the register."



He took a pile of cards from a drawer and rifled through them. His large hands, hairy-backed, were calm and expert, like animals that lived a serene life of their own, independent, of their emotional owner. They dealt me one of the cards across the desk. It was inscribed in block capitals: Richard Rowe, Detroit, Mich.

I said: "There was a woman with him."

"Impossible."

"Or he was a transvestite."

He surveyed me blankly, thinking something else. "The HP, did you tell them to come here? They know it happened here?"

"Not yet. But they'll find your towels. He used them for bandage."

"I see. Yes. Of course." He struck himself with a clenched fist on the temple. It made a noise like someone maltreating a pumpkin. "You are a private detective, you say. Now if you informed the police that you were on the trail of a fugitive, a fugitive from justice. . . . He shot himself rather than face arrest. . . . For five hundred dollars?"

"I'm not that private," I said. "I have

some public responsibility. Besides, the cops would do a little checking and catch me out."

"Not necessarily. He was a fugitive from justice, you know."

"I hear you telling me."

"Give me a little time, and I can even present you with his record."

The girl was leaning back away from her father, her eyes starred with broken illusions. "Daddy," she said weakly.

He didn't hear her. All of his bright black attention was fixed on me. "Seven hundred dollars?"

"No sale. The higher you raise it, the guiltier you look. Were you here last night?"

"You are being absurd," he said. "I spent the entire evening with my wife. We drove up to Los Angeles to attend the ballet." By way of supporting evidence, he hummed a couple of bars from Tchaikovsky. "We didn't arrive back here in Emerald Bay until nearly two o'clock."

"Alibis can be fixed."

"By criminals, yes," he said. "I am not a criminal."

The girl put a hand on his shoulder. He cringed away, his face creased by monkey fury, but his face was hidden from her.

"Daddy," she said. "Was he murdered, do you think?"

"How do I know?" His voice was wild and high, as if she had touched the spring of his emotion. "I wasn't here. I only know what Donny told me."

The girl was examining me with narrowed eyes, as if I were a new kind of animal she had discovered and was trying to think of a use for.

"This gentleman is a detective," she said, "or claims to be."

I pulled out my photostat and slapped it down on the desk. The little man picked it up and looked from it to my face. "Will you go to work for me?"

"Doing what, telling little white lies?"

The girl answered for him: "See what you can find out about this—this death. On my word of honor, Father had nothing to do with it."

I made a snap decision, the kind you live to regret. "All right. I'll take a fifty-dollar advance. Which is a good deal



less than five hundred. My first advice to you is to tell the police everything you know. Provided that you're innocent."

"You insult me," he said.

But he flicked a fifty-dollar bill from the cash drawer and pressed it into my hand fervently, like a love token. I had a queasy feeling that I had been conned into taking his money, not much of it but enough. The feeling deepened when he still refused to talk. I had to use all the arts of persuasion even to get Donny's address out of him.

The keyboy lived in a shack on the edge of a desolate stretch of dunes. I guessed that it had once been somebody's beach house, before sand had drifted like unthawing snow in the angles of the walls and winter storms had broken the tiles and cracked the concrete foundations. Huge chunks of concrete were piled haphazardly on what had been a terrace overlooking the sea.

On one of the tilted slabs, Donny was stretched like a long albino lizard in the sun. The onshore wind carried the sound of my motor to his ears. He sat up blinking, recognized me when I stopped the car, and ran into the house.

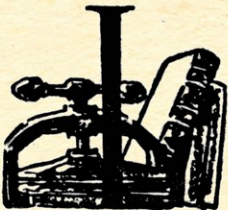
I descended flagstone steps and knocked on the warped door. "Open up, Donny."

"Go away," he answered huskily. His eye gleamed like a snail through a crack in the wood.

"I'm working for Mr. Salanda. He wants us to have a talk."

"You can go and take a running jump at yourself, you and Mr. Salanda both."

"Open it or I'll break it down."



waited for a while. He shot back the bolt. The door creaked reluctantly open. He leaned against the doorpost, searching my face with his eyes, his hairless body shivering from an internal chill. I pushed past him, through a kitchenette that was indescribably filthy, littered with the remnants of old meals, and gaseous with their odors. He followed me silently on bare soles into a larger room

whose sprung floorboards undulated under my feet. The picture window had been broken and patched with cardboard. The stone fireplace was choked with garbage. The only furniture was an army cot in one corner where Donny Apparently slept.

"Nice homey place you have here. It has that lived-in quality."



He seemed to take it as a compliment, and I wondered if I was dealing with a moron. "It suits me. I never was much of a one for fancy quarters. I like it here, where I can hear the ocean at night."

"What else do you hear at night, Donny?"

He missed the point of the question, or pretended to. "All different things. Big trucks going past on the highway. I like to hear those night sounds. Now I guess I can't go on living here. Mr. Salanda owns it, he lets me live here for nothing. Now he'll be kicking me out of here, I guess."

"On account of what happened last night?"

"Uh-huh." He subsided onto the cot, his doleful head supported by his hands.

I stood over him. "Just what did happen last night, Donny?"

"A bad thing," he said. "This fella checked in about ten o'clock—"

"The man with the dark curly hair?"

"That's the one. He checked in about ten, and I gave him room thirteen. Around about midnight I thought I heard a gun go off from there. It took me a little while to get my nerve up, then I went back to see what was going on. This fella came out of the room, without no clothes on. Just some kind of a bandage around his waist. He looked like some kind of a crazy Indian or something. He had a gun in his hand, and he was staggering, and I could see that he was bleeding some. He come right up to me and pushed the gun in my gut and told me to keep my trap shut. He said I wasn't to tell anybody I saw him, now or later. He said if I opened my mouth about it to anybody, that he would come back and kill me. But now he's dead, isn't he?"



"He's dead."

I could smell the fear on Donny: there's an unexplained trace of canine in my chromosomes. The hairs were prickling on the back of my neck, and I wondered if Donny's fear was of the past or for the future. The pimples stood out in bas-relief against his pale lugubrious face.

"I think he was murdered, Donny. You're lying, aren't you?"

"Me lying?" But his reaction was slow and feeble.

"The dead man didn't check in alone. He had a woman with him."

"What woman?" he said in elaborate surprise.

"You tell me. Her name was Fern. I think she did the shooting, and you caught her red-handed. The wounded man got out of the room and into his car and away. The woman stayed behind to talk to you. She probably paid you to dispose of his clothes and fake a new registration card for the room. But you both overlooked the blood on the floor of the bathroom. Am I right?"

"You couldn't be wronger, mister. Are you a cop?"

"A private detective. You're in deep trouble, Donny. You'd better talk yourself out of it if you can, before the cops start on you."

"I didn't do anything." His voice broke like a boy's. It went strangely with the glints of gray in his hair.

"Faking the register is a serious rap, even if they don't hang accessory to murder on you."

He began to expostulate in formless sentences that ran together. At the same time his hand was moving across the dirty gray blanket. It burrowed under the pillow and came out holding a crumpled card. He tried to stuff it into his mouth and chew it. I tore it away from between his discolored teeth.

It was a registration card from the motel, signed in a boyish scrawl: Mr. and Mrs. Richard Rowe, Detroit, Mich.

Donny was trembling violently. Below his cheap cotton shorts, his bony knees vibrated like tuning forks. "It wasn't my fault," he cried. "She held a gun on me."

"What did you do with the man's clothes?"

"Nothing. She didn't even let me into the room. She bundled them up and took them away herself."

"Where did she go?"

"Down the highway towards town. She walked away on the shoulder of the road and that was the last I saw of her."

"How much did she pay you, Donny?"

"Nothing, not a cent. I already told you, she held a gun on me."

"And you were so scared you kept quiet until this morning?"

"That's right. I was scared. Who wouldn't be scared?"

"She's gone now," I said. "You can give me a description of her."

"Yeah." He made a visible effort to pull his vague thoughts together. One of his eyes was a little off center, lending his face a stunned, amorphous appearance. "She was a big tall dame with blondey hair."

"Dyed?"

"I guess so, I dunno. She wore it in a braid like, on top of her head. She was kind of fat, built like a lady wrestler, great big watermelons on her. Big legs."

"How was she dressed?"

"I didn't hardly notice, I was so scared. I think she had some kind of a purple coat on, with black fur around the neck. Plenty of rings on her fingers and stuff."

"How old?"

"Pretty old, I'd say. Older than me, and I'm going on thirty-nine."

"And she did the shooting?"

"I guess so. She told me to say if anybody asked me, I was to say that Mr. Rowe shot himself."

"You're very suggestible, aren't you, Donny? It's a dangerous way to be, with people pushing each other around the way they do."

"I didn't get that, mister. Come again." He batted his pale blue eyes at me, smiling expectantly.

"Skip it," I said and left him.

A few hundred yards up the highway I passed an HP car with two uniformed men in the front seat looking grim.



Donny was in for it now. I pushed him out of my mind and drove across country to Palm Springs.



Palm Springs is still a one-horse town, but the horse is a Palomino with silver trappings. Most of the girls were Palomino, too. The main street was a cross-section of Hollywood and Vine transported across the desert by some unnatural force and disguised in western costumes which fooled nobody. Not even me.

I found Gretchen's lingerie shop in an expensive-looking arcade built around an imitation flagstone patio. In the patio's center a little fountain gurgled pleasantly, flinging small lariats of spray against the heat. It was late in March, and the season was ending. Most of the shops, including the one I entered, were deserted except for the hired help.

It was a small shop, faintly perfumed by a legion of vanished dolls. Stockings and robes and other garments were coiled on the glass counters or hung like brilliant treesnakes on display stands along the narrow walls. A henna-headed woman emerged from rustling recesses at the rear and came tripping towards me on her toes.

"You are looking for a gift, sir?" she cried with a wilted kind of gaiety. Behind her painted mask, she was tired and aging and it was Saturday afternoon and the lucky ones were dunking themselves in kidney-shaped swimming pools behind walls she couldn't climb.

"Not exactly. In fact, not at all. A peculiar thing happened to me last night. I'd like to tell you about it, but it's kind of a complicated story."

She looked me over quizzically and decided that I worked for a living, too. The phony smile faded away. Another smile took its place, which I liked better. "You look as if you'd had a fairly rough night. And you could do with a shave."

"I met a girl," I said. "Actually she was a mature woman, a statuesque blonde to be exact. I picked her up on the beach

at Laguna, if you want me to be brutally frank."

"I couldn't bear it if you weren't. What kind of a pitch is this, brother?"

"Wait. You're spoiling my story. Something clicked when we met, in that sunset light, on the edge of the warm summer sea."

"It's always bloody cold when I go in."

"It wasn't last night. We swam in the moonlight and had a gay time and all. Then she went away. I didn't realize until she was gone that I didn't know her telephone number, or even her last name."

"Married woman, eh? What do you think I am, a lonely hearts club?" Still, she was interested, though she probably didn't believe me. "She mentioned me, is that it? What was her first name?"

"Fern."

"Unusual name. You say she was a big blonde?"

"Magnificently proportioned," I said. "If I had a classical education I'd call her Junoesque."

"You're kidding me, aren't you?"

"A little."

"I thought so. Personally I don't mind a little kidding. What did she say about me?"

"Nothing but good. As a matter of fact, I was complimenting her on her—er—garments."

"I see." She was long past blushing. "We had a customer last fall some time, by the name of Fern. Fern Dee. She had some kind of a job at the Joshua Club, I think. But she doesn't fit the description at all. This one was a brunette, a middle-sized brunette, quite young. I remember the name Fern because she wanted it embroidered on all the things she bought. A corny idea if you ask me, but that was her girlish desire and who am I to argue with girlish desires."

"Is she still in town?"

"I haven't seen her lately, not for months. But it couldn't be the woman you're looking for. Or could it?"

"How long ago was she in here?"

She pondered. "Early last fall, around the start of the season. She only came in



that once, and made a big purchase, stockings and nightwear and underthings. The works. I remember thinking at the time, here was a girlie who suddenly hit the chips but heavily."

"She might have put on weight since then, and dyed her hair. Strange things can happen to the female from."

"You're telling me," she said. "How old was—your friend?"

"About forty, I'd say, give or take a little."

"It couldn't be the same one then. The girl I'm talking about was twenty-five at the outside, and I don't make mistakes about women's ages. I've seen too many of them in all stages, from Quentin quail to hags, and I certainly do mean hags."

"I bet you have."

She studied me with eyes shadowed by mascara and experience. "You a policeman?"

"I have been."

"You want to tell mother what it's all about?"

"Another time. Where's the Joshua Club?"

"It won't be open yet."

"I'll try it anyway."

She shrugged her thin shoulders and gave me directions. I thanked her.

It occupied a plain-faced one-story building half a block off the main street. The padded leather door swung inward when I pushed it. I passed through a lobby with a retractable roof, which contained a jungle growth of banana trees. The big main room was decorated with tinted desert photomurals. Behind a rattan bar with a fishnet canopy, a white-coated Caribbean type was drying shot-glasses with a dirty towel. His face looked uncommunicative.

On the orchestra dais beyond the piled chairs in the dining area, a young man in shirt sleeves was playing bop piano. His fingers shadowed the tune, ran circles around it, played leapfrog with it, and managed never to hit it on the nose. I stood beside him for a while and listened to him work. He looked up finally, still strumming with his left hand in the bass. He had soft-centered eyes and frozen-

looking nostrils and a whistling mouth.

"Nice piano," I said.

"I think so."

"Fifty-second Street?"

"It's the street with the beat and I'm not effete." His left hand struck the same chord three times and dropped away from the keys. "Looking for somebody, friend?"

"Fern Dee. She asked me to drop by some time."

"Too bad. Another wasted trip. She left here end of last year, the dear. She wasn't a bad little nightingale but she was no pro, Joe, you know? She had it but she couldn't project it. When she warbled the evening died, no matter how hard she tried, I don't wanna be snide."

"Where did she lam, Sam, or don't you give a damn?"



He smiled like a corpse in a deft mortician's hands. "I heard the boss retired her to private life. Took her home to live with him. That is what I heard. But I don't mix with the big boy socially, so I couldn't say for sure that she's impure. Is it anything to you?"

"Something, but she's over twenty-one."

"Not more than a couple of years over twenty-one." His eyes darkened and his thin mouth twisted sideways angrily. "I hate to see it happen to a pretty little twist like Fern. Not that I yearn—"

I broke in on his nonsense rhymes: "Who's the big boss you mentioned, the one Fern went to live with?"

"Angel. Who else?"

"What heaven does he inhabit?"

"You must be new in these parts—" His eyes swiveled and focused on something over my shoulder. His mouth opened and closed.

A grating tenor said behind me: "Got a question you want answered, bud?"

The pianist went back to the piano as if the ugly tenor had wiped me out, annulled my very existence. I turned to its source. He was standing in a narrow



doorway behind the drums, a man in his thirties with thick black curly hair and a heavy jaw blue-shadowed by closely shaven beard. He was almost the living image of the dead man in the Cadillac. The likeness gave me a jolt. The heavy black gun in his hand gave me another.

He came around the drums and approached me, bull-shouldered in a fuzzy tweed jacket, holding the gun in front of him like a dangerous gift. The pianist was doing wry things in quickened tempo with the dead march from *Saul*. A wit.

The dead man's almost-double waved his cruel chin and the crueler gun in unison. "Come inside, unless you're a government man. If you are, I'll have a look at your credentials."

"I'm a freelance."

"Inside then."



The muzzle of the automatic came into my solar plexus like a pointing iron finger. Obeying its injunction, I made my way between empty music stands and through the narrow door behind the drums. The iron finger, probing my back, directed me down a lightless corridor to a small square office containing a metal desk, a safe, a filing cabinet. It was windowless, lit by fluorescent tubes in the ceiling. Under their pitiless glare, the face above the gun looked more than ever like the dead man's face. I wondered if I had been mistaken about his deadness, or if the desert heat had addled my brain.

"I'm the manager here," he said, standing so close that I could smell the piney stuff he used on his crisp dark hair. "You got anything to ask about the members of the staff, you ask me."

"Will I get an answer?"

"Try me, bud."

"The name is Archer," I said. "I'm a private detective."

"Working for who?"

"You wouldn't be interested."

"I am, though, very much interested."

The gun hopped forward like a toad into my stomach again, with the weight of his

shoulder behind it. "Working for who did you say?"

I swallowed anger and nausea, estimating my chances of knocking the gun to one side and taking him barehanded. The chances seemed pretty slim. He was heavier than I was, and he held the automatic as if it had grown out of the end of his arm. You've seen too many movies, I told myself. I told him: "A motel owner on the coast. A man was shot in one of his rooms last night. I happened to check in there a few minutes later. The old boy hired me to look into the shooting."

"Who was it got himself ventilated?"

"He could be your brother," I said. "Do you have a brother?"

He lost his color. The center of his attention shifted from the gun to my face. The gun nodded. I knocked it up and sideways with a hard left uppercut. Its discharge burned the side of my face and drilled a hole in the wall. My right sank into his neck. The gun thumped the cork floor.



He went down but not out, his spread hand scrabbling for the gun, then closing on it. I kicked his wrist. He grunted but wouldn't let go of it. I threw a punch at the short hairs on the back of his neck. He took it and came up under it with the gun, shaking his head from side to side.

"Up with the hands now," he murmured. He was one of those men whose voices go soft and mild when they are in killing mood. He had the glassy impervious eyes of a killer. "Is Bart dead? My brother?"

"Very dead. He was shot in the belly."

"Who shot him?"

"That's the question."

"Who shot him?" he said in a quiet white-faced rage. The single eye of the gun stared emptily at my midriff. "It could happen to you, bud, here and now."

"A woman was with him. She took a quick powder after it happened."



"I heard you say a name to Alfie, the piano-player. Was it Fern?"

"It could have been."

"What do you mean, it could have been?"

"She was there in the room, apparently. If you can give me a description of her?"

His hard brown eyes looked past me. "I can do better than that. There's a picture of her on the wall behind you. Take a look at it. Keep those hands up high."

I shifted my feet and turned uneasily. The wall was blank. I heard him draw a breath and move, and tried to evade his blow. No use. It caught the back of my head. I pitched forward against the blank wall and slid down it into three dimensions of blankness.



The blankness coagulated into colored shapes. The shapes were half human and half beast and they dissolved and reformed. A dead man with a hairy breast climbed out of a hole and doubled and quadrupled. I ran away from them through a twisting tunnel which led to an echo chamber. Under the roaring surge of the nightmare music, a rasping tenor was saying:

"I figure it like this. Vario's tip was good. Bart found her in Acapulco, and he was bringing her back from there. She conned him into stopping off at this motel for the night. Bart always went for her."

"I didn't know that," a dry old voice put in. "This is very interesting news about Bart and Fern. You should have told me before about this. Then I would not have sent him for her and this would not have happened. Would it, Gino?"

My mind was still partly absent, wandering underground in the echoing caves. I couldn't recall the voices, or who they were talking about. I had barely sense enough to keep my eyes closed and go on listening. I was lying on my back on a hard surface. The voices were above me.

The tenor said: "You can't blame Bartolomeo. She's the one, the dirty treacherous lying little bitch."

"Calm yourself, Gino. I blame nobody. But more than ever now, we want her back, isn't that right?"

"I'll kill her," he said softly, almost wistfully.

"Perhaps. It may not be necessary now. I dislike promiscuous killing—"

"Since when, Angel?"

"Don't interrupt, it's not polite. I learned to put first things first. Now what is the most important thing? Why did we want her back in the first place? I will tell you: to shut her mouth. The government heard she left me, they wanted her to testify about my income. We wanted to find her first and shut her mouth, isn't that right?"

"I know how to shut her mouth," the younger man said very quietly.

"First we try a better way, my way. You learn when you're as old as I am there is a use for everything, and not to be wasteful. Not even wasteful with somebody else's blood. She shot your brother, right? So now we have something on her, strong enough to keep her mouth shut for good. She'd get off with second degree, with what she's got, but even that is five to ten in Tehachapi. I think all I need to do is tell her that. First we have to find her, eh?"

"I'll find her. Bart didn't have any trouble finding her."

"With Vario's tip to help him, no. But I think I'll keep you here with me, Gino. You're too hot-blooded, you and your brother both. I want her alive. Then I can talk to her, and then we'll see."

"You're going soft in your old age, Angel."

"Am I?" There was a light slapping sound, of a blow on flesh. "I have killed many men, for good reasons. So I think you will take that back."

"I take it back."

"And call me Mr. Funk. If I am so old, you will treat my gray hairs with respect. Call me Mr. Funk."

"Mr. Funk."

"All right, your friend here, does he know where Fern is?"



"I don't think so."

"Mr. Funk."

"Mr. Funk." Gino's voice was a whining snarl.

"I think he's coming to. His eyelids fluttered."

The toe of a shoe prodded my side. Somebody slapped my face a number of times. I opened my eyes and sat up. The back of my head was throbbing like an engine fueled by pain. Gino rose from a squatting position and stood over me.

"Stand up."

I rose shakily to my feet. I was in a stone-walled room with a high beamed ceiling, sparsely furnished with stiff old black oak chairs and tables. The room and the furniture seemed to have been built for a race of giants.

The man behind Gino was small and old and weary. He might have been an unsuccessful grocer or a super-annuated barkeep who had come to California for his health. Clearly his health was poor. Even in the stifling heat he looked pale and chilly, as if he had caught chronic death from one of his victims. He moved closer to me, his legs shuffling feebly in wrinkled blue trousers that bagged at the knees. His shrunken torso was swathed in a heavy blue turtleneck sweater. He had two days' beard on his chin, like moth-eaten gray plush.

"Gino informs me that you are investigating a shooting." His accent was Middle-European and very faint, as if he had forgotten his origins. "Where did this happen, exactly?"

"I don't think I'll tell you that. You can read it in the papers tomorrow night if you are interested."

"I am not prepared to wait. I am impatient. Do you know where Fern is?"

"I wouldn't be here if I did."

"But you know where she was last night."

"I couldn't be sure."

"Tell me anyway to the best of your knowledge."

"I don't think I will."

"He doesn't think he will," the old man said to Gino.

"I think you better let me out of here. Kidnaping is a tough rap. You don't want to die in the pen."

