

STREET
AND
SMITH'S

CLUES

AUG. 10
1939 10¢

DETECTIVE STORIES



THE
PENTHOUSE
TREASURE
a complete
mystery novel

Alfred

Turns
sorry
it is right
Address

GET RID OF **DANDRUFF** WITH **LISTERINE**

*Reaches and kills Pityrosporum ovale,
which causes dandruff . . . scalp
becomes cleaner, fresher, healthier*



Don't go around with a case of dandruff that humiliates you and disgusts others. Start using Listerine Antiseptic and massage once a day at least. Twice a day is better.

This amazingly delightful treatment has proved successful in laboratory and clinic. Countless men and women use no other.

Listerine Antiseptic, famous for 25 years as a mouth wash and gargle, succeeds so brilliantly in controlling dandruff because it reaches the scalp, hair, and hair follicles with an antiseptic bath which removes ugly flakes and kills the queer, bottle-shaped germ (*Pityrosporum ovale*) which causes dandruff.

Start with Listerine Antiseptic and continue the treatments regularly. Results will delight and

amaze you. No other remedy that we know of has such a clinical record of success in such a large majority of cases.

Even after dandruff has disappeared, it is wise to massage with Listerine Antiseptic at regular intervals to guard against reinfection.

Lambert Pharmacal Company
St. Louis, Mo.



THE TREATMENT

MEN: Douse Listerine Antiseptic on the scalp *at least one a day*. **WOMEN:** Part the hair at various places, and apply Listerine Antiseptic right along the part with a medicine dropper, to avoid wetting the hair excessively.

Always follow with vigorous and persistent massage with fingers or a good hair brush. But don't expect overnight results, because germ conditions cannot be cleared up that fast.

Genuine Listerine Antiseptic is guaranteed not to bleach the hair or affect texture.



LISTERINE THE PROVED TREATMENT FOR DANDRUFF

ANTISEPTIC

A Money-Making Opportunity for Men of Character

EXCLUSIVE FRANCHISE FOR AN INVENTION EXPECTED TO REPLACE A MULTI-MILLION-DOLLAR INDUSTRY

Costly Work Formerly "Sent Out" by Business Men Now Done by Themselves at a Fraction of the Expense

This is a call for men everywhere to handle
exclusive agency for one of the most
unique business inventions of the day.

Forty years ago the horse and buggy business was supreme—today almost extinct. Twenty years ago the phonograph industry ran into many millions—today practically a relic. Only a comparatively few foresighted men saw the fortunes ahead in the automobile and the radio. Yet irresistible waves of public buying swept these men to fortune, and sent the buggy and the phonograph into the discard. So are great successes made by men able to detect the shift in public favor from one industry to another.

Now another change is taking place. An old established industry—an integral and important part of the nation's structure—in which millions of dollars change hands every day—is in thousands of cases being replaced by a truly astonishing, simple invention which does the work better—more reliably—AND AT A COST OFTEN AS LOW AS 2% OF WHAT IS ORDINARILY PAID! It has not required very long for men who have taken over the rights to this valuable invention to do a remarkable business, and show earnings which in these times are almost unheard of for the average man.

Not a "Gadget"— Not a "Knick-Knack"—

but a valuable, proved device which
has been sold successfully by business
novices as well as seasoned
veterans.

Make no mistake—this is no novelty—no flimsy creation which the inventor hopes to put on the market. You probably have seen nothing like it yet—perhaps never dreamed of the existence of such a device—yet it has already been used by corporations of outstanding prominence—by dealers of great corporations—by their branches—by doctors, newspapers, publishers—schools—hospitals, etc., etc., and by thousands of small business men. You don't have to convince a man that he should use an electric bulb to light his office instead of a gas lamp. Nor do you have to sell the same business man the idea that some day he may need something like this invention. The need is already there—the money is usually being spent right at that very moment—and the desirability of saving the greatest part of this expense is obvious immediately.

Some of the Savings You Can Show

You walk into an office and put down before your prospect a letter from a sales organization showing that they did work in their own office for \$11 which formerly could have cost them over \$200. A building supply corporation pays our man \$70, whereas the bill could have been for \$1,600! An automobile dealer pays our representative \$15, whereas the expense could have been over \$1,000. A department store has expense of \$88.60, possible cost if done outside the business being well over \$2,000. And so on. We could not possibly list all cases here. These are just a few of the many actual cases which we place in your hands to work with. Practically every line of business and every section of the country is represented by these field reports which hammer across dazzling, convincing money-saving opportunities which hardly any business man can fail to understand.

Profits Typical of the Young, Growing Industry

Going into this business is not like selling something offered in every grocery, drug or department store. For instance, when you take a \$7.50 order, \$5.83 can be your share. On \$1,500 worth of business, your share can be \$1,167.00. The very least you get as your part of every dollar's worth of business you do is 67 cents—on ten dollars' worth \$6.70, on a hundred dollars' worth \$67.00—in other words two thirds of every order you get is yours. Not only on the first order—but on repeat orders—and you have the opportunity of earning an even larger percentage.

This Business Has Nothing to Do With House to House Canvassing

Nor do you have to know anything about high-pressure selling. "Selling" is unnecessary in the ordinary sense of the word. Instead of hammering away at the customer and trying to "force" a sale, you make a dignified, business-like call, leave the installation—whatever size the customer says he will accept—at our risk, let the customer sell himself after the device is in and working. This does away with the need for pressure on the customer—it eliminates the handicap of trying to get the money before the customer has really convinced himself 100%. You simply tell what you offer, showing proof of success in that customer's particular line of business. Then leave the invention without a dollar down. It starts working at once. In a few short days, the installation should actually produce enough cash money to pay for the deal, with profits above the investment coming in at the same time. You then call back, collect your money. Nothing is so convincing as our offer to let results speak for themselves without risk to the customer! While others fail to get even a hearing, our men are making sales running into the hundreds. They have received the attention of the largest firms in the country, and sold to the smallest businesses by the thousands.

EARNINGS

One man in California earned over \$1,600 per month for three months—close to \$5,000 in 90 days' time. Another writes from Delaware—"Since I have been operating (just a little less than a month of actual selling) and not the full day at that, because I have been getting organized and had to spend at least half the day in the office; counting what I have sold outright and on trial, I have made just a little in excess of one thousand dollars profit for one month." A man working small city in N. Y. State made \$10,805 in 9 months. Texas man nets over \$300 in less than a week's time. Space does not permit mentioning here more than these few random cases. However, they are sufficient to indicate that the worthwhile future in this business is coupled with immediate earnings for the right kind of man. One man with us has already made over a thousand sales on which his earnings ran from \$5 to \$60 per sale and more. A great deal of this business was repeat business. Yet he had never done anything like this before coming with us. That is the kind of opportunity this business offers. The fact that this business has attracted to it such business men as former bankers, executives of businesses—men who demand only the highest type of opportunity and income—gives a fairly good picture of the kind of business this is. Our door is open, however, to the young man looking for the right field in which to make his start and develop his future.

No Money Need Be Risked

in trying this business out. You can measure the possibilities and not be out a dollar. If you are looking for a business that is not overworked—a business that is just coming into its own—on the upgrade, instead of the downgrade—a business that offers the buyer relief from a burdensome, but unavoidable expense—a business that has a prospect practically in every office, store, or factory into which you can set foot—regardless of size—that is a necessity but does not have any price cutting to contend with as other necessities do—that because you control the sales in exclusive territory is your own business—that pays more on some individual sales than many men make in a week and sometimes in a month's time—if such a business looks as if it is worth investigating, get in touch with us at once for the rights in your territory—don't delay—because the chances are that if you do wait, someone else will have written to us in the meantime—and if it turns out that you were the better man—we'd both be sorry. So for convenience, use the coupon below—but send it right away—or wire if you wish. But do it now. Address

F. E. ARMSTRONG, President
Dept. 4095-G, Mobile, Ala.

RUSH FOR EXCLUSIVE TERRITORY PROPOSITION

F. E. ARMSTRONG, Pres., Dept. 4095-G, Mobile, Ala.
Without obligation to me, send me full information
on your proposition.

Name _____
Street or Route _____
Box No. _____
City _____
State _____

"THE HURLING MONSTER ROARED STRAIGHT AT ME!"



F. L. BROWNELL
Licensed Guide
Adirondack Forest Preserve



1 "One dark night," writes Mr. Brownell, "I had to cross Fourth Lake in a canoe. The utter silence gave one the feeling of being a million miles from civilization.



2 "About halfway across, the night was shattered by the roar of a powerful motor. Two specks of light, which rapidly grew larger, came towards me—a seaplane which had been anchored on the lake!



3 "The hurtling monster was roaring straight for me! The pilot couldn't hear my shouts. I made a frantic grab for the flashlight beside me. Just in time, the pilot saw its bright flash.



4 "The plane shot aside as it took the air, missing my canoe by what seemed like inches! I think I can truthfully say that those 'Eveready' fresh DATED batteries saved my life. I'll tell the world I'll never be without them in my flashlight. It just doesn't pay to take chances.

(Signed) *F. L. Brownell*



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

NATIONAL CARBON COMPANY, INC., 30 EAST 42ND STREET, NEW YORK, N. Y.

Unit of Union Carbide and Carbon Corporation

STREET & SMITH'S

CLUES

DETECTIVE STORIES

TITLE REGISTERED U. S. PATENT OFFICE

CONTENTS AUGUST, 1939

VOL. XLII, NO. 3

COVER BY CHARLES DE FEO

COMPLETE NOVEL

THE PENTHOUSE TREASURE . . . Alfred Williams 9

What would you do if you got a good job at \$75.00 a week—and found yourself in the midst of a murder?

TWO NOVELETTES

I'LL NEVER LET YOU GO . . . Steve Fisher 61

The stamp of the crook was upon her—put there by the hand of an ambitious officer. Then he wished he could wipe off the brand upon her name!

DON'T YOU BELIEVE IT . . . Robert Arthur 105

A case-hardened cop doesn't believe anything he hears—not even if he proves it for himself. He claims it pays to be that way.

SHORT STORIES

AMBULANCES ARE FOR SICK PEOPLE

Frederic Sinclair 51

But, in case of necessity, they can be used for dead ones, too!

INCLUDING MURDER Mel Everett 83

*Lead and gold—hot lead and bloody gold—
—all mixed up in a swiftly-paced plot.*

THE CLUE OF THE SUDDEN WINDOWS

Eugene Blake 97

A most unusual Indian detective in an unusual case.

FEATURES

THE STORY TRAIL 6

THE LAW AND THE LAWLESS 82

The entire contents of this magazine has not been published before and is protected by copyright and must not be reprinted without the publishers' permission.

Monthly publication issued by Street & Smith Publications, Incorporated, 79-89 Seventh Avenue, New York, N. Y. Allen L. Grammer, President; Henry W. Ralston, Vice President and Treasurer. Copyright, 1939, by Street & Smith Publications, Inc., New York. Copyright, 1939, by Street & Smith Publications, Inc., Great Britain. Reentered as Second-class Matter, October 23, 1938, at the Post Office at New York, N. Y., under Act of Congress of March 3, 1879. Subscriptions to Canada, Cuba, Dom. Republic, Haiti, Spain, Central and South American Countries, except The Guianas and British Honduras, \$1.25 per year. To all other Foreign Countries, including The Guianas and British Honduras, \$1.70 per year.



Printed in
the U.S.A.

We do not accept responsibility for the return of unsolicited manuscripts or artwork. To facilitate handling, the author should inclose a self-addressed envelope with the requisite postage attached, and artists should inclose or forward return postage. All characters used in fiction and semi-fiction stories in this magazine are fictitious. Any similarity in name or characterization to persons, living or dead, is coincidental.

ON SALE
SECOND WEDNES-
DAY EACH MONTH
\$1 per YEAR
10c per COPY

STREET & SMITH PUBLICATIONS, INC. • 79 7th AVE., NEW YORK, N. Y.

THE STORY TRAIL

YOU all know about the Black Widow spider, whose sting is death. In the next issue, Johnny Eight-ball Pike meets the Black Widow—and she's not a spider, although men who fall into her web suffer the same fate as do those who are struck by that deadly spinner of webs. Feeling that something is so, and proving it, are two entirely different things, however, and Johnny has quite a few experiences before he can convince the authorities that there is something to his theory. The story is "The Black Widow Murders," and it comes to you in a complete novelette in next month's Clues-Detective Stories.

Another fine story in our next issue is the complete novel, "House of Plunder," by Edward Ronns. Though it stems in the days when America was being made; when fortunes were being built up; it all takes place very much in our time, with the descendants of those original pioneers embroiled in a plot which was in the making for centuries. A house full of people. Murder is loose. Who is guilty? Why do such weird happenings take place? You'll really get a kick out of the solution.

In the story, "I'll Never Let You Go," which Steve Fisher gives you in this issue, you will find an unusual quality of action and suspense, of characterization and human emo-

tion. Steve Fisher has an unusual ability in the power of his writing, and it comes to the front in this novelette more so than in any of his other work that you have read, here or elsewhere. Once you start reading that tale, "you'll never let it go" until you've finished!

Just how hardened do police become after years of service? In every business and every profession, there are countless situations which come up to excite the sympathy of people. The first few hundred cases may seem exciting; after that, most of the tricks and schemes become known to the experienced, and as a result, they seem to be hardened and unfeeling. In Robert Arthur's novelette, "Don't You Believe It," you have such a police character. Years of service have shown him that you can't believe everything people tell you, even when they say they are looking after the interests of others. When, suddenly, a number of people all come in asking for protection for one particular individual—including that individual himself—you certainly can't believe all of them. This cop doesn't believe any of them, and thus gets a good start on solving an unusual case.

The life of a hospital interne is not a happy one; lots of work, few hours for recreation, and very little thanks for what he does. And, of course, very little money, too, for that is all in the line of experience. How varied that experience can be is well told in "Ambulances Are for Sick People," on page 51. It is an experience quite different from the average run of medical routine, and therefore that much more exciting.

HOW A FREE LESSON STARTED BILL ON THE WAY TO A GOOD RADIO JOB



Find out how practical it is to Train at Home for a Good RADIO Job *I'll send a sample lesson FREE*

SAY -- THIS WAY OF LEARNING IS GREAT. I'M GOING TO ENROLL. THEN I CAN BE A SET SERVICING EXPERT -- OR GET A JOB IN A BROADCASTING STATION -- OR INSTALL LOUDSPEAKER SYSTEMS. THERE ARE A LOT OF GOOD MONEY-MAKING OPPORTUNITIES IN RADIO



J. E. SMITH, President
National Radio Institute

Established 25 years
FREE. Examine it, read it, see how easy it is to understand -- how practical I make learning Radio at home. Men without Radio or electrical knowledge become Radio Experts, earn more money than ever as a result of my training.

Why Many Radio Experts Make \$30, \$50, \$75 a Week

Radio broadcasting stations employ engineers, operators, station managers and pay well for trained men. Fixing Radio sets in spare time pays many \$200 to \$500 a year -- full time jobs with Radio jobbers, manufacturers and dealers as much as \$30, \$50, \$75 a week. Many Radio Experts open full or part time Radio sales and repair businesses. Radio manufacturers and jobbers employ testers, inspectors, foremen, engineers, servicemen, in road-pay jobs with opportunities for advancement. Automobile, police, aviation, commercial Radio, loud speaker systems are newer fields offering good opportunities now and for the future. Television promises to open many good jobs soon. Men I trained have good jobs in these branches of Radio. Read how they got their jobs. Mail coupon.

**Many Make \$5, \$10, \$15
a Week Extra in Spare Time
While Learning**

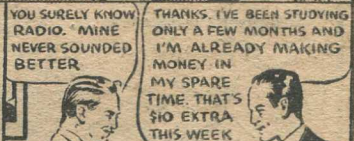
The day you enroll I start sending Extra Money Job Sheets; show you how to do Radio repair jobs. Throughout your training I send plans and directions that made good spare time money -- \$200 to \$500 -- for hundreds, while learning. I send you special Radio equipment to conduct experi-

ments and build circuits. This 50-50 method of training makes learning at home interesting, fascinating, practical. I ALSO GIVE YOU A MODERN, PROFESSIONAL, ALL-WAVE, ALL-PURPOSE RADIO SET SERVICING INSTRUMENT to help you make good money fixing Radios while learning and equip you for full time jobs after graduation.

Find Out What Radio Offers You

Act Today. Mail the coupon now for sample lesson and 64-page book. They're free to any fellow over 16 years old. They point out Radio's spare time and full time opportunities and those coming in Television; tells about my training in Radio and Television; show you letters from men I trained, telling what they are doing and earning. Find out what Radio offers YOU! MAIL COUPON in an envelope, or paste on a postcard -- NOW!

J. E. SMITH, President
National Radio Institute, Dept. 9GD,
Washington, D. C.



**J. E. SMITH, President, Dept. 9GD,
National Radio Institute, Washington, D. C.**

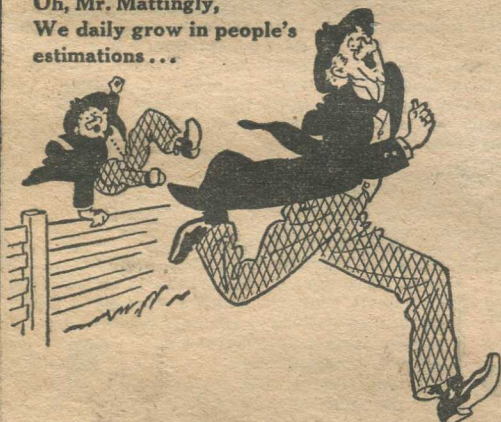
Dear Mr. Smith: Without obligating me, send the sample lesson and your book which tells about the opportunities in Radio and your 50-50 method of training men at home to become Radio Experts. (Please write plainly.)

NAME..... AGE.....
ADDRESS.....
CITY..... STATE..... 2PR

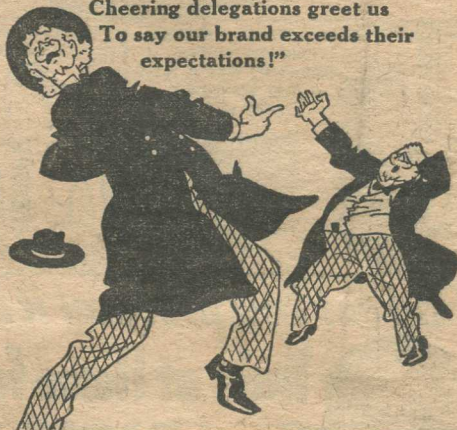
MAIL THIS NOW

Mr. Mattingly & Mr. Moore find they grow more popular every day!

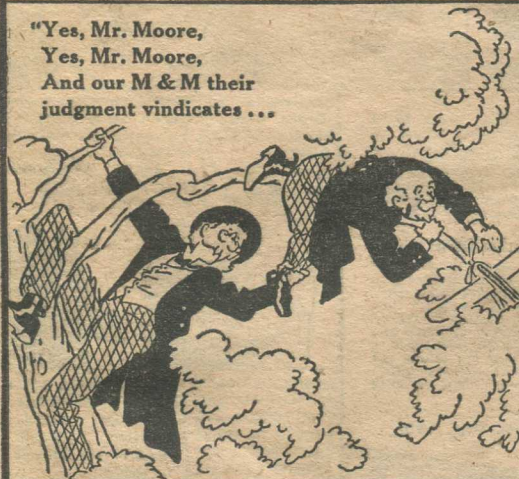
"Oh, Mr. Mattingly,
Oh, Mr. Mattingly,
We daily grow in people's
estimations ...



"Swarming crowds at stations meet us,
Cheering delegations greet us
To say our brand exceeds their
expectations!"



"Yes, Mr. Moore,
Yes, Mr. Moore,
And our M & M their
judgment vindicates ...



"We slow distill for flavor prime,
So ask for M & M next time—
You'll find its price is lower
than its flavor indicates!"



IF YOU TRIED to guess the price
of Mattingly & Moore by its
smooth, mellow flavor, you'd think
it costs a whole lot more than it
does!

You see, M & M is ALL whis-
key... every drop *slow*-distilled.
More, it is a blend of straight

whiskies—the kind of whiskey we
think is best of all!

M & M has been famous down
in Kentucky for more than 60
years! Get acquainted with its
grand, old-fashioned flavor today!
Ask for it at your favorite bar or
package store.

Mattingly & Moore

Long on Quality—Short on Price!

*A blend of straight whiskies—90 proof. Every drop is whiskey.
Frankfort Distilleries, Incorporated, Louisville & Baltimore.*

THE PENTHOUSE TREASURE



By **ALFRED WILLIAMS**

WITHOUT any real hope, save that the long envelope might contain notice of an appointment—with a job if he qualified—Lane Burnett took the letter from his grim-lipped landlady.

Lane thanked her, and trudged on up to the sixth floor. She followed, a little more slowly. He grimaced as he snapped on the one light of his bare attic room. With a savage gesture he tore way the empty end of

the envelope. Then he stared. A genuine miracle had happened to him—at a time when all faith had died. There was something oblong and buff-colored inside, something that had on it the red embossing of a checkwriter!

There was a brief typed note, too; but for the moment, as his heart raced to almost suffocating tempo, the destitute young man had eyes only for the check. It bore an unfamiliar signature: "Thurston Webb." And it bore the bank stamp, with the cabalistic initials and figures which said that it had been certified by the Marchmont National Bank of New York City. It was made out in the sum, incredible to the half-starved young man, of one hundred dollars!

Holding his breath, and with his ordinarily steel-nerved fingers shaking from excitement, Lane scanned the brusque note accompanying the wholly unexpected remittance:

THURSTON WEBB LOANS

Mr. Lane Burnett,
104 Grady Place,
New York, N. Y.

Dear Mr. Burnett:

Your application (to YS 1107 N. Y. Register) received and contents noted. You are accepted at salary stipulated. Herewith advance which will be deducted from future salary at rate of ten dollars a week. Kindly report tomorrow morning, June 5th, at 10 a. m. The address is penthouse, 211 Bagley Street, City. Bring suitcase, as you will make your quarters here at least temporarily.

Very truly yours,

Thurston Webb

Now, after a subdued cheer—subdued because he heard Mrs. Robbins climbing the last flight of stairs—Lane picked up the envelope and examined it. The flap bore Webb's

name. The postmark showed it had been mailed early this same morning, or late the previous night.

Between two long breaths the young man's mind was made up. He would cash the check, pay Mrs. Robbins, and go to work. A fleeting thought crossed his mind that a loan business probably meant pawnbroking or something akin to that. Still, Lane's bank training ought to qualify him. He just hoped the business would not be too sordid. But sordid or not, it meant life itself to the young man.

"I can stand it ten weeks, anyhow!" he breathed to himself. "And, lord of love, how *glad* I am! Oh, you're just in time, Mrs. Robbins! I was just coming to see you! I—Well, if you can cash a certified check—it's same as currency, of course—I'll be delighted and relieved to pay you the three weeks' rent I owe. I'm leaving you tomorrow."

Whereupon the grim-lipped Mrs. Robbins, like all her widowed kind who find it difficult indeed to collect from the down-at-heels roomers who have to live in such lodgings as she had to offer, was not at all anxious to get rid of her roomer.

"Oh-h, but you can't leave me like that, Mr. Burnett!" she protested, taking the check and reading the typed figures. "I—What is wrong? You aren't satisfied? I let you run up three weeks' bill, and I—"

Lane expressed his genuine gratitude, for until this windfall had happened, the landlady had had no chance at all of collecting except by holding the roomer's trunk and his meager clothing. He told her to take out a week's additional rent in lieu of notice. If she did not have the cash on hand, they might go together to her bank early the next morning. Only he would have to

get along to his place at ten o'clock.

A stifled exclamation of horror came from the woman then, just as she reluctantly agreed to go downstairs and get change for the certified check.

"You ain't," she began in a stifled voice, her tired eyes suddenly wide, "you ain't in that loan shark's clutches, Mr. Burnett! Oh, I hope you ain't!"

Lane shook his head slowly. "Not in his clutches, as you call it, Mrs. Robbins. In fact"—and he stopped, frowning a moment—"if he's a loan shark, maybe I'm to be one of his—talons! You see, he's offered me a job! What d'you know of him? What kind of fellow is he, really terrible?"

"Oh-h, he's a monster!" declared Mrs. Robbins in a hushed voice. She went on agitatedly to tell how she had been house manageress for the Aloysius Bartletts of Locust Valley, Long Island—up to the time Bartlett suddenly shot himself, and was found ruined and heavily in debt as the result of being a consistent bull in the depression bear market of '29-'33. Mrs. Robbins had lost what she had thought to be a life job. The family had gone on the rocks so badly that the charity of relatives had been required to keep them from the relief rolls.

"And it was him that done it!" concluded Mrs. Robbins. "Here, send him back his check. I'll let you stay another week or two, and maybe you'll get something else!"

Really touched, Lane nevertheless shook his head. He said he had made a decision to work for Thurston Webb at least ten weeks, save a bit from the remainder of his salary, get all square, and possibly then make a new decision. In the course of a half hour he managed to make Mrs. Robbins understand his posi-

tion, and get a derby hatful of crumpled small bills and silver from her as change of the check. At the last she relented, and did not charge him for the extra week as notice.

NEXT morning, having determined that his new employer's address was on one of those seedy streets east and north of the fringe of New York's financial district, less than a mile from his own lodging, Lane Burnett walked to the place through mean slum streets, suitcase in hand. He wondered inwardly that anyone in his right senses would build a penthouse on any of these ancient buildings, let alone attempt to carry on a loan business in this down-at-heels district.

The Menocino Building, which occupied half of the short block between Bagley and Thorpe streets, on Sixth Avenue, was substantial but old. As Lane would discover, most of the floors were occupied by a publishing firm. The presses were in the building, which was of the earliest steel-web construction, and twelve stories in height. The vibration of the presses made a constant swaying very disagreeable to anyone making a first visit to the penthouse structure on top of the flat roof.

That, however, was a handicap to which a person staying regularly day after day became completely accustomed.

To reach the penthouse, Lane took a slow, upward-meandering elevator crowded with young men in shirt-sleeves bearing wet page proofs, dyspeptic-looking and gloomy book readers, and authors in polo coats and spats because the weather was chilly for early June.

All of these got out of the elevator by the time the cage reached Floor 10. Then it creaked on slowly two more floors, and Lane left it gladly.

He looked around an office corridor where there was no sign of life. At one end, in dim light, was a frosted glass door bearing the name Acme Manufacturing Co., but no sounds came from within.

Burnett saw the iron circular stair at the other end of the corridor, and made for it. He climbed, and found himself in a boxlike cubicle above. A single door, with steel netting embedded in the frosted glass, bore the name of Thurston Webb, minus the word "loans" which showed on his letterhead. There was an old-fashioned bell with an ivory button. Lane pressed this, looking with a slight frown of disfavor upon the dusty floor. He heard a jangle of a bell within, and after that nearly a minute elapsed before there came a *click-click-cla-ack* at the door. It had been electrically released like the door of an apartment building. Lane turned the knob and walked inside, finding himself facing another glass-paneled door at the far side of an anteroom much like the cubicle reached by the iron stair.

One flashing look at his reclaimed wrist watch told the visitor that it was two minutes before ten. Not too early for the appointment. At that moment a bent, long-nosed silhouette appeared on the frosted glass, there was a clicking of bolts being shot, then the clank of a chain as the door opened six inches.

Lane saw the chain still held the door. He chuckled dryly. His employer evidently took few chances.

The face that peered out at him was not reassuring. Thurston Webb, it seemed, was all alone in here. He came to the door himself; and, vaguely now, the instant that bald head and swarthy face, with the long nose and the fine network of wrinkles around pouched eyes open only as

narrow slits, came into view, Lane had a sense of familiarity. Somewhere, at some time, he had seen this purse-mouthed, almost toothless old spider before!

"I got your letter. I'm Lane Burnett. Are you Mr. Thurston Webb?" said the caller.

"Hm-m-m. Younger'n I thought," was the odd reply. "Yeah, I'm Webb. Who else did ye expect here?"

The chain came away, and Lane entered, not trying to frame an answer to this cantankerous and unreasonable question. The old man, clad in dirty, frayed shirt with suspenders holding up trousers far too large at the waist and innocent of press in the legs, immediately closed the door and shot two bolts. Then he turned with a better semblance of welcome, and grinned wolfishly, thrusting out a claw of a hand and taking Lane's for a brief, damp clasp.

THAT dampness in the palm had been an unpleasant surprise. The old fellow as a whole looked as though the life juices had been pretty well dried out of him. He was bent over, as possibly with *arthritis deformans*, but he walked agilely enough, nevertheless. There was an awkward hump or bulge under his shirt and above his heart.

Lane's own heart skipped a beat when he saw that three buttons of that dirty shirt were open—and that the black butt of a medium-sized pistol showed momentarily in the gap. His employer was ready to defend himself—but against what possible enemies, up here in a penthouse locked and bolted away from the rest of the world?

The penthouse revealed itself as a four-room shanty, little more. The office, a place where dirty windows excluded what might have been ex-

cellent south light, was a place of steel filing cabinets, a grilled partition with a small counter and a hole in the grille, and a huge blue daylight bulb without a shade, hanging from the ceiling.

Everything was dusty, the two tables and the chairs and the stools inside the grille looking as though they had not been used for weeks. Beyond this reception office, if such it could be called, was a combination living room and storeroom, with two small but modern safes, a broken down davenport, a couple of dilapidated reading lamps, some mousy overstuffed chairs, and a rug which had long since got too dirty to show any trace of pattern.

Beyond this were two small bedrooms, one of them filthy and with a single bed unmade—and probably unmade for weeks, Lane thought grimly. The other room was dusty, but in better shape. The old man brusquely told him to leave his bag there, and indicated a dark doorway leading from the short central hall as being the bath. Lane grimly thought to himself that if there was a tub or shower in the bathroom, it could be little used.

There was no trace of servant or other employee, and no dishes, sink or refrigerator. Nothing that gave any sign that meals were prepared or served here.

"We get trays from the restaurant downstairs. They leave the full trays on the iron stair and we get them. Then we leave the empties there. They send me a monthly bill. I buy all your food, of course," explained Thurston Webb.

"It's pretty gloomy quarters," he went on, grimacing faintly in what might have been meant for a smile. "But I'm a gloomy old man—and this business isn't exactly what you'd call cheerful. But it pays. It pays—"

And then Lane felt an uncomfortable sensation as he watched something he never had seen save in "The Merchant of Venice," on the stage. Thurston Webb washed his hands in the air!

THEY went back to the grilled inclosure. There Webb waved the young man to a stool, perching on the other one himself.

"To save time," said Webb in his crusty, yet somehow oily, tone, "I'll tell you I've had you looked up pretty thoroughly, Mr. Lane Burnett. Let's see, here's the report. I'll read it."

He pulled out a thin, wide drawer at the top of the counter, and plucked a typed sheet therefrom, in the same movement snapping on the ghastly 500-watt daylight bulb above.

"Hem. That light is for the examination of pledges. Often they are jewels, you know. I'm a pawnbroker, of course, but one who deals in thousands or tens of thousands. Now this report. Hem.

"Lane Burnett . . . good family English extraction . . . 200 years in America. Educated Phillips Exeter, Dartmouth, Tuck School of Finance. Four years with Granite Trust, ending in position of assistant cashier when doors closed owing to depression years followed by defalcation and suicide of higher officer. No black mark on Burnett's bank record. Habits exemplary. Smokes a little evenings, no drinking, cards or horses. Once was supposed to be engaged, but young woman married another man later—"

"Do we have to go into that?" demanded Lane harshly. His face had suffused with crimson. "Take it that you do know me inside out. I have no reason to be ashamed of my record, except—" and he bit his lip.

"Except that you failed to get an-

other job? Yes, I know that, too, and why. Heh! Heh! They never did locate your father, did they? Or his rascally half brother?"

"Damn it, stop!" cried Lane. "My father—"

"Was an innocent man; probably a murdered man," finished this strange employer. "Yes, I know more than you might think about all that. I could not prove it, but I think likely a man named Pottiswoode or Spottiswoode—something like that—engineered the whole dirty frame-up. At any rate, I believe your father died that night on his own yacht, and that his body has been washing around the floor of Long Island Sound for these years."

"You . . . who are you? I've seen you somewhere before!" Lane's feet had slipped down to the floor. His voice was an agitated whisper as he bent toward the bald, brown-faced gnome there on top of the second stool.

"Perhaps you have. Perhaps you have, boy!" chortled the strange creature. "However, I have no desire to dig up any of the dead past. Suffice it to say that I believe in you, and in your family. You are one of the few people in the whole world I am prepared to trust. I may say that the transactions of my business are few and far between. However, when one comes, it is apt to involve a large sum of money. I need a man who will be faithful. That was why I offered you so much more money than you would be willing to work for. That is true, isn't it? At present seventy-five dollars a week represents an excellent chance, does it not?"

"It does," agreed Lane grimly. "I guess you've got the right to name your terms of employment, and I'll hew to them. However, suppose you put me to work, and let's drop this.