He smiled at me, with a tolerance more terrible than anger. His eyes were like thin stab-wounds filled with watery



blood. Shuffling unhurriedly to the head of the mahogany table behind him, he pressed a spot in the rug with the toe of one felt slipper. Two men in blue serge suits entered the room and stepped towards me briskly. They belonged to the race of giants it had been built for.

Gino moved behind me and reached to pin my arms. I pivoted, landed one short punch, and took a very hard counter below the belt. Something behind me slammed my kidneys with the heft of a trailer truck bumper. I turned on weakening legs and caught a chin with my elbow. Gino's fist, or one of the beams from the ceiling, landed on my neck. My head rang like a gong. Under its clangor, Angel was saying pleasantly:

"Where was Fern last night?"

I didn't say.

The men in blue serge held me upright by the arms while Gino used my head as a



punching bag, I rolled with his lefts and rights as well as I could, but his timing improved and mine deteriorated. His face wavered and receded. At intervals Angel inquired politely if I was willing to assist him now. I asked myself confusedly in the hail of fists what I was holding out for or who I was protecting. Probably I was holding out for myself. It seemed important to me not to give in to violence. But my identity was dissolving and receding like the face in front of me.

I concentrated on hating Gino's face. That kept it clear and steady for a while: a stupid square-jawed face barred by a single black-brow, two close-set brown eyes staring glassily. His fists continued to rock me like an air-hammer.

Finally Angel placed a clawed hand on his shoulder, and nodded to my handlers. They deposited me in a chair. It swung on an invisible wire from the ceiling in great circles. It swung out wide over the desert, across a bleak horizon, into darkness.

I came to, cursing. Gino was standing over me again. There was an empty



water-glass in his hand, and my face was dripping. Angel spoke up beside him, with a trace of irritation in his voice:

"You stand up good under punishment. Why go to all the trouble, though? I want a little information, that is all. My friend, my little girl-friend, ran away. I'm impatient to get her back."

"You're going about it the wrong way."



Gino leaned close, and laughed harshly. He shattered the glass on the arm of my chair, held the jagged base up to my eyes. Fear ran through me, cold and light in my veins. My eyes were my connection with everything. Blindness would be the end of me, I closed my eyes, shutting out the cruel edges of the broken thing in his hand.

"Nix, Gino," the old man said. "I have a better idea, as usual. There is heat on, remember."

They retreated to the far side of the table and conferred there in low voices. The young man left the room. The old man came back to me. His storm troopers stood one on each side of me, looking down at him in ignorant awe.

"What is your name, young fellow?"

I told him. My mouth was puffed and lipping, tongue tangled in ropes of blood.

"I like a young fellow who can take it, Mr. Archer. You say that you're a detective. You find people for a living, is that right?"

"I have a client," I said.

"Now you have another. Whoever he is, I can buy and sell him, believe me. Fifty times over." His thin blue hands scoured each other. They made a sound like two dry sticks rubbing together on a dead tree.

"Narcotics?" I said. "Are you the wheel in the heroin racket? I've heard of you."

His watery eyes veiled themselves like a bird's. "Now don't ask foolish questions, or I will lose my respect for you entirely."

"That would break my heart."

"Then comfort yourself with this." He brought an old-fashioned purse out of his hip pocket, abstracted a crumpled bill and smoothed it out on my knee. It was a five-hundred-dollar bill.

"This girl of mine you are going to find for me, she is young and foolish. I am old and foolish, to have trusted her. No matter. Find her for me and bring her back and I will give you another bill like this one. Take it."



"Take it," one of my guards repeated. "Mr. Funk said for you to take it."

I took it. "You're wasting your money. I don't even know what she looks like. I don't know anything about her."

"Gino is bringing a picture. He came across her last fall at a recording studio in Hollywood where Alfie had a date. He gave her an audition and took her on at the club, more for her looks than for the talent she had. As a singer she flopped. But she is a pretty little thing, about five foot four, nice figure, dark brown hair, big hazel eyes. I found a use for her." Lechery flickered briefly in his eyes and went out,

"You find a use for everything."

"That is good economics. I often think if I wasn't what I am, I would make a good economist. Nothing would go to waste." He paused and dragged his dying old mind back to the subject: "She was here a couple of months, then she ran out on me, silly girl. I heard last week that she was in Acapulco, and the federal Grand Jury was going to subpoena her. I have tax troubles, Mr. Archer, all my life I have tax troubles. Unfortunately I let Fern help with my books a little bit. She could do me great harm. So I sent Bart to Mexico to bring her back. But I meant no harm to her. I still intend her no harm, even now. A little talk, a little realistic discussion with Fern, that is all that will be necessary. So even the shooting of my good friend Bart serves its purpose. Where did it happen, by the way?"

The question flicked out like a hook on the end of a long line.

"In San Diego," I said, "at a place near the airport: the Mission Motel."

He smiled paternally. "Now you are showing good sense."

Gino came back with a silver-framed photograph in his hand. He handed it to Angel, who passed it on to me. It was a studio portrait, of the kind intended for publicity cheesecake. On a black velvet divan, against an artificial night sky, a young woman reclined in a gossamer robe that was split to show one bent leg. Shadows accentuated the lines of her body and the fine bones in her face. Under the heavy makeup which widened

the mouth and darkened the half-closed eyes, I recognized Ella Salanda. The picture was signed in white, in the lower right-hand corner. "To my Angel, with all my love, Fern."



sickness assailed me, worse than the sickness induced by Gino's fists. Angel breathed into my face: "Fern Dee is a stage name. Her real name I never learned.

She told me one time that if her family knew where she was they would die of shame." He chuckled drily, "She will not want them to know that she killed a man."

I drew away from his charnel-house breath. My guards escorted me out. Gino started to follow, but Angel called him back.

"Don't wait to hear from me," the old man said after me. "I expect to hear from you."

The building stood on a rise in the open desert. It was huge and turreted, like somebody's idea of a castle in Spain. The last rays of the sun washed its walls in purple light and cast long shadows across its barren acreage. It was surrounded by a ten-foot hurricane fence topped with three strands of barbed wire.

Palm Springs was a clutter of white stones in the distance, diamonded by an occasional light. The dull red sun was balanced like a glowing cigar-butt on the rim of the hills above the town. A man with a bulky shoulder harness under his brown suede windbreaker drove me towards it. The sun fell out of sight, and darkness gathered like an impalpable ash on the desert, like a column of blue-gray smoke towering into the sky.

The sky was blue-black and swarming with stars when I got back to Emerald Bay. A black Cadillac followed me out of Palm Springs. I lost it in the winding streets of Pasadena. So far as I could see, I had lost it for good.

The neon Mexican lay peaceful under the stars. A smaller sign at his feet asserted that there was No Vacancy. The lights in the long low stucco buildings



behind him shone brightly. The office door was open behind a screen, throwing a barred rectangle of light on the gravel. I stepped into it, and froze.

Behind the registration desk in the office, a woman was avidly reading a magazine. Her shoulders and bosom were massive. Her hair was blond, piled on her head in coroneted braids. There were rings on her fingers, a triple strand of cultured pearls around her thick white throat. She was the woman Donny had described to me.

I pulled the screen door open and said rudely: "Who are you?"

She glanced up twisting her mouth in a sour grimace. "Well! I'll thank you to keep a civil tongue in your head."

"Sorry. I thought I'd seen you before somewhere."

"Well, you haven't." She looked me over coldly. "What happened to your face, anyway?"

"I had a little plastic surgery done. By an amateur surgeon."

She clucked disapprovingly. "If you're looking for a room, we're full up for the night. I don't believe I'd rent you a room even if we weren't. Look at your clothes."

"Uh-huh. Where's Mr. Salanda?"

"Is it any business of yours?"

"He wants to see me. I'm doing a job for him."

"What kind of a job?"

I mimicked her: "Is it any business of yours?" I was irritated. Under her mounds of flesh she had a personality as thin and hard and abrasive as a rasp.

"Watch who you're getting flip with, sonny boy." She rose, and her shadow loomed immense across the back door of the room. The magazine fell closed on the desk: it was *Teen-age Confessions*. "I am Mrs. Salanda. Are you a handyman?"

"A sort of one," I said. "I'm a garbage collector in the moral field. You look as if you could use me."

The crack went over her head. "Well, you're wrong. And I don't think my husband hired you, either. This is a respectable motel."

"Uh-huh. Are you Ella's mother?"

"I should say not. That little snip is no daughter of mine."

"Her stepmother?"

"Mind your own business. You better get out of here. The police are keeping a close watch on this place tonight, if you're planning any tricks."

"Where's Ella now?"

"I don't know and I don't care. She's probably gallivanting off around the countryside. It's all she's good for. One day at home in the last six months, that's a fine record for a young unmarried girl."



Her face was thick and bloated with anger against her stepdaughter. She went on talking blindly, as if she had forgotten me entirely: "I told her father he was an old fool to take her back. How does he know what she's been up to? I say let the ungrateful filly go and fend for herself."

"Is that what you say, Mabel?" Salanda had softly opened the door behind her. He came forward into the room, doubly dwarfed by her blond magnitude. "I say if it wasn't for you, my dear, Ella wouldn't have been driven away from home in the first place."

She turned on him in a blubbing rage. He drew himself up tall and reached to snap his fingers under her nose. "Go back into the house. You are a disgrace to women, a disgrace to motherhood."

"I'm not *her* mother, thank God."

"Thank God," he echoed shaking his fist at her. She retreated like a schooner under full sail, menaced by a gunboat. The door closed on her. Salanda turned to me:

"I'm sorry, Mr. Archer. I have difficulties with my wife, I am ashamed to say it. I was an imbecile to marry again. I gained a senseless hulk of flesh, and lost my daughter. Old imbecile!" he denounced himself, wagging his great head sadly. "I married in hot blood. Sexual passion has always been my downfall. It runs in my family, this insane hunger for bloneness and stupidity and



size." He spread his arms in a wide and futile embrace on emptiness.

"Forget it."

"If I could." He came closer to examine my face. "You are injured, Mr. Archer. Your mouth is damaged. There is blood on your chin."

"I was in a slight brawl."

"On my account?"

"On my own. But I think it's time you leveled with me."

"Leveled with you?"

"Told me the truth. You knew who was shot last night, and who shot him, and why."

He touched my arm, with a quick, tentative grace. "I have only one daughter, Mr. Archer, only the one child. It was my duty to defend her, as best as I could."

"Defend her from what?"

"From shame, from the police, from prison." He flung one arm out, indicating the whole range of human disaster. "I am a man of honor, Mr. Archer. But private honor stands higher with me than public honor. The man was abducting my daughter. She brought him here in the hope of being rescued. Her last hope."

"I think that's true. You should have told me this before."

"I was alarmed, upset. I feared your intentions. Any minute the police were due to arrive."

"But you had a right to shoot him. It wasn't even a crime. The crime was his."

"I didn't know that then. The truth came out to me gradually. I feared that Ella was involved with him." His flat black gaze sought my face and rested on it. "However, I did not shoot him, Mr.

Archer. I was not even here at the time. I told you that this morning, and you may take my word for it."

"Was Mrs. Salanda here?"

"No sir, she was not. Why should you ask me that?"

"Donny described the woman who checked in with the dead man. The description fits your wife."

"Donny was lying. I told him to give a false description of the woman. Apparently he was unequal to the task of inventing one."

"Can you prove that she was with you?"

"Certainly I can. We had reserved seats at the theatre. Those who sat around us can testify that the seats were not empty. Mrs. Salanda and I, we are not an inconspicuous couple." He smiled wryly.

"Ella killed him then."

He neither assented, nor denied it. "I was hoping that you were on my side, my side and Ella's. Am I wrong?"

"I'll have to talk to her, before I know myself. Where is she?"

"I do not know, Mr. Archer, sincerely I do not know. She went away this afternoon, after the policemen questioned her. They were suspicious, but we managed to soothe their suspicions. They did not know that she had just come home, from another life, and I did not tell them. Mabel wanted to tell them. I silenced her." His white teeth clicked together.

"What about Donny?"

"They took him down to the station for questioning. He told them nothing damaging. Donny can appear very stupid when he wishes. He has the reputation of

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You've got dandruff  
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an idiot, but he is not so dumb. Donny has been with me for many years. He has a deep devotion for my daughter. I got him released tonight."

"You should have taken my advice," I said, "taken the police into your confidence. Nothing would have happened to you. The dead man was a mobster, and what he was doing amounts to kidnaping. Your daughter was a witness against his boss."

"She told me that. I am glad that it is true. Ella has not always told me the truth. She has been a hard girl to bring up, without a good mother to set her an example. Where has she been these last six months, Mr. Archer?"

"Singing in a night club in Palm Springs. Her boss was a racketeer."

"A racketeer?" His mouth and nose screwed up, as if he sniffed the odor of corruption.

"Where she was isn't important, compared with where she is now. The boss is still after her. He hired me to look for her."

Salanda regarded me with fear and dislike, as if the odor originated in me. "You let him hire you?"

"It was my best chance of getting out of his place alive. I'm not his boy, if that's what you mean."

"You ask me to believe you?"

"I'm telling you. Ella is in danger. As a matter of fact, we all are." I didn't tell him about the second black Cadillac. Gino would be driving it, wandering the night roads with a ready gun in his armpit and revenge corroding his heart.

"My daughter is aware of the danger," he said. "She warned me of it."

"She must have told you where she was going."

"No. But she may be at the beach house. The house where Donny lives. I will come with you."

"You stay here. Keep your doors locked. If any strangers show and start prowling the place, call the police."

He bolted the door behind me as I went out. Yellow traffic lights cast wan reflections on the asphalt. Streams of cars went by to the north, to the south. To

the west, where the sea lay, a great black emptiness opened under the stars. The beach house sat on its white margin, a little over a mile from the motel.

For the second time that day, I knocked on the warped kitchen door. There was light behind it, shining through the cracks. A shadow obscured the light.

"Who is it?" Donny said. Fear or some other emotion had filled his mouth with pebbles.

"You know me, Donny."

The door groaned on its hinges. He gestured dumbly to me to come in, his face a white blur. When he turned his head, and the light from the living room caught his face, I saw that grief was the emotion that marked it. His eyes were swollen as if he had been crying. More than ever he resembled a dilapidated boy whose growing pains had never paid off in manhood.

"Anybody with you?"

Sounds of movement in the living room answered my question. I brushed him aside and went in. Ella Salanda was bent over an open suitcase on the camp cot. She straightened, her mouth thin, eyes wide and dark. The .38 automatic in her hand gleamed dully under the naked bulb suspended from the ceiling.



"I'm getting out of here," she said, "and you're not going to stop me."

"I'm not sure I want to try. Where are you going, Fern?"

Donny spoke behind me, in his grief-thickened voice: "She's going away from me. She promised to be my girl—"

"Shut up, stupid." Her voice cut like a



lash, and Donny gasped as if the lash had been laid across his back.

"What did she tell you to do, Donny? Tell me just what you did."

"When she checked in last night with the fella from Detroit, she made a sign I wasn't to let on I knew her. Later on she left me a note. She wrote it with a lipstick on a piece of paper towel. I still got it hidden, in the kitchen."

"What did she write in the note?"

He lingered behind me, fearful of the gun in the girl's hand, more fearful of her anger.

She said: "Don't be crazy, Donny. He doesn't know a thing, not a thing. He can't do anything to either of us."

"I don't care what happens, to me or anybody else," the anguished voice said behind me. "You're running out on me, breaking your promise to me. I always knew it was too good to be true. Now I just don't care any more."

"I care," she said. "I care what happens to me." Her eyes shifted to me, above the unwavering gun. "I won't stay here. I'll shoot you if I have to."

"It shouldn't be necessary. Put it down, Fern. It's Bartolomeo's gun, isn't it? I found the shells to fit it in his glove compartment."

"How do you know so much?"

"I talked to Angel."

"Is he here?" Panic whined in her voice.

"No. I came alone."

"You better leave the same way then, while you can go under your own power."

"I'm staying. You need protection, whether you know it or not. And I need information. Donny, go in the kitchen and bring me that note."

"Don't do it, Donny. I'm warning you."

His sneakered feet made soft indecisive sounds. I advanced on the girl, talking quietly and steadily: "You conspired to kill a man, but you don't have to be afraid. He had it coming. Tell the whole story to the cops, and my guess is they won't even book you. Hell, you can even become famous. The government wants you as a witness in a tax case."

"What kind of a case?"

"A tax case against Angel. It's probably the only kind of rap they can pin on him. You can send him up for the rest of his life like Capone. You'll be a heroine, Fern."

"Don't call me Fern. I hate that name." There were sudden tears in her eyes. "I hate everything connected with that name. I hate myself."

"You'll hate yourself more if you don't put down that gun. Shoot me and it all starts over again. The cops will be on your trail, Angel's troopers will be gunning for you."

Now only the cot was between us, the cot and the unsteady gun facing me above it.

"This is the turning point," I said. "You've made a lot of bum decisions and almost ruined yourself, playing footsie with the vilest men there are. You can go on the way you have been, getting in deeper until you end up in a refrigerated drawer, or you can come back out of it now, into a decent life."

"A decent life? Here? With my father married to Mabel?"

"I don't think Mabel will last much longer. Anyway, I'm not Mabel. I'm on your side."

I waited. She dropped the gun on the blanket. I scooped it up and turned to Donny:

"Let me see that note."

He disappeared through the kitchen door, head and shoulders drooping on the long stalk of his body.

"What could I do?" the girl said. "I was caught. It was Bart or me. All the way up from Acapulco I planned how I could get away. He held a gun in my side when we crossed the border; the same way when we stopped for gas or to eat at the the drive-ins. I realized he had to be killed. My father's motel looked like my only chance. So I talked Bart into staying there with me overnight. He had no idea who the place belonged to. I didn't know what I was going to do. I only knew it had to be something drastic. Once I was back with Angel in the desert, that was the end of me. Even if he didn't kill me, it meant I'd have to go on living with



him. Anything was better than that. So I wrote a note to Donny in the bathroom, and dropped it out the window. He was always crazy about me."



Her mouth had grown softer. She looked remarkably young and virginal. The faint blue hollows under her eyes were dewy. "Donny shot Bart with Bart's own gun. He had more nerve than I had, I lost my nerve when I went back into the room this morning. I didn't know about the blood in the bathroom. It was the last straw."

She was wrong. Something crashed in the kitchen. A cool draft swept the living room. A gun spoke twice, out of sight. Donny fell backwards through the doorway, a piece of brownish paper clutched in his hand. Blood gleamed on his shoulder like a red badge.

I stepped behind the cot and pulled the girl down to the floor with me. Gino came through the door, his two-colored sports shoe stepping on Donny's laboring chest. I shot the gun out of his hand. He floundered back against the wall, clutching at his wrist.

I sighted carefully for my second shot, until the black bar of his eyebrows was steady in the sights of the .38. The hole it

made was invisible. Gino fell loosely forward, prone on the floor beside the man he had killed.

Ella Salanda ran across the room. She knelt, and cradled Donny's head in her lap. Incredibly, he spoke, in a loud sighing voice:

"You won't go away again, Ella? I did what you told me. You promised."

"Sure I promised. I won't leave you, Donny. Crazy man. Crazy fool."

"You like me better than you used to? Now?"

"I like you, Donny. You're the most man there is."

She held the poor insignificant head in her hands. He sighed, and his life came out bright-colored at the mouth. It was Donny who went away.

His hand relaxed, and I read the lipstick note she had written him on a piece of porous tissue:

"Donny: This man will kill me unless you kill him first. His gun will be in his clothes on the chair beside the bed. Come in and get it at midnight and shoot to kill. Good luck. I'll stay and be your girl if you do this, just like you always wished. Love. Ella."

I looked at the pair on the floor. She was rocking his lifeless head against her breast. Beside them, Gino looked very small and lonely, a dummy leaking darkness from his brow.

Donny had his wish and I had mine. I wondered what Ella's was.

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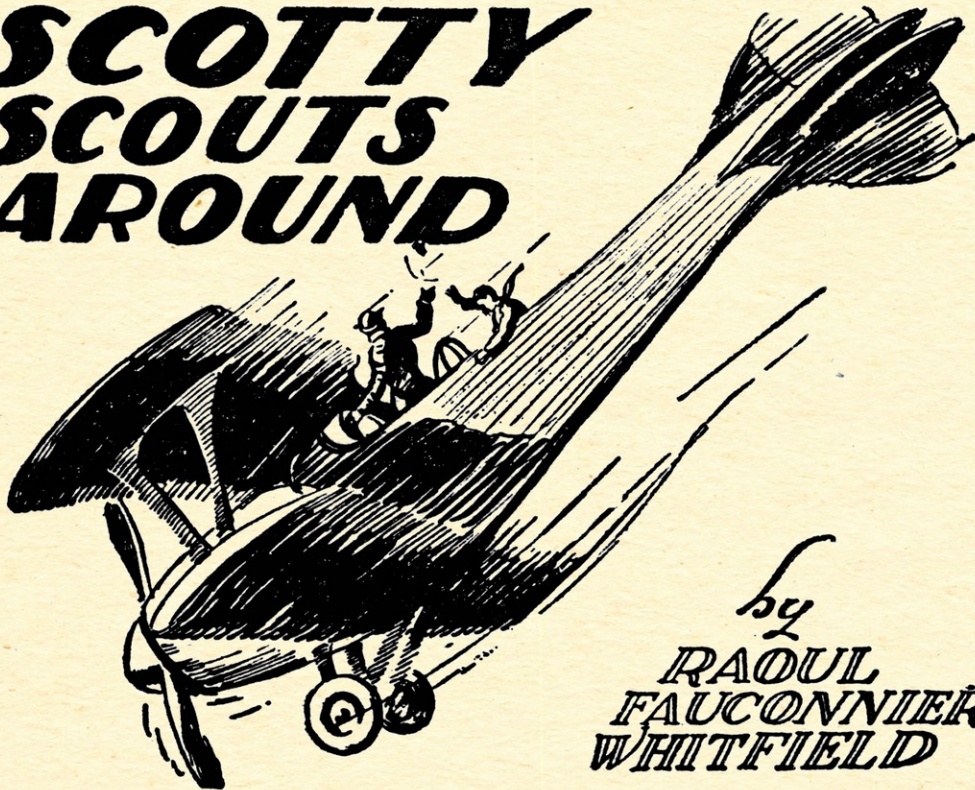
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## Only in Black Mask!



# SCOTTY SCOUTS AROUND



by  
**RAOUL  
FAUCONNIER  
WHITFIELD**

**S**COTTY possessed a sense of humor, which was fortunate at the moment. Glancing over the side of the fuselage, he noted the rough country below, the winding blue ribbon which was a river half a mile in width. The battered J.H.6 glided down, and Scotty spoke to Bing Russell through the 'phones.

"What do you say, Bing? River or that alfalfa field? Take it wet or dry? The engine's as dead as that there breed who tried to draw on you last week in Tia Juana."

Bing chuckled. Scotty's mechanic and partner in crime—if it were a crime to take chances in life—stared over the side of the 'plane's fuselage also.

"Up to you, Scotty," he muttered. "Busted feed line, I'd say. Get us down right side up and I'll fix it up in an hour or so. I'd favor the alfalfa field, big boy."

"Alfalfa she is!" Scotty replied cheerfully, and circled the 'plane down in

increasingly steep banks. The wind sang through wires and struts; she vibrated severely, but she held together. And that was about all that Scotty required a ship to do. He crashed them frequently, and usually he and Bing got them into the air again. Patched up a bit, perhaps flying with a wing down—but in the air just the same.

The ribbon of blue rose toward them. It widened. And the particular, level patch of alfalfa upon which Scotty had his eyes, rose with the river. Scotty chuckled as he made a final bank around into the wind.

"We'll be sure and hit the right side of the river Bing," he stated. "Mexico ain't so healthy for you this season."

Bing grunted. Tia Juana had become too civilized to suit him. It had gotten so you couldn't pot a drunken half-breed, who had taken offense at nothing and was trying to pull a gun, and get away with it without too much fuss.



Scotty pulled back slowly on the joystick. The J.H.6 settled nicely. The field was level and looked pretty smooth. Drifting along at a speed of about forty miles an hour, the front wheels of the 'plane struck earth.

The ship bounced once, settled down again. And then Scotty saw it. Savagely he jerk'd the joy-stick back against his khaki shirt. But he was too late. The ridge raced toward them; the ship's front wheels struck hard against the soft earth. Over she went, with Scotty still holding the stick against his shirt, and with one arm flung up to protect his face. There was a splintering of the propeller, the ship stood up on her nose, swayed back and forth for a second or two, and then toppled gently over on her back.

Scotty wriggled himself out of his upside down position in the front cockpit. He swore gently but with considerable feeling. Bing Russell emerged from the rear cockpit, a broad grin on his browned face.

"You're one hell of a pilot!" he commented sarcastically. "The river would have been better, Scotty."

Scotty continued to mutter to himself. His right leg hurt; it had been bruised in the turnover. He examined the ship. They were carrying an extra propeller back of the rear cockpit, and the wings could be patched. At least the accident had not been fatal.

A grin appeared on his face. He regarded Bing for several seconds in silence. Bing had engaged in rolling a cigarette. Scotty followed suit. Finally he spoke.

"Bing," he said earnestly, "I'm getting old. But the alfalfa hid that ridge of earth. My eyes might have picked it up five years ago. I'm getting old."

Bing nodded. "In another ten or fifteen years you'll have to quit the flying' game," he remarked with due seriousness. "And then I'll let you ride in the back seat with me."

Scotty grunted. "When I can't fly 'em myself—then's the time I stay down below," he said slowly. "The next question is—how are we going to get the old girl over on her stomach?"

Bing shook his head. "You an' me—we can't do it," he replied. "But I noticed a ranch house off to the north. About three miles, I'd say. Suppose I go over and shake out a few of the boys. You sit tight and solioquize on your sins, including this turnover."

Scotty grinned. "Think you can hike six miles without getting blisters?" he questioned gently. "Go ahead, Bing—it'll be dark in a few hours. And we're supposed to be at Tracy so's to stunt 'em up in the morning."

Bing nodded. He glanced at the sun, which was sinking in the hills off to the west, and moved off. Scotty continued to regard the ship. Several wires had snapped in the crash. He decided to go over the ground for a short distance. It might be dark by the time they got off. He limped slowly away from the ship, walking toward the west, from which direction the wind was blowing. He would get off into the wind, and that section of the field must be level. Another ridge like the one they hit would mean a worse smash than the one they had just been through.



nce he turned and looked over toward the spot he had last seen Bing. His partner was out of sight; it wouldn't be long before he'd be back with some aid.

They were lucky to have gotten out of the thing as easily as they had. And he didn't want to miss the carnival at Tracy. It would mean a nice little sum of money, and there would be more to be picked up by joy-riding the ranch-hands.

Suddenly Scotty stiffened. The sharp crack of a rifle had drifted down on the wind. At first he thought it might have been Bing shooting, but he realized instantly that the rifles were back in the 'plane. Bing had his Colt, but this crackle of a weapon had not been revolver fire. Scotty knew—he was an old-timer.

He waited, listening. There was no other sound. The wind sighed gently through the tall grass. Scotty started to walk forward again. And then another sound came to him. This time it was the



sound of a horse. The horse was running free and fast. Scotty halted.



quarter mile ahead was a slight rise. The horse came over the rise, and Scotty uttered an exclamation of surprise. The rider was slumping forward in the saddle, swaying dangerously. Even as Scotty watched he suddenly tumbled off his mount, disappeared in the grass. The horse sheered off, circled around and vanished.

Scotty started toward the spot where the rider had fallen, moving at a trot. He knew now that the rifle shot had been fired at this man. He was wounded, that was sure, and his mount was badly frightened. Scotty drew his own revolver as he went along.

A groan brought him to the man, who was lying on his side. Scotty turned him over, lifted him to a sitting position.

"All right, old fellow," he muttered. "What happened? Who shot you?"

The wounded man turned glazed eyes toward the pilot. A thin stream of red trickled down from his forehead.

"Menzie's!" he muttered thickly. "Get Menzie's! Runnin' chinks across the river. Busted into him alone. Thought I was Hinkey. He got me, damn him! Tell the bunch at—"

His body shook in a convulsion. He tried to speak again, and then collapsed in Scotty's arms. Gently the pilot laid him down on the hillside. Death had come swiftly.

Scotty rose. The thing had shaken him, but he acted quickly. He limped on up the slope of the hill. From the crest he had a fair view. But he saw no rider. The killer had gotten out of sight, and pretty quickly, too.

Scotty drew a deep breath. The last time he had been down at San Diego the Chief had talked with him about chink-running. And he had mentioned this man Menzie's. A renegade half-breed who had tried a little of everything that was without the law.

"Menzie's!" Scotty pronounced the name slowly. "I wonder who the poor

devil is that he got? Said something about Hinkey—sheriff or government agent, I figure. Damn!"

Scotty gazed toward the Rio. He was sure that Menzie's had ridden in that direction. South. And not more than six or seven miles south, at that. The pilot shook his head slowly.

He rolled a cigarette. It looked very much as though he had blundered into something. Scotty took a hand in almost anything that savored of adventure. And when the Chief, down at San Diego, hadn't anything particular on his mind, Scotty flew the carnivals and fairs, joy-rode passengers. But this killing, the pilot figured, would shortly be on the Chief's mind. Scotty knew the Chief; they had been in the same squadron in France. The Chief had been the Major in command. Scotty had been a lieutenant, and a good one.

"Yeah," Scotty remarked to himself. "Banning would sure want us in on this deal. Guess it's up to me and Bing to kinda' sit in without orders."

Scotty turned back toward the dead man lying down on the slope of the hill. The man's horse was out of sight. The pilot nodded his head as he walked slowly along.

"Yeah," he muttered for the second time. "I figure this is where Scotty sorta' scouts around."

## II

**H**INKEY, who was a deputy-sheriff with headquarters at Tracy, looked astonishingly like the dead man. Scotty saw readily why Menzie's had made the mistake. And Hinkey enlightened him, while Bing was working on the righted ship, as to the chink-runners' motive for the killing.

"You see," the deputy stated, "this Menzie's is a bad hombre. We've had the goods on him for some time, but we ain't been able to ride him down. He works mostly at night. Some of the boys have been hearin' a flyin' machine motor, and I figure he's been bringin' the chinks across the border by air. Sent in a couple of reports last week to the government. But I got two of Menzie's gang a few



weeks ago. And we persuaded them to talk. They told all they knew, which showed us that Menzies was at the head of this Chink-runnin' outfit, and that he was workin' a pretty nice system. But the breed got word that I'd hauled in these two birds—so he's out to get me. Just made a mess of it, that's all. Young Callow and me look kinda' similar. Tough, too—the boy was a good kid. And now we got a murder charge against Menzies."

Scotty nodded. His face had hardened.

"We've got the charge," he said slowly, "and it's up to us to get the murderer. Bing and me'll help you fellows all we can. If Menzies is workin' with a 'plane we may be able to help a lot. Bing'll have the old girl ready in an hour now—and we'll scout around over the river."

Hinke y smiled grimly. "Don't take any chances if you run into Menzies or his gang," he warned. "He's a killer, and you'll be justified in shooting on sight. That's about what he did—back over the hill."

Scotty's eyes narrowed. He shook hands with the deputy, and waved to the ranch hands who were riding slowly off, one of them holding the body of Callow astride of his mount.

When they were out of sight he walked over beside the engine of the J.H.6. Bing, his face streaked with grime, was about finished with the repairing of the broken feed-line.

"Pretty rough on that boy," he commented. "Lucky you got to him in time to hear who did the shooting, and also lucky this Hinkey was at the ranch."

Scotty nodded. "Lucky I set the old girl down here," he returned slowly. "How soon on the take-off, Bing?"

Bing inspected the engine. "Half, three-quarters of an hour," he replied. "Which way, Scotty?"

"We'll look the Rio over—fly across and see if we can get a line on this Menzies. And then we'll head over for Tracy. Make anyone watching think that we've gone along. We can drift back above the clouds, and be around tonight." Scotty glanced above him. The clouds were thickening, but they were

white—and he saw no signs of rain.

Bing grunted. "Seems like we never do get to the carnivals any more," he grumbled. "I'm gettin' kinda homesick for a loop or two. Ain't much excitement jaunting around out here in the open spaces and tinkerin' with engines."

Scotty chuckled. "A nice guy, you are!" he commented. "Just after sending a breed over the long trail—and then you kick about things bein' tame."

Bing grinned. "That was last week," he replied briefly. "I'm talkin' about *this* week, Scotty. Now, if I should happen to run across this here killer—"

"Just stick your paws up and inform me as to what you'd do!"



Scotty whirled around. Bing straightened and raised his hands slowly above his head. Facing them, a gun in each hand, stood a brown-skinned individual. He

wore a sombrero carelessly tilted forward, a tight chin-strap holding it firmly upon his head. His eyes were narrowed, and there was a short scar on his left cheek.

Scotty's hands moved upward. The expression in the eyes of the gentleman with the guns brooked no foolishness. A spotted pony grazed a short distance away, and the animal and rider had certainly come up noiselessly.

"Well?" The man spoke in a deep voice. "My name's Menzies—and I happened to hear it spoken carelessly. Just toss your shooters down at my feet—and don't make a break, gents. That's nice."

Neither Scotty nor Bing had hesitated. Both their Colts dropped to the ground at Menzies' feet. The chink-runner was smiling evilly.

Scotty forced himself to be calm. It was certain that Menzies had the upper hand, and he had the appearance of being a murderer. Bing wet his lips nervously. There was a sort of frozen smile on the mechanic's face.

"Talkin' out of turn, you was, eh?" Menzies stared at Bing. "Didn't figure I'd



drop in on you, I guess. Which one of you flies the 'plane?"

Scotty spoke as calmly as he could. His eyes were upon Menzies'.

"I pilot her," he said. "She's not in commission right now. Had a crash."

There was a grim smile playing about Menzies' lips. His eyes moved from Bing to Scotty.

"Take my advice, Mister," the chink-runner stated in a hard tone, "and see that she's in flyin' shape pronto. I'm aimin' to go somewhere pretty quick—and you're takin' me there, savvy?"

Scotty nodded his head slowly. He sensed the fact that argument was foolish. The man was a killer, and they were weaponless.

"Finish up your job, Bing." Scotty turned toward the mechanic. "He's got us—we'll have to follow instructions."

"Good dope, brother." The chink-runner chuckled. "No tricks on the 'plane, boys. I know ships. Use two of them in my business."

Scotty felt his heart beat faster. The man was flying chinks across, then! At least, he *had* flown them across, He did not doubt for a moment that the man was acquainted with a 'plane.

"I don't aim to be fooled with any," Menzies continued. "Me and the sheriff of this county ain't on speakin' terms. Had a runnin' fight with one of his deputies a little while back. He's layin' on the grass around here somewhere—was ridin' mighty loose in the saddle when I seen him last. Get that? No funny work, gents!"

Scotty shook his head. Before he had time to think of what the consequences might be, he had spoken.

"You didn't shoot a deputy," he stated. "That was a boy named Callow. He was ridin'—"

Scotty checked himself. Menzies' eyes widened, his thick lips hung apart. He stared at Scotty. When he spoke his voice was incredulous.

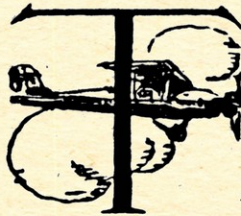
"Callow?" he muttered. "Jeff Callow's son? The old man's kid! Hell!"

Scotty nodded. It was evident that his information had been news to Menzies, and not welcome news, at that.

"Jeff Callow's kid!" Menzies jerked his guns rigid, leveled them threateningly at the pilot. "You givin' it to me straight, mister?"

Scotty nodded his head again. Menzies took a quick look about him. He whistled in a low manner, and the pony, pricking up his ears, trotted nearer.

Menzies showed his teeth in a grim smile. He relaxed his grip on the guns again, glanced about him. Scotty, as the man half-turned, leaped at him.



he two men went to the ground together. Scotty battering one of the weapons, the one Menzies had been holding in his left hand, from the chink-runner's clutching fingers. There was a terrific detonation in his ears—but Menzies had missed him with the first bullet in his right-hand gun.

They rolled over and over. Scotty gripped Menzies' right wrist, clung to it desperately. And then he felt the chink-runner relax his grip upon his neck, and staggered to his feet. Menzies groaned and became motionless.

Bing chuckled. "That's the second time a wrench has come in handy," he muttered. "Feel all right, Scotty?"

Scotty nodded. He moved toward the unconscious Menzies, and as he did so there came the sound of hoof-beats from beyond the hill to the west.

"We'll give 'em a surprise," Bing chuckled. "Got a murderer cold. Mebbe there's a reward for this chink—"

"The rifles, Bing—the rifles!" Scotty's voice was hoarse, raised. "This isn't the ranch bunch. It looks like—"

He stopped, and as Bing ran toward the ship, he lifted his own Colt from the grass. Six riders were coming down the grade, all of them rough-looking characters. They came on fast, and as the leader reined up before Scotty, the pilot raised his weapon.

The leader's eyes traveled down to the silent form of Menzies. The chink-runner had rolled over on his back, and recognition was easy.



"Who you got here?" The leader was a short, heavy-set man, with a thick growth of beard upon his face. His eyes were bloodshot and small.

Scotty returned the man's stare. He nodded to Bing who stepped out from the shelter of the 'plane with two rifles in his hands.


"A murderer," Scotty replied grimly. "Man by the name of Menzies. We're flyin' him in to San Diego. Any other questions?"

The leader of the five men threw back his head and laughed, loud and heartily. He seemed much amused.

"That's a good one!" he roared. "Hear that, boys? This gent's takin' him into San Diego! Now what do you know about that, eh?"

Several of the mounted men joined their leader in laughter. Scotty stood beside Bing, his face hard.

"Keep your hands away from your guns!" Scotty warned. "We'll shoot the first—"

The leader spurred his horse savagely. The animal plunged straight at Scotty, who dodged to one side, firing at the rider. He heard the crack of Bing's rifle, and then something struck him a terrific blow on the side of the head. There seemed to be shooting on all sides, and as he swayed and fell, he heard Bing cry out:

"The others, Scotty—the others!"

He tried to fight off the blackness which engulfed him, but it was useless. Slowly he sank to the grass. All sounds merged into a steady hum. And then there was complete oblivion.

### III

WHEN Scotty recovered consciousness he was aware of two things. There was a splitting pain in his head, and his hands and feet were bound tightly. He rolled over with a groan.

"Easy, Scotty—easy!"

Bing's voice came to him in a low whisper. It was quite dark, but as his eyes

became accustomed to the darkness he could distinguish the dim outline of the J.H.6 not far away.

"What—what happened?" he managed in a weak voice.



Bing rolled nearer. Scotty saw that he had a cut over his left eye, and that his mouth was badly swollen.

"Talk low," Bing warned. "Some of the

boys from the ranch rode back this way and ran into a warm reception. This is part of Menzies' outfit. And there's something up. They've got guards posted and Menzies and that other tough-looking gent are sleepin' a bit."

Scotty tried to sit upright. He was very dizzy and his head hurt. He relaxed again.

"You mean you think they're going to run some chinks over?" Scotty whispered. "They wouldn't have the nerve—not after all this shootin'."

Bing nodded his head. "I don't know just what they're up to," he whispered, "but something is coming off. They're short of horses. Menzies' mount was killed in the scrap. They got one of the ranch boys, and there are two of the chink-runnin' outfit pretty badly wounded. I got an idea that Menzies is going to have one of us fly him back across the Rio before the boys come back with reinforcements."

Scotty groaned. "You tied?"

"Tighter'n my last year's shirt," Bing replied. "I tangled with one of the gang, and then two more piled on. Ain't feelin' any too lively, at that."

There was a stirring of forms near the 'plane, and Scotty heard the deep voice of Menzies' muttering oaths as he rose to his feet. He walked toward them, glaring down at Scotty, who raised himself with an effort.

"Pretty tricky gent!" he observed, grinning nastily. "When I get through with you mebber you won't feel so much like actin' up, mister. I aim to get across the river pretty quick—got some business on the other side. Guess both you gents had better get busy on the 'plane. Give you a half hour to have her ready to get



off. An' the next piece of funny work—"

He broke off, and Scotty could see him tapping the holster of his gun in the semi-darkness.

"Hey—Tony!" Menzies called loudly, and a member of his gang loomed up beside him.

"Cut these birds loose," Menzies instructed. "And keep your eye on them. They've got tricky dispositions, Tony—an' I'm holdin' you responsible for them. This one"—the chink-runner pointed to Scotty—"is goin' to fly me across the stream. The other one you can bring along with you—for safety. Watch 'em close."

Menzies chuckled deep down in his throat. He turned away abruptly, and Scotty felt himself jerked to his feet. The strength of the man called Tony was remarkable. The rope which bound him was unfastened.

Bing was freed also. He stared at Scotty questioningly, their faces close in the gloom. Scotty saw that Bing was waiting for him to give the word. Bing was game to fight to the last, but it was useless.

The pilot nodded. "Fix it up," he told Bing. "There's nothing else to do. We'll get this Menzies sooner or later—and when we do—"

**T**he man the leader had called "Tony" chuckled. He stood beside Scotty and Bing, with his feet spread apart, his right hand on his gun holster. Scotty, glancing about him, shaking off his dizziness, could distinguish the forms of at least ten men. The horses were gathered together a short distance away.

"There's a searchlight in the front cockpit," Scotty told Bing as he moved toward the 'plane. "Use that."

"An' keep it down on the engine," Tony warned. "No signalin' stuff, gents. You heard what the boss said."

Bing grunted. Scotty moved along with him, and dropped down near a wing-tip of the ship. Menzies was a killer, and he wouldn't hesitate to force them to

do as he said. He was something of a puzzle. Conversationally he seemed more educated than one would expect from a man of his caliber. And there would be little chance for trickery, once he had forced Scotty to get him up in the air.



he only hope, and even that was a small one, was that some of the ranchers would return with aid before Bing got the broken feed-line repaired. Even then it would be a terrific fight. Menzies possessed courage. He showed that by remaining on the spot so long, by confining his activities to one place. He wasn't to be bluffed.

Suddenly Scotty drew a deep breath. He stared straight before him. A new thought had entered his head. He wondered why he had not thought of the thing before. It was startlingly convincing. Menzies' actions had puzzled him all along. The man was courting danger, taking too big a risk. Why?

"Holy smokes!" he muttered to himself. "What a fool I've been! Ten to one that's the game."

Bing switched on the flashlight. As he climbed up beside the engine Menzies walked over and stood near Scotty, puffing on a cigaret, a grin on his face.

The pilot regarded him cautiously in the dim light. Menzies paid no attention to Scotty; his eyes were upon Bing Russell, who was working on the broken feed line.

Scotty nodded his head thoughtfully. That was the thing, all right. That was the reason the chink-runner had appeared so startled when he had been told that he had accidentally shot Jeff Callow's son. It was more than a hunch to Scotty. Callow was the receiver—the receiving end for the chink-running! Jeff Callow was waiting, even now, to get the chinks from across the border!

Menzies was scowling. He turned away from the 'plane with a low mutter. Scotty could not get the chink-runner's words. He smiled grimly as Menzies vanished into the darkness. At least the pilot felt that



he had got to the solution of the thing.

The game was a fairly simple one—if Scotty's hunch was correct. Menzies was sticking around in the alfalfa field in order to throw the ranchers off the track. Jeff Callow, not knowing that his son had been killed by the chink-runner, was waiting somewhere nearby, waiting to receive the chinks.

A subordinate of Menzies would run the chinks across—already they might be en route. And Callow would meet them, conceal them until they could be run into the city in machines.



But the chink-runner did not intend to wait too long. That was why Scotty was to fly him over the river. He would be present when the chinks reached their

destination; he would be in on the final workings of the deal. Perhaps there was money to change hands—before Menzies could start for the border. Perhaps he wanted to be certain that the chinks got across.