The past is painful. I'd rather look ahead."

"Look ahead? Heh! Heh!" chortled Webb, finding something secretly humorous in that. "By all means look ahead, my dear young fellow. I think the future will be very bright for you indeed, under my guidance!"

But there was a sneer on the twisted mouth which Lane did not like at all, as the gnome reached down to open a cupboard below the thin, wide drawer, and bring out a pile of ledgers.

CHAPTER II.

EXULTATION IN DEATH.

DURING that period of instruction, which was largely concerned with the payments made and payments due on some two hundred loan accounts, with interest calculations, Lane had the peculiar feeling that all this was unreal. This man certainly did not need an as-



He watched, gun in hand. . . .

sistant at seventy-five dollars a week, in order to keep in hand this small amount of double-entry ledger work.

True, the sums involved were large, ranging from one loan originally \$500—and now grown to \$1148.45!—to one which was for a flat \$25,000!

But all of them were certainly legally made.

From the totals, it appeared that Thurston Webb kept in circulation with his clients, something akin to half a million dollars! Also—and this was curious to Lane, who had expected gross usury—save for a service charge of one percent of the face of the loan, made each time it was renewed wholly or in part, Webb charged no one a cent more than the rate made legal in New York!

The articles pledged in some cases were securities, but the vast majority were precious stones—dinner rings with diamonds of water, size and worth; rubies, sapphires and pearls in necklaces, wristlets, corselets, tiaras and other smaller settings. It appeared that Webb did much of his own appraising. There were two or three notations of having certain jewels sent out to well-known experts for valuation. Lane asked, and learned that this was done only when a serious difference regarding cash value arose between Webb and a client.

Apparently the man Mrs. Robbins had termed a monster did a perfectly legitimate pawnbroking business, license and all, and caused no difficulties about renewing or increasing the loans made as long as the security seemed to amply justify so doing.

Not a single customer appeared that day. Webb asked what Lane wanted for luncheon—the old man always had something like creamed chicken, or a gumbo, and then a cus-



The rope slipped, the man dropped twelve floors. . . .

tard for dessert, with coffee, owing to his lack of teeth—and then sent

down by phone for a pair of trays from the office-building restaurant.

Lane just asked for soup, pie and coffee with a chunk of American cheese, this noon. When evening came he was free, of course, although Webb warned him that occasionally an appointment would bring someone to the place after hours. Each time this happened, Lane was to stand by. It appeared plain that Webb feared his own clients far more than he did ordinary burglars.

The little shanty penthouse had no doors at all. When the afternoon wore on, and Lane said he'd like a breath of air and to stretch his legs on the broad expanse of gravel roof, Webb rather grumpily showed him a window which would open, but which was not only closed but steel-shuttered after office hours.

Lane took a constitutional there on the roof, rather hoping that one of Webb's customers would show up, so he could view the employer in action—and really see if the fellow had any of the sinister traits Mrs. Robbins had imputed. So far, Lane had not liked the man at all, but on the other hand had not seen any real reason to dislike him. Any employer, hiring a stranger who now and then will have to handle moneys and valuable jewels, could be excused for looking into the applicant's antecedents rather thoroughly.

And Webb had provided the young man with a service automatic, fully loaded and on safety.

"There'll be a license for you tomorrow in the mail," said Webb dryly. "It's best to be regular about these things—in case sometime you have to use it on a customer who gets tough—"

But no customer, tough or otherwise, appeared. There had been two payments due on this date. Webb rather crustily said that he would

take care of the delinquents on the morrow; and that he would have Burnett listen in, to get the manner in which such arrears were handled.

Not caring just to sit in the bedroom assigned to him, Lane went to an early movie. Webb said he would be admitted until ten thirty. After that, if he had to stay out, Lane would have to put up at a hotel. The young man saw at once that this living in the shabby penthouse was going to be a good deal of a trial, though worth it for the sake of a job.

In the midst of the movie, which thereafter remained a blank to him, a queer, almost shocking thought struck home. He recalled the advertisement in the *Register* which he had answered. It had offered seventy-five dollars a week for a man who could be trusted, a young man with some bank training, capable of helping in the loan department of a concern and taking considerable responsibility.

The ad, of the blind variety, had seemed almost aimed at him. But, used to disappointments, Lane had expected little. Now the memory which sent shivers down his spine was this:

Only three days had elapsed since he had sent in his reply to the ad!

How in the world could Thurston Webb have procured such complete information concerning the applicant in so short a time, even if he employed a topnotch detective agency? Why, considering the time letters took to go and come, not much more than twenty-four hours had been at the money lender's disposal!

LANE resolved to ask. He did not start the subject that evening when he returned, however, as Webb was palpably grouchy at having to answer the door after he had undressed. But Lane Burnett was a

thoughtful young man when he turned out his own light and tried to go to sleep in the strange bed.

Had this old fellow known him earlier? The fugitive feeling of familiarity, plus Webb's very complete information on that heartbreaking scandal concerning his father and a half uncle—men who had disappeared on the eve of the famous bank holiday, and apparently taking with them securities valued at over one million dollars—made Lane Burnett feel oppressed. Something more than a seventy-five-dollar-a-week job seemed in the offing, though, for one apparently blacklisted, because of family, by all the banking concerns in the New York area, the job was tremendously important.

Lane turned and tossed in bed. He drifted off to sleep, but awoke an unknown time later with one of those strange physical jerks that brought him sitting up, breathless. Then he grunted, and subsided. Almost everyone has that experience, but it is disagreeable, and due probably to nerve tension.

He determinedly closed his eyes. But sleep evaded. Then came the happening which would banish all idea of slumber for many hours to come.

From the adjoining chamber, occupied by Thurston Webb, came a wild scream! It was repeated, and seemed crammed with a weird, hair-raising kind of *mirth* and triumph rather than pain or nightmare-horror!

The beaverboard partition between these two chambers did little to muffle the screams. But suddenly, as Lane's bare feet hit the floor, and he groped for the light button, the ear-splitting sounds died out in a choking far worse.

"My Lord, if he's going to have these often!" gritted Lane, and he

emerged into the short hall. He rapped sharply. "Mr. Webb! Mr. Webb!" he called.

There was no answer. Wait! Was that a slight creaking of a floor board, as though Webb were stealthily approaching the door?

"Mr. Webb! It's Lane Burnett. Are you having a nightmare?" called the young man in louder voice. Still no answer at all, and so his knocking became more and more imperative.

At the end of three minutes Lane was really worried. He tried the knob, but the door was locked, of course.

He looked at the keyhole. It was just the primitive sort of lock found on cheap door construction. His own room key was just like that. He stepped over, secured it, and tried it in Webb's door. It clicked over!

"Mr. Webb! This is Lane Burnett!" he called again as he opened, but there was no reply. A huddle was dimly visible there on the single bed. Lane caught his breath in a gasp of premonition as he strode across and turned on the lights.

"Oh, lord of love!" he exclaimed in a choked whisper. This sight eclipsed any horror he had imagined. Beads of cold perspiration sprang to his forehead. His knees felt suddenly weak as he cast a look about, and into the bathroom, then into the front of the penthouse before approaching the thing which lay there contorted on the bed, half under the blanket and sheet.

No window or door had been open. All were burglar-latched. And still Thurston Webb lay there in his own locked room, dead!

Oh, yes, there was no mistaking death like this—even before Lane approached. What looked like a short-handled bamboo lance had been thrust downward right through

Webb's left eye and its socket, and was embedded in the brain below. The lance slanted sidewise.

There was one only little trickle of blood and vitreous humor from the eye. Lane gingerly touched the wrist, and found it still warm—but *stiff!* That in itself was horrifying, as Lane knew enough to realize that rigor mortis should not occur for a matter of two hours under any normal set of circumstances.

"No one would do that! It's murder!" the young man spoke aloud. Then he squared his shoulders and moved over to the phone cradle, to ask the operator for police headquarters.

"I'm in a tough spot," he reflected as he waited for the connection. No one but Lane Burnett could very well have had the chance to do this—or that's what they're bound to think. And only a maniac would commit suicide this way. Webb might have been a crook, even a monster like Mrs. Robbins said, but—

That was when a gruff voice answered, and he found himself telling the incredible, nightmarish tale to a desk sergeant who sounded surly or bored, as if outlandish murders of this sort were commonplace to him. He cautioned Webb to touch nothing, and to remain where he was, keeping others from the scene until the police and detectives arrived.

Webb replaced the phone on its cradle, and sank down in the only other chair of the room. He tried desperately to think, to recall that slight sound he had imagined—or really heard. Then, failing any addition to memory, he stared at the ceiling, walls and floor of this death chamber. It had only one window—barred just like all the rest of the penthouse with the exception of the steel-shuttered one outside the grille in the reception hall. That was the

window he had been allowed to leave open in the afternoon for a short while when he had taken a breather on the roof.

But Webb himself had seen to its being locked and burglar-fastened at nightfall. No chance there—or anywhere!

Only one man had possible access to the dead man's chamber, and that one man, who had a key that would open the door, was Lane Burnett himself!

IN a sort of daze the young man dressed, then let in the advance guard of the homicide squad. These proved to be a tall, dark-eyed and quiet man with odd, tow-colored hair, Inspector Strom, and a 250-pounder in plain clothes, Sergeant of Detectives Grady.

In their wake came the chief medical examiner, with an assistant, then two photographers and three fingerprint men. The result was to make the small shanty penthouse crowded.

After a few curt questions, and a searching, thoughtful scrutiny—backed up by an openly suspicious stare from Grady—Inspector Strom looked over the body and the room without touching anything. Then he gave quiet orders to Grady, and came back to Lane Burnett.

"Let's go in your bedroom—this is it?—and close this door. Sit down, and smoke if you wish. You seem to be the chief witness and also chief suspect, Mr. Burnett. If you killed this rather well-known and well-hated man, I advise you to say nothing at all to me now.

"If you're innocent, though, the quicker I understand every single thing pertaining to this death, the easier it will be for you."

"Well, I'm innocent; but unless it's suicide, I scarcely see how any-

body in the world can believe me," said Lane wryly, his rather harsh, homely features achieving a twisted smile. "But take this one fact into consideration, if you will—it's about my only possible defense. Mr. Webb employed me by mail, without an interview. I answered a blind ad in the *Register*. I had been out of work, save for a few odd jobs that did not last, for nearly two years. This was my first day of employment. Do you think I'd kill the man who just had hired me?"

"I'd have to have notice on that," smiled Strom. "But I'll admit right off you'd have to have a mighty big inducement. Why don't you tell me what you know, right from the start?"

Lane did just that. He spoke tersely—but after Strom realized the implications of Burnett's family connections, and then the odd manner in which Webb had seemed to know so much about him, the inspector interrupted, asking if Lane would mind at all dictating his story and signing it.

"There are some strange angles to it. Stuff I'd like to study," explained Strom. "If you'd be willing—"

"Of course. The sooner all this is understood, the sooner I'll have some chance to—to look for another job. Hell, I suppose my chances now will be down near absolute zero. Call your stenographer, if you wish."

Strom called a man in uniform, who produced pad and pencil. Then Lane, who had made up his mind to conceal nothing, went through the whole strange tale. He was interrupted only once, when Strom asked him to explain what he meant by a mirthful, triumphant scream.

"Well," hesitated Lane, "it really sounded more like drunken whoopee than like a death cry. Of course, I

thought then it was just some queer sort of nightmare."

He finished his story, then Strom had him sign it. Then the inspector quietly returned to the same point.

"I believe the medical examiner will bear me out in this," he said quietly. "That instrument, which bears no fingerprints, -is what is called a frog-gig. In other words, a spear. The part of the handle above, which usually is about six or seven feet long, is missing. But what I was saying is this: The end has a trident spear, with tines two and a half inches long. These tines were plunged deep into Mr. Webb's brain.

"It is impossible that he screamed after that was done! Such a wound would paralyze instantly, and kill within seconds!"

"A frog-gig!" repeated Lane in a whisper. "I never heard of one before! Certainly there hasn't been anything around here made of bamboo, that I saw."

Strom just sat there silent, perhaps hoping that the young man would throw some light on how Webb could have screamed, and still had the frog-spear thrust into his eye socket.

"You'd have to hold a man pretty tight, before he'd manage to squirm away from that, you know," said Strom quietly after a moment. "Any ideas, Burnett?"

Lane shook his head hopelessly. In repeating his story he had realized how thin and incredible it must sound. And also it had occurred that Webb, being in the loan business, must have many jewels and securities in the two small safes. Who could believe that a new confidential clerk and assistant, just being hired, would not know the combinations—and be tempted to steal something, even at the price of murdering the old man?

Right at that moment, though, a

shout came from the room where the body lay. Strom leaped up, threw the door wide, and hurried in. Lane followed. He saw something exceedingly peculiar.

The door of the clothespress in the bedroom was open, and the garments which had been hanging there had been tossed outside to the floor. Revealed was an iron ladder up one wall. And at the ceiling a trap opened outward. A policeman's legs were coming down. Now the man came slowly to the floor, holding something gingerly with a handkerchief.

It was a six-foot, jointed length of bamboo, the missing handle of the frog-gig which had been thrust into the brain of the lump of clay lying there on the bed!

CHAPTER III.

STRANGE REVELATIONS.

THE medical examiner, blue eyes glinting frosty fire with knowledge that here he had been given a look at a certain sort of case only textbook theory with him previously, called in Strom.

"Look, Eric!" he whispered in the manner of one divulging a choice secret. He lifted the sheet which had been placed over the stiffened corpse.

Inspector Strom bent over, examining a number of small bluish marks on the dead man's left thigh near the buttock.

"Oh-h, yes," he nodded thoughtfully. "Insulin injections for kidney disease, eh? I've heard of what that sometimes does. Explains the quick rigor, you mean?"

"Instantaneous rigor!" snapped the doctor. "Cadaveric spasm! You watch now. It'll pass off completely, and all at once, just about the time normal rigor would be appearing in

the extremities. When that frog-sticker came down, Webb died and stiffened out, all in a couple or three seconds!"

"M-m-m, he couldn't have done much yelling after that, could he?" asked Strom—for a second time that night.

"Hell, no! I told you before. If he had one full breath in his lungs, maybe one sound. Not a scream, though. Nothing like that. He must've screamed—if he did at all—while he was watching that sticker coming down!"

"I've only the word of one person for the scream," acceded Strom. "However, until I find some real motive, I'm assuming that young Burnett is telling me the truth as far as he knows it. A man awakened out of sleep by some kind of yell might easily think he heard it longer, and imagine all sorts of demoniac qualities."

"But I wasn't asleep, you know," said Lane quietly. "Oh, I know that makes it sound bad, but I've told the truth. You men will have to interpret it. I can't."

There was silence. The medical examiner moved away, and a moment later they heard his voice directing a couple of stretcher bearers to take the body. But Inspector Strom, who had been frowning down at the bamboo handle of the frog-gig, on one end of which was a brassy spiral of thread, suddenly held back the two stretcher men.

"Just a sec!" he asked them. "I've got a brainstorm!"

He opened the door of the clothespress, which swung away from the head of Thurston Webb's single bed, and looked up at the still open trap through which could be seen the pale twinkle of stars. Taking the two parts of the frog-gig, he screwed them together, then ascended the

wall ladder until he was on the flat roof, with one arm dangling to hold the strange spear.

"Look, by golly!" he breathed. "I can reach it easily! The murderer—maybe—thrust Webb in the eye, then left that trident deep in the bony eyesocket, unscrewed the handle, drew it up, and closed the trap up here! Then he got scared, maybe, and left the handle where we found it!"

"Yeh, the eyesocket'd be narrow enough to give purchase for the unscrewing," agreed one of the stretcher bearers with interest.

Lane, suddenly a little sick again, turned away and went back to the room in which he had tried to sleep. Not his room now. He still had the remains of that hundred-dollar remittance. In view of all the tangle Thurston Webb had brought him into, Lane decided to keep this small amount of money for the time being. He would need some slight resource, since jobs now—well, they would not exist in his own preferred line of business. That was sure. Perhaps he would not have to worry about jobs, though. He could see, in spite of the possibility of some intruder killing Webb from the roof, that the weight of evidence was still strong enough against himself to warrant Strom holding him as a suspect or as a material witness, if he so desired.

The young man lay back upon his rumpled bed. He closed his eyes, thinking—and then, incredibly, not thinking at all. He was sound asleep with his mouth wide, and snoring rhythmically, when Strom came in again.

The inspector smiled grimly. Although Lane Burnett would never know, this experienced police officer, though blinking none of the

facts or possibilities, yet had taken a liking to the ex-cashier.

IN Strom's experience, young men committed crimes, all right. But mighty few had the nerve to face out as if innocent any jam as patently bad as this one. A fool would have run. A wise man would have stayed—and hatched a better story. This was either genuine innocence, or a depth of guile Strom had encountered only in men over fifty. And only twice among them, at that.

The case of the Nutley Dissolver, who calmly stayed home and sprayed his butter beans with his liquefied victims, hoping no doubt for greater protein content. And then, of course, the old Italian he-spider who had lurked in that Hester Street basement. But these had been two exceptions in sixteen years. They tested, but did not abolish, the justice of the generality.

Strom let the youth sleep for the time being. The two safes, examined for fingerprints, had yielded only Webb's. There had been no prints at all upon any portion of the frog-gig. Now the inspector, wanting a general idea of Webb's business, got out the ledgers and likewise had the filing cases opened. He sat down and paged through the heavy account books for half an hour, then tackled the letters. But there was nothing that seemed especially pertinent. Some clients, of course, were in arrears. Some had recently defaulted. Webb's loans, apparently, were not terminated as abruptly as those of a cheap pawnbroker, it appeared. That is, if a man pledged securities worth \$10,000 and took only \$2500 as a first loan Webb usually allowed him to increase the loan once or twice—each time charging the one percent service fee, and adding arrears to the

face value of the loan, of course.

As loan business went, it was pretty clean. Strom failed to discover any threatening letters, any appointments made for the evening just past, or anything else that looked pertinent.

"Of course, anybody he closed out in the past might have stayed sore, and taken the first chance to do him in," sighed Strom at last, rising from his chair. He went in and shook Lane's shoulder.

"You've had your night's sleep now," he said a little grimly. "Dawn is breaking. Get up—and open the safes for me."

Lane's eyes opened, but for seconds he could not orient himself. He got to his feet. "Safes?" he muttered. "What— Oh, my God! I must have fallen asleep! But safes—I don't know anything about them, inspector. Mr. Webb hadn't got around to trusting me with combinations, or anything else as yet."

Strom frowned slightly. "Have these two safes been opened at all since you came?" he demanded.

"Not to my knowledge. No client came yesterday—openly, that is. Two of them were due to make payments. One had a whole loan with interest to pay, a matter of something like \$2200. The other fellow, a Mr. Bartelme, I believe, was paying off a large sum in monthly installments, and was due yesterday. Neither one came. Mr. Webb and I had nothing to do, except the general instruction in the fundamentals of his business which he gave me."

"I see." Strom considered. "There seems to be nothing more you can do—unless you happen to think of some pertinent circumstance. What do you plan to do, Mr. Burnett? Stay here for the time being?"

Lane flushed. "Just as soon as you . . . uh . . . feel it's all right, I'm



He flung the door wide

going to get a cheap room somewhere, perhaps where I was living before, and begin the weary hunt for work," he said. "How long—"

"I want to be fair to you," said Strom slowly. "You are under suspicion, of course, until we see another way out of this. Suppose you



to face his ex-fiancée!

stay here today, and tomorrow we'll see."

Lane acceded to that, and sat down in the bedroom. When time came for the office-building restaurant to open, he sent for breakfast and ate it. Then he went out on the roof, with Strom's permission, and walked

the circuit a number of times for fresh air.

THOROUGH search of all Webb's possessions failed to reveal any notation of the safe combinations. So, waiting to call the offices of the makers, asking them to send a man to open the two, Strom busied himself with other work. Then, before anything more of importance took place, a heavy-jowled, short man with a bustling manner appeared.

"A reporter phoned me from the station," he explained to Strom. "I am Martin Leaden, attorney for Mr. Webb. Who did it? You know?"

"That's what I'm here to discover, Mr. Leaden," said Strom without a smile. "Have you any ideas that might help me? Was Mr. Webb afraid of his life, or afraid of harm from some enemy?"

"Oh, yes!" was the unexpected reply. "Mr. Webb had no friends at all but me. He made only enemies—plenty of them, I can tell you!"

"I have Mr. Webb's will," continued Leaden, with scarcely time out for breath. "I will take charge here. That clerk now, he wouldn't be the man you want? I heard Thurston say he was going to engage a new man—"

"It's too early to say," was Strom's terse reply. "Under Mr. Webb's will who benefits—and who is named as executor?"

"I am the residuary legatee, and my partner, Joe Goldwin, is the executor. There are some small gifts, not much. So I will take charge here now. Joe will go for immediate probate."

"This place will have to remain in charge of the police for a little while, Mr. Leaden," was Strom's civil reply. "By the way, as a matter of routine, where were you last night?"

"Me?" The lawyer's eyes bulged

again. "Oh, you mean because of what I told you, the will? Well, I'm not worried. I didn't bump off my best client. I was in White Plains last night, and came in with Joe, my partner, by car this morning. There was a pinochle game that lasted till two, so we didn't get much sleep. What time did you say he was killed?"

"I didn't say, but if you can prove what you've told me, I guess we'll have to cross you from our list of possibles," said Strom.

He took the names of the pinochle players, also the address of the law office where Joe Goldwin was to be found, giving the assignment of checking the alibi to one of the headquarters detectives. Then he sent Leaden immediately with another plainclothesman in a car, to identify the body. Another formality, but it had occurred to Strom, who was a careful man, that so far they had only the word of a recently engaged clerk, that this corpse was Thurston Webb.

LEADEN returned forty minutes later. He had lost none of his aggressive manner. He went immediately around the rooms left open to him, and scowled the instant he caught sight of Lane Burnett seated in the bedroom.

"They keeping you here?" Leaden demanded.

"For the time. I'm hoping to get away—though I wonder. You're Mr. Webb's lawyer, I heard? Well, how about the clients? Their payments, and so on. Who will take care of the business? Of course, I really know little or nothing about it, but—"

The lawyer's scowl grew darker. "You don't need to worry!" he almost sneered. "As soon as and if they let you go, go! I will manage!

Joe and I will run this place!"

"You're welcome, I'm sure," Lane snapped. He had conceived a hearty dislike of this fellow. Calling himself the one friend of Webb, just the same he had an almost harpy-like anxiety to get his hands into the dead man's affairs. It disgusted Lane, and at the same time made more than a faint suspicion stir within him.

Strom could be counted on, probably, to investigate a man who appeared so promptly, announcing himself Webb's heir. Just the same, here was a person who might inherit the suspicion just then on his own shoulders—thought Lane.

It was then that the men from the safe company arrived. In the course of five minutes Strom's right to enter was established, and both safes opened.

One contained pledged articles and pledged securities only—but the array of jewels was almost frightening. The reason for Webb's many precautions now was plain, if there had been the slightest doubt in anyone's mind. Strom immediately called for an armored car with which to take the safe and its contents to headquarters. The ledgers dealing with those pledges also went along.

In the second safe were just two things. One was a pile of currency in sheaves. A total of \$30,000 in cash on hand!

The second item was a large manila envelope. Inside, Strom found no less than twenty-two bankbooks—each account holding the maximum insured amount of \$5,000. Also there were two safe-deposit box keys, with circles of metal-rimmed cardboard attached telling that one was for the Marchmont National, and the second for the Grand National Bank.

The last item made Strom blink

and catch his breath. He turned his back, though he had taken the precaution of excluding others from the room while he searched. The inspector unfolded and scanned a legal document. His eyebrows rose almost to his tow-colored hair.

"By golly—the lawyer was mistaken!" he breathed. Then he read on through, shaking his head. Slowly a frown grew upon his features. He looked at the outside of the will form, and whistled. This will had been executed the afternoon of the second previous day—the day Lane Burnett had received the notification that he had been accepted for the job with Thurston Webb!

What Strom held in his hand was not the original, but a duplicate of this newer will. The embossed stamp upon the outside gave the name of Ryder, Sillman & Zwenck as the law firm drawing the will; and next to this a note in a crabbed hand told that these attorneys held the original, duly signed and witnessed.

When Strom drew the fat lawyer aside and told him of the discovery, Leaden erupted. He swore. His eyes bulged horribly. He ran back and forth with short steps in the room.

The gist of it—for his words were all unprintable—was that the new will must be a forgery; that he, Leaden, had been the dead man's only friend; that he would oppose probate; that he demanded access to the original of the will, and that this was a conspiracy on the part of the police to defraud him of his rights.

Strom withheld the name of the chief legatee under the new will, until Leaden had departed at a run. Then the inspector's face hardened. He turned to Lane Burnett, who had been a disgusted listener to the tirade.

"Everything is changed now,"

said Strom. "Are you sure there is nothing more you wish to tell me, Mr. Burnett?"

Lane caught the new formality, and straightened in his chair. "I—you know everything I know, inspector," he said tersely.

"I beg leave to doubt that. Anyhow, you will stay right here, Mr. Burnett, until I can find out, or you can decide to tell me, just why Thurston Webb should will you almost everything he possessed—and *sign that will with a new legal firm just thirty-six hours before he was murdered!*"

The young man had come to his feet, cheeks draining of their color as the horrible implications seared his brain.

"I did not know! There can be no reason," he declared passionately, "unless this is the man who robbed and murdered my father, and he is making a damnable restitution in this way!"

CHAPTER IV.

PRISONER OF THE PENTHOUSE.

AN hour had passed. Strom had gone, but one bluecoat sat on a campstool out on the office-building roof, and another was posted at the foot of the iron stair leading down from the penthouse to the twelfth floor of the Menocino Building.

Lane Burnett was not under actual arrest, but he knew his status was that of prisoner. He could stay right here in these four rooms, from which safes, ledgers, and every particle of Thurston Webb's private property had been removed for examination.

The young man could get his meals sent up from the restaurant, as Webb had done. He could eat, sleep and think—bathe in that grimy tub in the windowless bathroom. If once

he attempted to reach the street, however, he would be arrested and haled to the Tombs.

Inspector Eric Strom had made that plain. "A jury would convict you now of first-degree murder," he had said grimly in parting. "If nothing further comes to light, it will be my business to see that they do just that. However—I'm ashamed to say that I still cherish certain doubts. There are some matters I wish to know before I go further. Will you stay here?"

"I'll stay—and thank you for doubts. I didn't do this, and have not the slightest real inkling *why* Thurston Webb should have left me a cent. Certainly I never heard a word to that effect!" returned Burnett, setting his jaw against the black despair which haunted him.

With sustained effort he cleared his brain both of horror and of puzzlement. "I'm going to go over every inch of this place, and find some clue to this insane business!" he said aloud and defiantly to the door which closed behind the inspector.

He brought a concentration of attention to bear up possibilities, but they seemed few. The manner in which a way out through the roof had been arranged by Thurston Webb seemed the only important thing. Lane examined the clothespress and the ladder. There was nothing significant except the heavy brass bolts in the ceiling which should have kept the trapdoor closed.

"I wonder how he happened to forget them—just the one night when a killer was after him?" mused Lane. "He must have done it. Or is it possible to arrange one of these cord-and-bent-pin things you hear about in stories?"

However, there was no fragment of silk thread, or revealing punctures of the woodwork, or anything else.

If the bolts had been shot back by the intruder, through some prearranged method, all traces now were gone. It was much easier to believe that Webb himself had forgotten. Possibly he forgot quite often. The murderer might have noted that.

But hold on! Who in the whole world had access to Webb's bed-chamber?

Shaking his head with grim certainty that Thurston Webb was not the sort of creature to have intimates with access to his holy of holies, Lane continued his inch-by-inch, seemingly hopeless, search. For hours, indeed until he had eaten another tray of food and smoked several pipes thoughtfully, he made no discovery. And then what he did uncover was most puzzling.

Covering the floor, Lane moved the bed—not difficult, as this was just a maple single bed, with all four legs resting in heavy glass cups, felt-bottomed. But moving the cups as well, Lane stopped, bending forward as he opened the big blade of his jackknife. Something queer had been under one of those glass cups!

It was a brass circle one and a half inches in diameter; and within the circle was a narrow brass ring swiveled to lift vertically. Inserting his forefinger, Lane lifted. Then he had to stop to move the bed farther, as a large section of wooden floor, fitted so that the cracks were less perceptible than others in the rest of the floor, came up toward him.

SUDDENLY excited, Lane lifted away the irregular section, which was padded with batting underneath so that footsteps could give no hollow sound. And he looked into a hole where the hollow tiles had been removed. This hole was only four feet long by eighteen inches wide, and all the rest of the expanse be-

neath the floor trap was ordinary floor-above and ceiling-below of this ancient business-block pattern. Once this had been the roof, but when the penthouse had been constructed, the upper layer had been removed. There was no difference here from the construction between other, lower floors of the building, except there was perhaps one extra foot of vertical space.

Down in the hole were a number of green, japanned boxes, none padlocked, but all held by metal clasps easily opened.

Kneeling there on the floor, Lane suddenly felt a wave of uneasiness sweep over him. Was someone watching? Was Inspector Strom leaving him here for the purpose of swooping down and catching him out in some incriminating move?

If so, exposing this hoard—whatever it might contain—surely would look like guilt!

Lane got up swiftly, and tiptoed around until he was certain no one was inside the penthouse, and that door and steel-shuttered window all were well fastened. Then he breathed a sigh of relief and came back to the floor cache.

Listening, he could hear movements in the office building below him. As happened at intervals, the great presses were silent, and Lane could hear muffled sounds. Probably from the Acme Manufacturing Company, which he recalled had offices on the twelfth floor just below the penthouse.

Lane lifted out one box from the top, and saw that there were two layers of green boxes, partially filling the hole. The box he carefully lifted out and set on the throw rug was unexpectedly heavy, and from it came one tiny click as it moved.

With care to make no noise, and with ears strained to catch a foot-

step approaching on the roof outside, or on the iron stair leading up to the penthouse from the twelfth floor, the young man opened his find. Then he stared, frowning a little.

The box was filled with gray, gold, green and black-tarnished pieces of metal. Some of them were twisted. Some were rings, still keeping their shape. From all of them stones of one kind or another had been taken, since the stone settings were bent, their metal claws open.

This was a collection of several hundred bits of silver, gold and platinum for what had been women's and men's jewelry!

"Unredeemed pledges," reflected Lane. Then a more sinister thought struck him. Thurston Webb apparently had kept something like two hundred accounts running. A good half of these were loans made on securities. Right here were at least five hundred bits of metal which had held precious stones. If the other boxes were filled in the same manner—ten boxes in all—that meant the incredible number of five thousand settings for unredeemed pledges!

"Surely half must be redeemed," he thought with mounting suspicion. "That would mean this is the accumulation of one hundred years of loan business! By the Lord Harry, that's not reasonable! It must be that Thurston Webb was either a thief, or a fence for the stolen jewelry of professional thieves!"

A second japanned box from the top layer showed the same sort of contents. With a hasty scrutiny, Lane put it on the rug beside its fellow, and reached far down for one of the boxes on the bottom layer.

THIS one, at the end of the hole, was covered with dust and showed plain signs that it had not been disturbed in its resting place for years.

The cover was slightly stuck, but finally yielded with a hollow sound. And then Lane Burnett's eyes slowly widened as a full breath crept into his lungs, to be expelled in a soundless whistle as he continued to stare down into the receptacle. This was filled, not with bent and twisted metal settings, but with old, somewhat tarnished jewelry which blazed up at him with fiery facet-eyes of blue-white, carmine, azure, green, cloud-white and burning desert-yellow!

Diamonds that needed no purple-lined Tiffany case to prove them first water blue-white Wesseltons! Rubies that could have come only from the mines of Burma! Sapphires, emeralds, pearls and a whole blazing yellow cross of stones which might be either Brazilian diamonds or especially fine topazes!

The box had cotton at the bottom and glued in place at the sides. Wisps of cotton came up through but did not veil the articles on the top layer. Here were old but breath-taking dinner rings, bracelets, lavalieres—and one especial article which sent Lane Burnett's brain reeling, and a crimson wave of color from choking excitement, to his cheeks and forehead.

This one barbarous but dazzling article lay right on top, and in the center of the lesser array. It was a dog-collar of diamonds fully one inch wide and fifteen inches long. Not one stone was modern-cut, all being of the barrel shape popular in the nineteenth century and earlier. But one diamond was of such huge size and brilliance that it gripped Lane's almost horrified attention, and made his fingers shake uncontrollably as he lifted the heavy dog-collar and stared closely at it.

"My mother's! My grandmother's!" he barely whispered aloud.

"The Lady Georgetown diamond! How did it ever get into the hands of Thurston Webb? Did my father pawn it and these—these other things? Heirlooms?"

In the early days of America, an English king had been forced by political pressure, to devote himself to the task of providing the British Rex with a royal heir. This had seemed to necessitate the exile of a certain fair lady—who was duly shipped to Virginia, with a land grant, jewels, and a huge chest of golden English guineas to console her. The Lady Georgetown Diamond had been her greatest treasure—and it had remained in the Burnett family, at least until the year 1931.