Scotty's eyes narrowed. If there were only some way that he could see the thing through—and have a chance to get his man! He was determined to fight it out to the end of the narrowing trail now, no matter how great the odds. If Menzies ever got clear he'd make the delivery, evidently a big one, and then skip into Mexico. And Scotty wanted that man badly.

Suddenly Menzies strode back. He stared at the pilot for several seconds, and then spoke in a harsh voice.

"Get up! We're going to hit the air pretty sudden—you and me. Get me goggles, and anything else I need."

Scotty got to his feet. He was still shaky from the blow he had received in the head, but he felt better than he had a short while ago. He would be able to fly, at any rate. He nodded. Menzies snarled at him as he moved toward the rear cockpit. The situation was desperate, the pilot knew. But he'd been in desperate situations before—and he was still alive.

There was one chance—and that was the one Bill Scott was playing for, praying for—one gambler's chance!

#### IV

BING RUSSELL dropped down to the grass. He smiled cheerfully at Scotty, who was standing beside Menzies, who was wearing Bing's helmet and goggles.

"The ship's all right," Bing muttered. "I hate to see—"

"Cut the gab!" The chink-runner's voice was harsh. "The boys will take care of you. And you"—he smiled at Scotty, showing his teeth—"climb in the front cockpit. Take her up five thousand, and then follow the river in the direction I tell you. Savvy?"

"Bring over those parachutes, Bing." Scotty was thinking fast. Menzies stared at him suspiciously but said nothing. Instead he drew his gun from its holster. Scotty caught the glint of the barrel. Bing turned away.

Scotty climbed into the front cockpit. And then, just as he settled down in the cushioned seat, he heard the sharp crack of a rifle. And then another—and another! His heart leaped. The ranchers had returned. They would be reinforced sufficiently to defeat the men of Menzies' band—the chink-runner had delayed his start too long!

Scotty leaned forward to cut the throttle and silence the throb of the engine, which Bing had been testing for the past five minutes. A bullet whined above the ship. And then the pilot felt it—cold and hard against his back—Menzies' gun!

"Get her off!" the chink-runner shouted. "Get her up—or I'll fill you full of lead, mister!"

Scotty advanced the throttle. The J.H.6 rolled forward over the alfalfa. There was very little wind, fortunately. Above the steady roar of the engine Scotty could hear the more staccato crackling of gun-fire. It was very dark, but he had flown much at night, and lifted the ship off the slight slope, nosing her up into the sky. The muzzle of Menzies' gun was still touching his back;



the two cockpits were separated by only two feet of fuselage and the leader of the chink-runners was taking no chances.

Up and up went the J.H.6. There had been no time for the parachute packs—and Scotty's heart sank as he realized that his last hope had been defeated. He had planned to chance a drop—leaving Menzies alone in the ship. The 'plane would be a complete wreck, he had figured—but either the leader would crash with it or risk a parachute jump. The 'chutes, with Scotty manipulating his, would land apart, and the pilot might have been able to establish contact with some of the sheriff's posse. The light wind was blowing in from the south, so that Menzies would have dropped on American soil.

But the scheme was worthless—without the parachutes. Scotty relaxed in his cushioned seat as he felt Menzies remove the gun from his back. At five thousand feet he cut the engine.

"What's the course?" he yelled, partially turning his head.

"Follow the Rio west!" Menzies replied. "About ten miles!"

Scotty nodded his head. Slowly he commenced to climb the ship again, heading her to the west. At ten thousand feet he leveled her off. The engine was droning a perfect song. There was some moonlight now; below him he could detect the winding ribbon of the Rio Grande, silver in the first, faint light of the moon.

On and on the ship flew. Then Menzies pounded on the fuselage. Scotty cut the engine and glanced behind. Menzies was pointing over the side.

Scotty followed his gaze. His eyes widened. Down below, coming out from the Mexican shore, was a large flat-boat. It was propelled by sweeps, and above it appeared to be a cable, extending from shore to shore. The cable glinted plainly in the moonlight. Scotty nodded his head slowly. The chinks were being brought across!

"Take her down—and damn fast!" Menzies shouted loudly. "There's a beach on the American side. You can make a landing—and don't fool!"

Scotty glided the ship downward, watching the flat-boat below. The cable, he supposed, was used because of the current, or as a guide. One thing was certain, the craft did not deviate the slightest from its course.

The pilot groaned. This looked like the end of things. Menzies would warn the others back, and take him along with them. The chances were that he would destroy the 'plane.

A faint breeze had come up with the moon, and the air was getting bumpy. The ship dropped a wing suddenly, and as Scotty moved the joy-stick to correct for the bump, the idea came to him. Instantly he put it into effect.

Kicking right rudder hard, he jammed the joy-stick far to the right—and nosed the ship down sharply. She went jerkily into a tight spin. Down she plunged, spinning and whistling like a top. And Scotty let her spin!



He was commencing to feel dizzy—but he knew that Menzies could not stand it as long as he. The speed was terrific. Once he heard the chink-runner shout—but paid no attention. At two thousand feet he was beginning to lose his sense of balance. Things were getting black.

The ship came out of the spin as he put the controls in neutral. And then, holding the stick with his left hand, Scotty fought off his own nausea and rose in the seat. He turned.

Menzies was lifting his gun hand. His revolver wobbled from side to side. With a slashing blow of his fist Scotty knocked it out into the air. Menzies muttered something, half rose in the cockpit, leaning forward. Once more Scotty swung savagely. And this time, even as the 'plane got out of control and plunged into another spin, his fist crashed against the jaw of the chink-runner leader. Menzies collapsed out of sight in the rear cockpit!

Scotty worked the controls frantically. This time the J.H.6 came out of the spin more slowly. But she came out—a



thousand feet above the flat-boat, which seemed to have halted in the middle of the river. Scotty flew around in wide circles, watching those below. As his eyes cleared he detected the huddled chinks. Four men, as far as he could see, constituted their guard.

Scotty headed the 'plane east. Five minutes later he was landing on the same field upon which the J.H.6 had been wrecked, and this time he was careful of the ridge which had been the cause of the disaster before.



His eyes searched the fields as he landed. The moonlight gave him vision, and he saw Bing waving his arms wildly. As the 'plane's wheels struck the ground he saw that the sheriff's posse had arrived—and succeeded in doing considerable damage. Bing and Hinkey rushed up to him as he climbed down from the front cockpit.

"Your chinks are being brought across about six miles west of here," Scotty told Hinkey. "Four men guarding them. They're on a flat-boat, and there's a beach on the American side, wide and pretty long."

"Bailey Flats!" Hinkey called to his men. "Chase—you take the boys down. The Rio's shallow there. You can ride in after them if they go back—but you can't lose them now. Get going!"

Bing grabbed Scotty by the shoulders. "What happened to Menzies?" he demanded. "Did that killer—"

"He's in your seat, Bing." Scotty chuckled. "Drag him out—I spun that chink-runner almost unconscious and then walloped him good on the jaw."

Hinkey and Bing dragged Menzies out.

He was just regaining consciousness, and Hinkey snapped the cuffs on him before he realized where he was.

"Say!" Scotty grinned. "Jeff Callow's your man, too. Better ride in on him, Hinkey. He's receiving the chinks, unless I'm dead wrong. Menzies sorta gave him away."

The sheriff stared. "Callow?" he muttered. "The kid's father?"

Scotty nodded. "Take my advice and go get him," the pilot replied. "He must have a rendezvous near the beach I spoke of—where the chinks were being brought across."

Hinkey grunted. "Man!" he muttered as he prepared to ride. "I'll leave Menzies with you—can't think of a safer place!"

JEFF CALLOW glared at the handcuffed Menzies. His evil face was twisted into a mask of hatred. He screamed at the chink-runner:

"You squealer! You dirty, little lyin' hound! Settin' them after me—killin' my boy! I'll get you for this! I'll get—"

Hinkey interrupted. The posse had made a good job of it. They had the four guards, and about thirty chattering, shivering Chinese. Hinkey had brought in Jeff Callow, who had already confessed. And Menzies was 'cuffed to his four men.

"No need for you to get him, Callow." The deputy's voice was grim. "The state'll handle this gent proper!"

Hinkey turned to Scotty. He extended a hand.

"I'll make a full report," he said simply. "You sure should get all the credit. Why, I'll say that you—"

Scotty grunted. "Just say that I scouted around a little," he muttered. "Bing and me—we're goin' to knock off a little sleep and then fly on to Tracy. Tomorrow we've got to do some *real* work!"





# The Magician Murder

By Ramon Decolta

*A baffling case—and  
Jo Gar, the Little  
Island detective*



**F**ROM the spot in which Jo Gar was seated the two fighting cocks were whirling, feathered forms bouncing from the dark earth of the pit. Filipinos, Japanese, Chinese, Malays and Portuguese filled the rising tiers of wooden benches; their shouts were shrill and fierce. The betting was good; already there had been several fights. The event now under way was the last fight of the evening; one of the cocks, a small bird named *Riazo*, was the champion of a distant Philippine

province. *Riazo* seemed to be winning and the majority of the crowd liked it.

The Island detective rolled the brown-paper cigarette between two short brown fingers of his right hand. His face was expressionless; it was as though he were unconscious of the excitement around him. At intervals he raised his right hand so that it was before his brown face. The fingers of the hand were spread carelessly; his blue-gray eyes looked between them.

Cardoro sat on his right, some twenty feet away, in the small box reserved for persons of importance. Cardoro was a



magician—Cardoro the Great. He was Spanish, but spoke several languages. Only five days ago he had reached Manila from Australia, and already he was the talk of the city. Crowds stormed the box office of the theatre at which he executed his magic. His name was on the lips of the mixed breeds of the Islands. He was a savage magician, working with knives and poisons. He made incisions on people and there was blood in evidence. Yet it was only a trick. The audience saw incisions that did not exist, and blood that was only colored water. But they liked it, and Cardoro was great. Therefore—he occupied the box of honor.

The shrill shouts now became a scream. Jo Gar smiled slightly as the favorite sank on the dark ground. It rose and launched itself into another attack. The larger bird met the attack with a more vicious one. The silver spurs glittered in the light shooting down on them. *Riazo* was battered back, fell on its side. The larger bird was on top of it now, spurs working. *Riazo's* movements were convulsive. Suddenly there were no more movements. The shrill of the crowd hushed. Filipinos were in the pit—bending over the birds.

Jo Gar said very softly: "Another champion is dead."

He raised his right hand again, spreading the fingers. Cardoro was on his feet in the box. He was staring towards the ground of the pit. He had large black eyes and a face that seemed very pale among the brown ones about him. His body was straight; he was a big man. His face seemed strained.

A Filipino standing in the pit raised a short arm and said into the silence:

"*Riazo* is dead!"

He spoke in Spanish, and before he could repeat the announcement in another language Cardoro had cried out. His voice carried over the close-packed circular arena.

"No!" he cried in Spanish. "It cannot be!"

Heads were jerked in his direction. A jeering voice from somewhere below reached Jo Gar's ears.

"It is so—*Riazo* is even too dead for

*your* magic, Señor Cardoro!"

Jo Gar narrowed his blue-gray eyes very little. There was the edge of a smile on his tight-pressed lips. He looked down at the one who had jeered up at the magician. It was Markden, an American who handled many bets. Many bets that were large. Markden was a gambler; it was rumored that he made good sums on the fighting cocks. It was also rumored that some of his bets were placed after he had advance knowledge of certain facts. The Chinese did not trust him, and the Chinese were known as the wisest of the gamblers.

Cardoro's big body was swaying a little from side to side. His arms were drawn upward, the elbows extended, and his fists were clenched. There were white gloves on his hands; he wore them to protect his fingers, which were long and extremely sensitive. He called above the murmur of the crowd:

"I will not—"

His voice ceased abruptly. Jo Gar watched him turn from the box, saw a rather pretty girl lift a hand as though to stop him. But the magician paid no attention to her. The Island detective watched Cardoro move down wooden steps to a narrow exit. When he looked at Markden again the gambler was facing the direction in which the magician had gone. He was a small, slight man—slighter even than Jo. There was a set expression on his face. His body was tense under the glare of the lights, but as Jo's eyes watched he saw the man relax. He shrugged his narrow shoulders, looked down at the form of the dead bird.

The Filipino official who had announced the defeat of the champion now lifted the live winner in his hands. He turned slowly with the fighting cock above his head.

"The new champion!" he called. "*Garcia the First!*"

There was shrill sound in the arena. A group of Portuguese sailors started down towards the pit. There was the odor of varied tobaccos and of heat of people. Betel-nut chewers passed Jo, and there were red stains on the planks. It was very hot.



The Island detective went slowly towards an exit from the cock fight arena. The crowd milled around the dry ground beyond the entrance, chattering excitedly. *Calesos* and noisy, battered cars were making sound. Cardoro was not in sight, but there was talk of him. A well-dressed Chinese near Jo stated to his companion that the great one had lost much money. He had backed *Riazo* to the limit. Such a bet had not been made in many Sundays.

Jo Gar moved slowly to his *caleso*, nodded to the driver, who drowsed on the seat. Señor Ronisa passed close to the *caleso*, spoke cheerfully to Jo.

"I was lucky," the fat one stated. "I have won many *pesos*. But most have lost."

Jo Gar's eyes were very small. He placed a Panama carefully over his gray hair.

"It is not good—when most lose," he said quietly.

The fat one shrugged. "It is good for the few who win," he replied. "The winning is greater."

Jo Gar smiled a little, climbed into the *caleso*. The driver lifted the reins and spoke shrilly to the ancient horse. Jo said in a toneless voice:

"And the hating of the losers is greater."

He closed his eyes and relaxed in the seat. The *caleso* jerked forward and the light wind fanned greater heat against his face. When he opened his blue-gray eyes they were smiling. But the smile was a hard one, and very thoughtful.



ADI RATAN frowned across the few feet of Jo Gar's office that separated the two. He looked cool despite the heat; his khaki uniform was spotless, well pressed. He said with a slight accent, speaking in English:

"You have perhaps seen that the magician, Cardoro, is dead, murdered?"

Jo Gar leaned back in the wicker chair. He nodded very slowly.

"Yes," he replied.

The Manila police lieutenant's frown

deepened. There was a short silence broken by the whistle of small craft on the Pasig.

"The crime was committed by the American, Markden," Sadi Ratan announced. "The gambler, Markden. He has been in difficulty before this. He has vanished. The Constabulary has been notified."

Jo Gar smiled pleasantly. "Is that so?" he said thoughtfully. "So it was Markden who knifed Señor Cardoro?"

Lieutenant Ratan nodded again. He stood erect, but did not smile.

"That is the way it was," he stated. "He had been betting against Markden three nights since he has arrived here. Large sums. He had lost each time. Last evening he made a big bet. It was Sunday and he had little money. He agreed to cable his bank in Australia this morning, if he lost. He lost and he refused to pay. At dusk tonight he was knifed to death by Markden in his room at the Manila Hotel. Markden escaped, but he will be caught."

The Island detective continued to smile. "Of course," he said simply.

There was another silence, and during it Sadi Ratan watched Jo closely.

"The knife we have not found. Perhaps it was not a knife. Beside the body was a blood-stained spur such as the cocks fight with. A knife spur. The wounds were on the back of the neck—many of them. The spinal column was struck. Markden was seen drinking very much at six o'clock. He talked of what he would do to Cardoro if he failed to pay. Perhaps it was that he fastened the silver spur to wood, and used it that way. He entered the room while Cardoro was sleeping. There was no struggle. Cardoro was stunned with the first blow and before he staggered from the bed to die on the floor Markden had struck many others. Then he fled."

Jo Gar lighted a brown-paper cigarette. "Why did Señor Cardoro refuse to pay his bet?" he asked, after a short time.

Lieutenant Ratan smiled a little. "He had been told, before the cock fights, that the champion bird, *Riazo*, had been drugged. The fight was not fair. Markden



afternoon. But I didn't kill him. I went to the hotel grounds, to talk to him again, just before dusk. But I was afraid to trust myself. I didn't see him. I went away. Then word reached me of what had happened. I hid out here—and sent for you."

Jo nodded. "It was difficult for me to reach you without being followed," he said. "The police are watching me carefully."

The American groaned. "They'll get me," he breathed. "I'd won from Cardoro. So much that I wanted this last fight to be absolutely fair. It had to be, or I knew he'd squeal. That's why I went to you."

Jo frowned. "It's a bad alibi, in any case. In this case—it's impossible."

Markden covered his soaked face with both palms and rocked on the bench. The dog howled again. Jo Gar said:

"You do not know of any enemies Cardoro might have had?"

Markden removed his hands, shook his head. "I didn't know him well. He was just a man with money, who wanted to bet."

The Island detective frowned. "You drank—and talked. Made threats before others?"

Markden's eyes were staring beyond Jo. "I drank *sake*. But I didn't make any threats. Only to Cardoro, and we were alone. I was careful not to make threats."

Jo sighed. "It is difficult," he said. "It was a good thing for someone who hated

him enough to kill—this hatred of yours. But if we do not know the one who could have made use of it—"

He broke off. Markden muttered: "Billibid—I'll hang for it! They won't believe me."

Jo Gar half closed his eyes. He said in a calm voice:

"If *you* hang for it—I will be forced to leave the Islands. I think you are telling the truth. I do not wish to leave Manila. You do not wish to hang. You will stay here and I will do what I can."

Markden stared at him with bloodshot eyes.

"But what can you do?" he muttered. "All the evidence is against me. All that they have."

Jo Gar rubbed moist fingers together and smiled grimly down at the gambler.

"Perhaps there will be some evidence they do *not* have," he said softly. "There is a chance."

The American said bitterly: "It's a hell—of a chance!"

Jo Gar drew a deep breath, shrugged. "Even a *hell* of a chance is worthwhile," he observed steadily and softly, and went cautiously from the thatch-roofed hut.

THE girl said: "It seems to me it's pretty late for me to have to talk about—this terrible thing."

Jo Gar stepped inside the large, high-ceilinged room, smiled apologetically.

"It is so, Miss Rayne," he said. "It is

# INTRIGUE ON THE ISLAND



A  
mysterious  
case  
starring Jo Gar  
will appear in

every issue of Black Mask





almost one o'clock. I am sorry."

The girl stood aside as he moved to the center of the room. There was moonlight beyond the Manila Hotel, on the water of the Bay. The girl was pretty, but her mouth and eyes were hard. She said huskily:

"I've been questioned—by the police."

The Island detective nodded. "Yes," he replied. "I suppose so. I am not of the police."

She watched him very closely. "I know. You're Señor Gar, a private detective."

Jo bowed slightly. The girl said: "Markden did this terrible thing. I was to have—married—Dario—next week—"

The Island detective said gently, looking at the older woman seated in the room.

"You think Markden killed Dario Cardoro?"

The girl said: "Yes—yes I do! I'm sure of it. I was with Dario at the cock fights. He was sure he had been tricked. He said he would never pay. *Riazo* had no life, no fight. Dario left me in the box, hurried away. He was terribly upset."

Jo gestured towards a chair. "Please sit down," he said.

The girl went slowly to the chair, sat down. She looked at the older woman, said:

"This is my companion—Señora Rig-gia."

The Spanish woman bowed, her eyes on Jo's. She was short and thick-set. Her body relaxed in the chair.

"It is terrible," she said with an accent.

Jo Gar nodded. "It is bad for Señor Markden, the American," he stated. "He was owed money by the dead man. It was refused him. He threatened the dead man. He was on the hotel grounds not long before the murder was committed. He has vanished."

The girl said: "They will find him—the police."

The Island detective nodded. "I think so," he agreed. "But he is not the murderer of the magician, Cardoro."

The girl's brown eyes widened. She said in a half whisper:

"Not the—murderer—"

Jo smiled gently. His eyes were on the older woman. Her hands were gripping the sides of the wicker chair. Far out in the Bay a big boat whistled. Jo spoke slowly.

"Markden has been in trouble with the police before. He has shot a man. He possesses a gun. He did not use it on Cardoro."

The older woman said sharply: "That was because he did not wish to give himself away. He wished the police to think it was some other person—not an American. Americans do not use knives."

Jo Gar said: "That is good reasoning, Señora. Almost *too* good. He looked at the girl again. There was a short silence. Then Jo said pleasantly:

"I have been looking at the body. Cardoro was killed by a strong person."

The girl said: "A strong person? That is not so. The doctors have said that the spur blade did not penetrate more than an inch. A blow to the base of the brain—"

The Island detective interrupted, but his tone was cold and his words unhurried.

"And Markden is not a strong person?" he suggested.

The girl said with scorn: "Of course not. He is smaller even than you."

Jo bowed slightly. "That is so," he agreed. "I felt that you were aware of the fact that Markden is not strong."



HERE was a knock at the door of the room. The girl rose. Before she reached the door it was opened. Sadi Ratan entered. He said quickly, looking at the

Spanish woman:

"I felt that you should know, Señora—"

He stared at Jo, broke off. The Island detective smiled at him.

"I came to talk with Miss Rayne, Lieutenant," he said.



Sadi Ratan frowned. Then his eyes narrowed until they were slits in his brown face.

"We have captured the American, Markden," he said grimly. "He has admitted that Señor Gar visited him tonight. That is bad for you, Señor Gar. You were protecting a murderer, one wanted by the police."

Jo Gar said quietly: "One wanted by the police, but not a murderer."

The police lieutenant said in a hard tone: "He will confess very soon. And even if he does not—"

The Island detective smiled with his lips. "You will try to hang him, anyway," he finished.

Sadi Ratan let his right hand go back towards a hip pocket. He said in a hard tone:

"It will be necessary for me to place you under arrest, Señor Gar, for interfering with the police and for aiding a murderer."

Jo shook his head. "Señor Markden is not yet a murderer," he reminded. "He has not been found guilty."

The girl said with scorn: "His record is not good. He has shot a man. He is a gambler and he has been caught cheating, before this happened. He killed Dario—because Dario refused to pay him."

Jo shook his head. His eyes were very small.

"You know much about the American," he said calmly, "Almost *too* much."

Sadi Ratan was watching him closely. Jo looked at the girl, addressed the police lieutenant.

"The Great Cardoro has done his tricks here often—for a period of years.





He is Spanish—there is a bond between him and the Spanish here. There is a Spanish paper in Manila. News of Spaniards all over the world reaches it and is printed or filed away in the paper morgue. I have been looking through the morgue files. I find that Cardoro was worth twice as much two years ago than he was six months ago. His losses were due to gambling. I found a later item stating that Cardoro the Great had become engaged to an American girl of the theatre, Miss Jessie Rayne. And I found one more item of three months ago. In Melbourne a gambling place was raided. One of the heaviest losers had been Cardoro. He had stated then that he was willing his money to Miss Rayne, his fiancée, and that on the day of their marriage he would never gamble again.”

The girl was watching him narrowly—her breathing was heavy. The older woman was tense in her chair. Jo said, smiling a little:

“So there you are.”

Sadi Ratan said sharply: “There you are—where? What of it?”

Jo Gar shrugged. “But Cardoro has continued gambling. Continued losing. His fortune is willed to Miss Rayne. But will there *be* any fortune—would there *have been* any fortune—if Cardoro had not been—”

The girl shrieked at him: “You are telling me that *I* killed—Dario! You dare—”

Jo Gar shook his head. “I am not,” he said quietly. “You did not love him, but you did not kill him. You do not know so much about knives, and you are not strong enough.”

The girl’s eyes were wide; her face was pale. Sadi breathed something that the Island detective did not catch. He said softly:

“But you realized, Miss Rayne, that the money you had married Cardoro for would not be for you, unless something was done. And you decided that something should be—death.”

The girl cried: “No—”

Jo Gar said steadily: “Yes. You waited for the opportunity. The American,

Markden, offered it. He had reason to hate Cardoro. He had a record and you knew about it. He was a gambler on cock fights, and that was why the blood-stained knife spur was found beside the dead man. But you went too far. Markden is an American, and he would not kill and then boast about it as a Filipino or a Spaniard might do. He would not hate that much.”

He paused and said very slowly: “Cardoro was killed with a knife—not a cock fight spur. He was killed by a strong man or woman, who knew how to handle a knife. He was killed by—”

He turned and looked at the girl’s companion. He said quietly:



“You murdered Dario Cardoro. You did not throw the knife far enough into the Bay, in your hurry. And you were seen throwing it. I have the knife.”

The woman sprang from the chair. She screamed in Spanish, terribly. From the folds of her dress steel color caught the light of the room. Her right arm was lifted.

Jo Gar said: “Stop—”

The woman’s right hand went down into the folds of the black dress she wore. She said in a hysterical tone:

“You lie—”

Jo Gar’s right hand made swift movement; his Colt was low at his right side.

“No,” he said steadily. “I do not lie. You murdered Cardoro. Drop the knife you were about to throw—on the floor.”

The woman was breathing heavily; her eyes held a wild expression. But her hand remained in the folds of her black dress.



Jo said: "Quickly—drop it!" He raised the gun slightly.

The knife made clattering sound as it struck the wood of the floor. The woman in black slipped downward, slowly, in a faint. Jo said:

"Well, I have the knife *now*, anyway." He went over and picked it up. "She did not throw it into the Bay—and she was not seen throwing it. But I was coming close—and her nerves—"

The Rayne girl was on the divan, rocking back and forth. Her eyes stared somewhere beyond the figure of Jo Gar. She spoke in a monotone.

"She made me—tell her when Dario slept. She used the knife and left the knife spur, touching it in his blood. She hated him. He loved her once, but he sent her away. He was losing, gambling away all the money he had willed to me. She made me help her—she was to have some of—the money. I didn't want—to do it."

Jo Gar looked at Sadi Ratan. "I thought at first that he had been

murdered outside, carried in. That was wrong. And I thought that the knife had been thrown away. That was wrong, too. But when I saw the woman's eyes, saw her watching me—"

He shrugged. The woman on the floor stirred and moaned. The Rayne girl said: "He was brutal—it was self-defense. He was brutal to both of us—"

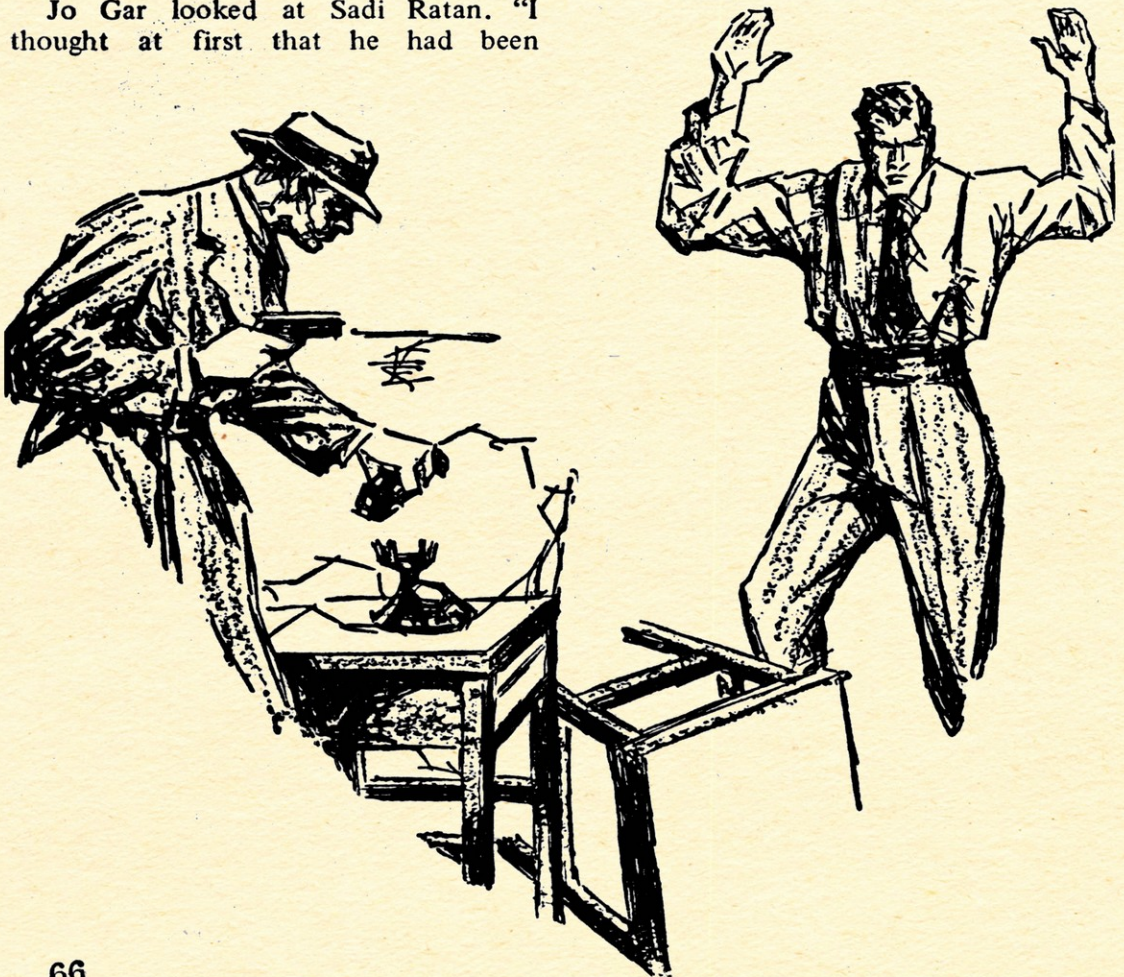
Jo Gar smiled slightly. "Your defense is your own affair," he said gently. "I am very little interested."

Lieutenant Ratan frowned and swore. Jo Gar said:

"You were so sure of the American. So sure he was guilty. Now you must free him."

Sadi Ratan muttered: "All the evidence we had—pointed to him."

Jo Gar sighed. "That is so," he agreed softly. And that was why I had to go to a newspaper and seek the evidence—you *did not* have."





# ABOMINABLE

By Fredric Brown

*Our Famous Daytime Story is a sly but ominous short short with punch. Beware the Curves!*







## ABOMINABLE

From the Classic Collection of Short Shorts  
*Nightmares and Geezenstacks*



SIR Chauncey Atherton waved a farewell to the Sherpa guides who were to set up camp here and let him proceed alone. This was the point beyond which they would not accompany him. This was Abominable Snowman country, a few hundred miles north of Mt. Everest, in the Himalayas. Abominable Snowmen were seen occasionally on Everest, on other Tibetan or Nepalese mountains, but Mt. Oblimov, at the foot of which he was now leaving his native guides, was so thick with them that not even the Sherpas would climb it, but would here await his return, if any. It took a brave man to pass this point. Sir Chauncey was a brave man.

Also, he was a connoisseur of women, which was why he was here and about to attempt, alone, not only a dangerous ascent but an even more dangerous rescue. If Lola Gabraldi was still alive, an Abominable Snowman had her.

Sir Chauncey had never seen Lola Gabraldi, in the flesh. He had, in fact, learned of her existence less than a month ago, when he had seen the one motion

picture in which she had starred—and through which she had become suddenly fabulous, the most beautiful woman on Earth, the most pulchritudinous movie star Italy had ever produced, and Sir Chauncey could not understand how even Italy had produced her. In one picture she had replaced Bardot, Lollobrigida and Ekberg as the image of feminine perfection in the minds of connoisseurs anywhere. The moment he had seen her on the screen he had known that he must know her in the flesh, or die trying.

But by that time Lola Gabraldi had vanished. As a vacation after her first picture she had taken a trip to India and had joined a group of climbers about to make an assault on Mt. Oblimov. The others of the party had returned; she had not. One of them had testified that he had seen her, at a distance too great for him to reach her in time, abducted, carried off screaming by a nine-foot-high hairy more-or-less-manlike creature. An Abominable Snowman. The party had searched for her for days before giving up and returning to civilization. Everyone agreed that there was no possible chance, now, of finding her alive.

Everyone except Sir Chauncey, who



had immediately flown from England to India.

He struggled on, now high into the eternal snows. And in addition to mountain climbing equipment he carried the heavy rifle with which he had, only last year, shot tigers in Bengal. If it could kill tigers, he reasoned, it could kill Snowmen.

Snow swirled about him as he neared the cloud line. Suddenly, a dozen yards ahead of him, which was as far as he could see, he caught a glimpse of a monstrous not-quite-human figure. He raised his rifle and fired. The figure fell, and kept on falling; it had been on a ledge over thousands of feet of nothingness.

And at the moment of the shot, arms closed around Sir Chauncey from behind him. Thick, hairy arms. And then, as one hand held him easily, the other took the rifle and bent it into an L-shaped as effortlessly as though it had been a toothpick and then tossed it away.

A voice spoke from a point about two feet above his head. "Be quiet; you will not be harmed." Sir Chauncey was a brave man, but a sort of squeak was all the answer he could make, despite the seeming assurance of the words. He was held so tightly against the creature behind him that he could not look upward and backward to see what its face was like.

"Let me explain," said the voice above and behind him. "We, whom you call Abominable Snowmen, are human, but transmuted. A great many centuries ago we were a tribe like the Sherpas. We chanced to discover a drug that let us change physically, let us adapt by

increased size, hairiness and other physiological changes to extreme cold and altitude, let us move up into the mountains, into country in which others cannot survive, except for the duration of brief climbing expeditions. Do you understand?"

"Y-y-yes," Sir Chauncey managed to say. He was beginning to feel a faint return of hope. Why would this creature be explaining these things to him if it intended to kill him?

"Then I shall explain further. Our number is small and is diminishing. For that reason we occasionally capture, as I have captured you, a mountain climber. We give him the transmuting drug; he undergoes the physiological changes and becomes one of us. By that means we keep our number, such as it is, relatively constant."

"B-but," Sir Chauncey stammered, "is that what happened to the woman I'm looking for, Lola Gabraldi? She is now—eight feet tall and hairy and—"

"She *was*. You just killed her. One of our tribe had taken her as its mate. We will take no revenge for your having killed her, but you must now, as it were, take her place."

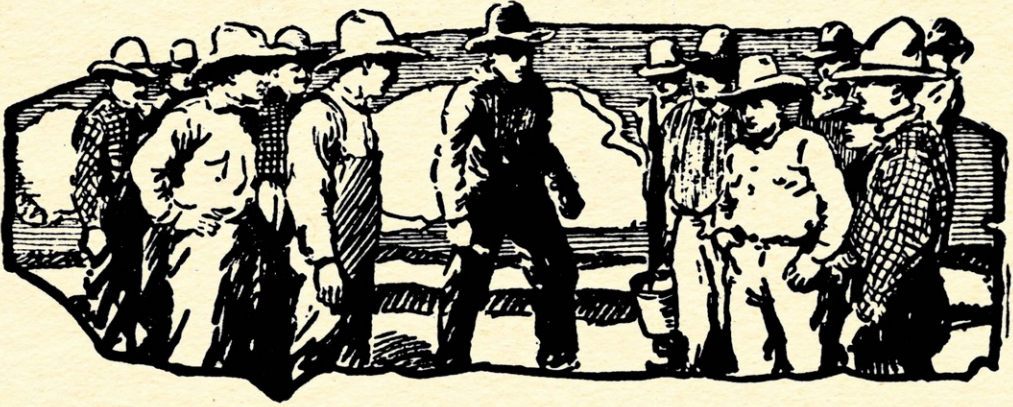
"Take her place? But—I'm a *man*."

"Thank God for that," said the voice above and behind him. He found himself turned around, held against a huge hairy body, his face at the right level to be buried between mountainous hairy breasts. "Thank God for that—because I am an Abominable Snowwoman."

Sir Chauncey fainted and was picked up and, as lightly as though he were a toy dog, carried away by his mate.





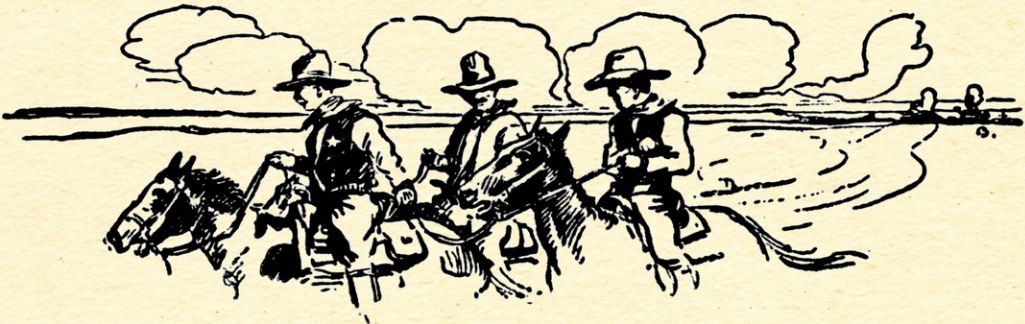


## TWISTED TRAILS



We are proud of our tradition. *Black Mask* was the only pulp known for its Westerns as well as its detective stories. Even during its hardboiled heyday in the 30's *Black Mask* still boldly ran an occasional Western cover. As in all its fiction, *Black Mask's* Westerns were set apart from the stories run in other publications by the quality of their language and the accuracy of their reporting. *Black Mask* editors wanted writing by people who knew their stuff.

Before his death in 1809, William Cooper (father of James Fenimore Cooper, America's first great novelist and inventor of the classic Western) wrote a series of letters about America that were finally published in 1810 under the title, *A Guide To The Wilderness*. In the few words that follow, published for the first time in any American magazine, Cooper captures the essence of all the Westerns that would follow—a solitary man making his way through the wilderness. And he tops his vision off with a glimmer of the frontier settlements that would grow up and slowly move across the land, chasing untold cowboy pioneers before them.



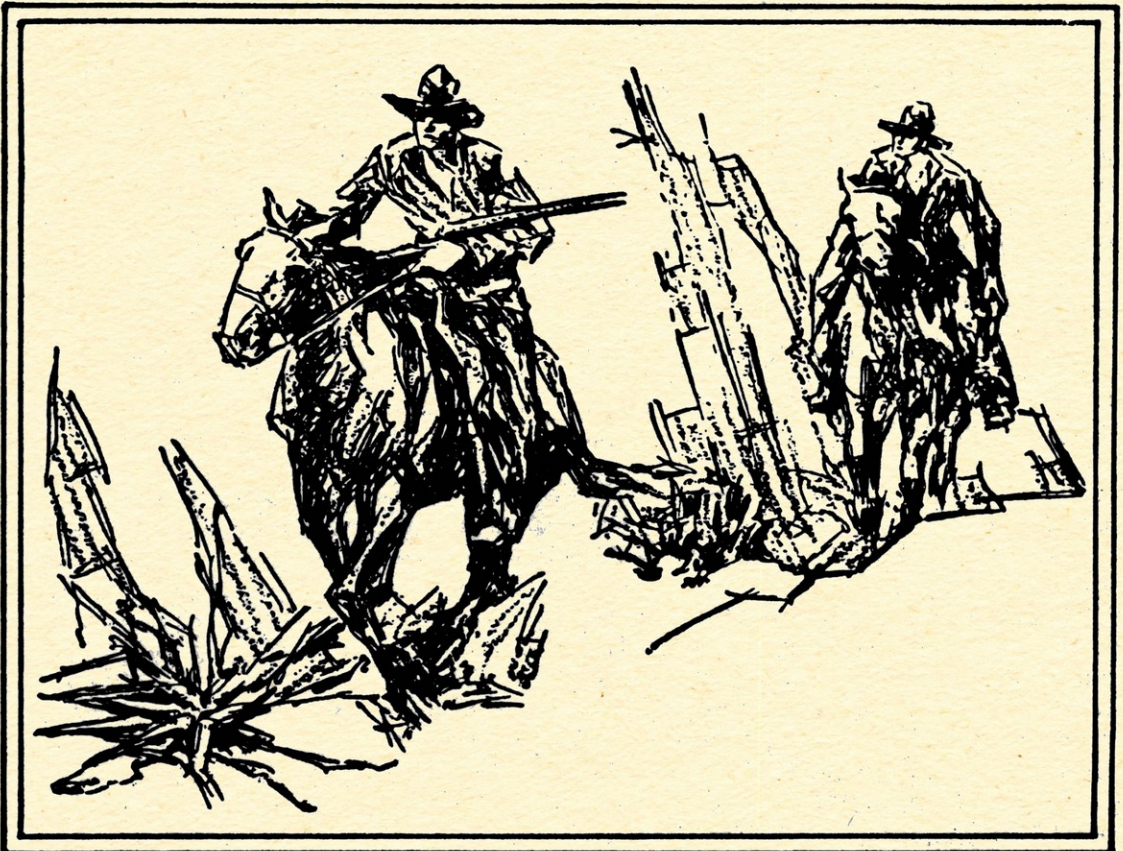


from *A Guide to the Wilderness*



*In 1785 I visited the rough and hilly country of Otesgo, where there existed not an inhabitant, nor any trace of a road; I was alone, three hundred miles from home, without bread, meat or food of any kind; fire and fishing tackle were my only means of subsistence. I caught trout in the brook and roasted them on the ashes. My horse fed on the grass that grew by the edge of the waters. I laid me down to sleep in my watch coat, nothing but the melancholy wilderness around me. In this way I explored the country, formed my plans of future settlement, and meditated upon the spot where a place of trade or a village should afterwards be established.*

With few words Cooper creates a scene which projects the image of the solitary man in tune with nature that every pulp Western illustrator sought in his drawings. See our *Black Mask* interview. Almost two hundred years after Cooper, William Burroughs offers *Black Mask* an unusual short piece which is a distillation of all the cool and detached Western stories that ever came before it. Hardly anything happens, but the scene lingers in the mind calling up all other Western memories.





# THE COLDSRING NEWS

Sunday, September 17, 1899 (William Burroughs, Editor)

## ON THE BACK PORCH OF HIS FARM

Martin, Bradly Martin, Mr. Bradly Mr. Martin sat down on the back porch of his farm. He slipped a bag of Bull Durham out of his shirt pocket with two fingers and started rolling a cigarette. He paused listening. He finished rolling the cigarette, put it between his lips and went back inside, lifted his gunbelt off a peg and hung it on. He lit the cigarette and sat down on the steps waiting.

Five horsemen stopped just outside the gate. They sat there looking at him and not saying anything.

Martin walked slowly out and leaned on the gate post. "Hello, Arch," he said addressing the oldest man. "Something on your mind?"

"Well, yes Martin, you might say so. Thought maybe some of my stock might have strayed up here?"

"Not that I know of, Arch, but this is free range country fellers say."

"Maybe a little too free, Martin."

"Don't know as I rightly understand you, Arch." His grey eyes pinned out in the afternoon sun cold as metal glinting to a distant point.

"Just telling you Martin I been losing a lot of stock lately."

"Why tell me, Arch?" said Martin softly.

"Because Clem here seen you the other day in Cold Spring selling off some stock."

"So?"

"Looked to me like the brand had been changed," said Clem keeping his eyes on the pommel of his saddle. Martin shifted his around Clem at the pale blue summer sky: "How close were you, Clem?"

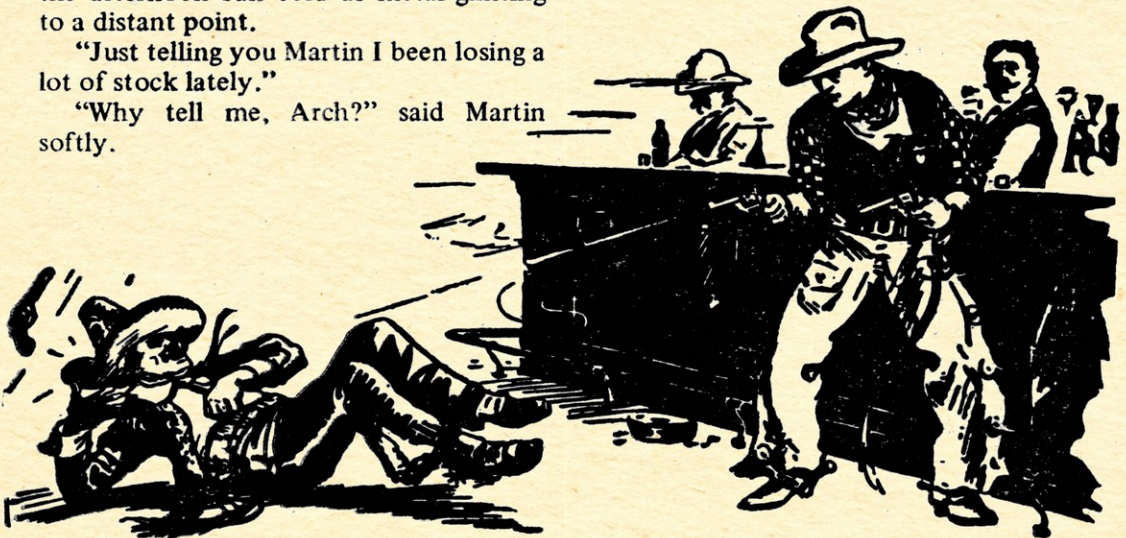
"Just about as close as I am to you now."