After the mysterious disappearance and supposed death of Lane Burnett's father, it had not been found. Not a single one of the celebrated jewels of the Burnett heirloom collection had been discovered. Those who counted themselves enemies of old Walter Raleigh Burnett, Lane's father, said that the banker had got away to Bolivia, or Afghanistan, or the Gobi Shamo with this and other loot, and now was living under another name out of reach of the law which wanted him.

Lane had stubbornly refused to believe any such thing of his father. Now this queer, spine-tingling find made it appear that there had been troubles of a sort Lane never suspected.

"Or—were these things just stolen from dad by Thurston Webb's thieves?" the young man questioned.

He could not answer that offhand, but as he put back the boxes carefully and noiselessly, he resolved that somehow he would get to the bottom of this mystery-tragedy if it was the last accomplishment of his life.

He was just sliding the floor trap

into position, when he started. From the direction of the locked door at the head of the iron staircase had come a timid rap—certainly *not* the peremptory summons of the police. Rather a stealthy or apprehensive summons.

Working quickly, Lane got the bed back into position, with one glass cup guarding the secret of the floor trap. Then he strode out to the door, unbolted it and flung it wide.

Then for a long second the young woman who stood there and Lane Burnett faced each other, soundless and rigid with complete surprise. This was the girl to whom Lane had been engaged to be married, four years before!

CHAPTER V.

INSPECTOR STROM SECEDES.

WHILE Lane Burnett was uncovering the jewel cache, Inspector Eric Strom of Centre Street was being sandbagged—figuratively, at least.

He began in the Menocino Building, making inquiries on each floor, and of the night watchman and elevator boys. He wanted to know all they could tell him of two people, Lane Burnett and Thurston Webb.

Concerning Lane Burnett he learned exactly nothing. One elevator operator vaguely remembered a man with a suitcase, answering to the inspector's description, getting off at the twelfth floor or some recent day. Yes, probably morning—and more vaguely still—probably the morning of the day on which the old money-lender had met his death.

That much Strom knew. He got nothing more. It looked quite as though Lane Burnett had not been in the building at all prior to his successful answering of the blind ad in the newspaper.

That worried Strom. Here was a youth that circumstantial evidence had all primed for electrocution—and for once the shrewd and quiet head man of the detectives of Centre Street did not believe the plain evidence. Here was negative confirmation of Burnett's denials. This was all he could unearth.

Feeling as though he was trying to put together a jigsaw made of perfectly circular pieces, Strom went back to his desk. But he stayed there only a few moments. A memo awaited him saying that Dr. Armitage, the chief medical examiner, wanted to see him.

Dr. Armitage, a saturnine, sour-mouthed man of few words, nodded without speaking when Strom strode in. The doctor got up and led the way back to the cheerless dissecting room. There in the acrid atmosphere of scents in which lysol and human decay fought for supremacy he threw back a rubberized sheet which had covered a naked human form bearing the disfiguring incisions of an autopsy.

"Two things. Maybe mean something to you. This is that loan shark Webb, you know," said Armitage dourly. "The lab reports a lot of allinol in this stiff's stomach and intestines. Oh, yeah, one of the barbituric acid group of hypnotics. The dead man—or somebody else—wanted to be sure he slept well, just about the time he was getting that frog-sticker through the eye!"

"I see," said Strom, thinking fast to determine whether or not Lane Burnett had been given access to a food tray sent up for his employer. "That's another volt or two in the 2200 shot into the electrodes—maybe. What's the other thing, doctor?"

"This!" said Armitage succinctly, taking the inspector's right hand and rubbing it back and forth over the

creased, yellow-brown scalp of the dead man. "Feel those bristles? They're still growing!"

"Help!" cried Strom, without meaning exactly that. "You mean he—he *wasn't bald*?"

"Not a bit of it. Look close. This man had a good shock of gray-white hair. For some reason he shaved it close, but it is still growing, after he is dead. You can feel it. In another twenty-four hours it will be long enough to make his yellow scalp look like the white of leprosy!"

THREE minutes later Inspector Strom was on his way back to the Menocino Building, to resume there his questions—this time in respect to the queer occupant of the penthouse.

He did get some information there, as Thurston Webb had had callers nearly every day. On several occasions, Webb had phoned down, asking the building policeman to remove someone at his door whom he did not want to admit. He had appeared then, of course, with fairly generous tips. On very few occasions, however, had he come down through the lobby of the building and gone outdoors himself. He seemed content to squat up there like an old spider, sucking the juices of his victims.

Strom knew from visits paid to several of the banks at which Webb had \$5,000 deposits that these had been made in lump sums. Small interest had accumulated, but Webb had neither paid in nor withdrawn anything. It was evident he considered this government-insured deposit money as his anchor to windward, in case anything like another panic-depression or bank holiday recurred. So the loan shark *did* go outside at times.

In the course of visiting each floor

a second time, Strom came to the barber shop on the sixth floor. Inquiries here brought only headshakes at first. But then the head barber of the quartet came back from lunch and started to put on his white coat. Strom went up to him.

"Did you ever serve that old man who just was killed—the money-lender on the top floor, Mr. Thurston Webb?" he asked.

A grin came to the barber's lips. "He never came in here, if that's what you mean, lieutenant," he replied. "But once about two months ago, I was called up there. Gave the old devil a shave, once when he was sick. Tipped me a dollar."

"Was his hair falling out badly then?"

"Falling out?" echoed the barber with a snort. "Hell, man, it'd done fell! I sold him a tonic, though; came right down and got him a bottle of it. This stuff." He reached over and lifted an ornately labeled flagon which advertised itself as a sure cure for dandruff and an aid for growing hair.

"Grows hair, does it?" asked Strom frowning.

The barber smiled, and put one hand beside his mouth. "Just between you and me," he confided, "*nothing'll* grow hair, once it's gone! But—are you getting a little thin, sir?"

"Nuts!" snarled Strom, who was always years behind with the few execrations or expletives he used. "Put your hat and coat back on and come with me! No, never mind any tools. You're going to the morgue!"

Speeding to Centre Street in his police car, the inspector led the wondering tonsorialist to the sheet-covered body of the murdered man.

"Did you ever see this man before?" demanded Strom, yanking the sheet.

The barber gasped and paled. Then he steadied himself. "Yes, sir, that's the old fella," he said. "But—but—I'll be damned if his mop wasn't startin' to grow! Maybe that varnish-remover I sold him really was the goods, after all!"

CHEWING savagely on his lower lip, Strom drove the barber back to the Menocino Building. The inspector himself kept on to the floor above, where the barber left him.

Here Strom continued his questions, without much result. He worked his way up floor by floor. The eleventh floor was vacant. On the twelfth was the Acme Manufacturing Company, where he had stopped once before. The concern evidently was just about moribund, because the only man in the offices was a red-haired, tall fellow who had claimed to know nothing at all of Webb or Lane Burnett.

He gave his name as Henry Lewis, and said he was chief clerk. The business, which had a small factory in Long Island City devoted to the manufacture of cheap bulbs for radio, had gone into receivership—or so Henry Lewis believed. He was still getting his weekly stipend for sticking around and cleaning up odds and ends. Lewis himself hoped to get an office job with R. C. A. or some other big firm which would take over the factory.

Now Strom asked him just one question. Had Lewis ever noticed any altercations or fights above his head?

"Heh, lots of 'em!" Lewis laughed shortly. "Nine or ten times the cop had to come up an' throw out somebody who that old bloodsucker had ruined. No wonder he was killed—"

Thump! Crash-bang! Blunk! came sudden heavy sounds from the penthouse above. Plaster dust sifted

down as Strom turned a startled glance upward.

"The old man's ghost is at it!" exclaimed Lewis, but he chuckled knowingly. "Beatin' hell out of that clerk you think done it, hey?" he added.

Strom merely grunted as he ran for the iron stair and raced up that last flight. He was in time to see Officer Jansen, who had been left here to prevent Burnett leaving by way of the building, rattling the knob of the cubicle door leading into the penthouse.

"What goes on, Jansen?" cried Strom.

"That gorilla I let in! I guess he's killin' Burnett an' the girl. Hell, you said to let anybody *in*, but to keep 'em in until you came to let 'em out. So I—let 'em in! Now lookit the damn thing!" He pounded on the glass of the door, almost heavily enough to smash it inward.

"Gorilla? Girl?" echoed Strom. But he needed only to wait a few seconds now, as a shadow approached the glass, a lock clicked, and the door came open to give sight of Burnett's back as the young man retreated toward one of the back chambers.

Strom went right in, stopping to stare at what he beheld. Over on a window sill almost covered a young woman in a becoming, if rather shabby, street dress. Stretched full length on the rug beside the bed which had belonged to Thurston Webb was a heavy-set thug with three days' growth of brown beard on his chin.

He was breathing stertorously, his mouth wide open. Strom opened one eye with thumb and forefinger, seeing the iris was only partly retracted.

"He was one of Webb's clients—maybe. Said he was, anyhow," ex-

plained Lane Burnett quietly. "He came busting in, and insulted Mrs. Chester, here, and myself. I had to tap him one on the chin, just a few seconds before you knocked, inspector."

"Just like that—you had to tap him one, eh?" inquired Strom quizzically. "I heard the—tapping, from below. Know who this little playmate is, Burnett? No? This is Sailor Connor, who used to be sparing partner for Gene Tunney. Of course, he's not that good any more, but—where did you learn to box, did you say, Burnett?"

"I didn't say, but it was Riley's Gym."

STROM nodded appreciatively, looking up and down the lithe figure of Burnett. In good trim—scale about 190—and Riley made most of his customers pay through the nose for boxing lessons. A few, a very few, he developed until they either were good enough for the professional ring under his management, or proved lacking. Realizing that bank salaries had not been immense in the days when Burnett was assistant cashier, Strom judged that Lane must have received free instruction at Riley's, a guess he later proved to be accurate.

"Well, Jansen," said the inspector, turning to the uniformed man in the doorway, "haul away this hunk of cheese. Give him a night in a cell, and let him go in the morning. I don't think he'll come around here bothering any more. I may stop in to question him."

"He's—" started Lane, but then his lips clamped. "Nothing," he said when Strom flashed a questioning look.

"All right, Burnett," said Strom dryly. "I just dropped in to say that you are no longer compelled to

stay here. You probably had better show up every day for office hours, till we see where we stand, but I've reached the conclusion that there is plenty to this business we haven't even touched as yet."

"By George!" breathed Lane in thankful admiration. "I can't even guess how you've come to that conclusion, inspector—but I give you my word you're right! I didn't do this thing! And—but pardon me, both of you! I was so bowled over I forgot my manners."

"Inspector Strom, I'd like to have you meet Mrs. Albert Chester. She's an old client of Thurston Webb—and my new landlady—yes, you are, Letty, don't dare to contradict me!"

"I—won't contradict you—not now," she whispered, and smiled as though she was plucky, but still bewildered by something. "You don't mind if I—if we go now, inspector?"

"No, I don't mind," he said gravely. "Only, let me have your address. And don't chase out of the city without telling me. You see, I rather expect developments here."

"I wouldn't say you'd be disappointed, inspector!" was Burnett's half-laughing reply. "Will you tell me the penalty for punching a lawyer? Two lawyers? You see, Leaden and his partner sent this Sailor Connor over to persuade me, you might say, to give them all the loot I stole from Thurston Webb!"

CHAPTER VI.

THE SILAGE CHOPPER.

ELATED, determined, and with a sort of breathless hope of abandoned paradise surging through his arteries, Lane led the way to the iron stair, and down. He really had not been given a chance to find out much concerning Letty Chester—save that she was not living with the scoundrel

she married, and that she and her mother had been forced to the last-ditch level of renting an old brownstone front and letting furnished rooms.

Al Chester, the handsome scion of an old, once-wealthy Long Island family, had been a sort of mystery. The truth about him came out almost as soon as the dazzled Letty Keith married him. Chester had been the lieutenant of Samuel (Nig) Sutro, who had controlled the housing, dope and liquor rackets for the whole of Long Island east of Brooklyn, Forest Hills and Flushing.

Chester was not killed when the G-men smashed Sutro and mowed down so many of his men. But Chester's importance—and his income—ended there. He went into hiding, leaving his bride of five months to shift for herself.

The fact that both the Chester and the Keith family fortunes had consisted chiefly of bank stock, first mortgages, and municipal bonds made them particularly vulnerable to the depression. The double-liability clause in the stock holdings of three banks which failed sank the Chesters beyond hope, and left Mrs. Keith and Letty with insufficient capital for its income—when and if there was income from it again—to support them even in cheap lodgings.

They had tried it, with Letty seeking work, and failing to find any at all, untrained as she was. At last, in desperation, she and Mrs. Keith had leased and opened the five-story brownstone house as a lodging.

Even that did not work out, as lodgers callously walked out on the two women leaving bills unpaid. All capital now had gone, leaving the rent of the big place to be met. A final thing was the chattel mortgage upon the really fine furniture re-

maining from their period of prosperity.

This had been taken by Thurston Webb, it seemed, and he had been threatening to foreclose when Letty had not been able to pay the first interest quite in full on the due date.

Even while he was stunned by the girl's coming, Lane had recalled clearly that nowhere in the ledgers had there been one single chattel mortgage on furniture. A clue had come at once, however, in the shape of the truculent fellow Strom named Sailor Connor. He had stormed in, demanding "the stuff" Lane Burnett had secreted. Lane, with the secret of the floor cache in his mind, had supposed that must be the thing. But Sailor Connor had gone off on a tangent. He did not speak of jewels, but securities and papers which the lawyers, Leaden and his partner, Joe Goldwin, intended to get hold of without delay.

IT seemed that there was a different side to Thurston Webb's affairs. It was much more sordid than the relatively high-class and clean loan business which he conducted from the penthouse. It was usury, bulldozing of the helpless, and the worst sort of preying upon widows—the sort of small-loan business where fines and service charges amounting to more than the face of the original loan are levied from time to time, insuring that the victim cannot possibly keep even, let alone repay the face of the loan.

The two shysters ran this for Webb, or so they claimed to do, through Connor. The original loans were made by Webb, who then turned everything of that one type over to Leaden and his partner.

This revelation, taken as a matter of course by Sailor Connor, who evidently thought Lane another crook



Lane Burnett and the girl were near the window—

who had edged in—perhaps murdering Webb, but anyway making off with some choice loot—made Lane Burnett go white with fury.

Then the bullying ex-pugilist tried to lay hands on the young man, and then, failing that, to knock him down. Lane had felt forked lightning of joy dart through himself. He met the attack, and treated Salior Connor to what would be a surprise as soon as he waked up sufficiently to know it was anything.

The brownstone house was a long way north, but a short time on the subway express. Letty had got hold of herself, and was pleasant but a trifle more reserved than Lane had ever seen her in the old days. She did not talk about herself at all, and Lane did not dare ask how matters stood between herself and Al Ches-

ter. She had volunteered the one bald statement that she had not lived with him for three and a half years.

The girl asked all about Lane himself, and he told her quietly, slurring his misfortunes and the tragedy of his family.

THEY emerged from the subway at Seventy-second Street, and then walked four blocks. The number was a house exactly like the entire row of similar ex-mansions. It had an areaway with basement just three steps down from sidewalk level. Four stories above this, all high-ceiled. The frontage was only twenty feet, the house occupying the whole lot. It, therefore, was deep but very narrow.

They entered the basement, where Letty and her mother lived. Mrs. Keith met them at the door, and with the ghost of her old welcoming smile shook hands with the young man who once had been engaged to her daughter.

"Mother," said Letty, "I don't know what you're going to say about this"—and she laughed shortly, roses coming to her cheeks which heretofore had been too pale—"but Mr. Burnett—"

"I still think of him as Lane," the elder woman murmured.

"Well, Lane, then. Lane says he's going to room here, and that he is coming into a lot of money. At first he only wants a couple of rooms, but later he will take a whole floor. You—do you think that will be all right?"

"Letty, honey, haven't you forgotten—" suggested the mother drearily. "But let's not talk of it now. Come right in and be at home, Lane. We—"

"I think we'll talk about it," said Lane, following her. "I have an idea that this mortgage that's worry-



and the thug was on the floor!

ing you both will prove to be easy enough to handle. You see, I was just about to be employed by this ogre of yours when he was killed. Now I believe I'll handle his affairs for a while. Make no mistake, there will be *no* chattel mortgages foreclosed while I am running things!"

"Oh-h!" breathed Mrs. Keith, tears coming to her eyes. "Is it—some kind of a moratorium?"

"Call it that. I may have better news than that for you—later. But now, if you'll just show me where I can park myself, I'll send down my scanty luggage later. And by the way, I want a twelve-a-week room near a bath, or *with* a bath—and here's three weeks in advance."

He peeled off the bills from the roll he had left, and gave them to Mrs. Keith. "Oh, but we don't charge that much for any of our rooms," she objected. "The highest one is nine."

"Well, I'll pick mine then, and pay twelve," he said. "I'm glad to have a choice. Come along, Letty, which floor?"

"W-which floor would you like? There's only one l-lodger left, old Miss Hanke on the third."

With the feeling of a wrench at his heart, Lane stopped at the foot of the staircase. He had to steel himself, for the memory of old times had flooded over him. Letty was crying. He had no right to comfort her. The best thing he could do was get away from here as fast as possible now, and not return until the two women were over their emotions of relief. Think of trying to run a whole house—and eat, too—on the rent paid by one lone female lodger!

"On second thought," he said, "I'll let you choose my room for me. I've got a little business to tend to. After that I'll send or bring

my stuff, and be here tonight if it's all right."

"It will be," nodded Mrs. Keith. "And thank you a thousand times! We had just about given up hope."

The little business Lane wanted to settle had to do with the two lawyers. He itched to get at them with fists, but realized that such a course was most unwise now. Instead, he stopped at a drugstore and phoned detective headquarters. He was lucky enough to get Strom, and answered the latter's curious questions about where Lane was at the time.

Then Lane finally broke in impatiently, telling the inspector that he had discovered something in regard to Thurston Webb's affairs. He described the usurious side of the loan business handled by the pair of shyster lawyers, and asked if Strom would like to meet him outside Leaden's office in twenty minutes.

"I think I can settle the thing all right, but in case trouble really starts, you might like to attach the papers yourself," said Lane in conclusion.

"So that's the answer, maybe," responded Strom's thoughtful voice. "Yes, I would. Make it thirty minutes. I'll be there to give you moral support—with a search warrant!"

PROMPTLY at a quarter past four the two men met in the dim corridor of an ancient building on Fourth Avenue. Leaden and his partner Joe evidently did not attempt to put up any kind of a front. Their names were on the glass of a door that had not been washed with in the memory of man. When Lane walked in, facing a typewriter desk and empty chair in the anteroom, Strom waited outside in the corridor. He kept near the door, and ex-

pected if those inside became excited enough, he could overhear them plainly. The reason for letting Lane Burnett try it alone first was because men of the stamp of Leaden might let something slip if they did not suspect themselves overheard. And Strom had developed almost as healthy a suspicion of the precious pair, alibis and all, as Lane Burnett entertained.

If the two shysters employed a stenographer, she was out at the moment. The inner door was closed, and yellow light on the glass told that it was occupied. Without knocking, Lane took hold of the knob, swung the door open, and stepped inside, closing it after himself. He frowned down at the uncouth spectacle presented.

Here were two filing cases, one double desk with a glass top, two swivel chairs, a water cooler, a hat-tree, a wastebasket and two men in shirtsleeves, with ties off—and a bottle of whiskey with glasses on the desk between them at the sides of their cocked feet.

The air was blue with smoke. The floor was littered with cigar stubs and cigarettes. Joe Goldwin went for a cheap cigar that smelt like Bubbly Creek in the Chicago Stockyards, and Martin Leaden smoked a peculiarly penetrating brand of cigarette.

"Him!" cried Leaden, letting down his big feet with a crash to the floor, and almost swallowing his cigarette.

"Who?" demanded Joe Goldwin, frowning savagely. He had not encountered Lane Burnett, though Sailor Connor now had given a full report of the youth.

"I'm Lane Burnett. I came for several things. First, hand over to me that chattel mortgage on the furniture belonging to Mrs. Rutherford Keith—"

"Hand to *you*? What t' hell, are you crazy? You—you—" sputtered Goldwin, letting down his feet, and squeaking forward in the swivel chair. "Say, you *are* in trouble now—with me! We got you here now, and you better cough up damn fast! Where is that stuff you stole from our client, Thurston Webb?"

"I didn't take anything—though it all belongs to me," countered Lane. "But I'm not answering questions. Give me that mortgage instantly, or I'll take this damned hole apart, and confiscate everything that looks as though Webb might have had a hand in it!"

"What? I'll call the police!" screamed Goldwin. He reached for the phone. Leaden, looking harassed, had nothing to say, but kept his partner from lifting the phone from its cradle.

"No, Joe!" he cautioned, "not the cops. We can settle this, maybe *this* way!"

At the accented word his hand flashed down into the wide top drawer of the desk. Nickel flashed under his hand.

WITH a grim chuckle of joy at the excuse, Lane leaped. He felt sure that Leaden had meant only to wave the revolver and threaten, but this was a trophy which would excuse almost anything in Strom's eyes. And Lane Burnett, for Mrs. Keith and Letty, owed these sordid shysters plenty. No matter if Letty had paid almost all the interest, they still would assess fines and service charges sufficient so that she and her mother never would get out of debt until they gave over their fine furniture.

Lane's sweeping right caught the lawyer flush in the teeth—with an unexpected result. Even those flashy gold teeth were false! Upper and

lower plates smashed back under the impact of the punch. Then Leaden, choking, and howling nasally, fell over backward in his swivel chair and thumped to the floor. From that moment he choked and busied himself completely with the important job of fishing the false teeth out of his throat.

Little Joe Goldwin, yelling for help, had leaped on top of Lane's back as the latter bent forward with the force of his blow.

Lane humped, then threw himself sidewise. His whole weight came down squarely upon Goldwin's paunch—a projection much like a rubber cushion to a sitter, but not intended by its owner for any service more arduous than discouraging stenographers from sitting in what once had been his lap.

Just as the breath blew out of Goldwin with an explosive "Awwk!" the door opened, and in came Inspector Strom.

"I am serving a search warrant for this office. You are suspected of concealing material evidence in the murder case of your former client, Mr. Thurston Webb!" he announced formally. Then, with the suspicion of a grin, "All right, Mr. Burnett, turn the place inside out. You'd be more likely to recognize the kind of stuff than I would."

STROM had to threaten immediate arrest on charges of violating the Sullivan Law, for Leaden, and assault and battery upon the person of the smiling Lane Burnett, by Joe Goldwin, before the screams of protest subsided. Then the partners were frightened, but sulky.

"You're taking away our whole business!" said Goldwin in a quavering voice at last, as he saw the contents of a whole filing case emptied. "Why can't we manage this just like

we done when Webb was alive? You can't do it half as good—"

"Oh, yes, I can!" gritted Lane, who had found evidence of the most atrocious usury. "Just as soon as the court awards Webb's possessions to me, every one of the mortgages and notes goes back, marked *Paid in Full*, to the borrower!"

"Hm-m!" said Strom, going to the door with one huge bundle under his arm, while Lane took the rest, "maybe it was not such a bad thing, after all, that Webb died suddenly.

"By the way, Goldwin and Leaden, which one of you actually killed the old man? I'm rather curious to know!"

For a second there was dead silence. Then Goldwin screamed dimly, toppling and slumping again to the floor in a faint.

"No, I refuse that as a confession," said Strom contemptuously, as he opened the door and led the way toward the street. "Lord, but the fresh air tastes good!"

"Yes, that stinking den was devoted to chopping up human lives—like cornstalks fed into the chopper for cattle!" was Lane's reply. "Do we go to your office?"

"No, take these back to the Menocino Building. I'm going to let you carry on there. After you left, there were several clients who came. I told them you'd be there to transact business at nine o'clock tomorrow morning. Meanwhile, I am keeping guards in the background, just to make sure there won't be any more murders—or robberies."

That was the first hint Lane had been given that Strom suspected something valuable had been in the shanty penthouse; something far more valuable than even the pledges and bank books left in the two safes, on the night Thurston Webb was murdered.

And there had been. There certainly had been. The Lady Georgetown diamond itself had been valued long ago at half a million dollars. Besides that, there had been an incalculable sum represented by the other flashing jewels. Now, thinking of Strom and the possibility that he had searched again and carefully enough to uncover the hoard, the young man's shoulderblades twitched as a chill raced across.

If that diamond once was identified as belonging to the Burnett family, no inspector could fail to draw erroneous but terrible conclusions. Lane would go straight to a cell. Later—probably up the river to the electric chair.

"I've got to get there and see," breathed Lane to himself, cold perspiration of near panic starting to his forehead.

CHAPTER VII. COWBOY OF THE SKY.

HE was still breathing fast when he unlocked doors and entered the penthouse, bearing his huge armful of large-sized envelopes. Dumping them hurriedly, he fastened both doors at his back, then made a swift search of the stuffy place.

Certainly no one was here now. He pulled the shades, then swiftly moved furniture and looked into the floor cache. The green boxes were still in place.

Just as he was replacing the trap and the bed over it, he heard a stealthy, scraping sound at his back. He whirled, the pistol leaping forth—but there was nothing in sight anywhere.

Striding swiftly to the outside doors, he opened the first softly and slowly, keeping the pistol ready. Then he shook his head, mystified. Nothing in the entry. He bent for-

ward, placing his ear to the outside door, and instantly he heard a faint thump and a rubbing sound.

Setting his jaw, crouching, he clasped the bolt and chain in turn, taking them noiselessly away. Then, still with his left hand, he turned the knob of the spring lock, and yanked the door.

Then the breath oozed out of his lungs. The hallway was completely empty; and listen with all his ears as he did he could not catch now the faintest sound of a retreating foot-fall.

"Someone was there just the same. I felt—as well as heard," Lane whispered to himself. But then he shook his head and closed the doors again, making sure the safeguards were in place.

The remaining hours of the day saw him gradually quieting from a jumpy, belligerent state of nerves. He forced himself to start in with the mortgages taken from the lawyers. The sooner this nasty business was out of the way, the better he would feel.

His method was curt, but satisfying to his own soul—and probably something like manna from heaven to the poor devils who had made these usury loans in the first place. Lane simply took each document, wrote with his fountain pen, *Paid in Full*, across the face of each, and signed his name. In the cases of larger amounts he added also a brief explanatory letter. This business had been bloodsucking, but it had ended.

With all these in stamped addressed envelopes, ready for mailing, Lane looked for the first time at his wrist watch, astonished to see how the time had fled. He had missed dinner and worked till eight p.m. without a thought of himself. Now he stretched a cramp in his back.

He'd take his stuff in a suitcase, and go along out to Letty's for the night. She was expecting him.

In the few minutes of simple packing, though, he chanced to look out of the back window, the one used for egress to the roof. And there he caught sight of the rising full moon just now appearing above the roof of the next building, a fourteen-story loft structure now almost without tenants owing to its decrepitude.

LANE became frozen, immobile. Up there on the cornice of the next roof, twenty-five feet higher and fifteen feet east of the wall of the building on which the penthouse rested, a crouched and toadlike human figure showed black and bulbous against the clear white face of the moon.

"What the hell?" whispered Lane to himself, staring. Instinctively, he knew this must concern himself. The fellow up there had one arm up-raised. His right arm. It appeared to be waving a flag or something. The high hand was circling around in a gesture vaguely familiar.

Then the hand stretched out, almost in Lane's direction—and something spat against the brick chimney which rose eight feet from the roof.

The bunchy silhouette straightened then, and made motions with both hands as though drawing something toward him. A few seconds later the mysterious waving in air began again.

"I've got you now, fella!" said Lane grimly, aloud. He turned back, got the phone, and rang Centre Street, asking for Strom. Quickly, he told the inspector of what was happening. Then he returned to the window, pistol ready.

He was just in time to see a swinging, agile body, drawn out, and

bunchy no longer, swinging along the rope which stretched from the cornice up there down to the chimney of the Menocino Building. The cowboy-burglar had thrown a loop over the chimney.

Then—a sudden piercing scream, which rasped across the balmy evening air like a tumbler-edge drawn on plate glass. Up there at the cornice the rope slipped a little. Then it suddenly came free. With a horrifying shriek, diminishing with terrible swiftness, the black body on the rope was snatched downward, whipped against the wall of the Menocino Building, then dropped twelve floors to the concrete alley beneath.

His knees trembling, and nausea gripping the pit of his stomach, Lane turned from the moonlit window, and slumped down in a chair to await Inspector Strom. Down there on the street there came the first siren moan of a coming squad car.

The tale was a strange one, but the evidence remaining was irrefutable. Strom and his men covered the ground both downstairs and up, and the inspector was grim but frankly puzzled.

"Good you warned us—and that it happened just as we were coming," he said, with a raspy edge to his voice. "Otherwise—"

"Now, look here!" said Lane with sudden tired resentment. "This man was a robber, wasn't he? Trying to get over to this roof, probably to break in here? I saw him, and phoned—"

"Oh, sure," said Strom. "I had a look at him, down below. He wasn't exactly pretty. In fact, he'd—splashed. But one side of his face was unmarked. He was Bennington Craig. You used to know him once, didn't you?"

"Benny Craig!" almost whispered Lane. "Yes—I knew him—only slightly. Haven't seen or heard of him in—four years. Then he was out on Long Island. A rich man—"

"Not four years ago," snapped Strom. "He was strapped, flat broke and playing around with racketeers. I don't think he's been around New York much lately, but once he was a patron of dude ranches in summer, Miami in winter, and the night clubs spring and fall. When he'd get tight in the old days, he'd get on a dance floor and do fancy rope spinning to music if they'd let him. But I guess this is the last roundup for Benny."

"What I'd like to know is, what the hell is here in this penthouse to keep attracting robbers?"

Lane did not answer, couldn't. For the moment he had been stricken dumb by a memory—one which linked in bizarre fashion with the murder here in the penthouse.

Four and one half years before, or nearer five perhaps, Lane had been a guest at an estate at Sands Point. Benny Craig had been there, and Letty—and the human louse Letty later had married. There were other week-end guests too, but they did not count. The one thing that mattered was the proposal this same Benny Craig had made one afternoon, when they were kept from tennis and golf by a misting rain. Benny had brought forth a queer pronged spear, and suggested that they go and get themselves a mess of frogs' legs for a fry.

He had exhibited the same kind of a weapon, a frog-gig, as the one which had been found in the eye-socket of the penthouse usurer!

And now he, Benny Craig, lay dead on the pavement, after trying his best to make another entry to the penthouse!

CHAPTER VIII.

THE TOILS TIGHTEN.

OFFICIALLY, that solved the case. No doubt Benny Craig had been one of several in a gang, since the waster himself hardly possessed the brain to plan and carry out a first-class crime.

But Strom was satisfied. "That'll end it," he said to Lane the next day, when he made—supposedly—his last official visit. "I've checked what you said about frog-gigging, and it's true. Benny used to do that a lot, because he couldn't buy frogs' legs around here, and he loved 'em. They tell me he went, all through the warm months, down to the south shore of Long Island and out on the crawfish flats near Jamaica, after frogs."

"So, naturally, he had one of those spears. We know how he got over to the roof the first time—and also how he failed in his second try. Probably he thought you still had the stuff that had been in the safes."

"And those two lawyers?" asked Lane. He hoped this really was the solution of his troubles, but an uneasy premonition made him doubt.

"Oh, they were in it, and we'll waltz 'em around till they give—enough," said Strom. Then he held out a hand. "I'm going now," he said. "If I were you, I'd carry on with the business. I'll have the two safes sent back. You can have the will, and a lawyer will get probate for you soon. I don't know anyone I'd rather see get the old spider's money."

Lane accepted the clasp with a smile. But then he shook his head. "Will you keep those safes down in the station for a while?" he asked. "I've got an awful hunch this isn't over. Oh, I just feel it in my bones! Anyhow, I can come down there and get any pledge that is redeemed—

and I'll feel a lot better—"

"Say no more," Strom cut in. "You're going to be all right, though if you like, I'll leave a man here for a week."

For an obvious reason, Lane Burnett did not want that. So he pretended to be assured. But the second the outside door closed after the satisfied inspector, Lane Burnett felt a chill of dread creeping back into the marrow of his bones.

THE previous night, when Benny Craig had met his death, Lane had locked up, taken his suitcase and gone out to Letty's. His room had been spick-and-span, with fresh flowers in a tiny vase on the table. But he had not glimpsed either Letty or her mother.

He had smelled pipe smoke, though, and this had made him frown. Of course, the girl and her mother had got themselves another male lodger; and he should have been very glad. They could not hope to live and pay rent on the income from just two furnished rooms. And he knew, with a depression of spirit, that Letty would not let him help her any further. Not while that rat of a husband of hers still lived, and there was no divorce.

"I'll make her get one," he had resolved.