"That's mighty close, Clem. Funny I didn't see you."

"You had your back turned."

"Well it isn't turned now, Clem."

Martin just stood there after that not saying anything and there wasn't anything to say—just cigarette smoke drifting in the still afternoon and Martin's pinpoint metal eyes looking through the smoke. Arch turned his horse abruptly. The party rode away. Martin went back and sat down on the porch steps.





# From LOG OF A COWBOY

## A True Narrative Of The Old Trail Days

by Andy Adams



AFTER leaving the country tributary to the Solomon River, we crossed a wide tableland for nearly a hundred miles, and with the exception of the Kansas Pacific Railroad, without a landmark worthy of a name. Western Kansas was then classified, worthily too, as belonging to the Great American Desert, and most of the country for the last five hundred miles of our course was entitled to a similar description. Once the freshness of spring had passed, the plain took on her natural sunburnt color, and day after day, as far as the eye could reach, the monotony was unbroken, save by the variations of the mirages on every hand. Except at morning and evening, we were never out of sight of these optical illusions, sometimes miles away, and then again close up, when an antelope standing half a mile distant looked as tall as a giraffe. Frequently the lead of the herd would be in eclipse from these illusions,

when to the men in the rear the horsemen and cattle in the lead would appear like giants in an old fairy story. If the monotony of the sea can be charged with dulling men's sensibilities until they become pirates, surely this desolate, arid plain might be equally charged with the wrongdoing of not a few of our craft.

On crossing the railroad at Grinnell, our foreman received a letter from Lovell, directing him to go to Culbertson, Nebraska, and there meet a man who was buying horses for a Montana ranch. Our employer had his business eye open for a possible purchaser for our *remuda*, and if the horses could be sold for delivery after the herd had reached its destination, the opportunity was not to be overlooked. Accordingly, on reaching Beaver Creek, where we encamped, Flood left us to ride through to the Republican River during the night. The trail crossed this river about twenty miles west of Culbertson,



and if the Montana horse buyer were yet there, it would be no trouble to come up to the trail crossing and look at our horses.

So after supper, and while we were catching up our night horses, Flood said to us, "Now, boys, I'm going to leave the outfit and herd under Joe Stallings as *segundo*. It's hardly necessary to leave you under any one as foreman, for you all know your places. But some one must be made responsible, and one bad boss will do less harm than half a dozen that mightn't agree. So you can put Honeyman on guard in your place at night, Joe, if you don't want to stand your own watch. Now behave yourselves, and when I meet you on the Republican, I'll bring out a box of cigars and have it charged up as axle grease when we get supplies at Ogalalla. And don't sit up all night telling fool stories."

"Now, that's what I call a good cow boss," said Joe Stallings, as our foreman rode away in the twilight; "besides, he used passable good judgment in selecting a *segundo*. Now, Honeyman, you heard what he said. Billy dear, I won't rob you of this chance to stand a guard. McCann, have you got on your next list of supplies any jam and jelly for Sundays? You have? That's right, son—that saves you from standing a guard tonight. Officer, when you come off guard at 3.30 in the morning, build the cook up a good fire. Let me see; yes, and I'll detail young Tom Quirk and The Rebel to grease the wagon and harness your mules before starting in the morning. I want to impress it on your mind, McCann, that I can appreciate a thoughtful cook. What's that, Honeyman? No, indeed, you can't ride my night horse. Love me, love my dog; my horse shares this snap. Now, I don't want to be under the necessity of speaking to any of you first guard, but flop into your saddles ready to take the herd. My turnip says it's eight o'clock now."

"Why, you've missed your calling—you'd make a fine second mate on a river steamboat, driving niggers," called back Quince Forrest, as the first guard rode away.

When our guard returned, Officer intentionally walked across Stallings's bed, and catching his spur in the tarpaulin, fell heavily across our *segundo*.

"Excuse me," said John, rising, "but I was just nosing around looking for the foreman. Oh, it's you, is it? I just wanted to ask if 4.30 wouldn't be plenty early to build up the fire. Wood's a little scarce, but I'll burn the prairies if you say so. That's all I wanted to know; you may lay down now and go to sleep."



Our camp-fire that night was a good one, and in the absence of Flood, no one felt like going to bed until drowsiness compelled us. So we lounged around the fire smoking the hours away, and in spite of the admonition of our foreman, told stories far into the night. During the early portion of the evening, dog stories occupied the boards. As the evening wore on, the subject of revisiting the old States came up for discussion.

"You all talk about going back to the old States," said Joe Stallings, "but I don't take very friendly to the idea. I felt that way once and went home to Tennessee; but I want to tell you that after you live a few years in the Sunny Southwest and get onto her ways, you can't stand it back there like you think you can. Now, when I went back, and I reckon my relations will average up pretty well,—fought in the Confederate army, vote the Democratic ticket, and belong to the Methodist church,—they all seemed to be rapidly getting locoed. Why, my uncles, when they think of planting the old buck field or the widow's acre



into any crop, they first go projecting around in the soil, and, as they say, analyze it, to see what kind of a fertilizer it will require to produce the best results. Back there if one man raises ten acres of corn and his neighbor raises twelve, the one raising twelve is sure to look upon the other as though he lacked enterprise or had modest ambitions. Now, up around that old cow town, Abilene, Kansas, it's a common sight to see the cornfields stretch out like an ocean.

"And then their stock—they are all locoed about that. Why, I know people who will pay a hundred dollars for siring a colt, and if there's one drop of mongrel blood in that sire's veins for ten generations back on either side of his ancestral tree, it condemns him, though he may be a good horse otherwise. They are strong on standard bred horses; but as for me, my mount is all right. I wouldn't trade with any man in this outfit, with out it would be Flood, and there's none of them standard bred either. Why, shucks! if you had the pick of all the standard bred horses in Tennessee, you couldn't handle a herd of cattle like ours with them, without carrying a commissary with you to feed them. No; they would never fit here—it takes a range-raised horse to run cattle; one that can rustle and live on grass.

"Another thing about those people back in those old States: Not one in ten, I'll gamble, knows the teacher he sends his children to school to. But when he has a promising colt to be shod, the owner goes to the blacksmith shop himself, and he and the smith will sit on the back sill of the shop, and they will discuss how to shoe that filly so as to give her certain knee action which she seems to need. Probably, says one, a little weight on her toe would give her reach. And there they will sit and powwow and make medicine for an hour or two. And while the blacksmith is shoeing her, the owner will tell him in confidence what a wonderful burst of speed she developed yesterday, while he was speeding her on the back stretch. And then just as he turned her into the home stretch, she threw a shoe

and he had to check her in; but if there'd been any one to catch her time, he was certain it was better than a two-ten clip. And that same colt, you couldn't cut a lame cow out of the shade of a tree on her. A man back there—he's rich, too, though his father made it—gave a thousand dollars for a pair of dogs before they were born. The terms were one half cash and the balance when they were old enough to ship to him. And for fear they were not the proper mustard, he had that dog man sue him in court for the balance, so as to make him prove the pedigree. Now Bob, there, thinks that old hound of his is the real stuff, but he wouldn't do now; almost every year the style changes in dogs back in the old States. One year maybe it's a little white dog with red eyes, and the very next it's a long bench-legged, black dog with a Dutch name that right now I disremember. Common old pot hounds and everyday yellow dogs have gone out of style entirely. No, you can all go back that want to, but as long as I can hold a job with Lovell and Flood, I'll try and worry along in my own way."

On finishing his little yarn, Stallings arose, saying, "I must take a listen to my men on herd. It always frets me for fear my men will ride too near the cattle."

A minute later he called us, and when several of us walked out to where he was listening, we recognized Roundtree's voice, singing:—







“Little black bull came down the hillside,  
Down the hillside, down the hillside,  
Little black bull came down the hillside,  
Long time ago.”

“Whenever my men sing that song on guard, it tells me that everything is amply serene,” remarked our *segundo*, with the air of a field-marshal, as we walked back to the fire.

The evening had passed so rapidly it was now almost time for the second guard to be called, and when the lateness of the hour was announced, we skurried

to our blankets like rabbits to their warrens. The second guard usually got an hour or two of sleep before being called, but in the absence of our regular foreman, the mice would play. When our guard was called at one o'clock, as usual, Officer delayed us several minutes looking for his spurs, and I took the chance to ask The Rebel why it was that he never wore spurs.

“It’s because I’m superstitious, son,” he answered. “I own a fine pair of silver-plated spurs that have a history, and if you’re ever at Lovell’s ranch I’ll show them to you. They were given to me by a mortally wounded Federal officer the day the battle of Lookout Mountain was fought. I was an orderly, carrying dispatches, and in passing through a wood from which the Union army had been recently driven, this officer was sitting at the root of a tree, fatally wounded. He motioned me to him, and when I dismounted, he said, ‘Johnny Reb, please give a dying man a drink.’ I gave him my canteen, and after drinking from it he continued, ‘I want you to have my spurs. Take them off. Listen to their history: as you have taken them off me to-day, so I took them off a Mexican general the day the American army entered the capital of Mexico.’ ”





# The MANHUNTERS



True Stories of the Country's Best Detective Work

## SENTENCE TO PARADISE

by Barney Campbell

**W**hat more could a man desire than to be in the prime of life, independently wealthy and living on a South Sea Island Paradise with a beautiful Polynesian princess? Well, at least one man who found that supposedly ideal lifestyle, also found that he wanted out!

Charles Wells Banks, according to the poster-picture, was 47, with black, slightly graying hair, cool, gray eyes, upturned nosed and full beard, smoked but did not chew, "snuffed" moderately, dressed neatly and had good, fast handwriting. A hand that was also good and fast at rifling the till, as attested to by the caption beneath the poster:

**"WELLS, FARGO & CO'S EXPRESS.  
\$1,000 REWARD."**

Banks, a respected member of the posh Union and Bohemian Clubs, a staid Republican, good tipper and bon vivant connoisseur of French cuisine and fine wines, was thought to be a "pillar of society."

He'd come to Wells Fargo with a record of service in the Union Army, and had served as Chief Clerk in the Freedman's Bureau in Washington and

Inspector in the New York Customs, surely impeccable recommendations for the post of cashier in the San Francisco Express Office.

Yet on November 1, 1886, the trusted cashier suddenly disappeared along with "in excess of 20 thousand dollars" of Express Office funds, but rumored to be over \$100,000, or nearly \$1,000,000 by today's values.

Immediately, Wells Fargo's Inspector James B. Hume, the most renowned of all the Old West manhunters, went into action—and discovered that the "pillar of society" also supported several Barbary Coast bawdy houses and at least two ladies of the evening in high style.

Meanwhile the absconder, using an alias, had hopped aboard an ocean liner bound for the South Pacific, and after living it up in booming Australia and New Zealand, had moved his big spender operation to Rarotonga in the Eden-like Friendly Islands.

Once there, he quickly courted and wed the lovely daughter of the Queen and settled down to connubial bliss amid a plentiful stock of fine cigars, choice viands and books.

Hume, along with two detectives, had taken up the chase, and following a green back and champagne marked trail, arrived on Rarotonga April, 1887, barely six



months after the crime, and confronted Banks.



The fugitive wined and dined the trio, but declined to submit to an arrest and his Royal Mother refused to sign extradition papers.

When the lawmen produced their warrant and drew their revolvers, they were swiftly surrounded by the Royal Guard wielding menacing clubs and spears.

The frustrated Hume returned to San Francisco and Banks settled down once again to a life of luxury and leisure. However, he soon tired of his now fattening Polynesian princess and sought

other female companions. Alas! This was taboo, for he was married to royalty.

In an amazingly short time, he'd run through his one hundred grand, and found himself imprisoned for life on the tropical island, for fear of arrest if he should ever attempt to leave.

Then his eyesight failed and his life of ease without action drastically affected his physical well-being.

In 1915, an obscure, destitute and broken beachcomber, Charles W. Banks, died, thousands of miles and a whole lifestyle removed from his bon vivant heyday on San Francisco's Barbary Coast.

James B. Hume, although he had failed to get his man, had let nature itself pass the final, fatal sentence in paradise.



## COLUMBO

### TV's SOFTBOILED

#### Detective

We enjoy watching Columbo, the scruffy little detective, slouch through the corridors of power, money, and glamor to bring the mighty to justice. And we're fascinated by a crime series that shows us the murder *and then* holds our interest for the next hour. Peter Falk's low-key, working-class cop gets the cultured, clever criminals without a hint of violence. He's our "Softboiled" detective.

So, last week we called up Bill Link, one of the creators of *Columbo*.

"HOW DO YOU CREATE ONE OF TV'S MOST POPULAR SHOWS?" was our basic question.

"It's not easy," was his basic

answer. The whole package—Columbo and that backwards plot formula—are from a play Richard Levinson and he wrote 13 years ago. *PRESCRIPTION: MURDER* toured the country with Thomas Mitchell, the veteran character actor who played the doctor-drunk in John Ford's *Stagecoach*, as Columbo.

When TV bought the story in 1966, Bing Crosby, Ernest Borgine, and Lee J. Cobb were considered for the role. But Peter Falk read the script and demanded the part. It turned out to be a unique blending of actor and character: Falk wears his own crumpled raincoat on the show.



Networks and sponsors were not interested in the first pilot. But a second show—with Falk again as Columbo—got a response. T.V series then all ran weekly, and Falk refused the offer because it meant too much time away from his family.

A good thing, too, Link thinks, because the weekly grind would have overexposed and killed the show.

They did a third pilot and sold it. By the '70s the networks were interested in "mini-series." Falk got livable working conditions, and the series had a better chance of survival on an every-third-week schedule.

Well, Link had blown our pet theory about Columbo. We had guessed that someone developed the character from Kinderman, the schmaltzy cop in *THE EXORCIST*. Chronology didn't bear us out.

Link could think of only one literary ancestor for Columbo—the cop in *Crime and Punishment*. He added that there had been an effort to make Kinderman less like Columbo in the movie version of *The Exorcist*, but— Lee J. Cobb, an early choice for Columbo, plays the role.

"WHAT ABOUT THE COLUMBO FORMULA?" we wanted to know. We'd read some Dr. Thorn-dyke mysteries by British writer R. Austin Freeman that had that same unusual structure . . .

Link said he knew the mysteries, but he was non-committal about any specific inspiration for Columbo's plot structure. He did say that the network was nervous about any show that went on for 20 minutes before the detective showed up.

We noted that Dr. Thorn-dyke mysteries always give us an even

chance. We know the crime with all its "trivial circumstances" (Freeman's expression). Interest focuses on the "unexpected significance" of details that the detective must discover to solve the crime.

Columbo sometimes cops out (pardon the expression). He doesn't always solve the crime by finding incriminating clues. He simply lures his suspect into some damning action. That's a hack's way to end a mystery. It doesn't depend on the *Columbo* formula. And there's no surprise—we already know who did it. Even some of these shows we still enjoy though: we like to watch the persistent detective irritate the slimey but slick character actors like Roddy McDowell and Jack Cassidy who do such a great job.

Link agreed that some shows were cheats. The problem, he said, is that good scripts are hard to come by—even with only 13 shows a season.

We rattled on about *Columbo* for awhile. The crime and its solution are of central interest as in any classic British mystery. But the little cop and his southern California locale are pure American detective story. Link, in fact, remembered *Black Mask* and its great California artists—Hammett, Gardner, and Chandler. He asked us to send him out a copy of our first issue.

We assured him we would and complimented Mr. Link on the way that *Columbo* catches the interest of every kind of detective fan. "Especially," we said, "with an excellent actor like Falk playing the role—"

"Everybody's telling Falk how good he is," Link said, "he's getting a swelled head. By the way, he's on the other line. . ."

We said goodbye.—S.M.





# BLACK MASK

## CRIME REVIEW

**GREEN ICE.** Raoul Whitfield's forgotten classic was started as a serial in *Black Mask* in 1929 just as Dashiell Hammett's *Maltese Falcon* was coming to a conclusion. *Green Ice* is considered by some the greatest hardboiled novel ever written. Where *The Maltese Falcon* takes place in the closed space of hotel corridors, *Green Ice* rushes across city streets from New York to Pittsburgh. It has more murders in the first six pages than most books have in the first six chapters. The writing is crisp and realistic. You can still find copies of the book. It was brought out by Avon in its CLASSIC CRIME series. Too bad that series has been discontinued. It was good. **GREEN ICE IS GREAT.** Don't miss it.

**THE CASE OF THE VELVET CLAWS.** All of Erle Stanley Gardner's Perry Mason mysteries are a satisfying read. This is the first book in that amazingly successful series. This is a younger Perry Mason than you are used to. A harder Perry Mason. The story is more like a complicated *Black Mask* piece than the later Mason novels. Perry chain smokes his way to the solution. The book was a sensation when it was released in 1934 by William Morrow. It is still listed as in print in a Pocket Book edition. *Black Mask* ran a one page version of the mystery in 1935 as part of the *Black Mask*-Warner Brothers mystery contest. Go out of your way to find this book.

**THREE OF A KIND.** James M. Cain is one of the finest authors of the hardboiled tradition. **THREE OF A KIND** includes "The Embezzler," "Double Indemnity," and "Career in C Major." Cain is best remembered for *The Postman Always Rings Twice*. Cain's major theme is passion. His narrators are always trapped by their sexual attraction for a woman of suspect loyalty. He is not a mystery writer exactly and plainly not a hardboiled writer. He has a driving lyric quality that makes his short novels unlike any others that come to mind. Last summer we suggested to Bantam Books that they bring out some of his novels. They brought out a big book that included three of his works. It is already out of print. Look for his work in the library. Knopf published him in hardback. He is worth looking up.

**LORD PETER.** For years a certain segment of the mystery reading public hungered after every short story they could find by Dorothy Sayers. And Lord Peter Wimsey was the object of their search. Last year Avon brought out a fine paperback volume that not only includes every short story about the endearing detective, but an excellent introduction also. The book should be even more popular now that America has been treated to the marvelous British TV productions starring the lordly sleuth on Public Broadcasting's Masterpiece Theater. Well worth the \$3.95.

**THE HARDBOILED DICKS.** Ron Goulart's excellent anthology of pulp detective fiction was brought out by Pocket Books in 1967. We tried to get them to reprint it, but they say it didn't sell well enough. You can still find it. When we were in the editorial offices at Pocket Books they were busy preparing that fantastic TV movie



"The Night Stalker" for publication. That was the thriller in Las Vegas starring Darren McGavin as the reporter who tracks down a vampire. The book is good, but not as exciting as the Richard Matheson script.

**AN ILLUSTRATED HISTORY OF THE HORROR FILM.** Carlos Clarens has put together the best work of its kind. Entertaining, informative, and intelligent. The photos are excellent. Published by Capricorn Books, our only complaint is that our glue binding hasn't held up too well.

**THE INVASION OF THE BODY SNATCHERS.** Jack Finney's classic horror novel has recently been re-issued by Award books. Originally published by Dell in the mid 50's, the book was made into a fine movie. The book is even better. Get it before it goes out of print again.

**THE UNEXPECTED!** Bennett Cerf edited this excellent collection of stories with twisted endings in 1948. Pocket Books should re-issue the anthology. Not all the pieces are horror or mystery. All are enjoyable.

**AVON GHOST READER.** Also ripe for re-issue is this collection of terror tales from 1946. This one is still possible to find in used book stores; if you find a copy, buy it.

**IN THE GRIP OF TERROR.** Groff Conklin is one of our greatest editors of popular fiction. This collection was published by Doubleday in 1951. Keep your fingers crossed that they bring back this anthology. We recently picked up a copy for 25 cents.

### OTHER VIEWPOINTS

**EDGAR RICE BURROUGHS: MASTER OF ADVENTURE.** Richard Lupoff has put together a rare blend, a readable biography and an exciting historical bibliography. ACE is one of the true pulp publishers working today. This ACE paperback is loaded with full page illustrations by Frank Frazetta. We couldn't put the book down.

**THE GREAT RADIO HEROES.** Jim Harmon, editor of Radiohero Magazine, has put together a great book for Ace Paperbacks and Doubleday. We did notice an error in dates about *Black Mask*. Nevertheless we heartily recommend it. It is about more than heroes. The book covers the whole spectrum of radio entertainment.

**A REQUIEM FOR ASTOUNDING.** Alva Rogers has written the finest history of any magazine we have ever read. See the Isaac Asimov letter in "Our Reader's Private Corner." He's read it twice. It is loaded with great illustrations from this the greatest of the Sci Fi magazines. You can get a copy by writing to ADVENT PUBLISHERS, Inc. Post Office Box 9228, Chicago, Illinois. 60690.

**CITY IN THE SKY.** Our own Curt Siodmak has a new book coming out this month. Keep a watch out for it. Included is the first description of sexual intercourse in zero gravity. A more complete review in our next issue.





# DONOVAN'S BRAIN

A CLASSIC NOVEL OF SUPER-SCIENCE AND  
AMAZING ADVENTURE

**By Curt Siodmak**





# A Black Mask Serial: Part 1

*September 13th*

**T**ODAY a Mexican organ grinder passed through Washington Junction. He carried a small Capuchin monkey which looked like a wizened old man. The animal was sick, dying of advanced tuberculosis. Its moth-eaten fur was tawny olive, greasy and full of hairless patches.

I offered three dollars for the monkey and the Mexican was eager to sell. Tuttle, the drugstore owner, wanted to keep me from buying it, but he was afraid to interfere lest I stop patronizing his place, and make my purchases in Konapah or Phoenix.