This evening, when he locked up and left, the uneasy feeling of being watched was strong in him. Yet Lane could not detect any shadow among the home-hurrying crowds on the street. He had got himself a shoulder holster for his pistol, and was glad now that he was wearing it. The mean streets were crowded as he went to the subway; but it seemed that eyes bored into his back unceasingly.

In the subway a white-faced fellow who looked like a dope addict



Goldwin yelled for help as Lane leaped

deliberately sidled a way close to Lane, who was standing and holding one of the white-enameled straps. Their eyes met, and a burning animosity seemed to leap out from the black orbs of the stranger.

Lane almost spoke, then stared down the stranger. Nothing happened. Lane got out at Seventy-second Street, and to the best of his knowledge the white-faced fellow did not come out of the train



at Leaden and swung hard!

to the same platform. The crowd was so great, however, that he could not be certain.

AT the rooming house there was no sign of Letty or her mother. The door leading to their rooms was uncompromisingly closed, and no sounds came from there. Upstairs in the hallway, however, the smell of tobacco was stronger. Also, as Lane frowned and stopped a moment to

listen, he heard the rumble of several masculine voices from upstairs. Not one new roomer, but at least three, had come.

One glance inside his own room, and the young man's jaw jugged. His suitcase had been moved. The clothes he had laid folded in a drawer of the chiffonier had been rumbled.

Letty certainly had not done this. Someone had searched his effects.

Had some member—or several members—of the jewel gang or robber gang taken up residence in the same house with him?

That second there came a light tap at the door. Then it opened swiftly, and Letty was inside. She was white of face, but lovelier than ever to the man's hungry eyes.

"Lane," she whispered tensely, "get out of here quickly. Go to a hotel somewhere. You must. Hurry!"

"I will not," he said, and took three steps to her. Then his arms went around her and he kissed her. She tried to avert her face, then a sob was torn from her.

"Oh, Lane, don't!" she urged, but let herself go pliant in his arms.

At that very instant Lane himself disengaged his arms and stepped back. He had heard muffled sounds in the hallway. Those roomers had come down all together.

Lane knew his way around, and had heard plenty of grim stories about mobsters. A flash of inspiration came to him. He could not start a battle here with Letty present. So he stepped back farther, as Letty turned with a little cry. Bending down swiftly, Lane transferred his loaded pistol from shoulder holster to a place under the tight garter-band on his left leg. It was questionable if it would stay. But the garters were new and strongly elastic. He hastily yanked down the cuff of his trousers, and swung to meet the three unprepossessing individuals who crowded into the small room, despite Letty's gasp and futile attempt to keep them out.

ALL three pushed pistols before them. Their faces were surly, determined. One glance and Lane's teeth ground together. Two of the men he did not know, but they looked like higher-up mobsters. The

leader of the trio, however, Lane did know. He hated the man from the soles of his cordovan bluchers to the artificial wave in the patent-leather hair showing beneath his cocked straw.

This was Al Chester, husband of Letty, and an egotistic, selfish scoundrel of the worst sort. Worst, because Al Chester possessed brains and a streak of inhuman cruelty, coupled with a certain recklessness that passed for courage.

The door closed before anyone spoke. Then Chester gently shoved Letty out of the way without looking at her. One of the other men caught her less gently, and thrust her down in a chair.

"You know why we've come, Burnett," said Al Chester coldly. "This little love scene has nothing to do with it. We've been double-crossed, and we're doing something about it. You know what we want. Where is it, still in the penthouse?"

"I don't know the story. Tell me how you've been double-crossed," evaded Lane, folding his arms.

"Frisk him, Carson," said Chester from the side of his mouth.

The second man moved sidewise, keeping out of range of the other two pistols. Then he reached and ran his hands through Lane's pockets. He located the under-arm holster, but no pistol.

"He's clean, Al," he reported. "Mebbe there's a gat around somewhere, though. He wears one."

"I didn't expect to need it in bed," snapped Lane, to forestall the direct question. "I keep it in the penthouse. Now, if you've got something to say to me, suppose you let Mrs. Chester go to her room."

"Yeh, let's give her some of that buttermilk that put the old lady to sleep," suggested the man called Carson.

A choked cry burst from the girl. "That was why—oh, you poisoned mother!" She tried to rise, but a rough hand shoved her back in the chair.

"Nothing much worse than a Mickey Finn—horse medicine," said Al Chester callously. "Give her a bromo before breakfast tomorrow, and she'll be O. K. But no, I think maybe Letty will be useful to us. If Mr. Burnett chooses to be troublesome, that is." His politeness was a corrosive sneer.

"We want the jewels," he went on in a more businesslike voice. "We're not afraid of you, Burnett, since we could send you to the chair for your rascally uncle's murder—"

"Wha-at?" gasped Lane, truly shocked to his heels. "My—uncle?" Before the other could answer, however, Lane saw—many things.

THE man who had called himself Thurston Webb had been one of two of his father's half brothers. Not the one who had supposedly absconded with Walter Raleigh Burnett, but the other one, the black sheep of the family who had never been mentioned in family councils before the disaster. Larkin was the name—yes, Charles Larkin. And he had been a loan shark, doing business down here in the very same city all the time.

"Of course, that's nonsense about the murder," said Lane then, after Chester had snapped something about an eyewitness testifying, "but I'm not disposed to make a point of it under these circumstances. Let L—Mrs. Chester—go and I'll tell you exactly where the jewels are hidden. The police have closed the case. You can take my key and go and get them."

That did not suit the plans of the trio, however. They told Lane that

they intended to have plenty time for a getaway after getting their hands on the jewels. Old Webb had double-crossed them. In letting him have them for safekeeping until the heat cooled, they had insisted that he put directions on how to find the cache in his lock-box in the hands of his lawyers. But when they had opened that box, it was empty. Perhaps Larkin—or Thurston Webb, as they knew him—had found the two lawyers untrustworthy, and so had quietly regained the hidden key.

"I'm telling you something," said Al Chester coolly. "We haven't any murders on our hands. Not that the cops know about, anyhow. And if you play along, there won't be any. I know it'd be a good idea to bump you two—"

"Two? Can't you leave your own wife out of it?" flashed Lane.

"Letty doesn't mean a thing to me any more," said Chester with a sneer. "I don't even hate her. So when you and she show us the jewels hidden by that damned rat of a half uncle of yours, we'll tie you up and—and mail a note to Inspector Strom to come and release you. Fair enough?"

"No," gritted Lane. "You'll let Mrs. Chester go now, or you'll never see those damned jewels."

"O. K., fella," said Chester with ominous calm. He reached in a jacket pocket, brought forth a silencer which he screwed to the muzzle of his automatic. Carson did the same. "Last chance, Burnett. Then you and Letty die—and we try to find what you found, using your key. Think we don't mean what we say?"

"All right, I give in," cried out Lane, with an agonized glance at Letty. These devils, part of the band which no doubt had murdered his own father—if not Thurston Webb, about whose death they

seemed to have a queer confidence—would not balk at two more killings, with between a half million and a million in easily sold jewels at stake. The stones now could be fenced abroad, since years had elapsed since they were taken. Webb must have had a tight grip on his thieves, indeed, to make them exercise such caution after a rich haul.

SO, walking down apparently free, accompanied by three men whose right hands stayed in their jacket pockets, Letty and Lane Burnett were forced to enter a black sedan which Carson drove. Half an hour later they parked at the Menocino Building. They went right into the front entrance—and in ten seconds old Jeff Garibaldi, the night watchman, was backing away from the snout of an automatic, a prisoner too.

Jeff was bound and gagged and left lying among the mops and brooms of a closet. Taking the elevator, the five ascended to the top floor, then climbed single file to the penthouse. Cursing, but unable to help this exchange, unless he wanted to expose Letty to the chance of quick death, Lane opened the doors, and let the stick-up trio into the shanty penthouse. Lane had only one satisfaction. The automatic had stayed under his garter; and now it felt comfortable, indeed.

"Move that bed. Lift the ring in the wood. The cache is under the trap," Lane directed bitterly. "And say, if Mrs. Chester and I promise to do nothing and say nothing, can't you leave us—or at least her—free?"

"Nuts, fella," snapped Al Chester. "You're lucky as hell we don't burn you both. It's just—"

He broke off short, bending forward as the man named Carson and the other hood lifted away the trap. All three bent forward, and even

Lane Burnett looked. Then snarling accusing voices turned on him and the girl.

The space which had held the green boxes of jewels was empty!

CHAPTER IX.

BANK CLERK BERSERK.

ONE glance, and giddy terror swept through Lane Burnett. These hoods would kill Letty now, and himself.

"Inspector Strom must have come back—" he began excitedly. But in the same second he knew words were of no avail. The heartless, cruel mask which was the real Al Chester had swung viciously around. The men had taken off the silencers when they had come in the car, but now Chester yanked his from his pocket.

"Le's bump 'em—an' 'en search thorough," said Carson through the side of his mouth.

"O. K.—and you, Spottiswoode, put a bullet in each, so we'll all be in it," grated Chester. "Damn you for a meddling fool, Burnett! Now—"

That was when Lane swept Letty from her feet with a backhand thrust of his left arm. He himself catapulted forward, his head butting straight for the midsection of Al Chester, while at the same time his hands went down, clawing frantically at the heavily loaded garter.

He struck—and there were coughing sounds. Something struck a tingling pain through the base of his neck. Another shot seared along the calf of his left leg.

But he and Chester were bowled back, the man's silenced gun wheezing past Lane's ear. Then Lane struck, and rolled to his chest. Up came the automatic and he fired once, twice—and then yelped and rolled over, curling a little, as a

downslanting slug struck and paralyzed his left elbow, sending shooting pains all the way to his eye teeth.

With a yell, he uncurled and let go two more shots, straight into the slanting, falling body of the man, Spottiswoode, who had been the last of the three hoods on his feet.

But there was one thing more. Carson, bubbling red foam, moved and triggered from the floor, just as a thrown shoe from Letty struck him on the back of the head.

But the shoe was not needed. Something, possibly a pile-up of gases in the silencer of his weapon, caused catastrophe. There was a devastating explosion. The weapon and his fingers seemed to curl up and then belch fire and blood. One finger sailed off by itself to smack against the wall.

Carson shrieked and fell back flat. He squirmed a half minute, while Burnett climbed dizzily to his feet, weapon ready, to look down at three dying or dead hoods—the first men Lane Burnett had ever killed in any fashion.

"If you can still talk, Letty," he managed to whisper, "call the cops. I—I sort of feel—weak. Might bring the doctor, too, though I think—"

Letty, grasping the phone, gasped. She had seen Lane crumple up in a heap on the floor.

IT took some time to locate Strom, who had gone off duty, so other detectives and patrolmen swarmed into the penthouse first. With them a surgeon, who made a swift examination of the three hoods. Three shrugs. They were dead. Lane Burnett was sitting up on the floor, Letty holding his shoulders. The doctor saw the stains of blood, and motioned two blue-coated huskies to lift Lane onto the bed. There he was undressed, and his slight wounds

treated and bandaged. Letty sat beside him, her hand over his. She was pale and silent, after telling the first detective sergeant she would tell everything to Strom when he came.

"That is, Mr. Burnett will," she corrected. "I really don't know what this is all about."

"Tell *that* to Eric," snapped the detective. But he left them alone and waited. Strom had been on this queer case all along. He was still in charge.

Lying there, looking up at Letty's stricken profile, Lane found his brain clearer than ever before. He saw the whole involved mess—that is, he thought he could guess the part which suddenly was necessary as a complement to the mystery Strom had said was solved.

The rustlings and thumpings, the feeling of a presence near him when he worked in this room. Then, the mention of the dead hood's name by Al Chester, Spottiswoode. That was the same name Thurston Webb had mentioned. Webb had said Spottiswoode had killed Walter Raleigh Burnett, Lane's father.

"Webb—or Larkin, as he really was named—must have been *willing* for me and the police to get after Spottiswoode, when he came for the jewels," reflected Lane. "And I believe, by thunder, I know exactly *why!*"

That was when Eric Strom came striding in. His blue eyes were questioning. Lane lifted a hand to beckon, and then sat up on the bed. "I've got the whole thing, inspector," he said.

"Four years ago my father for some reason was taking his fortune, converted into jewels, away somewhere in his yacht. That was his intention, anyhow. He was afraid of what might occur to the financial

arrangement of this country, perhaps.

"In the bank also was his half brother, Henry Larkin. Henry saw the chance to steal some money—a million in cash and securities. He took it and disappeared at the same time my father disappeared.

"Well, my father was murdered by these three men in here on the floor, with the connivance of the fellow we knew as Thurston Webb. Webb was really another Larkin half brother, who was a fence for jewel thieves, a pawnbroker, a loan shark—and whatever.

"These men got the huge haul of jewels, but let it lie hidden here till the heat cooled. Then the other members of the gang were double-crossed by Webb-Larkin. I'll go into that part later. Meanwhile—"

Here he sketched swiftly the happenings of the night, and what Chester and his two companions had revealed before their deaths. Then Lane seemed to recall something.

"Heavens, Letty!" he exclaimed to the girl who still sat silent and pale on the edge of the bed. "They said they had drugged your mother. Do you suppose—"

With a cry of terror the girl sprang up. Lane asked if a doctor could not go in a squad car, and see about the mother. With an odd glance at Lane, the inspector gave the necessary orders.

"I was so—disturbed, I f-forgot! Oh, poor mother!" Letty breathed at departure. "Come home as soon as you can, won't you, Lane, dear?" And she bent, kissing him swiftly, then turned to hurry away.

"You timed that," accused Strom grimly, though there was a half-amused twinkle in his blue eyes. He was really thinking that this bank-clerk stooge of Thurston Webb's

was proving up a good deal of a tartar.

"Yes, I timed that. I didn't want Letty here for any more of this," said Lane rising. He dropped his voice to a whisper intended only for the detective's ear. "There is still more to this damned case!"

"More? Hell, isn't—"

"Yes, now you listen with both ears. It's got to be this way. You see—"

And Lane spoke well and fast, still holding to a whisper, for several minutes. As he listened Strom looked down at the floor, at the empty hole where the green boxes had lain, and his jaw grew harsh.

"Two brothers—and not Thurston Webb dead at all?" he gasped at last. "My Lord, you may be right. It's wild, but—"

"It would pay him to leave the bank books. Think of it. He has a million—and these gems. Why not leave a fortune of a couple hundred thousand to make sure I'd stay here and keep the gang busy? They thought naturally that I'd killed the old man, and taken the jewels—"

But Strom, battle light glinting in his eyes, had swung away to issue terse, low-voiced orders to his men. One of these went down to the eleventh floor, and there opened a window. He went out to the fire escape which served this part of the building and waited, gun in hand.

Another pair of detectives went down to guard the stairway and elevators. Strom himself, with one capable-looking sergeant, walked down to the twelfth floor and there rang the bell of the Acme Manufacturing Company—the almost deserted suite of offices where one red-haired clerk had been left to end the defunct business.

There was no answer to the ring, so the capable-looking sergeant bus-

ied himself with some keys, while Strom looked away so as not to have official cognizance of this breach of regulations.

Just as the sergeant gave an exclamation of satisfaction, and straightened, turning the knob and pushing open the door, a light bloomed inside, and a shadow fell across the doorway.

"Up with your hands! I'll shoot!" came an agitated voice, shrill and quavering with a terror greater than even robbers ought to inspire. It was the red-haired clerk, still in the office after hours. In the half shadow he looked older, lined of face. He held a weapon which Strom grimly recognized, a .357 Magnum. Too good, too powerful and expensive a weapon for police to have. Only crooks owned them thus far, you might say.

"This is police," snapped Strom. "I want to ask some—"

That was as far as he got. With a sudden rasping yell, the cornered man pulled trigger. The pistol crashed. The sergeant next to Strom said "Hah!" and staggered back against the door.

Strom cursed and fired. But that second the redhead whimpered strangely and dodged to one side. He ran behind some filing cases, made for a narrow door which said "Men." He slammed this door before Strom could reach it. A lock ratcheted.

Strom cursed again, lowering his pistol and slamming three shots into the lock. He yanked once, twice, and at the third try the door burst open. There was no one in the laboratory; and the single window was locked on the inside.

There was no mystery about this disappearance, though. An iron ladder was screwed to one wall, and up there were sounds of conflict oc-

curring just above an open trap in the ceiling.

UPSTAIRS in the penthouse, Lane Burnett sprang up with a cry at the sound of the first shot. He had guessed right!

He was actually looking down the hole in the floor where the cache of green boxes had lain, when the arm, followed by the disarranged red wig of a panic-stricken murderer and rat appeared. With a grim cry Lane went to his knees, seized the arm, and then hauled with all his strength till the man's body shot up and out of the hole, scraping cruelly against the narrow sides. And then Lane seized the fellow in a bear hug, pulling him sidewise to the floor. The red wig came off. The man struggled to bring his big pistol to bear, but the one detective left in the penthouse seized it and twisted it away. A moment more and Lane Burnett sat upon the chest of the snarling, slavering spider Larkin—the scheming plunderer and murderer he had known as his employer, Thurston Webb.

That was really all that happened. Two days later Webb made a complete confession. He had given shelter to his own absconding half brother in order to get hold of the million in cash and securities taken from the bank.

The brother had been suffering from *arthritis deformans*, and gradually grew unable to travel. In order to further the wily scheme then hatching in his brain, the loan shark Thurston Webb began to impersonate his own brother, dressing like him and adopting his mannerisms of speech and his apparent physical disability.

In order to have the brother take his place at times, Webb even had the latter shave his head regularly to

simulate the bald patch on the loan shark's head.

Then, of course, all was ready. The main part of the jewel gang, captained by Spottiswoode, had murdered Walter Raleigh Burnett when the latter, starting for his yacht in the tender, was burdened with the jewel wealth he intended to cache somewhere outside the borders of the United States.

The elder Burnett had been no crook at all, merely pessimistic and somewhat selfishly unpatriotic. He had lost his life because of trying to save one million from the financial panic he foresaw for his country, and for the bank of which he was president.

In losing his life he also had been marked as an absconder, getting half the blame for the million embezzled by his employee, Larkin.

Because of the celebrity of the jewels, the pawnbroker-fence had convinced Spottiswoode, Carson and Al Chester to let the jewel loot lie untouched for four or five years. Meanwhile there would be other, smaller jobs, and Larkin would keep the gang supplied with subsistence cash when hauls were too scant.

That set the whole stage for Charles Larkin. He knew of Lane Burnett and the latter's daily perusal of the want ad columns. It was no trick to hook him. Lane, of course, would be recognized by Al Chester and Spottiswoode. They would think Lane guilty of killing Thurston Webb and trying to get

back his family jewels.

They did think this; and as a result enlisted the fancy roper who fell to his death trying to get across to the penthouse to search for the jewels.

Thurston Webb-Larkin calmly drugged his own crippled brother, hauled him up to bed in the penthouse, then killed him. The implement of murder, the frog-gig, was intended to throw suspicion on Al Chester—which it did.

Webb-Larkin intended to live there on the twelfth floor, in the Acme office, until the furor died down. Then he would calmly take what was left of the embezzled million, plus the enormously valuable Lady Georgetown diamond, and the other loot of this and smaller robberies, and vanish to South America or Europe.

"AND that's the story—all except one thing," said Lane Burnett, when he reached this point in telling the final development to Letty, some two hours later. "I'll never sell the Lady Georgetown diamond. It must remain in the family, to be handed down to my illustrious descendants.

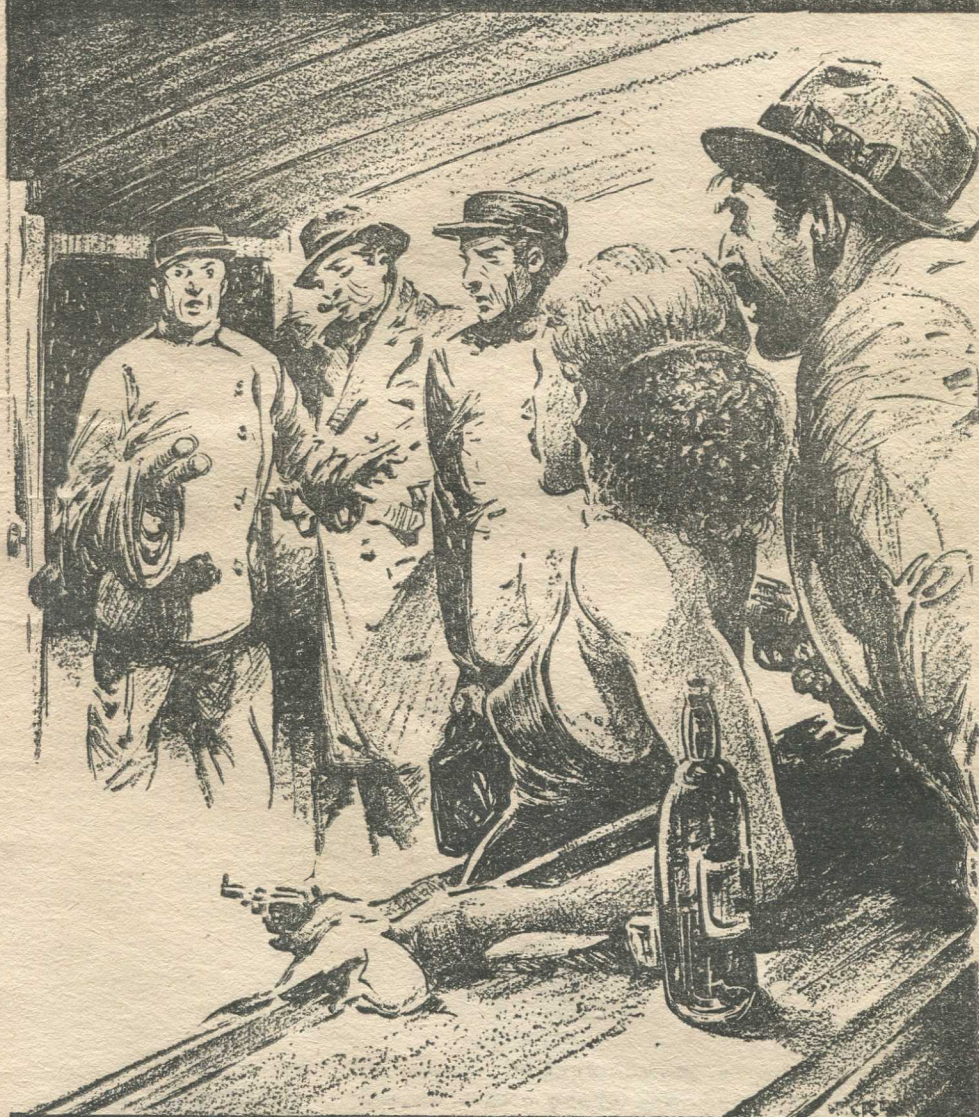
"But right now, Letty dear, I don't suppose I have any illustrious descendants. Hope not, anyhow. Do you suppose you could help me out with this terrible problem?"

She smiled, blushing a little as he drew her close. "Suppose we work on that together, Lane dearest," she whispered.

THE END

Thrills and excitement packed in every line, the next issue will bring you, among others, a complete novel, "House of Plunder," by Edward Ronns; a Johnny Eight-ball Pike novelette, "The Black Widow Murders," and other great stories. Be sure to get your copy!

AMBULANCES ARE FOR SICK PEOPLE



By **FREDERIC SINCLAIR**

Ambulances Are For Sick People

BY FREDERIC SINCLAIR

LIKE a fleet gray ghost with the throat of a banshee, the ambulance flashed down Highway 20. Rubber shrieked as Joe twisted the wheel, slithering around an S curve. Sandy took his finger off the siren button, held on. They straightened with a neck-cracking lurch. Spinning wheels slewed off the macadam, churned gravel and dirt against rear fenders in a staccato chatter. Joe eased up on the gas pedal, double-clutched into second, trod hard on the accelerator. They gobbled up road in a burst of speed.

Ahead, the highway dipped and rolled like a haphazardly flung ribbon in the moonlight. Joe settled his shoulder against the cab door, grinning gleefully as the speedometer crawled past seventy.

Sandy Trotter sang softly in beat with the whining motor:

*"Oh, Joe, Oh, Joe, you go so slow,
What can the matter be?
We left at one on emergency run,
And brought back a corpse at
three."*

Joe fondled the steering wheel. "Doc! This bus'll do ninety with the brakes on and you dragging your feet. What a wagon!"

Sandy jerked forward, jabbing at the siren button. The siren moaned to life, screeching a high-pitched wail. Up ahead a red- and green-lighted convoy truck nearly climbed a ditch. They hurtled past, rocking with the wind pressure.

Sandy hunched his white coat up

around his neck. He took his medicine kit off his lap, put it on the seat between them, and lit a cigarette. He settled back, watching the road slide under them in a hazy blur.

He wished he could sleep. He was dead tired. His head ached, his feet hurt and now the seat of his pants was catching hell. Internes, reflected Sandy bitterly, lead a dog's life. Especially in a hospital like the Watersport General Hospital, where he was Number One interne. Understaffed, overworked, little pay and no thanks. Even the nurses were homely. The work was messy, too. Mostly accident cases, like this one they were on now.

Midway between two large cities, the Watersport General Hospital patrolled the area that the city hospitals wouldn't touch. They collected crash victims, fitted the pieces together and sewed them up in wholesale fashion. It was good training for an aspiring young doctor, Sandy admitted sourly, but even champagne tastes lousy when you get it in bucketsful.

Joe said, "Grab your rumpus. We're going into a spin!"

He babied the wheel, judged his distance. They skidded off the main highway, caromed down a narrow, hog-backed road.

Sandy put himself back on the seat, growled, "My hair's white. 'Satisfied?'"

Joe grinned. The ambulance performed a neat little two-step around a gaping hole in the road. Fifty

feet ahead the lights picked out a frowzy sign that read:

OLD MILL, TURN RIGHT.

Joe grunted. "Dr. Trotter, you ether bum, we have arrived." He jammed on the brakes. "Thought this gin mill was closed up?"

"It is," said Sandy. "The guy who phoned the hospital said there was an accident and that they'd dragged them into the Old Mill to await our pleasure." He scowled. "Rather a surly laddie he was, too. Wouldn't volunteer much information."

THE headlights flashed across trees. They swung up a narrow winding driveway that wound through tangled shrubbery. Through the bushes Sandy could see pin-points of light.

"That," said Joe, "is the Old Mill. The 'Old Clip-Joint' we used to call it. What a honky-tonk!"

They burst into a gravel clearing with a mossy fountain in the center, and slammed to a stop before a rambling, one-storied building. Sandy grabbed his bag and was halfway up the broad veranda steps before the ambulance stopped moving.

A door opened, streaming light onto the porch. "In here, buddy," somebody said.

Sandy walked across the porch and went in. He found himself in a dusty taproom with cobwebbed oak-beamed ceilings, high paneled walls, old-inn style furniture. A bar with a brass footrail took up most of the room. Standing with their backs to the bar, looking at him, were two men and a girl in a scarlet, breathtaking gown.

The girl was leaning with her elbow on the bar, her head in her hand as if she were tired. Her face was white; a drained white. Her mouth

slashed across it like a crimson smear.

The man who'd opened the door nudged Sandy's arm. He turned.

"You're the doc, ain'tcha?" said the man.

Sandy nodded. "Yes," he said. "What's wrong?"

The girl at the bar straightened. "My gawd, he's only a kid! What can a kid do, Max? Those boys need a doctor, not a kid." Her voice was husky, rather thick. Mentally, Sandy catalogued it as a whiskey tenor.

Max said: "Shut up, Myrna! This guy's an interne. All internes are kids, but they know their stuff." He turned back to Sandy. "You know your stuff, don't yuh, kid?"

Sandy looked at him. Max had a heavy, dark face. There were bags under his eyes; bluish bags. His eyes were red-rimmed and sore looking. You've got kidney trouble, brother, thought Sandy, but who cares?

He said: "I know my stuff. What's happened here?"

A short, baldheaded man at the bar took a cigar out of his mouth and said: "You were so damn anxious about them mugs and now yuh stand there and chin. They'll croak if yuh don't do somethin'."

Max looked at him. "Those guys are tough, Charley. Good and tough. A coupla minutes more ain't gonna matter."

Charley put the cigar back in his mouth. "Oke, oke," he said. "They are your babies, not mine. It don't make no difference to me, one way or the other."

Max took hold of Sandy's arm and edged him toward the bar. "We've got a bottle. Have a drink, doc. One drink. Then you can go to work."

Sandy said: "Listen. I appreciate

your hospitality, but if somebody's hurt let's take a look at them. We broke all traffic records getting here because a call came in that someone was hurt. If I wanted a drink I could buy one"—he shook Max's hand off his arm—"but I don't want a drink."

Max's voice was injured. "Oke, oke, you're the doctor," he said. "Yeah, you're the doctor. Just thought you might want a little snifter—"

"For cripes sake, Max!" broke in a tall thin man with cold eyes. "You've been worrying about those chumps ever since we—ever since they got hurt. You can't wait until you get a sawbones out here, and then all you do is talk! I think you want those boys to croak."

"You think!" snarled Max. "You couldn't think if you stood on your head! Who the hell called that hospital and told 'em to send an ambulance right out? Who? Me! You guys didn't even want to have anything to do with them stiffies. Let 'em lay and leave ourselves wide open to get our hinders burned. You think! Don't make me laugh!"

The big man was getting so excited Sandy thought he'd have a case of apoplexy on his hands before he found out who was hurt.

FOOTSTEPS sounded on the veranda. The effect on the occupants of the room was startling. Charley cursed and bounced across the floor toward the door on his toes. The biggest gun Sandy had ever seen had somehow grown in his hand. Max melted away, gliding into the shadowy hall. Steel glittered in his fist. The girl swore softly. She didn't move from where she stood. But she lifted up her red gown—lifted it way up and slid a tiny, snub-nosed revolver from a silken hol-

ster adhesive-taped to her thigh. Her mouth twisted in a hard red pencil line. The tall thin man sidled behind the bar. He took a gun from his coat pocket and propped his elbows on the bar, looking over the barrel of the gun at the door.

The door opened and Joe walked in with a rolled-up stretcher under his arm. He blinked at the girl; looked startled at the man behind her sighting at him along six inches of blue steel.

"Hey!" he hollered.

Max loomed alongside of him. "Freeze, buddy!" he said, and jabbed a gun in his ribs.

Joe dropped the stretcher, eyes wide. "Holy mackerel!" he gasped.

The girl said "Nuts!" disgustedly. She lifted up her dress and tucked the gun back in the silken sheath. She turned her back and poured a stiff drink from a bottle on the bar.

The man with the cold eyes wag-gled his gun at Sandy. "Your man?" he asked, flatly.

Sandy said: "Yeah. Can he live?"

Charley came back to the bar. He took the cigar out of his mouth and dropped it on the floor; lit another one. "Why didn't you say somebody was with you?" he demanded.

"Because I don't remember you asking," Sandy snapped. "And what the hell's going on here, anyhow?"

Max took his gun out of Joe's rib and walked over to Sandy. "Now, doc, don't get excited," he soothed. "We just thought your friend was somebody else that's all."

Joe picked up the stretcher and edged into the room. He eyed Sandy questioningly. "What's up?" he asked, low-voiced.

Sandy shrugged. "A bunch of kids with popguns and a bad case of nerves. Anyhow, we're leaving." He started for the door. "Come on, Joe. False alarm."

Max said: "Nix! Wait a minute, kid. Don't be like that!"

Sandy turned. He said: "Listen. We came out here under the impression somebody was hurt. We didn't come to have a bunch of morons wave guns in our faces and act tough. Nobody's hurt, that I can see—yet. We're leaving. Thanks for nothing."

"Spunky kid, ain't he?" said Charley, chewing on his cigar. "I don't get that crack about Mormons, though."

"Sure he is, sure," nodded Max. "Doctors gotta be spunky. I like this kid. He's got somethin'."

"Well, let him give it to them two flatties," the girl said. "If he's got something, let him patch up them two mugs. They're in a bad way."

Sandy looked at her. "Is there somebody hurt, sister, or is this a gag?" he asked.

"A gag!" She laughed harshly. "Listen, sonny, there's two boys in there"—she jerked her head at a door behind the bar—"with holes in them big enough to stick your foot in!"

SANDY turned and walked around the edge of the bar. He squeezed past the tall, thin man and opened the door.

The room was dark.

"There's a switch just inside the door, on the wall," called Max.

Sandy slid his fingers along the wall, switched on the light. A bed without any mattress stood in the center of the room amid a litter of dusty packing cases and whiskey cartons. On it sprawled two men on their backs. A couple of tablecloths had been thrown over the bed-springs. The men's shirts were saturated with blood. The tablecloths had little pools of it in the wrinkles. It didn't smell nice in the room, for

there wasn't any window.

Sandy walked over to the bed and put his bag on a chair. One of the men was breathing hard, rattling in his throat. Sandy tilted his head gently. The man stopped gasping, breathing more easily, saliva trickling out of the corner of his mouth. The other man sucked air through his teeth, whistling. His face was so white it looked transparent. They were both unconscious.

Sandy opened his bag and took out a pair of scissors. He cut the blood-soaked shirts off both men. The bigger man had been shot in the chest. He wasn't bleeding much anymore. Sandy grimaced. He was bleeding inside, filling up the lung. The other one had been shot in the arm. The bullet had entered at the wrist, plowed upward ripping tendon and flesh and came out at the elbow. The elbow bone was shattered. The exposed artery pulsed. He had bled terribly.

"Joe!" shouted Sandy.

Joe came in with Max after him. Max's face got green when he saw the wounds of the two men.

"Gawd!" he said thickly. "Gawd!"

"I need hot water. Plenty of it. And a basin or something," said Sandy.

"Yeah. You bet, kid. Anything you say," bobbed Max. He went out. Sandy heard him holler: "Hymie! Beat it out in back and heat some water. The doc wants plenty of hot water. Get a pan or a basin, too."

"Hot water?" said Charley. "What's he gonna do, give 'em a bath?"

Joe looked at the two men on the bed. "Boy! You got something, there," he said.

Sandy said: "Yeah." He was doing things to the big man's chest.

Max came back into the room. "Hymie'll have some hot water here

in a minute," he said. "Can yuh fix 'em up all right, doc?"

Sandy didn't look up. "I can patch them up enough to get them into a hospital, maybe," he said, "but it's a ten-to-one chance. They've lost a lot of blood. We'll have to get there in a hurry."

"M-m-m," said Max. He tapped his teeth, staring at Sandy. "M-m-m. That's too bad. They was nice boys, too, I guess."

"Hell," said Joe, "I got a buggy out there that'll get 'em in one, two, three! Don't you worry, mister, we'll get 'em there in time!"

Max eyed Joe speculatively. He tapped his teeth again. "Is that so? A fast wagon, eh?" He rubbed his chin. "I don't think it's fast enough, though."

The big man on the bed moaned. Sandy said: "Where the hell's that water?"

Max went to the door. "Hymie!" he bellowed, "shake a leg, will yuh?" He came back in. "The only time that guy moves fast is when he pulls a gun."

SANDY seated himself on the bed. He held a hypodermic needle in his hand, squinting at it. He asked casually: "I thought this was an accident? Who shot these men?"

Max grabbed a chair, spun it around and straddled it, leaning his chest against the chair's back. "It was an accident," he said. He sucked on a tooth. "Doc, you're in a spot."

"I'm in a spot?"

"Yeah," Max nodded, "but I don't think you'll get hurt. Just don't try master-minding. See? Don't get curious."

The tall, thin man with the cold eyes came in. He had a rusty kettle of steaming water in one hand and a saucepan in the other. "Where yuh want this?" he asked.

Sandy motioned at the chair. Hymie put the kettle down gingerly. His eyes slanted to the bed. He got nervous and dropped the saucepan.

Sandy said, "I'll get it," and leaned over and picked it up.

He straightened slowly, a muscle jumping in his cheek. "Get that girl in here," he ordered.

Max raised his eyebrows. "Myrna?" What d'ya want her for?"

"She's going to play nurse," Sandy told him.

Max tapped his teeth. He nodded to Hymie. "You heard the doc," he said. "Get Myrna in here."

The girl, Myrna, came in. She stood at the foot of the bed, her face expressionless as she looked down at the two men. "They going to live?" she asked in a flat voice.

"Sure they are," Max told her. "The doc's gonna patch 'em up and take 'em into a hospital."

Her shoulders jerked. "Hospital?" she said incredulously. "You daffy, Max?"

"Yeah, I'm daffy," said Max. His eye dropped in a slow wink.

Sandy was rummaging in his bag. He took out a big syringe with a long curved needle. He opened the lid of the kettle, sucked hot water into the syringe and then shot it out in the saucepan, warming it.

He motioned to Myrna. "Stand here," he said. He handed her a hypodermic. "Every time I say 'shot' you stick that in his arm, here." He indicated the vein on the underpart of the wounded man's forearm. "That's so the blood won't clot. Understand?"

She didn't say anything. She nodded, holding the hypodermic like a cigarette in her fingers. Her face was white. But Sandy knew, instinctively, that she wouldn't faint.

Joe said: "Want me to do anything, Sandy?"

"No," said Sandy. "Not yet."

He leaned over the wounded man. The hole in his chest was small, with a purplish, puckered look to it. It went straight down, just missing the lung, and there was a hemorrhage there. The important thing right now was to locate the hemorrhage before it clotted. Once it clotted and blocked the heart there was no hope. Even now, the chances were slim. He tapped on the man's chest, slowly, methodically, all around the purple hole. He found the hemorrhage. Deftly, skillfully, he inserted the three-inch curved needle into the bare chest.

Sandy pulled out the needle. The syringe was full. He pushed the plunger and filled the warm saucepan with blood. "Shot!" he said.

The girl jabbed the hypodermic. Sandy nodded. She pulled it out. Sandy sucked the blood out of the saucepan into another hypodermic. He injected the blood back into the man's arm. Then he picked up the syringe with the curved needle again. He repeated the operation.

THREE-QUARTERS of an hour later, Sandy stood up and moved his head stiffly. He said: "That's all."

The girl sighed, her mouth quivering. She dropped the needle, wavered. Max got up and put his arm around her. He lifted her up and swung her onto the chair.

"Get a drink for her, Hymie," he said. He gulped uncomfortably. "Get one for me, while you're at it."

Sandy said: "Now, this one." He motioned to the other man.

He needed no help for this. He cleaned the bone, filed it, then set the arm. He took needle and thread and, squatting like a tailor, proceeded to sew up the wound. He bound the arm and stood up.

"They've got to get to the hos-

pital right away," he said. "They both need a blood transfusion."

Max shook his head. "It can't be done, doc," he said. "They'll have to fight it out here."

Sandy looked at him, eyes glinting. He said evenly: "These men are going to a hospital, right now!"

"Sure, sure," said Max. "They'll go to a hospital. But not right now."

Hymie's face was jerking. He said: "Let's bump 'em, Max."

"You dope duncie," snarled Max, "keep out of this before I smear you!"

Myrna's scarlet mouth moved. "You were a sap to get these guys out here, Max," she said. "You were a sap to lug these two along after we plugged them. You've been a sap all around, Max. I wish to God I'd never seen you!"

Hymie rasped: "Yeah. That goes for me, too. Whoever heard of bumping a coupla guys off and then callin' a doctor to bring 'em back to life? It ain't sensible."

Max grabbed the thin man by the neck and shook him. "What you trying to do, give me the business?" he hollered. "If it hadn't been for you we wouldn't be in this jam. I never killed a guy in my life. It was you that bumped 'em off, but we'd all fry for it. These guys ain't gonna die, though, because I had sense enough to call a doctor. We can scam, now, and not have a murder rap hanging over our heads." He flung Hymie from him.

The girl laughed bitterly. "Don't make me laugh, big hearted," she said. "How can we scam? The car's got so many holes in it, it's a wonder it got us this far without falling apart."

"You forget that these guys came out in an ambulance," Max said softly.

Myrna sat up straighter. "Max!"

Max laughed. "I'm daffy, eh? You and Hymie lay in the back. I put the doc's white coat on and sit in front with Charley, who drives. Duck soup! We might even get a police escort."

Sandy said: "You're crazy! You can't get away with it!"

Max turned beady eyes on him. "Now, doc, take it easy," he said. "You and your flunky just sit tight and see that these boys don't croak. We ain't going to hurt you."

Sandy gritted: "Thanks." He started to put his instruments away, stowing them in the bag carefully.

Myrna stood up. "Well, what are we waiting for?" she said. "This joint's getting in my hair."

THE man who had been shot in the chest commenced to groan. He cursed weakly. The words throttled in his throat. He choked. Sandy bent quickly over the bed, putting his head down close to the man's chest.

Max came over. He said anxiously: "Hey! He ain't gonna slide out, is he, doc?"

Sandy said tersely: "He's not getting any better."

He grabbed his bag and zipped it open. He rummaged into it, dragging out a stethoscope. Fastening it to his ears, he listened to the man's chest, tapping gently with his finger.

Max swung on Hymie. He gritted: "You two-bit palooka! If that guy croaks, I'll ripe you wide open!"

Sandy said: "Shut up!" He swung around, the stethoscope dangling from his ears. "Beat it out to the ambulance, Joe, and get that lung collapser. Step on it!" Then he held his breath.

Joe looked at him. He swallowed hard. "The lung collapser?" he said. "Oh, yeah, I'll get it." He started for the door.

Max's voice stopped him. "Wait a minute, buddy. What's this lung collapser business?"

"This man's lung has filled up with blood," Sandy lied glibly. "It has to be collapsed or he'll be dead in five minutes."

"Yeah?" said Max. His eyes swiveled from Sandy to Joe. "I'll send Charley out with him," he said, "just so he don't get no ideas."

Sandy shrugged.

Max shouted for Charley. The baldheaded man lounged in the doorway. He took the cigar out of his mouth. "Yeah?" he said.

"Go out with this guy," ordered Max. "He wants to get something out of the ambulance."

"Him?" Charley jerked his thumb at Joe.

"Him," said Max.

"Gotcha," said Charley. "You first, buddy, I'm right behind yuh."

Joe walked past him, out of the room. The baldheaded man put the cigar back in his mouth and trailed after him.

His hands in his pockets, Max prowled around the room, staring at the floor. Every once in a while he'd stop and look at Sandy, who was bent over the bed. Myrna slouched in the chair, the hem of her gown trailing on the dusty floor. She puffed on a cigarette, pulling the smoke down deep, blowing it out through her lower lip. Hymie was glowering, fingering his neck where Max had grabbed him.

Myrna said: "My teeth are on edge. Cripes! I wish we were out of this joint."

"You and me, both," growled Hymie.

Max scowled. He looked at Sandy. "Is that guy any better, doc?"

Sandy said: "He's in a bad way. Come here, I'll show you something."

Max tapped his teeth. Then he

walked over to the bed and bent down, his head close to Sandy's shoulder.

FROM the doorway Joe's excited voice said: "I've got it, Sandy! Should I pop a coupla skunkies?"

Max started to turn. Sandy's long arms shot up around his neck. "Stay here, sweetheart," he gritted.

He squeezed hard. Max yelped. He was overbalanced and his feet started to slip on the floor. The hypodermic needle that Sandy had palmed in his hand flashed. Max howled as Sandy plunged it into his neck, jamming home the plunger.

"Off to beddy," he whispered and squeezed Max harder.

In the doorway, Joe pointed the rifle he held at Hymie and the girl. His voice was high pitched. "I'll show you how this lung collapser works, if you so much as quiver."

Myrna said: "Put that cannon down, dearie; you'll hurt somebody."

Joe said: "Ain't it the truth?"

Max suddenly sighed and went limp in Sandy's arms, his face gray. Sandy pushed him away. "Hope this guy's got a good heart," he said. "I gave him enough to paralyze an elephant."

He felt in Max's pockets and took out a big gun. He pointed it at Hymie. "Turn around," he ordered.

Hymie licked his lips. His eyes flicked from Sandy to Joe in the doorway. Sandy wagged the gun. Slowly, cautiously, Hymie turned around, his back to them, his face to the wall.

"Get his Betsy, Joe," said Sandy.

Joe walked around in back of the girl. Gingerly, he searched Hymie, extracted a gun, slipped it in his own pocket. He looked questioningly at Sandy.

Looking at Myrna, Sandy said: "I want your gun."

"Go to hell!" she blazed.

Sandy shrugged. He stood up and went over to her. Her lips curled back over her teeth. He saw her fingers stretch. He leaned over and yanked up her dress, ran his hand along the sheen of her stocking. She cursed him and lashed out with her claws, raking him across the face.

He said owlshly: "Doctors can do these things, you know."

He found the tiny gun and slipped it out of its silken sheath and put it in his pocket. Then he stood up.

He grinned at Joe. "Is Charley *compos mentis*?"

"Charley," Joe grinned back, "is in the land of pixies."

Myrna was swearing steadily, monotonously, without pause. And then, suddenly, as befits a woman, she started to cry.

Sandy said: "Let's scram. I hate to think what that night super's going to say."

Joe waved the gun. "What about our little palsy-walsies?"

Picking up the hypodermic, Sandy said grimly: "There is one sure way of calming unruly patients. Put them to sleep."

He moved swiftly; so swiftly that the girl had no chance to resist and it took but a brief second. She rubbed her arm where the needle had pricked her. "You're a louse!" she spat.

Sandy said: "Sleep, my darling, sleep." He started for Hymie.

Hymie backed up against the wall, his face working. "Get away from me with that thing!" he chattered.

With satisfaction, Sandy rocked the tall man's head against the wall with a straight-arm jab that had all of his hundred and fifty pounds be-

hind it. Hymie sagged, and Sandy pinked him with the needle.

AFTER that it was simple. They bundled the wounded men on the stretcher, carted them out to the ambulance. Sandy almost stepped on Charley, who lay sprawled on the ground, his head snuggled up against the rear wheel.

Joe said: "I told him I thought somebody was under the ambulance. He bent down to look, and I place-kicked him four feet."

Sandy grinned and said: "Toss Charley in the back of the buggy. Wedge him under the cot. We gotta leave room for his pals. The girl can sleep up front with you."

Joe gaped at him. "You gonna take them gorillas with us?"

"Sweetheart," said Sandy, "those gorillas are bosom pals of mine. I feel like a brother to 'em. They relieve the ache in my bones, the split in my head, the pain in my posterior. In a word, I wouldn't part with 'em."

"You nuts?" gasped Joe.

"Slightly. It'll wear off with a good belt of Mother Ryan's whiskey."

"What do yuh want to lug these mugs along, for?" demanded Joe. "Gawd! Haven't we seen enough of them?"

"Joe, my boy, I'll tell you a story," said Sandy. "Before we left tonight a hard looking mug came into the hospital. He had a badge and flat feet and a cigar. He was a detective, name of Finnigan. He was checking hospitals to see if anybody had been admitted for treatment of gun wounds. It seems a bank had been robbed. The First National Bank. Also, two watchmen had disappeared. Mr. Finnigan expressed the opinion that the watchmen were part of the gang. An inside job, Mr. Finnigan said, picking his teeth."

Joe's mouth was open, eyes wide. "These guys?"

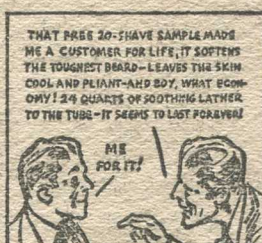
"These guys and a gal. Max was scared to death of a murder rap. A phobia, I'd label it. He lugged the two watchmen away with him when they made their getaway, after Hymie shot 'em. He called us because he really didn't want them to die, and because he needed the ambulance to make an escape." Sandy lit a cigarette. "You've got to admit, Max has his good points."

Joe stuck his jaw out. "How the hell do you know they're the ones?"

Sandy grinned and said: "Under the bed, in the room of 'Winkin', Blinkin' and Nod,' is a canvas bag. First National Bank is printed on it

Continued on page 104

WILL YOU TRY A FINER, COOLER SHAVING CREAM FREE?



Lambert Pharmacal Co., Dept. 31, St. Louis, Mo. Please send me free and postpaid your large sample tube of ☐ Listerine Shaving Cream; ☐ Listerine Brushless Cream. (Check whichever is desired.)

Name _____

Address _____

City _____

State _____

CLIP THE
COUPON

I'LL NEVER LET YOU GO



by STEVE FISHER

I'LL NEVER LET YOU GO

BY STEVE FISHER

CHAPTER I.

FEMALE STIR-BUG.

SAXON came into his apartment and closed the door. He was tired. His face was pale, and his eyes were bloodshot. He took off his hat and tossed it to a chair, then he put a cigarette in his mouth and lit it. He was a medium-sized man and blond. He looked like any ordinary citizen, except perhaps the lines which made his countenance were harder. It was a fixed hardness which had grown there.

He looked around at the apartment—the windows through which late-afternoon sunshine tumbled secondhand. It was a sun which slanted off the rooftops across Market Street and filtered through dust before it reached here. The furniture was old, the paneling in the walls was ancient. But it was the kind of place you got in San Francisco; the kind of dump he had always known. He couldn't tell what was wrong with him now, why he was so sour.

He moved into the kitchen and went through the process of making himself a Tom Collins. Too much work, that was what was the matter. You never got through when you were a parole officer. That was what the San Francisco *Blade* had said in its feature articles about parole work. A man was never through; one detective was burdened down with seventy-five ex-convicts on whom he had to keep constant tab. And the trouble was, you couldn't

be hard with them. There were orders to the contrary. You had to take their lip. You had to be their adviser, their consoler; you had to find them jobs, loan them money. While all the time you knew they were laughing at you. You could keep your own ideas of a crook, of course. Saxon knew they were all the same. They'd get what they could from a parole officer; they'd fake and lie, and put you to a lot of trouble; they'd try to fool you right up to the end. And, in the end, nine out of ten went right back to the clink.

Saxon poured the gin into his drink and slowly stirred it.

That was it, that was what got you—being nice to sniveling punks that'd cut your throat; being the stir-bug's apparent One-Friend-in-Need, while at the same time you were responsible for him at headquarters. It was up to you to make the arrest the moment the ex-con stepped out of line.

Saxon lifted the Tom Collins. "Here's to your seventy-five crummy charges," he said.

HE had just put the glass to his lips when the phone rang. He left the drink on the sink and went into the living room and answered.

"Saxon? I've been trying to get you for a couple of hours. This is Chief Craig."

"Hello, chief."

"I haven't much time, Sax. Tell you why I called. There's a woman getting out of the woman's prison

today, and I see from my records that the case was yours from the beginning."

"Yeah?"

"Well, we've assigned a woman parole cop to her, but I thought I'd ask you to take over the actual parole job. It isn't done, usually. You guys don't always handle females. But this is different. I think the girl might be dangerous. Besides—"

"What's her name?"

"Listen, you'll remember when I tell you this, Saxon—right after her courtroom trial she threatened to kill you when she got out."

"Things like that don't mean anything," Saxon said irritably. "I've had maybe a dozen similar threats."

"O. K., then. The girl's name is Laura Mead."

Saxon stiffened. "Oh," he said.

The chief went on: "I remember you making a statement once that what soured you on women was seeing this Mead girl, how hard and false she could be, while she looked so pretty and innocent on the surface. Well, you still ain't tied up with any babe, so I guess you're still pretty sour."

"That's right."

"You interested in the case?"

"I'll handle it," Saxon said.

"O. K. Remember what I told you a long time ago—once a crook, always a crook. Don't let that face make you forget a thing so important as that."

"Don't worry about me," Saxon breathed. "I work with these I'm-on-the-straight-and-narrow pledgers day in and day out, and they *all* lie. They're always crooks. They *never* change."

"All right. You'll be responsible for the girl. Don't let her get away with anything."

"I won't," Saxon said. "I'll hound her."

SAXON was waiting in the shed when the prison ferry docked, and he was the first to see her. She stepped off the boat and looked out to the street toward the network of buildings that was San Francisco. She was carrying one bag.

Saxon didn't step forward immediately. He was watching her. She was very pale, and considerably thinner than when he'd seen her last. Her gray suit looked drab, and there was something in her dark eyes that flickered between fatigue and hope. She had nice hair, shiny, like mahogany; and she was no less pretty than she had been. Prison hadn't taken her beauty. She was more matured now. He looked at her card which he had in his hand. Twenty-five. Twenty-five now. That reminded him he was older, too. Time does pass; the years do go by you.

She came forward with the crowd and, standing back by some casing, he noticed that she was more eager than she had been a moment ago. When she had passed, he drifted out and followed. Outside the shed she stood and took air into her lungs, and she actually smiled. He thought he saw tears in the corners of her eyes. He was unimpressed. She hailed a taxicab. When the door had been opened, and she was ready to step in, Saxon caught her arm.

"Move on, cabbie," he said to the driver.

The girl turned, embarrassed. Two of three people glanced around. It was so obvious—cop and a girl. Laura stared at Saxon. He had thought her face was pale. But it was different now; it was blanched. Her eyes grew hard and bitter with hatred. She made a screaming face, but no sound came from her throat to match it. Her voice was low, flat.

"What do you want?"

"Maybe we can walk along, up Market Street. I can tell you then."

"I don't have to. I'm free now, I—"

"Baby, you give me one more word of lip and I'll send you right back up the stream. You're not free. You're a charge of the State. You're on parole, and you're *my* charge!"

Her eyes dropped.

"Now come along," he said.

She carried her bag, and walked along with him.

Saxon said: "You were going to kill me. Do you still have that in mind?"

She was over her anger, she realized her position. Her voice pleaded. "I was young then. I was hysterical when I was sentenced. I didn't know what I was saying."

"Do you still maintain you were innocent?"

"Yes," she said. Her voice hardened. "Yes."

Saxon laughed softly. "What have you in mind? Any work?"

"I'm going to get a job; yes."

"Have it lined up?"

"No," she replied, "but I'll start looking tomorrow."

He glanced at the card in his hand again. "That won't be necessary. We've got one fixed up for you. You dance?"

"No."

"Then you can learn. Chorus routine. Only six girls. Cheesy little beer joint in the Russian district. It won't take much talent. You'll get twelve dollars a week after they've taught you the routine."

"But I don't want a job like that!"

HE went into his patter: "We of the parole have considered you from every standpoint. We are interested only in seeing that you make a good start in your new life. It is our earnest desire to fit you into a niche

in the world today for which you will be properly fitted. Now, you have a good figure and a fair personality. Do you want this job, or would you rather go back to prison?"

Crushed, she said: "All right. I'm supposed to live on twelve dollars, is that right?"

He nodded. "And you'll report to me three times a week. You'll return to your room the moment the show in the club is over. You'll confine your mornings to walking only around your own neighborhood. You are allowed no friends, male or female, until I've approved of them. And certainly no dates. A matron will give you a weekly physical examination—"

She whirled on him. "I hate you! I hate you! All of my life I have spent hating you!"

She began to sob.

CHAPTER II.

"I'LL KILL HIM!"

THAT night, in his apartment, he went over the notes he had kept on Laura Mead throughout the years. It wasn't necessary to refer to them, because this was one case he knew in detail; but he was a deliberate, methodical man, which was what had prompted him to make the notes, and now caused him to go over them.

The first read:

This is the biggest day of my life. Made an arrest in the Lambert kidnaping, and recovered alive the Lambert two-year-old baby. Only prisoner is a girl, Laura Mead. They are grilling her now to discover whereabouts of the rest of the gang. My name is in the papers. The cracking of this case is a cinch to get me promoted into plain clothes.

He read that, and then he sat back, remembering. He had been very young, and his police uniform wasn't

over a year old. He remembered things very vividly back to that year, because he had been more easily impressed than now. He had been inexperienced, less hard. There was tenderness in his heart for the life he had known then, and since had gradually lost.

It was 1931, and his beat had been upper Market Street, outside the sailor dance hall, Balconades. The Fox Theater, across the street, was a new million-dollar project with pictures and musical-comedy stage shows that featured such then unknowns as Ginger Rogers. The depression was on, and everywhere stores were closed, and big markets lay empty. On all the corner lots there were miniature golf courses which were the rage. Along with prohibition, bathtub gin. Bing Crosby had just scored from coast to coast with a song called "Blue of the Night," and a local boy, Russ Columbo, was imitating him and singing ballads like "Time on My Hands" and "You May Call It Madness" and "Can't We Talk It Over." A genius named Disney had made a cartoon picture in which there was a song about The Big Bad Wolf which still had the financiers scared; and people were talking about Prosperity Around the Corner, and a Chicken in Every Pot. Viña Delmar had just written "Bad Girl."

HE remembered this, and that in the papers there was news of the Lambert kidnaping. It was sensational, because the Lindbergh baby had just been found, and people were worked up. Saxon was a dumb cop; he didn't know any more about it than anyone else. But he had been told that if you were smart you got information, and plenty of it, from stool pigeons. So when a stoolie had whispered in his ear, he had listened.



Saxon said, "Move on, cabbie!"

Afterward, he had gone straight to Laura Mead's address. That was when he'd seen her for the first time. She was just seventeen, with big eyes, and dark hair, worn wind-blown, which was the style. He had stood at the door.

"I'd like to ask you some questions."

"Come in," she had said.

He had entered and looked around. "Nice little place. You live here alone?"

"No. With my brother. Our mother and father died when we were very small."

"I see. You work?"

"No," she had said simply, "my brother works."

He remembered that—the simplicity of her, the innocence. It was so convincing he had doubted he was on the right track. That was why, afterward, he became so bitter.

"What does your brother do?"

"He's a mechanic."

Saxon had been self-conscious. He had barked out the next like a movie detective: "All right, sister, where's the kid?"

"Kid?"

"You've got a two-year-old baby you're keeping here, haven't you?"

"Why—why, yes. My brother brought him. Belonged to a friend of his—his wife had to go to the hospital. I'm keeping the baby 'til she gets back."

Saxon had laughed harshly. She led him to the child, which was taking its nap. It was very pink and healthy. There had been no late pictures of the Lambert baby, so there was nothing for Saxon to recognize. But he had been very big and important.

"That's him! That's the Lambert baby!"

"You're crazy!" Laura snapped. "You're crazy, officer!" Then, in a minute: "I tell you this baby belongs to a friend of my brother. The woman had to go to the hospital, I tell you—" A few minutes later, screaming: "*You can't do this! You can't arrest me!* I haven't done anything. I don't know anything about this. I tell you—"

SAXON gazed down at the next notation in the note book:

It came through—I'm a third-class detective! Police and Federal men have thrown a network around San Francisco for Mike Mead, Laura's brother, and two other men believed to be implicated in the kidnaping. It's just a matter of hours before they'll be captured. Saw Laura Mead in the line-up today. She was very pale.

He remembered seeing her there on the stage, the spotlight in her eyes. She looked very young and frightened—just a girl.

"Your name?"

"Laura Mead."

"Age?"

"Seventeen." Then: "I tell you I'm innocent, I—"

Five weeks, and the first break came in the Lambert kidnaping case since the arrest of Laura Mead: Mike Mead was found floating in the harbor. His body had been in the water so long that it was almost entirely decomposed. The other two believed members of the kidnaping ring have vanished. It is beginning to look hopeless that any trace of the forty thousand dollars ransom paid by Mr. Lambert will ever be recovered. Laura Mead still refused to reveal the identity of the two missing men by pleading innocent. She goes on trial tomorrow.

A hard, embittered detective who had been assigned to the kidnaping even before Laura's arrest had said to Saxon: "You're new at this, kid. But I'll tell you how it is with these cases. We get 'em, and we have to build 'em before we hand them to the D. A. Now, these hard little youngster criminals are the worst. If we're to penetrate their arrogant bluff and convict them, we must use every legal trick we know. So we can hand the case over to the prosecutor cold turkey. Now there are one or two points . . . as to clues—"

"I don't know what you mean," Saxon replied.

"Well, you can't be too hard on crooks," the detective had continued. "You've got to fight fire with fire. Now there are two small points that'll come up in your testimony where it will be best if you . . . ah . . . exaggerate. Just to a very small degree, you understand—"

Saxon had considered experienced dicks right along with gods in those days, and his inexperienced ears had drunk all of this in.

During the trial, he sat there on the witness stand.

"You made the arrest?"

"Yes, sir."

"When you entered the Mead apartment tell us exactly what you saw."

"Well, there was a newspaper on the divan, with the Lambert kidnaping headlined. I remember that and—"

The attorney held up a curious stubby pencil. It was very thick and blunt.

"Did you by any chance see this?"

"Yes."

"How do you remember that you saw it?"

"Because I accidentally knocked it off the desk; I picked it up and gave it back to Miss Mead."

Laura Mead, white and shaken, leaped to her feet. "He's lying! He's lying! God in heaven, is there no justice!"

THE D. A. was talking through her protest: "This" was the pencil with which the ransom notes had been written.

The whole scene, the entire experience, had given Saxon a chill down his back. Only the assurance of the old-time detective who had built up the material evidence had consoled him: "Listen, that pencil was a small item. You didn't see it, no. But *I* say it was found in the apartment; so it was. Only to make it more important in the trial, you had to say *you* saw it there. That's so they won't think I planted it. You got to do things like that. The pencil was in the apartment, and it was either she or her brother that used it."

The trial had gone on, day after day. Saxon had made this further notation:

There can be no doubt that she's guilty, even Simon Rand, one of the country's smartest criminal lawyers, keeps losing point after point to the D. A.; and Simon, as though he senses the hopelessness of this case, the tremendous amount of evidence against the guilty girl, is listless, has none of his usual courtroom fire,

CLU—5

Simon Rand, the well-known criminal lawyer, called shyster in polite company, was a thin, smallish man. He was filled to the brim with nervous energy, and his favorite pose was to stand tapping a pencil against his lip. He wore pince-nez glasses and he had a pink, round face. His hair was sandy. Saxon remembered his various squabbles with Laura Mead during the trial, and then Rand's summing up:

"Ladies and gentlemen of the jury, I ask you only this—to take the word of this innocent child. To sit in judgment as though you were a mother, or a father; to try to understand her. She is too young, too sweet, to be sent to prison. That is why the people of San Francisco took up a collection in her behalf to employ me to handle her case. But if they hadn't, if I didn't make a cent from this trial, I should have defended Laura Mead out of the kindness of my heart. I should have defended her because, like each of you, I am a warm-hearted human being."

Eloquent, but empty. Appealing to emotion rather than logic.

This was before the famous California law which now puts kidnapers to death on the gallows. Saxon wrote in his book in October, 1931:

The jury found Laura Mead guilty of conspiracy to aid a kidnaping, but because of her age was recommended clemency. Judge Rollins sentenced her to fifteen years at hard labor.

Laura listened to the sentence, and then she shrieked: "I'm innocent! I tell you, I knew nothing about the baby. My brother brought it home, he—"

She had whirled, pointing to Simon Rand: "He helped convict me. He's in the pay of the men who have the ransom. The men who killed my



"That's the Lambert baby!"

brother. He didn't try to fight for me! He refused to consider what defense I had! I shall kill him some day. Kill him . . . Kill him, and kill that police officer who testified, who lied on the stand . . . I—"

She had fainted.

CHAPTER III. OBSESSION.

SAXON rubbed his hand across his eyes, and lit a cigarette.

He turned the pages of his book: 1932—The election of a man named Franklin Delano Roosevelt— The Winchell craze and the movie *Blessed Event*, in which a new actor had his first tiny part, Dick Powell. Miniature golf going out, lending libraries just coming in. The Bank Holiday. The flood of mediocre sex novels trying to imitate "*Bad Girl*." The earthquake in Los Angeles and Long Beach. The new radio program sensation: *March of Time*. Kate Smith and Connie Boswell and

Morton Downey. The new heavy-weight champion of the world, Max Baer.

Up for second-class detective; two men were arrested in Fresno, and questioned in the old Lambert kidnaping. They are Hollis Smith and Joe Ritz. Both are ex-cons and were convicted on a new charge of robbery. Each drew ten years in San Quentin. Claimed no knowledge of the Lambert case. None of the ransom money has ever turned up.

A few months later:

I have been promoted to second class. Heard that Joe Ritz, robber, once questioned in the Lambert case, died of influenza in San Quentin. Mumbled incoherently on deathbed about kidnaping, but gave no new light on the case. Hollis Smith questioned again, still denies all knowledge in the Lambert affair.

Still later:

Cache of twenty thousand dollars, half of the Lambert ransom money, found near Fresno. Only a few bills missing. Cache believed to be the share of the cash received by Joe Ritz and hidden away by him. Fresno cops are now looking for the other twenty thousand still missing. Hollis Smith told of the discovery, but displayed no outward emotion. This Smith lad is still playing his cards close to the chest.

Saxon kept turning the pages. 1933—1934—

Repeal. The Dionne quintuplets. Hauptmann arrested. Hitler. Ethel Merman singing "*Heat Wave*"; the the song "*Day and Night*" on every radio. People read "*North to the Orient*," and sex novels were dying; left-wing literature magazines flourished briefly; Gertrude Stein was laughed at, and William Saroyan was the fading sensation. *Esquire* was born, and Hemmingway began to write again. Marie Dressler died. Darrel Zanuck walked out on Warner Brothers and started his own

company. Shirley Temple. Upton Sinclair running for governor on the EPIC plan in California, with everybody in Frisco scared.

Promoted to first-class detective. There is some talk about putting me on the parole officer staff. Trying hard to get it; I'd be assistant chief parole officer in San Francisco . . . studying all of the angles.

Later:

I'm on!

Then, in November, 1934:

Called to the new woman's prison to sit in on meeting of citizen parole board and to give opinion and advice on various cases, some of which I am personally acquainted with. Enjoyed this new rôle immensely, only one bad moment: they brought in Laura Mead.

"Miss Mead is very young, and she has been recommended as a subject for parole. Have you any opinion as to the advisability of this, Mr. Saxon?"

Saxon had been nervous. "What's her record?"

"Perfect."

He had sat there, watching his fingernails, conscious of her eyes on him: the hope, the fear.