I wrapped the flea-ridden Capuchin in my coat and carried it home. It shivered in spite of the burning heat, but when I held it closer, it bit me.

The animal trembled with fear as we entered my laboratory. I chained it to the leg of the work table, then washed my wound thoroughly with disinfectant. After that, I fed the creature some raw eggs, and talked to it. It calmed down—till I tried to pet it. Then it bit me again.

Franklin, my colored man, brought me a cardboard box which he had half-filled with hemp. The hemp would smother the fleas, he explained. My monkey nimbly hopped into the box and hid there. When I paid it no further attention, it soon fell asleep. I studied its almost hairless face, its head covered with short fur that resembled the cowl of a Capuchin monk. The animal was breathing with difficulty and I was afraid it might not live through the night.

*September 14th*

The monkey was still alive this morning and screamed hysterically when I tried to grab it. But after I fed it bananas and raw egg again, it let me pet its head a moment. I had to make it trust me completely. Fear causes an excess secretion of adrenalin, resulting in an abnormal condition of the blood stream. This would throw off my observations.

This afternoon, the Capuchin put its long arms around my chest and pressed its face against my shoulder, in perfect confidence. I stroked it slowly, and it uttered small whimpers of content. I tried its pulse, which was way above normal.

When it began to sleep in my arms, I stabbed it between the occipital bone and the first cervical vertebra. It died instantly.

*September 15th*

At three o'clock this afternoon, Dr. Schratt came from Konapah to visit me. Though I often do not see him for weeks at a time, we communicate freely by phone and letter. He is very interested in my work but, as he watches my experiments, he cannot hide his misgivings. He does not conceal his satisfaction when he sees me failing in an experiment. His soul is torn between a scientific compulsion (which is also mine), and a pusillanimous reaction against what he calls "invading God's own hemisphere."

Schratt has lived in Konapah for more than thirty years. The heat has dried up his energies. He has become superstitious as the Indians of his district. If his medical ethics permitted, he would prescribe snake charms and powdered toads for his patients.

He is official physician for the emergency landing field at Konapah and the small sum paid him by the airline keeps him from starving. There is not very much business around here to feed a country doctor. The few white people go to the hospital in Phoenix when they are ill. The Indians only call a white doctor when all the mystic charms have failed and the patient is dying.



CHRATT once had the makings of a Pasteur or a Robert Koch. Half drowned in cheap tequila now, he has lost the ability to concentrate. But still sometimes a flash of genius illuminates the



twilight of his consciousness. Afraid of that lightning-flash of vision, he deliberately withdraws into the haze of his slowly simmering life.

If he could forbid me to do what I am doing, he would. But forgotten wishes and dreams sometimes echo in the ruins of his wretched life. His antagonism to me and my work is pure manifestation of his regret that he has betrayed his own genius.

Sitting in a deep chair near the fireplace, he smoked his pipe nervously. How he can stand the desert heat in that thick old coat he brought from Europe forty years ago I will never know. Maybe it is the only one he has.

I am quite sure that each time he leaves me he takes an oath never to see me again. But every few days my telephone rings and his hoarse, tired voice asks for me—or his aged Ford stops boiling, in front of my house.

I had dissected the monkey's carcass. The lungs were infected with tuberculosis, which had also attacked the kidneys. But the brain was in good shape. To preserve it, I placed it in an artificial respirator.

I fixed rubber arteries to the vertebrae and internal carotid arteries of the brain and the blood substance, forced by a small pump, streamed through the Circle of Willis to supply the brain. It flowed out through the corresponding veins on both sides and passed through glass tubes which I had irradiated with ultra-violet.

The strength and frequency of the infinitesimal electric charges the brain was producing were easy to measure. The electro-encephalograms marked their slow, trembling curves on the paper strip which continuously flowed from the wave-recording machine.

Schratt lifted his thick brown fingers and touched the glass in which the brain was floating. Immediately, disturbed, the brain waves altered, rose and fell with ever-increasing rapidity. The detached organ was reacting to an external stimulus!

"It feels—it *thinks!*" Schratt said. When he turned around I saw the spark in his eyes I had eagerly expected.

But Schratt sat down heavily. As he thought of what he had seen, he grew pale under the coarse, brownish skin that loosely covered his drink-sodden face.

"You're the godfather of this phenomenon," I said to cheer him up, in spite of my knowing he could not be flattered.

"I don't want any part of anything you are doing, Patrick," he answered. "You—with your mechanistic physiology—reduce life to physical chemistry! This brain may still be able to feel pain, it may suffer, though bodyless, eyeless and deprived of any organ to express its feeling. It may be writhing in agony!"

"We know that the brain itself is *insensitive*," I answered quietly. To please him I added: "At least we *believe* we know that!"

"You have put it in a nutshell," Schratt answered. I perceived that he was trembling. The success of my experiment had unnerved him. "You believe and acknowledge only what you are able to observe and measure. You recklessly push through to your discoveries with no thought of the consequences."

"I only try to cultivate living tissues outside the body," I patiently answered. "You must agree in spite of your abhorrence of everything concerned in the progress of science, that my experiment is a big step forward. You told me the fragility of nervous substance is too great to be studied in the living state. But I have done it!"

**I** TOUCHED the glass which contained the Capuchin's brain, and the encephalograph at once registered the reaction of the irritated tissues.

I watched Schratt closely. I wanted to have from him again that admixture of genius which fertilized my researches. But Schratt's expression was blank and remote.

"You're synthetic and concise," he



finally said unhappily. "There's no human emotion left in you. Your passion for observation and your mathematical precision have killed it, Patrick. Your intelligence is crippled by a profound inability to understand life. I am convinced that life is a synthesis of love and hatred, ambition and aimlessness, vanity and kindness. When you can manufacture kindness in a test tube, I'll be back."

He walked slowly and forlornly to the door, as always when he had made up his mind to break with me. But in the doorway he turned and added in a trembling voice: "Do me a favor, Patrick! Shut off the pump. Let that poor thing in there die!"

### *September 16th*

After midnight the deflections of the encephalograph ceased, and the monkey's brain died.

The telephone in the living-room rang at three in the morning, while I was still working in the laboratory. I heard the bell shrill faintly again and again. Janice had gone to bed hours ago, after bringing me some supper on a tray.

Obviously she had taken a sleeping draught, or the bell's persistent ringing would have wakened her. Franklin, who slept in the cottage in the back, would never get up.

When I finally took down the receiver, I heard Ranger White's excited voice. A plane had crashed near his station.

"I can't reach Konapah!" White shouted as if he had to talk to me across the distance without the help of a telephone. "Old Doc Schratt is drunk again. . . ."

He began to swear, out of control of himself—a man alone in a blockhouse on top of a mountain, eight hard miles from the nearest dwelling, and a crashed plane close to him.

He had tried Schratt for ten minutes before he switched the call to me. He had only two lines to choose from—Schratt's and mine. The telephone operator leaves these connections open all night in case of emergencies.

I calmed White down and promised speedy help.

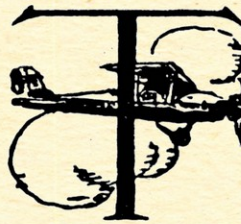
Finally I got Schratt on the phone. He could hardly talk or even understand what I was telling him. I repeated the information again and again.

"I can't get up there!" he whined when my words had penetrated his tequila-fogged brain. "I can't. I'm an old man. I can't sit on a horse for hours. I've got a bad heart!"

He was deadly afraid of losing his job, but the alcohol had paralyzed him.

"All right, I'll take over for you," I said. "Meet me at my house tonight."

"At your house tonight, Patrick," he repeated plaintively. "Thanks, Patrick. Thanks. . . ."

O WAKE Franklin from his sleep was a job. I ordered him to call the neighbors and to get me some help. Then I went back to the laboratory and packed my bag with all the instruments and medication I would need. When I looked up, Janice stood in the door.

She had put on her morning gown and with thin fingers was trying to fasten the belt at her waist. Her eyes were tired and dull. She had drugged herself. I saw that at once.

She cannot bear the climate, the heat of the parched desert, the sudden sandstorms, the stale water that is pumped through miles of hot pipelines. She was withering away slowly, desiccating. I had told her often enough to leave Washington Junction. She should live in New England, where she was born. But she will not leave me.

"Emergency?" she asked, pulling herself together, battling the drug.

I told her about the plane and White's call.

"Let me go with you," she asked, but her tongue was thick. "I can help. . . ."

She was suddenly awake, restless. I knew she only wanted to be with me, close to me, and the crash was a pretext.

"No," I said, "you're not fit for the trip. Go to bed."



I realized I had not talked to her for weeks. Her shadow was always behind me—my food in my room at the right moment, the house cleaned noiselessly, and she never bothered me with questions. She was waiting for me to call her, but I had forgotten her shadowy existence.

The men arrived with the horses and mules. We went up the mountain trail.

### *September 16th*

Our horses had climbed for three hours when we came to White's ranger station. It is a blockhouse of heavy timbers and a tower from which the observer has a wide view over the mountains. White's job is to keep a lookout for fires and see that the batteries for the revolving lights are charged properly. The beacons are landmarks for planes flying to the north and west.

White is a man of about fifty. He lives with only his dog in this lonely place. To him even the few inhabitants of Washington Junction are an unbearable crowd. Now, for the first time, I found him wanting to see someone, anyone. His weather-browned face looked livid.

"Glad you came," he said, helping me from my horse.

As he led me to the plane, he added: "It's a goddam mess!"

There was not much left of the ship. The impact of the crash had disintegrated the wings, cabin and fuselage. Pieces of the plane were scattered over a wide area. It looked as if the pilot had misjudged the height of the mountain.

"It caught fire, but I got it out," White said and pointed at a still smoldering patch where the blackened gas tank had burst inside out.

"I hope they're still alive." White had done an efficient job in spite of his shock.

He had carried the two survivors into the shade under a tree. One was a young man, the other an older man whose face seemed familiar. Both were still breathing. The young one had his eyes open, but he did not see me. He was

semi-conscious and his teeth were embedded in his lower lip. A trickle of blood ran down his chin.

I gave him a shot of morphine and turned to the other man. This one had compound fracture of both legs. White had twisted a tourniquet above each of the man's knees to keep him from bleeding to death.

TUTTLE and Phillips approached, but stopped a few yards from the injured men. I did not see Matthews, the third man. He had told me on the way up he could not stand the sight of blood.

Tuttle said: "There're two more guys over there, but they are dead!"

I turned in the indicated direction and saw a propeller buried in the ground, with a part of the motor still attached to it.

"Their heads are off." Phillips' voice was so low I could not understand him at first.

White had found four bodies. The plane, though powerful, was too small to have carried more.

I ordered White and Phillips to take the older man to the blockhouse. I examined the young man where he lay. His chest was crushed and both arms broken. I told Tuttle to cut four straight branches from the tree.

The man was conscious but could not talk. The morphine had lessened his pain, he was perspiring profusely. His pulse was close to a hundred and ten.

"Take it easy, try to doze off," I told him. "Don't fight. You'll be all right."

He seemed to understand and tried to answer. But the drug was already taking effect, closing his eyes.



I moved his arms carefully across his chest, and padding with bandages the four branches Tuttle had brought me, I laid them against both sides of the humerus and tied them securely at wrist and elbow. I gave the man a second injection to keep him asleep until we got him to the hospital and ordered Tuttle to take



him down to Washington Junction where he would meet the ambulance.

Tuttle called Phillips and they tied the unconscious man on a stretcher. I went back to the house without waiting for them to leave.

White had placed the old man on a table. He was beginning to stir and groan as I loosened the tourniquets from around his legs, which were swelling rapidly.

"They will have to be amputated," I said to White, "or he will die in a few hours."

White turned his livid face toward me and nodded. He grinned in an effort to control himself, but I was afraid he would never stick it through.

Now I regretted not having brought Janice Matthews, the grocer, the only other helper I had still with me, was outside being sick. He had never seen broken bones and mangled bodies before. I talked to him, but he was no help.

I gave White a bromide to calm him down. He became very efficient, carried out all my orders with speed and precision. But he could not stop talking. I let him talk, for it seemed to relieve him. He kept explaining just what had happened.

He had heard the ship cruising overhead soon after midnight. It seemed to have lost its bearings. The beacons were all in working order, but the clouds were unusually thick. White was at a loss to know what plane it was. The commercial from Los Angeles had already passed, and no other information had come from Konapah.

White talked in a staccato voice while he gathered fresh bed linen and white shirts from a drawer. He fired the kitchen stove and put water on to heat, efficient but mechanical. I scrubbed the kitchen table with green soap, which he fortunately had in the house.

White's voice while he moved quietly about, was feverish. He had lived at the station eight years. There had never been an accident or irregularity. Once a few trout fishermen stole gasoline from one

of the beacons for their stove. That is a federal offense, but White had not bothered reporting it.

He felt strangely responsible and obsessed by the idea that he might be accused of negligence. He tried to drown his guilt in a torrent of explanations.

He took it as a personal misfortune that the crash had occurred near his station.



THE WATER was boiling and I sterilized the instruments. Infection can follow even the most rigid asepsis and this dusty kitchen for an operating theater

hardly gave the man on the table a sporting chance. For a minute I considered not operating at all and letting fate decide.

I stepped closer to the man and studied his face. These features were somehow familiar, the thin colorless mouth, the high cheek bones, the short nose, the prominent forehead. Even the scar which ran from the left ear to the tip of the chin seemed known to me.

White had cut the man's coat from him and thrown it on a chair. I took the wallet from the breast pocket. Blood had soaked it and glued the sheaf of big bills together. The man carried a fortune with him! The wallet was old and worn and stamped with the initials W.H.D. Warren Horace Donovan!

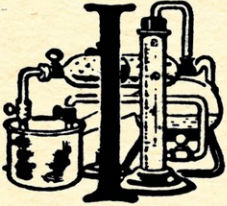
Now that I knew who he was I had to save his life. This man was too important. In a few hours dozens of specialists would be poking their noses into this case and if I did not get him down alive I would be accused of negligence. I had to make a clean job of it.

I did not tell White who the man on his kitchen table was. If I had, he would have been too awed and excited to help me.

After cutting away Donovan's trousers and underwear, I injected a spinal anesthetic between the third and fourth lumbar vertebrae. If the man became conscious now, he would feel no pain.



His respirations were irregular, and I lowered his head by having White place a couple of books under the back legs of the table. The blood pressure was falling alarmingly. I gave Donovan a half c.c. of 1-1000 Adrenalin intravenously. The pressure rose again. I began the amputation and finished it in less than an hour.



I was obliged to cut through the femur, because the femur bones had suffered multiple fractures and the arteries were severed. A steady stream of arterial blood gushed forth as soon as the tourniquets were loosened. His toes were ice cold and calmmy. Nobody could have saved Donovan's legs. And all the time I was operating I was aware of the futility of my endeavor.

The sun stood high when we tied him to the stretcher to take him down the trail. We fastened the litter between two horses, lowering the rear to carry the body in a fairly level position. The tedious descent began.

I left White behind. Matthews had recovered from the shock and seemed ashamed of his weakness and desertion. He wanted to make good now and walked beside the stretcher, letting me ride the horse.

Every few minutes we had to stop to take Donovan's pulse. It was around one hundred forty and very weak. I gave him one c.c. of 1-1000 Adrenalin intravenously.

When we were two hours on our way, Donovan stopped breathing. I had to pull his tongue forward and administer some oxygen which I carried with me in a small steel flask. He needed an intravenous injection of coramine, but I did not have it.

I had not slept for two days and I could feel I was close to the end of my resistance. A few times the trail blurred before my eyes. I had to hold tight to the neck of the horse.

**T**HE sun seemed to stand still in the sky and the heat became unbear-

able as we trailed down the pass. Once the horses shied, but Matthews caught the reins in time to keep them from bolting. A rattlesnake was sunning itself across the path. While I held the excited horses, Matthews killed it with a club. Then he threw the crushed body as far as he could, but the dead snake caught in the branches of a nearby tree and we had a bad time leading the horses past. This was torture, climbing downhill with a dying man strung between the horses.

When we finally heard voices hailing us, we stopped at once and sat down, exhausted.

Four men came up the trail to meet us. Schratt had phoned to Phoenix and the hospital had sent an ambulance. But Schratt had declined the assistance of a doctor from Phoenix. It was his job to take care of these injured. He was sticking to his job, and I was doing it!

Phoenix was still unaware that the plane which had crashed was Warren Horace Donovan's. Otherwise all the ethics of the medical profession would not have kept the hospital from sending every available specialist up the mountain to save W.H. Donovan's life!

#### *September 17th*

Just before we got to Washington Junction, Donovan reached a crisis. His strong heart had delayed the coma, but it was too late now to send him on to Phoenix. He could not have arrived alive.

I had him carried into my laboratory and put on the operating table. The men looked around curiously. They had not expected such an elaborate layout. None of them knew my name or anything about me. But people who live in the desert are not very curious or talkative. I lived secludedly. Nobody asked what I was doing.

I sent the men away, then changed to a clean shirt which Janice had left in the laboratory. I found iced coffee on my desk and some food. She was silently waiting in her room for me to call her. The accident had interrupted the monotonous routine of our days and she was hoping I would want to talk to her.

I examined the dying man. His pulse



was rapid and his heart-sounds so weak I could hardly hear them with my stethoscope.

I called Janice.

"Where is Schratt?" I asked. I could see she had not slept, waiting for me.

"He took the other man to Phoenix," she answered.

"Call up the hospital and tell him to get over here right away. Then come and help me."

She ran out of the room to obey my order.

I had to come to a decision. I had to make up my mind now. At once! Before it was too late. I did not feel exhausted any more. The opportunity was unprecedented. Too tremendous. This man was dying but his brain was still alive. It was an extraordinary brain, the dome large and of perfect shape, the skull broad, the forehead wide.

I tested its reactions with the encephalograph. It showed strong delta deflections.

An animal's brain has weak reactions and very little resistance. An animal gives up when it is going to die. The brain is a minor organ of its body, less important than the weapons of defense. But the man on my table had exercised his brain all his life, trained it, strengthened it.

Here was the perfect specimen a scientist might wish for!

If only Schratt were here. . . .



DOVONAN'S skull was nearly hairless. That made it easier. He was in a coma, it was not necessary to use an anesthetic.

I switched on the sterilizer and put in a surgical scalpel and a Gigli saw.

When the instruments were ready, I picked out the scalpel and made a semi-circular incision in the skin just above the right ear, continuing the incision around the back of the head to the upper surface of the left ear. I pulled the scalpel forward until it completely exposed the top of the calvarium. There

was very little bleeding from the exposed surfaces.

Taking the Gigli saw, I made an incision in the bony vault completely around the skull. To leave the brain uninjured, I was very careful not to cut through the duramater. I then lifted off the entire top of the cranial vault in toto.

The glistening surface of the duramater was still warm to my finger's touch.

I made the same semi-circular incision in the duramater that I had in the outer skin.

I pulled the dura forward and there lay exposed—Donovan's brain!

Donovan's breathing stopped. White asphyxis due to cardiac failure began. There was no time to apply stimulants. That would have taken precious minutes. I had to open his brain while he was still alive. I made that mistake before with the Capuchin, and I could not take any risk now.

I heard Janice at the phone talking to Phoenix. Schratt was on his way back. She repeated the information loudly so I could hear.

If Schratt's Ford didn't break down!

Janice came in. She stopped, seeing me at work over the body.

"Come here," I ordered gruffly. I wanted to give her no time to think. She had studied medicine to please me and have the chance to be closer to me. Concentrated, cool, precise even in emergencies, she was an ideal nurse. But, like Schratt, she deeply resented the work I was doing, for it took me away from her and she was jealous. I was married to my apparatus and scalpels.

"The Gigli saw! Quick!" I said. I stretched out my hand without looking at her. She hesitated, standing there in the doorway. Then I heard her move. She stepped close behind my shoulder and passed me the instrument. I pressed the Gigli saw to the occipital bone. I was so concentrated on my work I did not hear Schratt enter.

Finally I felt someone watching me. Schratt was standing two yards behind me, staring. His face twisting, he battled



with himself, undecided whether to run away or come to my assistance, but finally he overcame the shock of seeing me steal a man's brain.

I lifted up the cranium, severed it by cutting the medulla oblongata just above the foramen magnum.

"We would like to be alone, Janice," I said.

She left at once, relieved to go I felt, and for a second I regretted having called her to help me. I did not want witnesses!

"Put on those gloves and a smock," I said to Schratt, while I loosened the frontal gyrus with a blunt dissector, feeling my way not to injure the eyes.

**S**CHRATT impulsively hid his face in his hands and stood motionless for seconds. When he uncovered his face again, his expression had changed. He had known what I was going to do as soon as he entered the laboratory. I was violating his creed and ethics, but he did not refuse to help me, though I had no power to coerce him.

The potential frustrated Pasteur had broken through and Schratt's vocation was stronger than his conscience. I knew that afterwards he would have pangs of remorse, fits of repentance he would try to drown in tequila. He knew it too but he helped me.

He stepped over to the table and pulled on the gloves. Without waiting to put on a smock, he grabbed the knife. His hands, heavy and coarse fingered, became subtle. He worked with great speed.

"I'll have to cut here," he muttered, and as I nodded he severed the medulla oblongata.

I took blood serum from the heater, affixed the rubber tube to the rotary pump, and turned on the ultra-violet lights.

"Ready?" Schratt asked.

I nodded, took a steaming towel from the sterilizer, and held it over the brain which Schratt was lifting out of the lower cranium. He carried it over to the glass bowl and submerged it in the serum, fastened the rubber tubes to the vertebral

and internal carotid arteries and set the pump in motion.

"Better hurry," Schratt said pulling off his gloves. "They may come for the body any minute." His face suddenly looked gray and shriveled. He nodded toward the body.

"Better get him in shape. Stuff some cotton in the skull or the eyes might fall in."

I filled the skull cavity with cotton bandages and replaced the cranium, taping it with adhesive. I pulled the scalp back over the calvarium, then I bandaged the head carefully and had foresight enough to soak a few drops of Donovan's blood into the bandages as if a wound from the accident had bled through.