He saw that she had changed, she was growing up. She was twenty now. He paused, then he realized that he was letting sentiment and sympathy sway him, and for fear that his judgment would be questioned by the parole board since he was new in the job, he said officiously:

"It has been my experience that persons of her type, after a few years in prison, either return to crime, or resort to an evil well known to all of us."

"The parole would be strict, Mr. Saxon. Don't you think she should be given a chance?"

He had been ready to say yes, then he saw her looking at him—the wild hatred that was in her eyes. He gazed back at her, coolly.

"No," he said. "I think giving her a chance would be futile."

Her first parole had been denied. He didn't know whether it was his testimony or not. He was aware that he counted very little in the final consideration of the applicants, but he knew what she would always think, and there grew now a feeling between himself and the girl. He could not define it. He hated her. He did not know why he should think about her seriously enough to hate, but that's the way it was. As the days passed, it grew worse. He tried to analyze the hatred. Once he thought it might be his own conscience, because of the possibility that she was innocent. But his methodical police mind discarded this theory as absurd. Nonetheless, he was unable to forget her.

Everywhere he went, the thought of her haunted him. He saw the weeks and the months going by; he saw news made, and saw it give way to newer stuff. He saw celebrities made, and read of men dying. The world surged on—the crowds of San Francisco packed Market Street, the four trolley tracks hummed, the cable cars went up and down the steep hills; they were building a bridge across the harbor. But up there, in prison, a girl twenty, now twenty-one, lived one day that was exactly like another. She had no hope, nothing to which to look forward. Hard labor. Dreary routine. Early hours. Poor food. No newspapers. No one to write to her. No one to visit her. Day after day, never a change, never variety. The thought obsessed Saxon. He was miserable with it.

It drove him to see Simon Rand.

The criminal lawyer was very bland. Sandy hair, pince-nez glasses, pinkish face, he sat and listened; and then he had to look up the case before he fully remembered it. At least, these were the motions he went through.

"No, I'm afraid she was guilty, all right."

"But are you sure? Did you investigate every angle?"

Simon Rand nodded, smiling without humor. "I remember her perfectly now. And, as a matter of fact, in strict confidence, she confessed to me that she had been in on the kidnaping."

"She—"

"As her attorney, she felt she could tell me."

"I see." Saxon rose. He was awkward with his hands. He felt vast relief surging through him. Of course, he had known all along that she was guilty; it was pure police logic. At best there was only her word for what had happened. But this was different. This was the cincher.

"Thanks very much, Mr. Rand."

Simon Rand replied: "You are entirely welcome."

Walking down Geary Street, Saxon felt much better. He remembered all of his own parole mottoes—once a crook, always a crook. They're born like that. You shouldn't ever give them a chance. Parole's a mistake, but since they have it, all you can do is hound them and hunt them, and try to keep them straight. When they do revert to form, be there and pick up the pieces, and send them back to the clink.

He stopped in front of a burlesque theater and looked at the posters. Then he paid his quarter and went in. He bought a bag of peanuts, and

sat there eating them, and watching a strip tease.

He was relaxing.

CHAPTER IV. CAT AND MOUSE.

IN the next four years, though, he never quite forgot her. Charges came to him, and left him. He met people, he went places. There was the case of the hophead on parole, whom he'd chased through Chinatown. There was a gun fight on a roof with a youth who'd been on parole. In off hours there'd been a girl he'd taken twice to the movies. She was a cashier in a beer joint and neglected telling him she was married until after her husband had blackened Saxon's eyes. There was a nurse he had met on an emergency case: that was his closest to being in love. It lasted a year, and she married an interne. He hadn't shown enough interest. But the thing was, he lived life, like every human lives it.

Things happened to him. Each passing day was a new life, a new world within itself, and the past grew dark and became a tunnel. He kept going forward into new sunshine, forgetting the shadow of yesterday behind him. But never once again did he forget Laura Mead. He didn't know why her memory stayed with him. He came to accept it after a while. He'd be doing some silly thing, stirring his coffee, or waiting in line to see Stanford play in a football game, or lecturing to some miserable parolee, then he'd think of her again. He'd see her face, and her hair like dark mahogany, glistening; and her eyes.

He hated her. Hated her because she affected him this way. Because he knew she was guilty, and yet she had that false innocent look. She

was a type, he told himself. Yet he'd never seen another quite her type.

THE days passed him. Hauptmann burned in the electric chair. There was the Roosevelt landslide. Spain began a civil war. Japan landed troops in China and began to fight in earnest. Hitler became more powerful. "Gone With the Wind" became a landmark. Will Rogers and Wiley Post crashed. Jean Harlow died in Hollywood. Swing music came in; Benny Goodman sent kids crazy playing his clarinet. Disney made "Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs." Corrigan flew the wrong way. People sang "Thanks for the Memory." Paul Gallico and Richard Sherman became the writing favorites; and Clifford Odets went to Hollywood at two thousand a week. The G-man craze rose and gradually faded. The press panned Robert Taylor. Time passed, the calendar caught up with itself, but Saxon never again forgot Laura Mead, up the river in prison, missing all this.

He wrote a new notation in the book now:

Laura Mead was finally paroled. She arrived today and is my charge. Got her a job in Russian Hill at Ivan's Nite Spot.

TWO days later he went to Ivan's Nite Spot so she could make her first report. The show was on, and he took a table and sat and watched her. He was conscious from this moment of an intensity that attached itself to his consideration of her. He became aware with a frightened backward glance, that she was no longer just a case, a parolee, if indeed she had ever been. Insanely, he had the desire to crush her, to choke her. It was one of those emotions that come to human beings and makes them

glad others can only see them on the surface. Saxon's hands worked in and out, he lit a cigarette.

Perhaps it was because she was so beautiful: so beautiful and still so young. So innocent seeming, so sweet. He had never seen her in tights before. And Ivan, though he may have made his girls wear fur, white fur, panties, they were entirely scant; the breast strap scarcely covered the parts for which it was meant. And Laura's body was full, and vital and rich. Her legs were perfectly shaped; her figure was almost sensuous. She danced in line with the others, but she was easily the knockout on the floor. None of the other cheap, washed-out ex-burlesque hoofers Ivan hired could hold a candle to her. Young, and pretty, and pale; dark, shiny hair; glistening red lips. There was only one thing. Saxon noticed it at once. Laura's eyes. Still frightened. That hunted look. He smiled.

SHE saw him, and came over to his table during the intermission. He saw that the other girls mixed with the customers, also. They sat, still in their scant costumes, and drank. This was business. Ivan paid them for this, as well as for dancing. Laura did not look at Saxon; she sat down opposite him. She kept her eyes on the table, as though she were ashamed of being so undressed; as though she was embarrassed, and resented him and the club and everything about it.

"How have you made out?" he asked.

"All right."

"Does the world seem different to you?"

"After seven and a half years," she said, "how do you think it would seem?"

He was officious: "This attitude



"I've got the angle on this—and I'll make the arrest!"

will do you no good, you understand that."

"I hate you!" she replied. "I've hated you, and that lawyer, ever since the trial."

He put his cigarette out. "Want a drink?"

"Not with you. Do I have to do any more reporting?"

"No. That's all for this time."

He sat there, numb, cold with fury. When the next chorus number went on in ten minutes, he watched her. She saw him, too. The number finished. The girls ran backstage to dress. Saxon got up and followed backstage. Laura saw him as he arrived near the dressing rooms. Her eyes went wide with horror. There was no reason. No explanation. Fear—the hunted. She turned and ran. She ran into her dressing room and slammed the door.

He had meant only to tell her she was doing all right, to give her some little word of encouragement. But now his blood pulsed hot. Instinctive desire surged through him—to chase, to pursue, to capture. He ran after her. He banged on her door. He had no right to do this, no right to intrude, but he crashed against the door. His temples throbbed. He forced the lock and moved into the room.

She was crouched back against the opposite wall, her eyes still wide with terror. His fingers were moving, but now they stopped. His hands dropped to his sides. She was like an animal. Like a rabbit that had run into its hole; but he had come in after her. It was all over now. She was here. He was awkward; there was nothing he could say. Cat and mouse. He smiled emptily and walked out.

A game between them. His heart beat so hard it hurt him. He had that wild, tingling sensation in his stomach which made him dizzy. And yet, when he was on the street again, in the night air, he felt very big. He felt like a conqueror. He had the primitive desire to scream and beat his chest.

He was afraid of himself.

HE was at headquarters, talking to Chief Craig, when the news came in.

It had been three days since he had seen Laura, and he was making routine reports when the word flashed around the office.

"Simon Rand's been murdered!" Craig said.

"Rand?"

"Yeah. The criminal's shyster. I'm surprised somebody didn't think of that a long while ago."

Saxon left at once.

He arrived in Simon Rand's office shortly after the homicide men. The pink-faced lawyer was lying stretched out on the floor. His pince-nez glasses had been broken. There was a bullet hole in his head, and blood clotted his sandy hair. The coroner came in. Fingerprint men began dusting. A police captain opened and closed drawers, talked very fast. A third-grade detective took down notes in shorthand.

Saxon stood there at the door, and then he moved forward. He bent, and from the wastebasket he picked out a handkerchief. Initials were sewn into the corner of it. "L. M." Saxon stared at it.

The police captain was holding a lipstick container. "Some dame must have spilled open her purse, and didn't pick up everything afterward. This had rolled under the cabinet."

Saxon's eyes were on the lipstick. Blood came up into his cheeks.

"I got the angle on this case," he said quietly. "I'll make the arrest."

"We got angles, too," said the captain.

Saxon didn't hear. He was headed for Russian Hill.

CHAPTER V. HOUND ON TRAIL.

SHE was dressed in a green skirt that was nice on her figure, and a green wool sweater. She was hatless, and her black hair clung to her

shoulders. Her face was still very white, her eyes dark.

"You came for the report?" she said.

He looked around the room. Then he opened his clenched hand and showed her the handkerchief.

"This yours?"

She looked at it, nodded.

He showed her the lipstick. She nodded again.

"So you killed him. I suppose I was next."

"Killed who?"

"Rand. Simon Rand."

She stepped back, incredulous with disbelief. "No!"

"You lied like that before."

She was watching him now. "He's dead?"

"That's right. Why don't you confess it? This is the postman's second ring. We have you, no matter whether you admit it or don't. Ex-convicts don't have the opportunity of lying in court like first offenders."

She drank in his words, watching him, entirely fascinated by him. She spoke in almost a whisper.

"You—you're a machine, aren't you?"

"A very efficient one," he said.

"A law machine, mechanical, punctual. You never miss a trick. Everything is evidence, logic, material reasoning."

"I do all right," he said. "You admit you killed Rand?"

She nodded. She made a screaming face again, but laughter came instead. "Sure," she said, "I killed him. See, it isn't hard for you this time. Aren't you disappointed? You'd like to grill me, and break me down. But I won't let you."

He moved toward her numbly.

The next he knew she had a china lamp in her hand. It was coming at him.

Then he didn't know any more.

WHEN he regained consciousness he was still in the room, and it wasn't very much later.

But she was gone, and her bag was gone.

He got up and picked a splinter of china out of his forehead. Then he washed the wound, and soothed it with a hot cloth. His heart was jumping.

When he left the place he didn't bother to call in and report. He went directly to Ivan.

"She drew thirty dollars in advance," said Ivan. "Why?"

"How long ago was she here?"

"About half an hour."

"Half an hour," Saxon said.

*Give the fox thirty minutes' start.
Any good hound can pick up the trail—*

HE used the telephone, and checked on Greyhound busses. Then he began driving. The car ate up the road, and he took a short cut. He was in the terminal at Fresno waiting when two busses pulled in, one from Los Angeles, the other from San Francisco. He stood back, watching. People poured in from the bus landings to get a meal. There was an awful crowd. He made his way through it.

He didn't see her; but she must have seen him, because when the busses pulled out, she was not on either one of them. He had a description, but no way of being sure, absolutely positive, she had taken the Fresno bus. No way except instinct—the instinct of the pursuer. He had felt her in that crowd just as sure as he had tasted his own breath. He had been aware of her personality, of her fright, and of her fleeing. But he had not seen her.

So he stayed in Fresno, because he knew she was here.

He had the local police check on

all the hotels, rooming houses and tourist camps, in case she checked in. They would get word the moment she tried to rent a room. He had a watch put on cafés.

But then, he himself went to the far end of town where the highway left Fresno; because he sensed that her flight had just begun, and that she would know it was impossible to stay in the town. He moved from filling station to filling station. At last, at seven that night:

"Why, yeah, mister, a girl like that got a ride on a truck going down through the valley. They left about an hour and a half ago."

Easy, he thought; easy. Trucks go slowly.

He had the State Highway Patrol with him. They stopped one truck after another, and he inspected them as he caught up. She wouldn't necessarily be riding in the driver's compartment, though that seemed logical. She might be hidden in the freight. The inspections held him up. At midnight he was still on the highway and the Los Angeles Greyhound bus, a huge double-decker, glittering through the night with its lights on, swept by him going eighty miles an hour.

He passed the bus at the next town, but it went on around him the next truck he inspected.

This kept happening for hours, then the bus got a big lead and left him. The fastest private motorists had never beaten the busses on this route.

Saxon caught her trail again in Modesto. She had eaten there. The truck on which she had ridden had been a fruit express and had unwittingly been faster than the net stretched out to get it. Saxon talked to the driver.

"She was just a scared kid; said she had to get to Los Angeles. So

I took her this far. This is as far as I go. She bought me a meal here, to square up, she said. Funny kid, insisted on being square."

"Where did she go when she left here?"

"Search me."

"Is she staying in town?"

The counterman in the diner spoke up. "There was a local milk train pulling out, mister. It don't go far, but it has one passenger car. She might have got that."

"What makes you think so?" Saxon snapped.

"Well, she was asking about schedules."

The train carried milk only as far as Pixley, or a few miles farther.

Pixley was a very small, very quiet town at five in the morning. Only the old wooden-front hotel was open, and farther along the line a café. He went to the hotel. The sleepy clerk, aroused from his slumber on the second floor, knew nothing.

Saxon went out.

Afterward, he learned she was sitting right there in the lobby, slumped down in a leather chair, too tired to move. It was in a dark corner. She had been almost asleep when she heard him, the noise, the roar he made.

He went to the café and had coffee. He sat around, and a little while later ate his breakfast. He was at the station when the first passenger arrived, and left. She didn't get on it. He checked up the next Greyhound that came in. Everyone was asleep. No one got on at Pixley. While he waited there at the bus stop, a freight train pulled out.

Somehow, instinctively, he was drawn to it. He watched it; then he ran across the railroad yard to the tracks. The train was going very slowly. He had the impulse to catch it, but he restrained himself.

There was no proof that she was aboard. The train picked up speed. He saw her in one of the last cars, but it was too late to jump. She still had her bag.

This was easy, easy

HE got his car and raced along the highway, faster than the train. He stopped once, found out where the freight's first stop would be, and drove hurriedly to the town. It was a long stretch, halfway to Bakersfield.

When the train came in he had local cops to help him. But she wasn't aboard.

The engineer said: "We stopped once for water."

So he had to go back, miles back, to where the train had stopped for water.

A gasoline attendant had seen her. "Sure, she came in here and hung around until a lone tourist drove up that was going straight through to Los Angeles. He agreed to give her a ride. A man of about fifty, I'd say. Had a nice Stutz, and he drove fast."

Saxon drove fast.

Bakersfield—a long, straight stretch, the longest and straightest in the world from the other side of Bakersfield to the Ridge Route. Saxon was feverish. A Stutz, easy to spot. But the Stutz was well ahead, too far ahead.

Saxon's car climbed the mountains, the grapevine, dizzy with cliffs and curves. His tires whined as he whipped around curves; the motor droned as it pulled him up—up—higher and higher. Twenty-six miles of Ridge Route. Peril and disaster at every turn—

Then, grinding down the other side, Los Angeles not far ahead.

If she ever gets to Los Angeles, God help me!

He drove resolutely, filled with

despair and panic, lest he had lost the trail. Worn and panting: tired dog; tired hound. The keenness of the hunt worn to an edge.

Then luck played with him, just as it had played against him. He spotted the Stutz at a curb in front of a café. It was in Burbank, or on the outskirts, just a stone's throw from Hollywood, and, once there, he would have lost her trail.

He slammed on the brakes and climbed out of his car.

CHAPTER VI.

THE QUARRY.

THE owner of the Stutz turned out to be a movie producer. He didn't want any run-in with the law.

"Believe me, mister. She told me her sister was dying, that she needed an operation, and that it was necessary to get to Los Angeles as quickly as possible. When I stopped here for something to eat before pulling on into Hollywood, she just said thanks, and out she went."

"Which way did she go?"

"I didn't notice."

Saxon went back outside. Fortunately, the neighborhood was residential, which didn't afford her much opportunity. After such a fast ride through Bakersfield and over the mountains, she must have figured she had left Saxon somewhere back in San Joaquin Valley. She thought she was ahead of him, that she would fool him by stopping here instead of going the rest of the way into Los Angeles. Her logic was good; he would never have guessed she would stop off before the actual destination. Criminals usually over-shot, rather than undershot, their mark. He had with him now the element of surprise. There were no more than two or three places where, at best, she could rent a room.

HE approached the first. He was tired, worn out, but the scent of bait so close revived him so that he was excited. His system, his very being, rose to meet the crisis, the ultimate; and fatigue faded, was set aside to be salved later.

The place he entered was an apartment house—a cheap, wooden one with weekly rentals. She would have just about enough left for a week's rent, and food. He rang the manager's bell. He didn't want to arouse any suspicion. This was all his own show.

"I think my sister was going to stop here; I wanted to give her a message." He described Laura. The manager looked him over, then told him the room number. It was on the second floor in the rear, she said.

Saxon climbed the stairs. This was it; this was what he had been waiting for.

In front of the room door, he paused. He was breathing very hard, like an actor before a stage entrance; this stimulation made palsy of his nervous system. He was cold all over; yet his temples were hot, hot. There would be no trouble. Quietly, he tried the door. It was locked. He rang. She couldn't get away. She couldn't jump out the window without breaking her legs. He rang again. He waited. He was intolerably patient. He had all of the world of time. In a minute he heard the lock click back. He tried the door. It opened easily. He stepped in.

The door slammed shut. He whirled around. But it was too late. She had been waiting behind the door. Now she leaned back against it, her face very white. There was a gun in her hand. He had no time to go for his own weapon. A gun was the last thing in the world he expected from her. He gazed at

her, and the gun. It was a black automatic, very old, very used. She must have had it beside her in the kitchen as she ate, because there was a smear of butter on it.

"The gun," she said, "something I picked up in a Fresno hock shop—two dollars."

"Very pretty," he said.

"Makes noise," she replied. She was very hard and cold.

"Going to use it?"

"Yes," she said. Then: "Don't try to draw, you'd be stupidly slow. And stand right where you are."

"I'm your obedient servant," he said.

SHE laughed softly. "You put me away, out of the world for seven and a half years. For something I didn't do. For something of which I was innocent. Now you were ready to send me to the gallows for the murder of Simon Rand, which I didn't commit. If I hadn't seen cockeyed justice before, I might have pleaded my innocence again. Like I did the first time. But it was no use. I saw that look in your eyes."

"You did it," he said, "you know you did."

"You mean you know I did. This is a world which is a façade, a street embanked with buildings and boats and people so that you may swagger down the center. There is no other human being. The world exists for your pleasure; your calculations. You are the infallible law. You feel nothing for others. They are puppets, machinery which you move in positions designated by the small ticking of your mind."

"Very pretty," he said.

"Yes," she replied, "my parting eloquence to hatred. Rehearsed, edited, thought out, on trains and busses and trucks and in cars all

the way through the San Joaquin Valley. Because I knew, you see, that eventually you'd catch up. I knew, somehow, it was futile to keep fleeing. You are too dogged, too narrow, to err."

"Thank you."

She went on: "You've hounded me, you've persecuted me; relentlessly you've pursued and tortured me through my life. You've chased me and hunted me. And now I'm here before you. Only it's my show. I never committed a crime in my life. But now I'm going to. Because you've driven me to it."

He just nodded, and coldly, living fury, she stood before him—seven and a half years dead, out of the world; a live thing now, eyes flashing, beautiful hair. She watched him, and she was right. It was her game. He saw her hand tighten on the gun. You don't think of anything. You don't have time to be scared in a moment like that.

She fired.

He dropped to his knees first, grasping his side, and still staring at her.

Then he flopped forward on his face.

CHAPTER VII.

PAYOFF.

THOSE next days were very dim at first, and the way he remembered things was in snatches; and he would not remember one conscious spell from the next, so that each time he awakened and tried to clear his mind it would be like the first awakening; and each time he would have to adjust himself to that which was around him. But gradually he became used to it, so that it was as though he had been here always.

The first time he remembered great pain in his side, and when his eyelids fluttered there was a doctor

bending over him; he remembered the stethoscope, and that the doctor had a short Vandyke beard. Then everything faded.

Later in the week, he got so that he could hear the things that were being said, and he was conscious long enough to realize this was the Los Angeles City Hospital.

Somebody said: "The wound would heal—it isn't so bad. But now that pneumonia's set in, I wouldn't gamble on his chances—"

Then again, later: "I'm a cop down from San Francisco. He's Saxon, all right. Been missing several days. Where'd you say you found him?"

"Apartment house in Burbank. Landlady heard a shot and called the cops."

"Know who did it?"

"Yeah. She says a girl checked into the place a little while before. But she must have gotten out by the rear fire escape. She wasn't there."

"Her name?"

"Mary Maloney."

"Probably fake," said the voice of the detective.

"Probably a fake name all right," replied the other voice.

"Well," the detective concluded, "I'll hang around L. A. 'til he comes out of it enough to talk. If he does. There's no doubt he knows the name of the girl that shot him. He didn't come all the way down here for nothing. If he'll identify the girl, we'll really have something."

SAXON had tried to speak then, but he faded back into unconsciousness. When his mind was clear the next time he remembered that he hadn't even checked out in San Francisco. He'd been so eager to pick up Laura's trail, so sure that she was guilty and he'd arrest her easily, that he had told no one.

Then one morning he awakened

and most of the pain was gone; he could see things and hear things. He gazed at the nurse who fed him, and later he talked to the doctor. He spoke, though his voice was only a whisper:

"Will I be all right?"

"You'll be fine."

"Is there a detective down here waiting for me—an officer from San Francisco?"

"Well," said the doctor, "he was called back."

"Did he leave any message?"

"Yes. He said to get whoever had shot you, if you could. And to phone them about it as soon as you were able."

Saxon's eyes flickered grimly.

He tried not to think any more about her. He was waiting until he could get up. But the next day he still couldn't leave his bed and there was time on his hands, so he asked the nurse to bring him the back issues of newspapers he had missed.

He stared at the first headline:

HOLLIS SMITH ARRESTED FOR MURDER OF SIMON RAND

Found With Old Lambert Kidnap
Ransom Notes

Smith, Ex-convict, Confesses In Face
Of Overwhelming Evidence

Saxon rubbed his hand across his face. He was cold with sweat.

He read column after column in the papers, stunned, the words something blurring before his eyes.

THE whole thing, from the beginning, had been like this:

Hollis Smith and Joe Ritz, two-time losers on robbery charges, had conceived the plan to kidnap the Lambert baby. So they would have a place to keep the child they rang in Mike Mead, Laura's brother, on the job. He was to get an even



The lamp was coming at him. . . .

split for taking care of the baby during ransom negotiations. So—as Hollis had now testified—Mike Mead brought the baby to Laura and told her the story of a sick friend for whom they were to keep the child for a few days.

Meanwhile, Joe Ritz and Hollis Smith collected the ransom and, having no further use for Mike Mead, and not wishing to have him alive as a possible witness some day, and being unwilling to split any money with him, they killed Mike and threw him in the harbor. Hollis Smith then tipped a stool pigeon to inform a cop where the Lambert baby could be found, feeling that if the baby were taken back alive there would be less pressure on the search for the kidnapers. Particularly if they had Laura Mead—who had known nothing of the deal—to take part of the rap, and so partly appease the public.

Saxon was the cop the stoolie had tipped.

All of this simple plan came off perfectly, but a later complication arose when Laura was arrested. Simon Rand, who had been lawyer for Joe Ritz and Hollis Smith in the past, knew of their acquaintance with Mike Mead, and guessed the rest. He demanded fifteen thousand dollars of the ransom money as blackmail. This the two kidnapers promptly paid, knowing Rand's power. Simon Rand then pretended to defend Laura, and in reality helped the D. A. get a conviction by presenting her case as weakly as possible.

A detective, on the other hand, thinking Laura guilty, and wanting to make sure he got a conviction on so important a case, had asked Saxon to exaggerate two small items which helped in the evidence against Laura.

Laura served her sentence. Meanwhile Joe Ritz and Hollis Smith, afraid to spend the hot ransom money for a few months, were picked up on a robbery charge and sent back to prison. Joe Ritz died in prison, and part of his share and part of Smith's share of the money was discovered in Modesto. Hollis Smith was released from prison on his robbery term shortly before Laura Mead was released.

The remainder of Hollis Smith's ransom was gone. He was desperate for money. Simon Rand had blackmailed him, and was still holding onto the fifteen thousand dollars blackmail money. Smith decided to get it back. He went to Ivan's Nite Spot, where he had traced Laura, hung around long enough to pick up her handkerchief and lipstick container, then went to visit Simon Rand.

When he saw that it was impossible to blackmail Rand, as he had anticipated it would be, he killed the lawyer, and left the clues which

led to Laura. He then went through Rand's files, found the keys to a safe-deposit box in a bank in the outlying districts. The lawyer had the money hidden there under an assumed name so that, in the event it should be found, he could disclaim knowledge of it.

Hollis Smith took the key, went to the bank under the posed name invented by Rand, and got the money. The captain of detectives who'd had Smith down as a leading suspect nabbed the crook when he came out of the bank. With the hot money on him, and fingerprints left back in Rand's office, along with one or two other clumsy marks which Smith had neglected to clean up, it was easy to make him confess.

And, since a man can hang only once, Smith related the rest of the story, going back to 1931, and the Lambert kidnaping. It was one story really, for one crime went into another.

Laura Mead could not be found, but a citizens' committee was taking up a collection to compensate her for the injustice that had been done.

Saxon looked up.

It had taken him thirty minutes to read all of this for it was not in the coherent form of a story, but in newspaper style, featuring the most dramatic incidents first, and gradually boiling down to detail and fact. He had read slowly, deliberately, so that he could clear his mind.

This he read again: Laura Mead could not be found.

She was hiding, afraid that Saxon would arrest her for deadly assault. *Afraid.*

A DAY later he was up. He flew to San Francisco. He didn't bother to check in with the police yet.

He knew this—that she'd return to Frisco the same way she'd gotten

out of it. He knew she'd come back because before she went to prison she had been raised here; it was the only city she knew, and anywhere else would be foreign to her. She had run from San Francisco to get away from him, but she'd come back. He knew that just as he knew everything else about her.

Just like he knew *where* in San Francisco she'd be most likely to be. It was his town, too, and he knew the streets people walked on when they were friendless and afraid. It took him some time, of course; it took him a day and a night. He went to Ivan's, and then he checked up on the chorus girls she'd known and liked. She'd slept at the flat of one of them, then left. He went back to the old neighborhood where she had lived when she was arrested. An old lady who'd known her in girlhood had kept her one night and fed her, and loaned her money. Saxon walked, kept walking; he went to all the obvious places, got information from all of the obvious sources. When he found her she was in a room on Jones Street.

He knocked on the door.

She answered it, then tried to slam it in his face. He had his foot in the jamb; he pushed the door back and came in. She retreated from him, her face very white.

"You thought I was dead?" he asked.

She shook her head slowly. "No. I knew you'd live, I—" She caught her breath. "I didn't shoot to kill." Then suddenly: "What do you want of me now? Are you going to—"

"No," he said. He said it crisply, cutting her short.

She kept watching him.

He tried to keep her gaze, but he couldn't. And he was taking off his hat. A hard guy like him. He was taking off his hat.

"No, Laura. The hunt's all over. The reason I had to find you was—"

"Yes?"

He met her eyes now. "I'm sorry, that's all."

She stared at him, and then what he said seemed to reach her, to free her; comprehension burst within her like a flood of sunlight. She started to laugh, because she was happy, she was free, but then she choked, and she sat down and sobbed.

Saxon stood at the door. "Maybe I could come around once in a while. Coming around's got to be a habit, and maybe I could make it up to you, by— You see, I can never let you go."

She was still crying, but she was nodding, too.

He left, and went quietly down the stairs.

GIANT THRIFT PACK

12 for 25¢

REGULAR PACK

4 for 10¢



STAR

STAR

WORLD'S LARGEST-SELLING SINGLE EDGE BLADE

FOR GEM AND EVER-READY RAZORS



TOY GUN DETAINS JAIL VISITOR: When the "electric eye" at Cuyahoga County Jail at Cleveland, Ohio, detected metal on the person of a nineteen-year-old visitor, a deputy sheriff pulled a black pistol from the youth's pocket and put him in jail. After a night in a cell, the visitor convinced officers that he had no evil intent. His explanation was that, tiring of his little brother's tricks, he had pocketed the youngster's water pistol.



FINGERPRINT OFFICE OPEN EVERY DAY: Since crime observes no holidays, the justice department will keep the fingerprint section of the Federal bureau of investigation, at Washington, D. C., open seven days a week.



GIFT FROM THIEF: A chicken thief who visited the farm of James Stonesifier, near Lancaster, Pennsylvania, left two hens in the coop and a note on the door which read: "I am leaving two chickens so that you will have eggs for breakfast."



BECAUSE he does not believe in capital punishment, R. T. Storm, the man who built the Texas prison's electric chair in which eighteen felons have died in fourteen years, was excused from jury duty. Storm was called with other prospective jurors in a murder case at Houston.



SIX EXECUTED FOR KILLING GUARD: Six convicts were executed at the State penitentiary at Columbia, South Carolina, for the slaying of J. Olin Sanders, prison guard captain, in an attempt to escape.

Continued on page 96

INCLUDING MURDER



By MEL EVERETT

INCLUDING MURDER

BY MEL EVERETT

I WAS blowing a slightly alcoholic breath into my ocarina, and the tune that came out sort of hinted I still had a thirst: "How Dry I Am!"

"Me, too," said a voice from out on deck.

I quit breathing into my ocarina, killing the melody but not a bit of the mood. I was sitting here in the deckhouse of the *Susie Q*, with my sail-ears set for the slightest sound.

Suddenly, there he was, standing in the deckhouse doorway.

"All right," I said, "you sneaked aboard. But the tide turned at midnight, which makes it Sunday now! So you can get the hell off my tug!"

He was big, natty, with a nasty grin. I figured he was a sea-lawyer out from San Diego to slap a plaster on my tug—you know, what they slap on your car when you can't pay your debts. Only Sundays they can't do it.

He came toward me with a right leg limp, moving jerkily like a guy on a pogo stick. Then memory clicked:

"Kelly Stryker," I said.

"In person," he whispered—he always whispered. Once upon a night, cops blackjacked his talk-box. I remembered; you don't forget things like that.

I drained spittle out of my ocarina and tossed it on top of my locker. I took down a bottle of Bacardi and two glass jiggers.

"Make it three," Stryker beamed. "One for a lady."

"And the lady is—"

"Mine," he finished, with nasty implication.

I shrugged, ducked back into my locker for another jigger. I turned around and the lady was in. She must have stayed on deck—like an actress in the wings—awaiting her cue. She made a sweet entrance.

She was young, curvy. She wore a cape trimmed with blue-fox, no hat, and her hair was the color of a brush-fire seen through fog. She had smoke-blue eyes and a firm mouth. She also had lovely legs. I smelled sandalwood in her hair, and I liked her, smiling at me.

Smiling at him, her lips went soft, submissive. I quit liking her. She was his.

We settled around in chairs—and settled a round of rum.

Stryker put his elbows on the table and said across it: "Nine years, boy. Me, I'm still in the chips. And you?"

"This seagoing tug," I said, "the *Susie Q*, I own her. She's legit business; everything topside. And I don't hate what I see in my mirror any more."

"Sure, boy, sure," He chortled, overfriendly. "Only I hear they're slapping a plaster on you for dock-age, on account of diesel oil costs dough, and you can't run a tug on a pocketful of dreams."

I said, dourly: "I'm doing fine, considering."

I was thinking back to the days of the off-shore liquor fleet, when good money was good money until murder muscled in, and Stryker al-

most took the big rap—for me!

But Stryker was lithe and hard in those days; my pal. So he wouldn't talk. And cops blackjacked his throat until he couldn't. I owed him a lot for that!

Stryker sluiced drinks around. "Honey, look at a guy who quit a hundred-an-hour racket to go back to college! And put the glimpse on what it got him."

Honey's eyes took possession of the meager deckhouse. "Is the name Charlie Chump?" she asked, laughing.

"The name's Morgan," I said softly. "Moody Morgan. I'm moody on account of I don't like tootsies who've seen all the etchings."

She flushed, and sipped her drink to cover it. But I saw her mouth go firm again, and white fury lined her lips.

"No cracks, Moody!" There was curbed anger in Stryker's hush-up. "We're slicing you a piece of gelt. Five grand for a tug-ride to Mexico. Ensenada."

"Is that all?"

He squinted at the big diamond on his right little pinkie, and said: "Make it ten and expenses."

"I mean: is that all—just a tug-ride to Mexico? Or do you maybe have a package you want to ferry back?" I figured it was dope and I tensed, set to say: "Include me out!" I knew he might resent that—with a Luger!

"Be smart, Moody. It's a one-way jaunt."

I began to tighten up inside, wondering if he meant one-way for them, or for me. You don't take dope *into* Mexico. Something else or a snatch, maybe? Anyway, I was jammed between the past and present, and getting squeezed into a future I didn't want. I didn't let my

pan show how much of it I didn't want.

THE *Susie Q* rolled in the swell of a freighter, standing in. I watched Honey saunter over and look out at it.

Stryker was weighing what he could tell me. It wouldn't be a bit more than he had to. In the old days, yes. Not now. He'd gone gross, mentally and physically, since then. Cruel and crafty now!

"Listen," he whispered, "you've heard how some boys blasted guards on the pier and heisted half a million in gold bars off some ship in from Alaska?"

Being a regular reader and a guy with a memory, I recalled it. Two years ago, it was, in Seattle. Three guards killed. No clues. I added two and two and got forty.

"You bought this hot gold at about ten cents on the dollar," I said. "You let it cool two years. Now, for ten G's, I run you and your gold and your girl to Mexico. You ship the gold to the United States Treasury and get a full half million for it. Then you live happily ever after—with Honey!"

Watching Honey whirl on me, I saw I'd scorched her again. She lit a cigarette, came back to the table and gulped her drink. Seeing her scorch made me feel good. I don't know why. It just did.

"Good guessing," Stryker sighed. He looked relieved at not having to tell me more.

"Two grand," I said, "will clear the *Susie Q*."

He let me have it in hundreds. Only a hand like his could get around a roll like his. "Then you're in, Moody?"

I thought it over. It didn't look like dirty dough. And if I didn't want to lose the *Susie Q*, dough is

what I needed. I weighed a payoff in lead. And I smelled the sandalwood in Honey's hair.

I nodded at her. "She going along for the ride?"

Stryker got up, came around the table at me, limping. "Meaning what?" he whispered. And there was menace in his nasty grin.

I looked up into his beefy face. "Meaning, can I trust her?"

"So?" he whistled softly. "Can I trust you?" He was getting nervous. When nervous, he was mean. I remembered.

I pulled a cigarette out of Honey's package, lit it, and said: "If there's ten grand in it, so am I."

"Good!" He glanced at his wristwatch. "Now look, boy, I got a little job for you. Ever hear of T'Chang Ling?"

Who hasn't? Head of the First National Bank of China. Over here to raise money to finance the war. He got a bushel of it, remember? Lost it when the *Clipper* went down. There was talk about sabotage, only nothing came of it. And T'Chang was having trouble trying to raise more money.

Stryker sat down again and used lots of words. Between them he hit the Bacardi and I said "Yes" to what he was saying and "No" to what he was drinking. I got the facts.

But I was thinking about him and the course he'd run and the women in his wake. And Honey—too young, too fine, to be just another mistake he'd made.

Then Stryker said: "Sure it's clear, boy? Know what you're to do? No slips, boy, not any. Not a bit of any!"

I reversed my mind, backed fast over his words. I'd take an envelope to a guy named Cuyler and get some boxes. When I delivered the boxes to T'Chang Ling, the Chi-

nese banker would pay me a quarter million dollars cash. Then it was back to my tug and off to Mexico, fast.

"This Cuyler," I said, "is he in on the deal?"

"Just a stooge."

I got the idea. But I couldn't see Stryker trusting me with a quarter million cash. He must've read my mind.

"Honey goes with you. Passing any places marked 'Gents,' if you gotta go, you *don't* gotta go. See?"

"These boxes I get from Cuyler?" I asked. "They heavy?"

"Rather."

"About twelve hundred pounds total?"

"About that."

"About right," I said, "for half a million in hot gold."

He killed the rum. "You're good at figures; don't be too good for your own good!" Lowering the jigger from his lips to the table, his hand shook just a little. He was fighting the jerks.

I changed my mind about asking him why T'Chang wanted a half million in hot gold. I thought I knew, anyway.

Stryker snaked a bulky envelope from inside his coat. Doing it, he let me see his Luger. I turned the envelope in my fingers. It felt like money—Cuyler's payoff for the hot gold, I supposed. It was addressed:

Drake Cuyler, 2420 South Shore.

Stryker tapped it. "I wouldn't lose this, if I were you."

"Guns is guns," I said. "Do I get one?"

Honey let me peek into her purse. It was long and large, accordion-like on the ends. One of the ends was slit. She carried her purse with her right hand *inside* of it, through

the slit. Garter elastic held the .32 to the wall of the purse. The front of the trigger guard was cut away. A cute gadget for quick gunning!

"Moody and I will get along," she said, smiling.

Stryker limped around and took my arm. A way overfriendly!

"You got a good head, boy. Any flaws?"

"Well," I said, sounding happier than I felt, "variety is the spice of crime. You got hot gold, a pretty girl, a mystery stooge, a Chinese banker and a guy who's trying to make a reasonably honest living with a tug he's about to lose. You got about everything."

His fingers dug into my arm. He hadn't lost his grip.

"Everything," he whispered, "including murder, maybe!"

"Meaning mine?" I could've struck a match on my tongue.

"I hope not, boy. I sure do hope not."

So did I!

AWAY from Stryker, Honey relaxed. I couldn't; not for a minute. Not dealing with Stryker! We halved the seat of a taxi and headed for South Shore.

Honey began crooning softly: "You take the high road and I'll take the low road—"

"And you'll get to hell before me," I finished.

She laughed. "You got religion, Moody?"

"No, but I got a cigarette. You got a match?"

She snapped a lighter to flame and leaned toward my cigarette. I pushed my face at the flame and slapped my left hand down on her purse. Her right was inside the purse, on the .32.

My weight, holding her purse to the seat, hurt her fingers. I could

have broken them. The lighter burned steadily. I sucked fire into my cigarette.

I was hurting her hand, and I wanted her to show it. She just smiled, so I blew out the light. I didn't want to hurt her any more.

The cab turned into South Shore and stopped, short of where we were to meet Cuyler. I took my hand off Honey's purse.

"Thanks, Moody," she murmured. Her voice was like a memory of a beautiful sound heard long ago. "You just wanted me to know you could take me. That it?"

"I guess so."

"You can, Moody. Anytime."

The hackie pushed back the glass partition. "This meter, it measures time in dimes. You wanna set here, or rent a room?"

We got out.

"It's the woman who pays," I said. I was stony, except for the two grand in hundreds Stryker had advanced. Honey paid the hack toll, and I thought about what she was doing just to be in the dough. And I wished I'd taken her gun!

South Shore was, at this hour, asleep. In the silence, Honey's high heels clacked like a hunt and peck typist. We saw one beat-bull, one milkman and, away down the street, one Neon sign—an all-night garage.

No. 2420 was a print shop with a full-front window. Raised letters on the window said:

South Shore Sentinel
Drake Cuyler, Publisher

Inside, a dim night light revealed a run-down business office. The door to the back shop was closed.

"We're expected," Honey told me, "at the back door."

There were two seven-passenger tourings parked in the areaway behind the print shop. We expected

only one, a Cadillac. I felt the radiators. The Packard was warm, recently come.

Stryker was supposedly waiting aboard the *Susie Q*. But I figured he'd be close every minute, guarding his gold and his girl. In his shoes, I would be.

I leaned close to Honey, scenting the sandalwood in her hair.

"Stryker? Think he beat us out here?" I asked.

"No. No, Moody, I don't."

"Trouble, maybe?"

"Maybe," she hushed. "Or maybe the Packard's Cuyler's."

We went up four steps, walked along the rear of the printing plant on the raised loading platform. A caged electric light glowed above the rear door.

The guy in the doorway was built like a big toe: burly, thick-shouldered, thin-hipped. "Hi, Honey," he growled, "got what I want?"

"No," I snapped, "she hasn't! I have!"

He bit down hard on his frayed cigar and his small shrewd eyes glinted in the light over the doorway. "Who pulled your chain?"

Honey said: "Cuyler, meet Moody Morgan."

"T'meecha," I said. "Who belongs to the Packard?"

"Me! So what?" His breath was bad, like burning brakes.

"So," I said, "first, the boxes in our Cadillac; second, us in our Cadillac; third, you get paid. See?"

"And fourth," he yawned, "you go to hell! See? See *this*!"

I didn't notice where it came from, but now that it was here I had no trouble seeing it. "All right," I said, "who are we to argue with an automatic?"

We all went inside, quietly.

Honey could have got him with her purse-hidden .32. She didn't and

I wondered why. I wasn't sure which team she was playing on. I hoped mine, because Cuyler was coked, kill-high!

"Up arms," he said, moving in. He frisked his payoff envelope, missed my two grand, and said, "Oh, a panty waist," when he found I had no gun.

It was easier to look around him than at him. I sized the plant: a bank of job presses, a bank of linos, a small rotary for printing the South Shore *Sentinel*, and stereotyping equipment for melting and casting lead.

There were two piles of little wooden boxes on the floor. The boxes were stenciled: *Lead*. The stereotyper was still hot, and the shop smelled like scorched paper. I figured Cuyler had been casting bars of lead, and had boxed a pile of them.

HIS plant was legitimate as I recalled from kid days as a printer's devil. Only, there was enough lead here to get out the *Sunday Times*!

Cuyler stepped back, but Honey stayed half a turn to his left.

"Cuyler," I said, "you're crossing Stryker! Other guys have tried that, and they've all quit living."

He snorted. "Stryker bothers me like a bottle of beer."

"What's the cross?" Honey asked me.

"Look," I pointed. "Two piles of boxes stenciled: *Lead*. Outside, two cars; one pile of boxes for each car. Only the boxes we'd take would *really* be lead! He'd take the boxes of gold. We'd go to T'Chang, and he'd go bye-bye with half a million in gold!"

Cuyler's gun wavered between us. He spat a shred of cigar.

"Only I spoiled it, talking tough. Cuyler got riled, hop-heads always do, and he threw down on us. Other-



I said: "Who are we to argue with an automatic?"

wise, we'd be on our way, and he'd be on his."

"Me, I'm Professor Quiz," Cuyler smirked. "Your question is: 'A tisket, a tasket, a brown and yellow

casket'—who's the corpse?" He laughed in a high, curdled minor. Once I heard a hop-head musician hit a note like that on a trumpet just before he died from an overload.

I glanced at Honey, and her eyes said: "Yes." She pointed her purse at Cuyler and began to ease it up. There was a moist shine on her lips, and I caught a whiff of the sandalwood in her hair.

Cuyler was as good as dead.

I kept talking; talking to keep his eye. I felt ghoulish. Like talking to a dead man. Honey's purse would be up now. She'd be going for the trigger. Her knuckle would be white. She'd be squeezing the trigger—to kill!

Maybe it would be the first time. Maybe she'd killed plenty of guys. Maybe this, maybe that, maybe anything. Only I didn't want to see her do it!

Deliberately, I looked away from Cuyler—and at Honey! I knew Cuyler's eyes would follow mine. They did. And his foot lashed up, kiting her purse and jolting the gun-action. A .32 slug blew out of her purse and twanged on metal, harmlessly.

Honey flashed me a hurt, wondering look, like a child punished for something she was told to do. And then I was in, slugging. But Cuyler, wheeling to cover me, slashed his gun across my scalp. And then I was down on my knees, half out.

Cuyler went at Honey, using his left to slap her. She fooled him. She took his hand swiftly in both of hers—one hand on his wrist and one on his palm—and twisted her body. Cuyler spun over her shoulder and hit the floor.

Sprawled on the floor, feeling around for his gun, he looked vicious. "Jujitsu, huh? A lousy Jap trick! I'll kill you!"

He almost did before I found Honey's purse. I triggered the .32 three times—missed twice. But one's enough.

Honey looked at Cuyler's cocoon,

and at me. My scalp ached, and anyway her calm scrutiny gripped me. "If you want Stryker's pay-off dough," I fumed, "go roll the guy I cheated you out of killing!"

I was having that nasty reaction you get from killing someone. Never mind self-defense. You hate yourself.

When Honey got the pay-off envelope off the corpse, I got meaner. But I still had a hunch about Stryker's business with T'Chang. And I still felt sorry for T'Chang, bucking Stryker.

I was suddenly in a hurry, and not on account of the shots. A watchdog in the front office wouldn't hear a .32 through walls as thick as these.

I test-hefted one of the wooden boxes from each of the piles. Then I began carrying boxes from one pile and putting them into the tonneau of the Cadillac.

Honey came out on the loading platform. "How do you tell which is the gold, Moody?"

"By weight," I snapped. "Gold's heavier, twelve hundred pounds per cubic foot. Lead's only seven hundred. And if you think I'm crossing you, load the car yourself."

She laughed. "I don't sing bass, Moody." She could see these boxes were small, but plenty heavy. I heaved one into the back seat of the Cadillac and asked: "Why'd Stryker ring in Cuyler?"

"To get the gold coated with lead. You wouldn't want the customs inspectors finding hot gold on your tug. Or would you?"

"We take this lead-covered gold to T'Chang?"

"We do."

"Only T'Chang thinks I really own the gold?"

"You make a nice front, Moody."

"And we also take the gold to Mexico?"

"We do."

"Oh," I said, and went back to work. When I got all the boxes from the first pile into the Cadillac, I told her to drive into the alley and wait.

"What for, Moody?"

"For me," I said. "There's too much lead in this plant. Cops might reason why. I'm getting the excess out of here."

"It could be fun, working with you." She started the motor. "You're smart, Moody." She smiled and drove into the alley, out of sight. I couldn't hear the motor, but a Cadillac is quiet; so maybe she hadn't driven off and left me.

I GRUNTED the other boxes into the Packard. It was also a rent-car. I drove down to that all-night garage and parked it. I put the claim check up inside the lining of my cap.

When I got back, the Cadillac was parked driver-side against the alley wall; and to get under the wheel I had to climb over Honey. I could see, looking at her, she hadn't parked that way by accident.

Climbing over her, I got a big breath of the sandalwood in her hair and I quit feeling zero. My hand slipped across her shoulder. Our faces passed close. I saw the challenging fire in her eyes and I could feel the submissive warmth of her lips, and I—almost! I took it out on the car, gunning all the way back to town.

T'Chang had sublet sky-high, because people who dwell in pent-houses usually need private elevators. T'Chang did. Otherwise, how could I haul a bunch of boxes into the swanky Berkshire Towers without benefit of witnesses? Even at 4 a. m.

I drove into T'Chang's private garage, and Honey watched me unload

into his private elevator. She'd moped all the way in, and now she said: "I'll wait here, Moody."

"No," I said. "Better get the car out of the district. It may be hot, considering Cuyler's condition."

"Sure, Moody. Then I'll pick you up in a cab."

Getting the gold to the Susie Q was, I supposed, T'Chang's job. All I had to do was collect a quarter million in cash and try to get away alive. "Maybe ten, fifteen minutes," I told Honey as she backed the car out.

WHEN I hit the top in the private elevator, there was T'Chang: tall, frail, slightly stooped, with a halo of thin gray hair combed back from his high forehead. He was wearing a housecoat, fashionable two thousand years ago; and a right-angle wristwatch, fashionable now.

Quite a guy, this T'Chang! He's called the Alexander Hamilton of China because he substituted banking for banditry. So I thought he'd be holding one of these Chinese abacus counting racks instead of an automatic!

The private elevator opened into the hallway between the kitchen and the dinette. I stepped out, saying: "I see I'm welcome. I'm Moody Morgan—not J. P. So you can hide the hardware."

"Excuse me if I seem to know what I'm doing," T'Chang told me, politely. And then brusquely: "Quong! Quickly!"

Quong stepped out of the dark kitchen. He had a Pekinese puss and a double-decker bald dome, guaranteed to reflect every ray of a setting sun. He also had a Mauser.

"A new Chinese custom," T'Chang told me. His gun didn't waver. Quong ditched his Mauser and did a nice job of frisking me. T'Chang

put his automatic under the folds of his housecoat.

Quong stepped into the elevator, cutoff the power switch, and put the shiny side of his pantaloons down on the boxes. His Mauser appeared again like a magician's ace of spades.

"The gold will be guarded," T'Chang said. "This way, Mr. Morgan." He led me across the dinette, down into a sunken living room. There was nothing Oriental about it. The paneling was maple, the furnishing modernistic.

T'Chang sat beside a low table on which was a metal money-box, a bowl of Chinese honeydew and a game—not fan-tan. Checkers!

Reds were leading blacks. I sank into an armchair, nodded at the board. "You red or black?"

"Red," he said. "I'm winning." There were lines of worry around his sensitive mouth and above the bridge of his long, sharply chiseled nose. He was a Shansi; it's southern Chinese, like Quong, with flattened features.

There was a semicircle of cigar ashes on the rug around the black side of the table. "Who's black?" I asked.

"Quong, my man-servant." When I looked quizzical he added: "We modern Chinese are quite democratic."

He was modern, all right, and maybe democratic. So maybe he played checkers with his man-servant. But nobody's *man* put ashes on the master's rug. Huh-uh! That wasn't anyone's servant problem!

T'CHANG began beating around the mulberry bush, and I said an occasional "Yes" or "No" or "I think so, too."

But I was remembering a night off Nantucket on a mothership. A Fed was to arrange a landing fix. He

came aboard for a bigger pay-off. But he wasn't good enough in a game of checkers; his body went overside. And Stryker said: "You know, Moody, I'd never kill anyone who could beat me at checkers!"

And I wondered now, could T'Chang be beating Stryker at checkers? Stryker hadn't been out at the plant, or he'd have shot Cuyler quicker than I had. And Stryker was a guy who'd put ashes on Roosevelt's rug! It was odds-on that Stryker was here, waiting in another room. If so, there'd be trouble!

"You know, of course," T'Chang said, "why I want this gold?"

"I can guess."

He clasped thin, bony hands across his breast, said fervently:

"My country is being raped!"

"And," I chimed in, "for China, money-lenders are scarcer than grapes on a bean vine."

"Precisely. Now, I pay a quarter million for your half million in gold. A munitions dealer will accept the gold at full value in exchange for fighting planes."

"This gun runner," I said, "knows the gold's hot?"

"Yes."

T'Chang passed the bowl of Chinese honeydew, and I said, munching: "Only he can't take payment in gold here. So you get your planes and he gets the gold in Mexico. That it?" A suspicion I'd had all night was about to be verified.

"In theory, yes," T'Chang said, smiling. "Actually, he gives me a bill of sale for the planes; and he, himself, will get the gold to Mexico."

"And you get planes worth half a million. And all you put out is the quarter million you pay me for the gold. Nice deal!" I lied in my teeth. It wasn't a nice deal, because with Stryker in it, that meant a double-deal.

I was sure now of what I'd suspected when Stryker first spoke of T'Chang: Stryker was posing as a munitions dealer! And Stryker's bill of sale for planes would carry no more weight than a bubble-dancer.

I felt awfully sorry for T'Chang, a poor, blind victim of his own patriotism. And the Chinese people, getting blown off the map, because the money-changers fled the temples to back the favorite.

"While we talked," T'Chang said, "your cargo has been removed from the elevator." He stood, picked the metal money box up off the table. "The gold is being checked. If all is correct, you shall be paid one quarter million dollars."

He bowed himself out of the room, smiling.

I soft-soled out through the dinette. The private elevator was still at this level; the power switch still off; all the boxes gone. I switched the power on. I might need this elevator in a hurry.

It was pay-off time and that's when trouble comes. I could feel every nerve in my body, fine-drawn, like on an anatomical chart. I eased back into the living room. Blood pounded up into my ears.

Behind me, I heard one soft footstep. And then something hard and round gouged into my spine. It wasn't a piece of gaspipe.

"Play dead—or be dead!" There was an odd, repellent sweetness in Stryker's whisper.

I knew he was going to drop me, here and now! He didn't need me any more. He could run the *Susie Q* himself. But Honey, not being with me, had him worried; and I had to keep him worried.

"I dunno," I said. "She's been gone too long."

"Gone where?" Stryker's breath steamed the back of my neck.

"To ditch the car, *she* said."

"Why?" he whispered. "It's a rent."

"It's a hot rent now! Cuyler was coked and tried to gun us. I saved your gold and your girl. Doing it, I killed Cuyler! So what does that get me? A slug in the back?"

"It wouldn't," he rasped, "only you made a mistake!" His Luger trenched deeper into my back. "See now, can you talk out of it?"

The palms of my hands glistened with sweat. I'd turned on the elevator power so I could go down in a hurry. But if Honey got curious, she could come up here! Something learned as a kid ran through my mind, a fragment of prayer. My prayer was for Honey:

"O God, keep her out of here!"

MY lone chance for life was making Stryker need me! To make him need *me*, I had to make him quit trusting *her*. And if I did that, and she came up here, he'd kill her. But maybe I could take him before she got here? I drew a deep breath and said with all the force I could put into it:

"Listen, Stryker! She may be Honey to you—but to the insurance company she's just a damned good investigator!"

"That's a lie!" said a voice behind us.

There was no mistaking that voice. Or the scent of sandalwood. "That's a stupid lie," Honey said. "If I'm an insurance gumheel, why didn't I grab the gold at the plant? Why play along this far?"

I turned my head and Stryker looked at me like I was something that just crawled out of a sewer. Behind him, in the dinette doorway above the sunken living room, I saw Honey. Dark shadows around her eyes heightened the deathly pale-

ness of her face. She had her hand inside her purse, and her purse pointed death at both of us!

"It wasn't doing him no good, anyway," Stryker grated. I could feel the barrel of his Luger pull up slightly as his finger squeezed back on the trigger!

"Stryker," Honey said very quietly, "you can kill Moody; but do it—and I'll kill you!"

A second of silence dragged almost into eternity.

"What the hell?" Stryker finally stammered.

"Drop your gun, Stryker!" Honey's voice tightened to its tensile strength. "You're under arrest!"

My flesh tried to crawl away from Stryker's gun barrel. I knew he wouldn't drop his gun. He'd blow his cork!

"A she-cop" he burbled. "Me loving a dirty she-cop!"

"Special Agent, U. S. Treasury," Honey clipped. "With orders to get you, Stryker. That's why I waited until I got you and the gold together. Now drop that gun!"

"Maybe now you trust me, Stryker," I said acidly. "Only now's too late, and we're both rapped on hot gold. So drop it, or the rap is murder."

Stryker's lips touched my ear. "We're pals, boy. You hit the deck. I can handle her. And we'll heist T'Chang's quarter million."

I tensed, feeling his Luger pull out of my back. He was ready for a whirl-shot. He was good with a gun. He'd get her, if—

Suddenly, the door near the front of the living room flew open and T'Chang boiled out at us, waving his automatic. T'Chang's face was livid with rage; his eyes afire with fury.

I hit the deck, sliding along the floor on my midriff. I spun around

to keep seeing Honey—and Stryker—and I saw Quong's placid yellow face pop out of the hall behind Honey.

"You can't do this to my people!" T'Chang screeched. His voice was thick with primitive accent. I watched Quong step up beside Honey, moving his Mauser to line it on Stryker's back. Quong didn't see Honey's gun. It was in her purse.

"It isn't too late!" T'Chang yelled. "I won't pay—"

"Yes," Stryker hissed, and I saw murder come up in his face.

Honey shrilled: "Stryker, drop your gun!" She wanted him alive, if possible.

"Yes, T'Chang," Stryker wheezed. "Yes, you will pay!" And his Luger jumped and roared over my head. T'Chang's thin, tired body lay down quietly. Dead!

Stryker wheeled, dropped to one knee, level his Luger on Honey and Quong in the doorway. I had no time to go for T'Chang's automatic. I lunged at Stryker, swinging my body downward and coming hard into his legs. We spilled and Stryker kned me.

Quong shot, and a Mauser slug burned Stryker's ribs and furrowed the floor in front of my face. A long splinter knifed into my cheek and lodged there.

Stryker shivered out of my grasp, moved his Luger up. But Honey, in the doorway, moved faster. She caught her hold, and jujitsu leverage hurtled Quong through the air.

Stryker was up now! Gunning for Honey, he shot Quong twice in the chest before Quong hit the floor. I rolled after Quong's Mauser.

In tossing Quong, Honey lost balance. I saw her feet tangle, watched her pitch forward on the carpet. Hate and pain twisted Stryker's face.

He put his gun on a plane with her prone figure.

Honey lifted her head, saw it coming. Her purse-gun had fallen beyond reach. She didn't cringe. She was taking it, looking right at him!

"Stryker!" I shouted. He turned and I shot him on the equator. He went away from me, going backward on his heels. His knees touched the low table and he sat down on the checker game. He dropped his Luger, grabbed his stomach with both hands, and slumped forward like a jackknife folding.

AND then the cops were in. And the Treasury agents. And the D. A.'s birddogs. And the corner, without enough wicker baskets.

Honey did a nice job as homicide hostess. She took the law on a Cook's tour, pointing out bodies and reenacting everything. Then the law went into the other room and wasted time testing and weighing the contents of the boxes I'd hauled up here. Finally, they learned what Stryker and T'Chang and Quong had found out before they died.

I pulled the splinter out of my cheek and was dabbing my face with a kerchief when Honey came out with the inspector.

"Inspector Gerughty," she said, "this is Moody Morgan."

We shook hands. Gerughty was a soldily-built man, with roughhewn features and eyes that now expressed distinct displeasure.

"It looks," Gerughty said, "like someone made a foolish error." He looked at Honey and the color rushed up into her cheeks.

"I guess you've checked the gold," I said. "So that leaves no charge to hold me on."

"You knew it was just plain lead," Gerughty said. "You could tell by the weight."

"Sure," I said. "I knew there couldn't be gold in those boxes I brought up here. They weren't heavy enough."

"Well," Gerughty said, "you're clear, Morgan. She cleared you on the shootings." He looked at Honey, and genuine anger edged his rebuke: "There's only one thing dumber than a dumb dick, and that's a smart woman!"

Honey flushed some more. Inspector Gerughty went back into the bedroom. Honey just stood there, gnawing her lower lip. I took her hand and made her look at me.

"I'm sorry, Honey," I said. "Really sorry."

"What do you want to do about it, Moody? Kiss my hand or support me?"

I took the garage claim check for Cuyler's Packard out from under the lining of my cap. "Remember the boxes I put in the Packard? That was the gold, Honey."

I put the claim check in her hand. "I figured Stryker planned to cross T'Chang. And I didn't want him getting away with T'Chang's quarter million and the half million in gold on top of that."

"There's a large insurance reward, Moody. I can't claim that, but you can."

"You get the glory," I said.

Honey stepped closer, smiling. "Is that all, Moody?"

"Look, Honey, how's about a deal? I keep the two grand Stryker advanced me. The reward money goes to the Chinese people, and—"

"Yes, Moody. And what?"

I smelled the sandalwood in her hair, met the challenge of her eyes, and said:

"And you and I take a nice long tug ride to nowhere."

She laughed throatily. "It's a deal, Moody."

THE LAW AND THE LAWLESS

Continued from page 82

AN automobile theft which netted only forty dollars put twenty-year-old Francis Spaulding, of Los Angeles, behind prison bars on the eve of his first fifteen-thousand-dollars annual inheritance.

Spaulding is heir to the three-hundred-and-fifty-thousand-dollar fortune of his grandfather, the late Joel C. Cohen, who built Honolulu's first movie theater. Not until his stepgrandmother's death will he get the full inheritance, but, meanwhile, a fifteen-thousand-dollar check will go to him annually, beginning on his twenty-first birthday.

The youth was found guilty of stealing six automobiles in as many years. He has served terms in two reform schools. The latest theft, by which he profited only forty dollars, brought a one to five-year sentence.

In reply to Spaulding's plea for probation, Judge A. A. Scott said curtly: "You're an out-and-out thief. The fact that you soon will become a wealthy man does not alter the fact that you are a public liability."



WATCHFUL WAITING REWARDED: For over two years a Bridgeport, Connecticut, musician watched parades in the hope of recovering his stolen drum. His zeal was rewarded when he finally spotted the instrument in a holiday procession and collared the youth who was carrying it. Although the drum had passed through several hands since it was stolen from the musician's car, police found and arrested the thief.



PISTOL WOONG PUTS SWAIN IN CELL: A Brooklyn man became so enamored of a waitress in a New York City restaurant that he tried to force her at pistol point to leave her job. He was jailed on a charge of felonious assault.



JUDGE PRAISES BANDIT SLAYER: A Philadelphia magistrate discharged a twenty-one-year-old youth with congratulations for shooting and killing a bandit who, with a companion, tried to hold up the grocery owned by the young man's father. "There is no question concerning the right to shoot, or even kill, under such circumstances," the magistrate said. "It is time the public realized its right to protect home and property."

THE CLUE OF THE SUDDEN WINDOWS



By EUGENE BLAKE

The Clue Of The Sudden Windows

BY EUGENE BLAKE

THE Indian, riding on the driver's seat beside me, jerked the long stem of a heavy pipe from his mouth. Gazing back, he said: "And the girl in that last car, she had trouble in her face."

I had been trying to buy or trade his reeking heirloom. This hollow-stone eagle had been smoked, generations before, by the wise Four Heads himself.

"Clever, as ever, Black Fox," I teased. "Here I try to talk paper-weights for the desk where I've been pecking out the accounts of your investigations, and you try to change the subject to ladies in distress. They all have their troubles—everybody has."

"But that girl has much trouble!"

The small red man kept looking back. I reminded him that I had engaged him to help me investigate the death down Highway No. 20 for one of my articles. It wouldn't do to turn off on a cold trail.

"But you did not see the mud on that car!"

"Black Fox, I've been boasting I've found an investigator with something new on the ball. I've been saying you nose around and uncover stuff in a way nobody else could. People are beginning to watch for accounts of Dr. Black Fox's investigations. But if we follow that girl, it would be like a bird dog chasing off after a rabbit. We would be a joke if this got out!"

"But our old men said that Four Heads said: 'If you want to catch

the wolf, follow the fawn's blood while it is dripping.' See! Mr. Georges, the numbers on that girl's car, they were covered with mud, I tell you. And the face on that girl was covered with trouble. I have spoken."

"Then, why did you wait so long to let me know her abductors were covering their tag?"

"Because I didn't want you to turn the car round too quick and make that man and woman in the car take her away faster."

Instead of speeding up as we drew near, the black sedan with the muddy license plate slowed down. The pudgy man at the wheel said nothing, merely glanced at us from black little eyes, set deep in their sockets. As he slowed still more to let us pass, my car choked to a standstill.

"We-ll?" came a gin-husky snarl from the back seat.

The woman who snarled was not really old. But a face, shriveling early, told that she had plucked life too green. "We-ll," she snarled a little more sharply.

Terror was plain in the fresh face of the young girl, rigid, beside the woman. The girl stared straight ahead as though held by some threat. A more menacing, "We-ll?" jerked my eyes back to the snarler.

I said: "We want—"

"Spill it," snapped from the corner of the man's full lips before I could say that we wanted to ask about the road.

The woman's next words were a

bit softer. "Yeah! This leads into Dixie Highway. Our daughter, here—throat trouble—lost her voice. We thought the mountains—"

"No-no-no!" the voiceless girl shrieked.

The woman struck her prisoner over the head with something blue-black. It was about the size of an automatic. The black sedan shot forward again; the numbers on its license plate too dim to read.

"Kidnapers," mumbled Black Fox.

He leaned out, squeezing a large revolver in a sinewy bronzed hand. A round hole popped through my windshield spitting particles of glass on the seat between the Indian and me. The distance between us and the black sedan was increasing steadily until it began to swerve. Black Fox fired low again. The muddy car swerved less, but moved more slowly. Suddenly, it headed off into a woods on a road that led toward a swamp.

BEFORE turning into that road to follow, I stopped my car. Surprise was in the chinquapin eyes of the red man.

"You would not let them take the girl away, not after they are crippled in both tires?" he asked.

"But their trigged fingers are not crippled!"

"I crippled that gasoline tank too, but I didn't want bullets in the car to put holes through the girl, maybe."

He was loading again!

"Black Fox, we could phone the Federal Bureau of Investigation. The G-men would round up that pair in no time. I'm a pretty poor shot."

"But, our old men said that old Four Heads said: 'One bad scalp in your belt is worth many on the head

CLU—7

of your going-away enemy.'"

While we talked, smoke shot up in the woods toward the swamp. We looked at each other. "Black Fox, if that car could have gone that far on flat tires before all the gas leaked out, I'd say it's caught fire."

"Or say they take the gas that is left in the car and make fire quick in it to hide things."

The red man touched his brown tailored suit below the left armpit to make sure an extra automatic was in place. "Do you hide your car in bushes, Mr. Georges, and come for a scoop to put in your talking leaves, your newspapers, or do I go after this fun by myself?"