I eagerly turned to see if the brain was still alive but Schratt stopped me.

"We have done all we can," he said. "Let's get the body out of here. You wouldn't want them to see *that*?" He indicated the brain with a jerky movement of his head. "If we get the body out into the sun, it will decompose fast. I don't want an autopsy."

Excitement had fuddled my judgment, and I submitted to Schratt. But he did not seem to enjoy his new authority.

For years Schratt had been inhibited in my presence. I knew that. He had lost his own ambition and drive, and he envied me my persistence in carrying through the researches. But now, though he had the upper hand at last, he did not take advantage of me. Cowardly he walked out on his opportunity to revenge himself for the humiliations I had involuntarily inflicted upon him through all these years.

**W**WE put Donovan's body on a stretcher, covered it with a sheet and carried it outside. The heat would do fast work. We returned to the laboratory and proceeded to wash up.

"Write the death certificate before the ambulance gets here," I told Schratt calmly.



He did not answer and I divined that remorse had started to affect him.

Now he must register his crime in black and white, set down evidence that could send him to jail at any time. He was not afraid of the prison so much, but he had lost his last shred of self-respect.

"Sorry. I would write it myself, but I'm not the coroner. Besides it was your duty to take care of the victims of the crash."

"I'm being blackmailed," he said with a wan smile, but I knew he meant it. He was dangerous. He might give us both away in one of his fits of pathological depression.

"Want a drink?" I asked.

He looked up, astonished, read my thoughts and shook his head.

"You don't have to get me drunk for me to write the certificate," he muttered, walking over to the desk. "What's the man's name?"

When I told him he paled.

"W. H. Donovan," he repeated and sat down trembling. I waited for him to recover. "We have stolen Donovan's brain!"

He laughed suddenly, turned to the desk, picked up a pen and took a blank coroner's report from his pocket.

"I had better leave the name off," he said. "I just hope the heat melts that carcass away before every doctor in the country comes poking his nose into it."

He wrote and passed the paper to me.

"Death due to bleeding and shock following amputation of both legs," I read.

"They can see for themselves it's true what I wrote down."

He spoke swaggeringly to hide his uneasiness and walked over to the door. "I'll see that Phoenix collects it."

He put on his big hat and walked away without glancing at me or saying good-bye. He was walking out on me again.

**H**E stopped outside for a moment to talk to Janice. They have a curious conspiracy I have never bothered to intrude on and I was not interested now in what they were saying to each other,

but I went into my bedroom and called her.

Janice entered at once.

"You ought to sleep a little." She dropped the suggestion casually. For the first time in years she was telling me what to do. She was tapping hesitantly at the door to my consciousness, timidly trying to remind me of her.

"The ambulance from Phoenix will call for the body. If anyone calls, don't disturb me whoever it is." I sank on the bed. I really needed some sleep.

Even as I turned toward the wall, I could feel sleep blacking out my mind.

### *September 18th*

I woke at a very early morning hour. There was food near the bed, where Janice had left it in a thermos to keep warm. I ate hastily and went back to the laboratory. I heard Janice moving in her room, but she did not leave it.

Through the garden window I could see that the body had been taken away. On my desk lay the evening paper and a message. The hospital at Phoenix had phoned for me to come over and report to the coroner. Since Schrott was the coroner in the case, I tossed the paper into the wastebasket.

The Phoenix *Herald* had a big headline: *TYCOON DIES. W. H. Donovan Killed in Plane Crash in Snake Mountains.*

I put the paper into a drawer of my desk and turned to Donovan's brain.

The pump was faithfully supplying blood to the main artery and the ultra-violet lights shone through the glass tubes in which the serum circulated.

I wheeled the table with the encephalograph close to the vessel which contained the brain and fastened the five electrodes to the cortical tissue. One near the right ear, two high on the forehead, one above each eye cavity.

The brain of any living creature has an electric beat that is conducted by neurons, not by blood vessels or connecting tissue. All cells show varying degrees of mechanical, thermal, electrical and chemical activity.





**I** SWITCHED on the current that drove the current that drove the small motor, which, in turn, drew out a white paper strip an inch per second at a frequency of sixty cycles. A pen scratched a faint line on the moving paper. I amplified the infinitesimally small currents the brain was sending until their power was great enough to move the pen.

On the paper strip the activity of Donovan's thought processes showed in exact, equal curves. The curves repeated themselves; the brain was at rest, not really thinking now. The pen drew smooth alpha curves, concise as breathing.

I tested the occipital lead. The deflections were continuous, 10 cycles per second, with very low seven-to-eight cycles per second waves.

I touched the glass and at once the alpha waves disappeared. The brain in the glass was aware that I was standing there!

Delta waves appeared on the moving strip, a sure indication that the brain was emotionally disturbed.

It seemed fatigued, however, and suddenly it fell asleep again. I saw the repeating pattern reappear. The brain slept deeply, its strength exhausted by the grave operation.

I watched its depthless slumber while the pattern of this sleep, drawn by a pen on white paper, slipped through my fingers.

I watched for hours. I knew I had succeeded.

Donovan's brain would live though his body had died.

*September 19th*

The hospital in Phoenix phoned three times asking me to come over and answer some questions about Donovan's death.

Janice told them I was too busy now and would see them later.

Schratt called too. Janice took the phone into her room and had a long conversation with him. Generally she dislikes talking at length, so I anticipated that the situation in Phoenix was becoming involved.

When the hospital called for the fourth time, I decided to go before they became suspicious.

Janice wanted to ride into town with me. She sat silent and tense in the car. It annoyed me to feel her watching me out of the corner of her eye.

I made up my mind to clear all the accumulated issues between us as soon as possible. I resented her intensity which interfered with my work. I had to end this household disharmony.

When we arrived in town, Janice decided to stay in the car. I did not ask why she suddenly changed her mind or why she had ridden with me at all.

I went into the hospital.

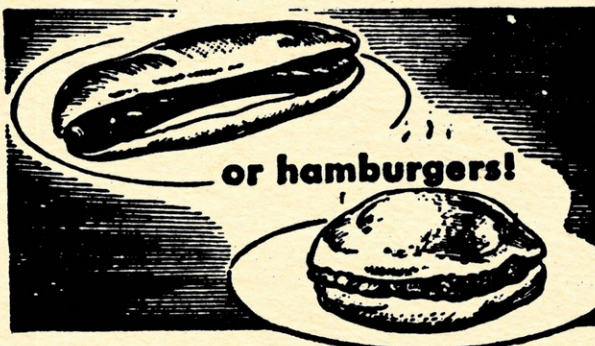
At the entrance a thin shabby-looking man with a camera took pictures of me and I did not like it.

The nurse at the reception desk sent

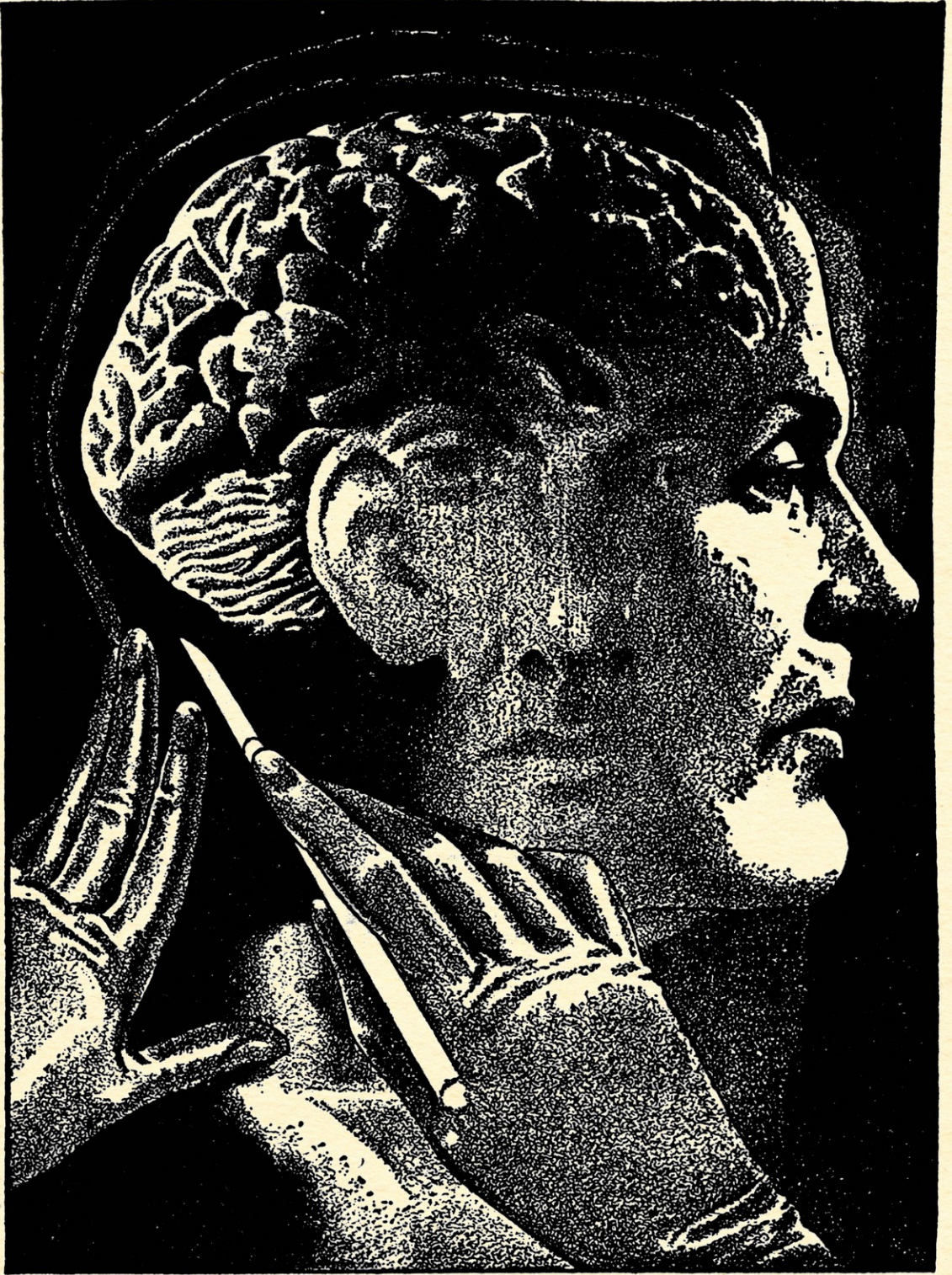
**NO FINER DRINK . . . with hot dogs . . .**

**PEPSI-COLA**

*Energy... in the big big bottle*







I pulled the scalpel forward and there  
lay exposed – Donovan's Brain!



me straight up to Dr. Higgins, the superintendent.

In Higgins' waiting-room sat Schratt, dilapidated and looking greenish. I nodded at him, but his shifting eyes registered no recognition. As I was walking over to speak to him, Higgins opened a door and called me inside.

Webster, a manager of the airline, was with him. Webster did not wait for formalities. "Dr. Cory," he said, "Schratt tells me you led the emergency party to the ranger station."

"Yes," I replied. "It was the obvious thing to do. If Dr. Schratt had had to form a rescue party in Konapah, he would have arrived much later."

"As I understand it, you are not a practicing physician in this district?" Higgins spoke sharply, but I was prepared for the question.

"I am a medical doctor, Dr. Higgins." I spoke as sharply as he. "In an emergency

every physician has his duty to perform."

I turned to Webster. He nodded perfunctorily as if I had ordered him to affirm my statement.

Webster was uneasy. The man who had died was too important to be disposed of with just an ordinary report.

**E**VERY newspaper in the country will blow up this incident. Webster's activities the night of the disaster will be discussed in detail.

Donovan could not have been saved if all the specialists of the Mayo clinic had been waiting at the spot of the accident, and Higgins seemed to know it. But Webster was to blame that an old crackpot doctor was in charge the night of the disaster and an unknown physician undertook a major operation on one of the richest men in America.

Continued next issue

## **SMASHING STORIES, RARE AND UNCOLLECTED**

### **OCTOBER'S ISSUE: ANOTHER KNOCKOUT CLASSIC HARD BOILED DETECTIVE FICTION**

**Special Feature**  
**On the set of**

## **"I WALKED WITH A ZOMBIE"**

*Curt Siodmak creator of the Wolfman  
remembers his horror movie days*

**Don't Miss It**

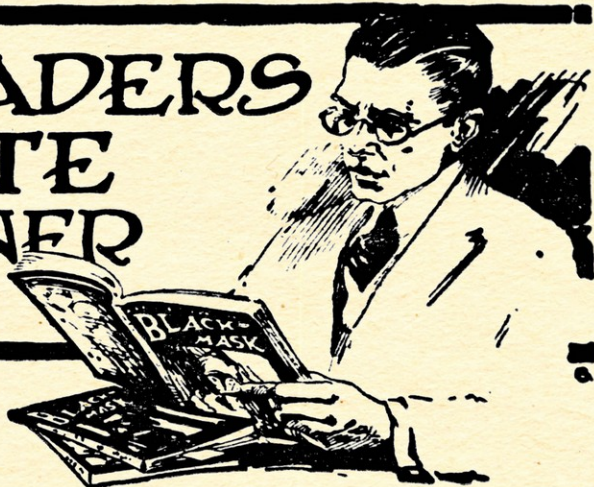


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# OUR READERS PRIVATE CORNER

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## INSIDE DOPE FROM AUTHORS

*From the Author of Donovan's Brain*

Thanks for your letter of April 2.

I'm happy to hear that *Black Mask* is being revived and I herewith sign up for a charter subscription.

It would be traditional to start *Black Mask* again with *Donovan's Brain*. A new generation has grown up and the novel does not seem to have lost any of its appeal.

I'm foremost a novelist and a screen writer. But I also directed and produced motion pictures. If you pick up *Who Wrote The Movie*, Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences, you'll find 35 of my pictures registered.

I "originated" the character of the WOLFMAN, (Larry Talbot) and I wish I had the copyright. I gave Dracula a name, Count A. Lucard (Dracula backwards), and it has stuck to the character since. To answer your question, I wrote "I Walked With A Zombie" for Val Lewton at RKO.

*DONOVAN'S BRAIN* was an idea for a motion picture, rejected by Columbia pictures. I wrote the novel in a hut in the Mojave desert, detached from any community. It took only a few months, 90 days to be exact. 12 publishers rejected it, and it is still in print all over the world. Three times it found its way to the screen in English. *Black Mask* published it first.

I was trained by the famous German Producer, Erich Pommer, who made the Emil Jannings pictures. He produced at UFA BERLIN my novel *F.P.I. DOES NOT ANSWER*, which Little Brown also published. When Hitler came I went to England where I did many pictures, among them *TRANSATLANTIC TUNNEL*. I started in Hollywood in 1937.

Lately I want back to S-F writing: *Hauser's Memory* (Putnams 1969) which also became a

picture and got first prize at the S-F festival in Triest in 1970. *The Third Ear* (Putnams 1970), *City In The Sky* (Putnams 1974, to be published in April).

I'm lookin forward to the first edition of *Black Mask*.

Kind regards,

CURT SIODMAK  
Three Rivers, California

### *The Science Fiction Question*

Some time ago we wrote to Dr. Isaac Asimov, the great science fictioneer and innovator of robot literature, suggesting that he write an essay on his early pulp writing experiences for *Black Mask*. Here is part of his reply.

I look forward to receiving the first issue of the renescent *Black Mask*.

I must say I am not certain that there is anything reasonable I can do for you. My memories of writing in the old pulp days are confined to the science fiction magazines, which are a specialized case, and perhaps not interesting to the readers of *Black Mask*.

Yours,

New York City

Isaac Asimov

The point we wish to make with Dr. Asimov's letter is that any *Black Mask* reader worthy of the name is interested in all aspects of pulp writing and popular culture.

We had a similar conversation with a big time movie producer when we asked



him to keep us informed about some Dashiell Hammett productions he had brewing. He warned us not to mix up movies and *Black Mask*. But the point is that *Black Mask* has always been mixed up with movies and with science fiction and with horror stories and even with westerns. It never restricted itself. And we think that is one of its great qualities.

We wrote back to Dr. Asimov and asked if we could use his letter to make our point and informed him of some of our other plans for the magazine. Here is his answer.

Sure, go ahead and print the letter if you wish. I have no objections. And if its a handy lever with which to put out a call for s.f., so much the better.

I know Rogers A *REQUIEM FOR ASTOUNDING* very well and own a copy and have read it twice. If you serialize it I shall read it a third time.

And I look forward to *Black Mask*.

Yours,

New York City

Isaac Asimov

### Reading Suggestion

#### From the Author of *Naked Lunch*

In S.F. I read a lot of them and some I forget . . . Mention *Fury* by Henry Kuttner.

I thought *The Inheritors* by Conrad and Madox Ford a very interesting science fiction book. It is rather hard to find. I have just bought a book of Gertrude Stein which contains the essay you mention. Please let me hear from you again.

Cordially Yours,

London, England

William S. Burroughs

### Local Color

The following is part of a letter from Erle Stanley Gardner reprinted in a 1933 *Black Mask* editorial by Cap Shaw, one of our greatest editors. The Gardner anecdote is interesting and the Captain's point is well taken.

Dear Cap:

I started out in the camp wagon to work on the Ed Jenkins story and pick up some local color down at the border, also to poke around on a lost mine proposition that sounded interesting. Got down there in the camp wagon and ran into the only snowstorm which Border country has had in the last thirty years, and maybe you think it wasn't cold. In fact it was

so cold it froze me out . . . Some of the curious came over to look, saw that I was getting a trace of gold, and came to the conclusion that the snow must have been impregnated with gold. As it happened I got out of town just in time.

All of which is the reason that half of the Jenkins yarn is written and half of it isn't.

ERLE STANLEY GARDNER

The Cap wrote in his editorial:

"The point about Mr. Gardner's letter is that he got into the mess going down there for AUTHENTIC local color.

That is something in which we feel *Black Mask* writers are specialists . . . all of these writers know people, real human beings of flesh and blood, with human emotions and frailties and strength.

It seems to us that this is the secret of their success, the reason why their stories have such punch and kick and why they are different from the stories you find elsewhere."

#### *From The Author of Women, Politics, and Murder*

In 1924 when Dashiell Hammett was just about becoming a regular fixture in *Black Mask*, the editors were forced to reject a few of his stories.

The editors printed Mr. Hammett's response, which follows below in part, as an example to other writers. They wrote that "Mr. Hammett has gone to the heart of the whole subject of writing—or of painting, singing, acting . . . or just living for that matter. As advertising gentry would say, here is the "Secret" of success."

I don't think I will send "Women, Politics, and Murder" back to you. Not in time for the July issue anyway. The trouble is that this sleuth of mine has degenerated into a meal-ticket. I liked him at first and used to enjoy putting him through his tricks; but recently I've fallen into the habit of bringing him out whenever the landlord shows signs of nervousness.

There are men who can write like that, but I am not one of them. If I stick to the stuff I want to write—the stuff I enjoy writing—I can make a go of it.

I want to thank both you and Mr. Cody for jolting me into wakefulness. There's no telling how much good this will do me. And you may be sure that whenever you receive a story from me hereafter,—frequently, I hope,—it will be one I enjoyed writing.

San Francisco, Cal.

Dashiell Hammett

Dash must have done "Women, Politics, and Murder" to his satisfaction. It ran two issues later. You can find it in this magazine. It never appeared anywhere else!



# The Outlaw

HERE'S WHY THIS THRILLING NEW PICTURE HAS BEEN KEPT OFF THE SCREEN FOR TWO YEARS!



1944—HOWARD HUGHES, WORLD FAMOUS FLYER AND MOTION PICTURE PRODUCER, COMPLETES HIS PICTURE THE OUTLAW.

HOWARD HUGHES DISCOVERED JEAN HARLOW, PAUL MUNI, GEORGE RAFT, AND PAT O'BRIEN. NOW, IN THE OUTLAW, HE PRESENTS HIS SENSATIONAL NEW STAR DISCOVERY—  
**JANE RUSSELL**



JUNE, 1944—THE OUTLAW WORLD PREMIERE IS HELD AT SAN FRANCISCO. THE PICTURE BREAKS EVERY EXISTING RECORD!! HELD OVER FOR 8 WEEKS! PLAYS TO MORE THAN 300,000 PEOPLE!!

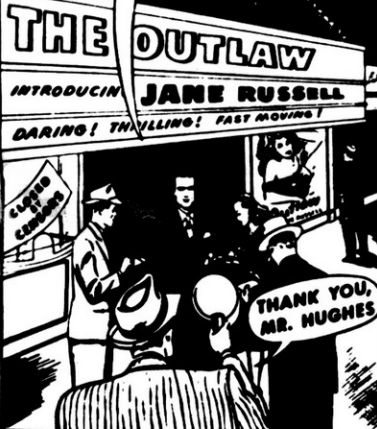


THE OUTLAW IS TRIGGER-FAST ACTION COMBINED WITH DARING SENSATION TOO STARTLING TO DESCRIBE!

THEN...THE OUTLAW IS BANNED BY THE CENSORS! BUT RATHER THAN CUT A SINGLE SCENE FROM THE FILM, HOWARD HUGHES WITHDRAWS IT FROM THE THEATRES OF THE WORLD.



I'M GOING TO FIGHT THIS BATTLE TO THE FINISH AND MAKE SURE THAT THE PUBLIC SEES MY PICTURE EXACTLY AS I MADE IT!



NOW, AT LAST, AFTER A TWO YEARS FIGHT WITH THE CENSORS, HOWARD HUGHES BRINGS YOU HIS DARING PRODUCTION, THE OUTLAW... EXACTLY AS IT WAS FILMED!! NOT A SCENE CUT!! AND INTRODUCING A NEW STAR, JANE RUSSELL!



*A pack o'  
pleasure*

**Chesterfield**

**CIGARETTES**

**LIGGETT & MYER**

Warning: The Surgeon General Has Determined  
That Cigarette Smoking Is Dangerous to Your Health.

In 1937 when this snappy ad appeared, the Surgeon General had not spoken out on the dangers of smoking. The statistics refer to today's Chesterfield blend.



# BLACK MASK

## **COLLECTORS ISSUE**

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