"Well, we don't want to walk right to that wreck while they watch for us?"

He smiled, removed a large flat cap and fingered one of the long braids of jet-black hair that dangled in front of either shoulder. "On the other foot—I mean other hand—we go look at them wait for us to come to the car burning."

I locked my car. The son of the forest led the way through the bushes. With each crouching step, he seemed to move more cautiously. His photographic eyes caught many details of the forest scene in which I was blind.

Near a fallen limb, he whispered: "Rabbit hiding."

Try as I did, I simply could not make out the camouflaged creature.

Farther on, he announced: "Many woodpeckers."

I said I couldn't see a bird of any kind.

"See with your ears, too."

Now I could make out faint tap-pings in the swamp, downhill, beyond the dwindling smoke.

We had crawled around and beyond the seared wreck, when my guide

suddenly leveled his gun. I raised mine, too, ready for action. I could see nothing to shoot at.

"Pig eye," he smiled and lowered his weapon.

Something moved! Now I saw a small pig walking away.

With not the faintest sound, movement, or scent escaping the attention of this man, schooled in the ways of the wild, I knew we were safe from surprise. Such extreme caution seemed useless.

"Looks like we were killing too much time," I breathed, rising to look around.

A shot cracked through the woods. I dropped to the ground for safety and squeezed my automatic in the general direction of the report.

HALF a minute later, a shrill voice shouted: "Don't shoot any

more. It's me a-comin'! Me!"

A slim girl was running past, some fifty yards to our left, both hands wildly outstretched.

"Me-ee! Please don't shoot. It's me-ee!"

"Here! Wait!" I shouted. "Here we are!"

The girl sprawled over something. She was on her feet again before we could get to her. Shaking with sobs, she could not speak at first.

We kept asking about the man and woman.

"They . . . oh, they've run away," she finally sobbed.

The girl said her name was Carrie Dee Mitters—D-e-e, not just a capital D. She was from near Jasper. The strange pair had offered her a ride, after a kind man in a furniture truck wasn't going any farther. The



WEAR THE SIGN OF YOUR RULING PLANET

Express your personality through your birth sign! Get your astrological sign mounted on a handsome silver-plated chromium ring you will be proud to wear. Your sign is impressively mounted on a beautiful stone, colored differently for every month. It should last a long time! The symbol of your birth is supposed to bring luck.

FREE: With each ring we send you an astrological reading of your sun sign prepared especially for you by KAI, the famous astrologer who writes exclusively for LOVE STORY MAGAZINE.

This reading would sell for \$1.00, but you can have the ring and reading for only

25c

Dept. A-B
Box 34, Station "O"
New York, N. Y.

Inclosed please find 25c for which send me one ring and my astrological reading.

Name.....

Born..... day month year

Address.....

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

man and the woman said they were Mr. and Mrs. Wilson.

Carrie Dee's large eyes, red from crying, kept turning toward the seared wreck. As often, they swept the woods in various directions.

"I . . . they run. But I'm scared—ever since she poked that pistol in my side—ever since before we passed you-all. When I tried to get out, she said she would kill me if I talked to anybody, or even looked at anybody."

Black Fox was moving about looking for traces of the vanished pair.

The girl gazed at the red man, then at me. With delicate but roughened fingers, she clutched her hair, a luxuriant mass of untrained chestnut beauty that would stir envy in a beauty parlor.

"I don't know you-all neither! How do I—"

"Don't worry," said Black Fox. "We are friends. You have trouble. We have trouble. The little bird people and animal people, they have trouble. That red-headed woodpecker, he has much trouble, too."

"You, you're making fun . . . fun of me! Wha'd'ya mean—me like red-headed peckerwoods?"

"I just say listen! Hear the woodpeckers?"

We three stood quiet. From toward the edge of a backwater, where many trees had died, came the raucous chatter of a bird.

"You know I didn't make a noise like that thing!"

I tried to calm her. "Listen, Carrie Dee. This Dr. Black Fox is a very kind Indian medicine man that spends a lot of his time gathering herbs. He is a detective, too. He has sent a lot of crooks to the pen and three or four to the chair."

"No, not but two," Black Fox corrected, "not yet."

I thought he blushed, though his face was too much of a pinkish-olive to show it.

"Well"—the girl doubted—"you don't think you could catch that kidnagin' Sippi Wilson, do you? He told Mrs. Wilson he was goin' to burn the evidence, and then he run. And she swore nasty and put me in front of her. Said she was goin' to kill you-all if you followed, to shut your mouth. And she's run off now, too, but I want to get out of these here woods, I tell you!"

Carrie Dee wasn't sure what the woman had taken out of the car besides a large purse and that pistol. The girl frowned; then she remembered that Mr. and Mrs. Wilson had fussed about dividing the cartridges, when they decided it would be safer to travel separately.

"Yes," Carrie Dee replied, in answer to our questions, "Mrs. Wilson carried a lot of things in that purse. She'd gone into it and she got a gold vanity case, then she got out and shot and run. But'n she didn't leave nutin' on the ground."

"If we could get the lady's purse or something she left," said Black Fox, "we could get her finger tracks on it for the sheriff."

CARRIE DEE tried vainly to lead us to "some bushes" where Mrs. Wilson stood when she fired. But there were "some bushes" scattered all about. While we searched, we managed to piece out more of what had happened to the girl.

Carrie Dee's story was like the old one of thousands of girl who jump blindly from unhappy surroundings toward some place where everything will seemingly be all right. But, Carrie Dee's plight was like scores of them who fall in with kind strangers who steer, or even force them

into a life more sordid than they even knew existed.

"The more I decided I didn't want to go on and work at their boarding house for working girls," she explained, "the more they promised me silk dresses and the like, every day, to work in. This I got on is my Sunday one." She glanced at the cheap fabric and twisted a soiled damp handkerchief in her hands. "And they said I would have nicer clothes than this old thing, if I wanted, for just every day. And then, when I wanted to get out, that pistol was in my ribs; so I couldn't even look at you-all, or anybody."

"That woodpecker, he is in big trouble," Black Fox reminded us.

I had forgotten we ever heard the bird. Now, it appeared, we had drifted, with Black Fox in the lead, toward a dead tree that seemed to be its home. The bird was going in and out of a round hole, chattering angrily about something.

The Indian walked slowly around the pine in the mud left by the receding backwater. He kept gazing up. "I believe that woodpecker could help us find Mrs. Wilson," he exclaimed.

He broke off a stiff forked twig. Leaving one branch long and the other short, he formed a hook.

Carrie Dee grabbed my arm. "I want to go! I'm scared of that red Indian."

Black Fox climbed up, ignoring the threats of the angry bird. He began probing with the stick in the round hole that was the door to the nest.

"The poor woodpecker's wife, she is going to the Darkening Land. Yes, she is dead nearly."

Black Fox studied the tree closely where it had been hollowed out for the nest. He worked himself around

to a position that seemed to suit his fancy. Holding with his legs crooked around the small trunk, he called down orders to Carrie Dee and me like a telephone linesman calls to helpers on the ground.

"Now walk where I tell you. Straight up the hill toward that pine tree with the limb broke off. I wave this hand, you go this way. That hand, and you go that way. I show you where the woman left some tracks, maybe, or something else."

Carrie Dee was twisting her soiled damp handkerchief again. "That little red Indian don't talk sense. He must be crazy!"

The man up the dead tree was giving more instructions. "When I wave two hands down, you stop. Look at the ground everywhere. Everywhere, look at it!"

At times, Black Fox's guesses were utterly wrong. But I had seen too much of his clever and peculiar work to doubt until he had proven himself wrong.

"Carrie Dee, maybe he has found something up there we can't see." And to the man with his legs crooked below the woodpecker's nest, "And you watch out for bullets, Black Fox."

Pretty soon, I noticed we had gone some distance beyond the pine with the broken limb. I looked back. I couldn't see the Indian's face; only the edges of his body, and his arms. He kept beckoning us to retrace some of our steps. We were about to go around a scattered clump of bushes. Clearly he was waving us to come through them.

"A track there," I announced to the trembling girl. "Watch the ground close!"

A few steps off our path something glistened dully. A soiled vanity case. Carrie Dee was about



**HERE IT IS!
THE SPORTS MAGAZINE
YOU'VE BEEN
WAITING FOR!**

Athlete

- For the Informed and Uninformed
- About Today's and Tomorrow's Greats
- The Story Behind the Headlines
- Fact and Fiction

**WATCH FOR IT! IT
GOES ON SALE JULY 14**

to grab it before I could explain the danger of spoiling possible fingerprints.

Usually Black Fox was too calm to suit me. Even when bullets were dusting us with chipped windshield glass, or boring holes through the forest. But when he came down and saw that vanity case, he seemed ready to go into a scalp dance, modern Indian though he was.

"Now, Dr. Black Fox, just to prove to Carrie Dee you're not crazy, tell us just what the bird had to do with it."

He took a limp feathered mass from the pocket of his tailored coat. "This red-headed woodpecker—"

"He must be got a lot of sense," Carrie Dee said in an undertone, "but he says that's a red-headed woodpecker when it's got a black head."

The man of the forest smiled. "Yes, the wife of the red-headed woodpecker, she has a head like black. And when that Mrs. Wilson's bullet go through her nest, it hurt her. Then I hear him make noises, worried."

"The bul-let?"

"Yes, woodpecker makes door to house, but no windows. I think I see new little, sudden windows. I get up behind the tree, where bullet come on out one side of the little room. I peep through and see through other hole too, where bullet come in the other side."

"Then, Black Fox, it was easy enough to sight through the two holes and wave us back along the line the bullet came!"

"Yes, and now we got her vanity."

CURIOSITY is said to have killed a cat. Vanity hasn't even caught this Mrs. Wilson. Not just yet. But the Federal Bureau of Investigation reported a criminal record for one Nessie Gordon, whose blurred fingerprints were on the little vanity case we found in the bushes.

Better, though, the G-men knew that her male confederate was one Giusippi Tolco. With our new lead, they picked up, in short order, that pudgy button-eyed, small-time dealer in girls. And now Sippi says, if he lives out his rap, or can get just one more parole, he's going to deal in nothing but cattle.

Ambulances Are For Sick People

Continued from page 60

in letters a mile high. The loot. I saw it when I stooped over to pick up the saucepan Hymie dropped."

Joe breathed: "I'm a monkey's uncle!"

Sandy nodded. "You probably are. Mr. Finnigan was pretty mournful because the crooks weren't lying in bed at the hospital, waiting for him. It seems Mr. Finnigan owes money. He'd sort of planned on capturing these babies and collecting the reward and paying some bills."

"Reward!" goggled Joe. "How much?"

"Five thousand bananas," Sandy told him, grinning. "Should we take these gorillas with us?"

Joe was halfway up the steps. "Dr. Trotter," he said, "for five thousand bananas I'd push them to town in a wheelbarrow!"

Sandy bent over Charley. "While you're figuring how much five thousand divided by two is, I'll inoculate Charles. The cops'll think there's an epidemic of sleeping sickness when we dump this bunch on 'em."

DON'T YOU BELIEVE IT



By ROBERT ARTHUR

DON'T YOU BELIEVE IT

BY ROBERT ARTHUR

CHAPTER I.

SWELL NUMBER.

DANNY KILGORE goggled at Sergeant Thomas Tierney, who was his chief, and assistant head of San Martino's homicide squad. And Danny knew that at last Doubting Tom Tierney's eternal suspiciousness of everything and everybody had driven him completely off his nut, as Danny had always predicted that it would.

"You want a clothing-store dummy, a set of bathroom scales, two pairs of ladies' black cotton stockings, and a mashie niblick?" Danny Kilgore gulped. "You want—"

Sergeant Tierney rose, two hundred pounds of wrath, and Danny fled hastily to obey his orders. The last words he heard were the sarge's bellowed:

"And a pair of football shoes, the kind with cleats! Pick out a pair to fit you, Danny."

Yes, either the sarge was completely batty at last, or else the whole screwy business of the ants in a dead man's pantry and the hundred thousand dollars' worth of diamonds that maybe were missing and maybe weren't—nobody could tell—was going to wind up even more fantastically than it had begun.

Which it had done on a sunny fall afternoon not more than a month ago.

San Martino sits between the mountains and the sea, a rich man's playground and a week-end rendezvous for the movie great, not more than a hundred miles north of Holly-

wood and Los Angeles. San Martino's police headquarters sits between the city hall and the beach, as dingy and dark inside as all police headquarters everywhere, even though the outside is bright-white stucco. And Sergeant Thomas Tierney sits in one of the smaller and dingier of its offices, between the window and a scarred pine desk, staring most of the time with weary melancholy at First Class Dick Danny Kilgore, behind a smaller desk in the corner.

FOR some reason known only to himself, Sergeant Tierney had chosen Danny Kilgore for his chief aid and assistant. Maybe because Danny was young and active and never—well, almost never—gave him an argument. Sergeant Tierney had peculiar ideas, hated ever to admit he was wrong, and preferred to do things his own way, often to the exasperation of older and wiser heads than Danny's.

Detective Sergeant Thomas Tierney, this bright and sunny afternoon, had his feet up and his chin down—the first on his desk, the second on his chest. A stranger might have thought he was asleep. Young Danny Kilgore, though, knew the sergeant was only meditating in his own way on the evil in the world. Sergeant Tierney was, for a cop, a remarkably meditative man.

"Listen, sarge," Danny said aloud, turning a page of the morning paper. "About that Schuyler bump-off in New York, now, the widow says—"

Sergeant Tierney's lips opened.

"Don't you believe it, Danny," he mumbled.

"Don't believe what?"

"Whatever it is the widow says."

"But you don't know what she said," Danny protested indignantly.

"It don't matter," Tierney yawned. "Whatever it is, don't believe it. Never believe what anybody tells you on a murder case, Danny, and you won't be far wrong. Course, they'll tell the truth occasionally and cross you up, but that can't be helped. Only believe yourself, and then don't be too trusting."

Danny Kilgore snorted.

"Doubting Thomas Tierney!" he giped. "No wonder they call you Doubting Tom! If I ever see a more suspicious man than you, I'm gonna hide from him. You ruin all my fun in life, always belittlin' everything. I'm gonna ask for a transfer."

"A cop can't have any fun," Tierney grumbled, sitting up and rubbing his eyes. His jowls hung loose along the sides of his square, hard jaw. His pug nose and bright little eyes, in combination with his square face and hanging jowls, made him look like an unhappy bulldog picking a place to sink his teeth.

"You stick with me, Danny, and when I've got all your faith in humanity knocked out of you—why, you'll be a pretty fair cop."

"Aw, sarge," Danny protested, "hardly anybody's as bad as you suspect 'em of being. They couldn't be."

"Don't you believe it," the sarge said firmly. "They're worse."

Danny Kilgore had no chance to argue the point further. An interruption entered—an interruption with a peaches-and-cream complexion, wearing a nifty new fall outfit, complete with fox fur and a silly hat.

"Are you in charge of the detective bureau?" the interruption asked, her gaze passing over Danny and fastening on Doubting Tom Tierney.

"No, ma'am," Tierney answered. "Only the Homicide Squad, and that only in Captain Hodge's absence."

"Well," the vision said with a dimpling charm, "I wanted to see you because my husband thinks he's had a hundred thousand dollars' worth of diamonds stolen from him, and—"

"You want the burglary squad, ma'am. Two doors down."

"Oh, no," the vision dimpled again. "They told me to come here, because it's about a murder, in a way."

Danny sat up straighter, and even Tierney seemed more alert.

"You murdered somebody, ma'am?" he asked.

"Why, no, of course not," the woman told him, smiling again and showing Danny another dimple he had not noticed. "It's my husband."

"He killed somebody?"

"No," the woman sighed. "He thinks he's going to be killed. I want someone to stay at our house tonight to protect him."

"Who he thinks is gonna kill him?" Tierney questioned.

"Why, he thinks I'm going to," the lady giggled. "Isn't that silly?"

Now, for the first time, Tierney definitely seemed to open his eyes and become aware of the charm of his visitor.

"You want a detective to come protect your husband from you?" he asked, a bit unclearly.

The woman nodded, and showed her pearl-like teeth.

"Isn't it ridiculous? But perhaps I ought to explain more completely. You see, I'm Mrs. Randolph Beyers. My husband owns the big jewelry store—you know, the one at Main and Hill Streets. Well,



The sarge had to grab her and hold her hands. . . .

my husband has a secretary named Timothy Ravel, who is very good looking, and my husband has become suspicious that I—well, that I admire Timothy more than I should. Which is silly, of course, but that's what he thinks."

"And he suspects you're going to bump him off? Like the Judd-Gray case?" Danny Kilgore put in eagerly.

Sergeant Tierney silenced him with a look.

"Well, ma'am—I mean, Mrs. Beyers—I don't guess I follow you. Why should your husband think you're gonna kill him? And tonight, especially? And where do the hundred thousand dollars' worth of diamonds you say he thinks were stolen from him fit in? Who does he think stole 'em?"

The lady sighed gently.

"He thinks I did. Or, rather, that I helped."

Mrs. Beyers dimpled again. She seemed to dimple very easily—and effectively.

"I guess I'll have to explain," she murmured, and sat down daintily in the visitor's chair beside Tierney's desk. Something seemed to catch her skirts as she sat, so that as she faced the sarge a troubling expanse of silk stocking was visible. She did not notice, however, and smiled winningly at the old pessimist.

"You see," she murmured gently, "my husband is getting old—quite old—and the older he gets the more suspicious and violent his nature gets. For a long time now he has been very irritable and quarrelsome. And just lately it's this business about Timothy Ravel. He—my husband—thinks that I have been seeing Timothy more than I should. Also, he thinks that Timothy is a crook."

The pretty violet eyes of Mrs. Randolph Beyers flashed with indignation.

"He's no such thing! He's a perfect gentleman! But my husband accuses Timothy of having stolen from him a number of valuable stones, with a total value somewhere around a hundred thousand dollars. And he accuses me of having helped him!"

Mrs. Randolph Beyers' voice softened again. Danny felt a little chill of delight chase up and down his spine at its lovely modulations.

"You see," she said, "in recent years my husband has been getting *quite* absent-minded. Everyone has noticed it. But still he persists in buying diamonds on speculation in a way he has always done. You see, the store he owns in collaboration with several silent partners. But the diamond buying is done on his own initiative, and is quite separate from the store's purchases. He buys from individuals who bring him especially fine stones, and he is always a ready market for someone who has to sell a very good lot of diamonds quickly and at a sacrifice. Then he holds them for a profit.

"When he was younger, he was able to do all this in his head. But now he has to make memoranda of everything he purchases. Whenever he buys a diamond, he puts it in his special safe at the store, and then he puts the memorandum about it—its weight, its shape, its value, and whom he bought it from—in another special safe at home. That way, you see, somebody might steal the diamonds, or somebody might steal the memoranda, but nobody could ever steal both."

Tierney nodded, signifying that he followed, and Mrs. Beyers continued the explanation.

"Sometimes he keeps a stone for several years before selling it," she went on, "and, naturally, with a large stock and being so absent-minded,

he forgets exactly what stones he still has and what he hasn't. And just last week, going through the stones he keeps at the store, he suddenly got the fantastic idea that at least a hundred thousand dollars' worth of them were missing.

"Since his secretary Timothy Ravel is the only man besides himself who has access to them, he immediately accused Timothy of stealing them. Then he rushed home to look up his memoranda about the stones he thought were missing—and he couldn't find any memoranda about them.

"You see"—and now Mrs. Beyers leaned toward Sergeant Tierney appealingly—"his memory had played him false, and made him think he was missing stones that he never really had. But he thought that Timothy Ravel and I were in a plot to rob him. He said Timothy stole the stones and I stole the memoranda. He believed that Timothy was going to sell the stones and then—then Timothy and I were going off together. Did you ever hear of anything more fantastic!"

"U-m-m-m," Sergeant Tierney grunted, not clearly indicating whether he ever had or not. "But still that ain't telling why your husband is afraid you're gonna bump him off. Tonight especially, I mean."

"Oh, yes." Mrs. Beyers seemed to recollect the point of her explanation. "Yes, of course. Why, tonight, you see, my husband is going to get the proof. Proof that Timothy is innocent, of course. But my husband thinks the proof will show he's guilty. My husband's chief assistant, Peter Duween, is returning from Holland today. He landed last night in New York and he's flying West, bringing some new stock for the store. Peter Duween, when he's

here, is also allowed access to the stones in my husband's private safe, and he has a very good memory. He can tell just what stones *should* be there, and by comparing them with my husband's memory of what he *thinks* should be there, between them they'll know just which are missing, if any. And if any are missing, of course he'll have Timothy arrested. Knowing that we know that, he's afraid Timothy and I have plotted to murder him before ten o'clock tonight, when Peter Duween arrives."

MRS. BEYERS' voice tinkled through the somber little office. Then she sobered, her face showing anxious concern.

"He said as much last night," she explained. "He even said he was going to come here for a bodyguard. So I wanted to tell you, in case he came, what it was all about, so you wouldn't think he is mad. It's just that he's old and crotchety. He claims he's intuitive. It's really only indigestion.

"But for his sake—for his peace of mind—please, sergeant, won't you come to our home tonight sometime before six, when Randolph gets home, and stay until Peter Duween arrives and settles the matter? It will ease my husband's mind so much. And show him how wrong he is, too!"

The sarge seemed to be having trouble with his cigar for an instant before he answered. When he did, his face was perfectly blank, his face perfectly calm. Danny thought, momentarily, that the sarge certainly was getting old and crusty when he couldn't warm up to a swell number troubled about her husband, like Mrs. Beyers.

"Sure," the sarge said finally. "Sure, Mrs. Beyers, I'll come. It's

what we're here for—to give service to the taxpayers."

"Thank you. Thank you so much." And the lovely violet eyes gave a glance of warm gratefulness that just getting a corner of made Danny Kilgore feel like Sir Walter Raleigh.

Then, having left the address, she floated out, a beautiful butterfly on the currents of life, leaving a lingering scent of perfume to freshen the heavy atmosphere created by the sarge's cigar.

"Gee!" Danny murmured rapturously. "Gee, there goes a dame!"

And surprisingly, for once, the sarge agreed with him.

"Yep," he said, a tone of bafflement in his voice, "there goes a dame!"

CHAPTER II.

MR. RANDOLPH BEYERS.

THE air of gentle bafflement that enveloped Doubting Thomas Tierney after Mrs. Randolph Beyers left persisted for some time, while he wheeled his swivel chair to stare out at the breakers foaming on the beach, meanwhile drumming his fingernails on the arm of the chair as if trying to make up his mind about something.

He obviously had not yet succeeded when a second unusual interruption occurred.

This time it was the entrance of a tall, well-groomed gentleman with broad shoulders, a pin-striped blue flannel business suit, a darkly tanned face, a wide smile, and flashing white teeth. He carried a cane and a twenty-dollar hat in his hand, and he sat down quite at ease in the chair beside the sergeant's desk.

"My name," he said, "is Timothy Ravel."

The crashing sound in the office was the outgoing mail basket that Danny Kilgore knocked off the desk

in his surprise. And even the sarge himself was a little taken aback, for he failed to cast a glance of reprimand at Danny.

"Uh—" Tierney coughed. "Uh—"

"I've come to ask you for one of your men for this evening," Timothy Ravel went on, in even, cultured tones. "It's—ah—it's in the way of a bodyguard."

"For you?" Tierney asked, knowing full well it was not.

Timothy Ravel shook his head.

"For my employer," he stated. "Mr. Randolph Beyers, the jewelry man. He's afraid someone is planning to murder him tonight."

The tanned face broke into a deprecatory smile. The heavy black eyebrows rose, half amused, half serious.

"To be truthful, he's afraid I'm going to murder him."

But by now Sergeant Tierney had control over himself, and a warning glance chilled Danny into sudden activity over some papers while the sarge solemnly recorded information that was a duplicate of what the lovely Mrs. Beyers had given earlier. And having gotten the sergeant's assurance that he himself would be on hand at the residence of Randolph Beyers that evening, he left, as self-assured and composed as when he had entered.

WATCHING him go, the sergeant's brow was definitely perplexed. Why Tierney should be puzzled, Danny couldn't imagine. Here were two charming and honest people, embarrassed by a choleric old gentleman's suspicions, trying to do the right thing, and, unknown to each other, choosing the same way to do it.

Here were—

But a puffing and panting in the hall threw Danny Kilgore's train of



FOUND : By a young man who dared to look for the treasure. And was pursued by gangsters, was followed by a beautiful girl, and

THE SHADOW!

It's a thrilling story of smugglers, treasure hunters and crooks who fight it out on a rocky island with no law but the survival of the toughest to govern them! Read

ISLE OF GOLD in the SHADOW MAGAZINE

AUGUST 1st ISSUE

10c A COPY

NOW ON SALE

thought off the track. The puffing and panting came closer. It stopped outside the door. Then the door flew open, and a choleric old gentleman in natty gray flannels and a broad Panama hat, leaning heavily on a stick, stamped in.

Bright, impatient blue eyes set in a round, red face surveyed Danny, the sarge, and the office with evident distaste.

"Damned . . . outrage!" the visitor puffed. "No . . . elevators in . . . a public building! What do we . . . pay taxes for, anyway . . . I want to know?"

He sat himself down heavily in the chair beside Tierney's desk and stared at the sarge with dislike.

"They told me to come here!" he puffed. "Said you were the detective I wanted to see. Must say you don't look much like a detective to me. Not with all that hogfat on you. Detectives ought to be able to get around. What would happen to you if a crook punched you in that stomach? You'd bust like a paper bag, that's what you'd do!"

Their visitor took off his Panama hat and wiped his brow.

"Well, anyway, I came here for . . . for . . . let's see now—"

"For a bodyguard?" Sergeant Tierney suggested mournfully.

The red-faced man brought his stick down on the floor with a thump.

"That's it! For a bodyguard! I want you to be on hand to arrest a man tonight, d'you hear? And to prevent me from being murdered! Murdered by my wife and my scoundrelly secretary to keep me from sending 'em to San Quentin! My name is Randolph Beyers. Here's the address." He flung a card on the desk and rose. "I want you there when I arrive, at six. I want you there all evening. I want the service my taxes entitle me to."

He rose, slapped on his Panama, and gave them another glare.

"Before six!" he snorted again, and then he stamped out, puffing. When he was safely gone, Danny Kilgore mopped his face.

"Bodyguard!" Danny said disrespectfully. "That old bat doesn't need a bodyguard. He needs a nurse!"

For a moment Danny thought the sarge was going to break all records by agreeing with him twice in the same day. But then the sarge rallied and answered true to form.

"Don't you believe it, Danny," he mumbled.

But his eyes had a faraway look in them, and his heart wasn't in it.

DANNY KILGORE sat gingerly in a very genteel plush armchair and watched Sergeant Tierney, in another arm chair, this one of pale canary-yellow, balancing a cup of tea on one knee and a plate of cake on the other.

For the first time that afternoon, Danny could detect a slight lessening of the air of dour suspicion that had gradually darkened his bulldog countenance since the visit of Mrs. Randolph Beyers to the office earlier.

The change was being worked by Mrs. Randolph Beyers' dimpled charm and deep dusky violet eyes as she served Danny and the sarge with tea and cake. Nobody could remain exposed to Mrs. Beyers long without softening a little, Danny figured. If they did, they weren't human. Though sometimes he had thought that about the sarge.

A phone discreetly hidden behind a screen tinkled, and Mrs. Beyers rose from her chair near the long French windows of the room that opened out onto a sort of balcony overhanging the swimming pool, expensively constructed of imported Italian tiles.

"Excuse me," Mrs. Beyers mur-

mured smiling. "That's probably Randolph calling now to say that he's leaving the office."

She disappeared behind the screen, and Danny utilized the moment to lean toward Sergeant Tierney and whisper:

"Some dump, hey, sarge?"

Even the sarge couldn't deny that it was some dump. They had driven in his old rattlettrap sedan about a hundred yards into what looked like a park before they came on the house, big and white, sitting on the top of a little hill surrounded by expensive shrubbery. Parking the old jellopy at the end of a walk made out of blue-and-yellow flagstones, they had found their way past a swimming pool—the one underneath the windows—constructed of cream-and-blue tiles with little green fishes and ships inset around the edges, and inside a Father Neptune on the bottom that wasn't very clear, because the water was murky with long standing.

All around it were more expensive shrubs and flowers, so that it practically couldn't be seen except from above. Then, knocking on a door that opened out of the house to the pool, they had been admitted, not by a maid, but by a gaunt woman who had led them through a living room in which the furniture sat shrouded like so many ghosts, upstairs to the little cozy living room where Mrs. Beyers was feeding them tea now. All in all a swell layout, only there didn't seem to be any servants around.

Danny mentioned this to the sarge in a whisper, and almost as if she had heard, Mrs. Beyers answered his question as she came from behind the screen.

"That was my husband," she dimpled. "He and Timothy Ravel are leaving the store now, and driving.

"They'll be here in fifteen minutes, I think. I told Randolph you were here, and he's very appreciative."

She sat down, gracefully, and smiled at them.

"I suppose you're wondering why there aren't any servants?" she said. "It's because they've all gone on to New York to open our town house for the fall season. Mr. Beyers does a large business in New York in the fall, you know, and we'll be gone for several months. So we sent the cook and the butler, the two maids and the chauffeur on in the large car yesterday. We'll follow by plane tomorrow—that is, if everything is satisfactory when Peter Duween arrives. Poor Randolph! He'll feel so ashamed when he learns how wrong he's been!"

She laughed, in silvery tones.

"So that leaves us only the gardener and his wife to take care of us. They'll stay on to watch the house while we're gone. It was she who let you in."

Sergeant Tierney, engaged in the delicate manipulation of a shaky cup of tea from knee to mouth, was going to say something polite when he and Danny both heard a car draw to a stop out in the driveway where they had left the sergeant's jellopy.

And, a moment later, coming through the open windows, they heard two men's voices.

"Thunder and damnation!" That was Randolph Beyers, all right. "Who cracked these tiles around my swimming pool?"

"I really couldn't say." That was Timothy Ravel's cool tones. "Let's go in and have some of the tea Mrs. Beyers said she was keeping for us. I'm starved. You can look into it later."

"Hell's hot fires!" they heard Randolph Beyers bark back at his secretary. "Here's another one, And

another. God knows how many more are broken, but I'm going to find out. Carelessness, that's what it is. Errant carelessness! Criminal carelessness! Those tiles cost me fifty cents apiece, and the one who broke them is going to sweat blood."

"Suit yourself," Timothy Ravel answered. "I'm going on in."

There was silence from outside then, and a minute later they heard the tall man's steps on the stairs. Mrs. Beyers shook her lovely head and poured two cups of tea.

"Poor Randolph," she murmured. "He gets so angry about things."

Timothy Ravel came in the room then, and Danny Kilgore saw the sarge visibly draw a deep breath of relief, while the uneasy cloud of bafflement at last left his rugged features completely.

"Hello, sergeant," Timothy Ravel said genially, as he entered. "Glad to see you got here. I did hate to ask you to come, but—"

"You asked him?" Mrs. Beyers' voice expressed surprise. "But I asked the sergeant, too. To reassure Randolph that really we had no—"

Sergeant Tierney coughed uneasily.

"To tell you the truth, ma'am," he said, a little sheepishly, "you both asked me. And then Mr. Beyers came in and asked me, too."

Timothy Ravel and Mrs. Beyers broke into helpless laughter.

"We both asked him," Mrs. Beyers gurgled. "All unknown to each other, we both went down to ask the sergeant to come protect Randolph from us. Oh, it's so funny!"

She and the tall man went off into another gale of laughter, in which Danny and Sergeant Tierney found themselves joining.

"Oh, dear!" Mrs. Beyers gasped presently, wiping tears of laughter from her eyes with a wisp of hand-

kerchief. "You must have thought us both awfully silly, sergeant."

"Still," Timothy Ravel said, "I'm glad he's here. Thank the Lord, I got Randolph here safe and sound, without any accidents en route. Now if anything happens to him, it's an act of God. The sergeant will be able to testify we had nothing to do with it."

"I'll go hurry him along," Mrs. Beyers said. "His tea is getting cold. When he's angry, he forgets everything."

She stepped out onto the balcony outside the French windows.

"Randolph!" she called. "Randolph! Do come in before the tea is all cold. The tiles can just as well wait until later."

She turned, with a little gesture of resignation.

"He's still glaring at those tiles," she said. "Now he's squatting down to look at them closer!"

With one final glance to see if her choleric husband was coming, she turned gracefully to re-enter the living room. But she had scarcely reached the threshold when from outside came a loud, unmistakable, chunking splash, like a large individual taking a belly-flop into a body of water.

Mrs. Randolph Beyers whirled about. Her hands went to her throat, and a startled cry wrenched itself from her lovely lips.

"Randolph!" she screamed. "Randolph! 'He's . . . he's gone!'"

Then she tottered, swayed, and fell in a dead faint across the threshold. Sergeant Tierney leaped up, and all the laughter of the minute before was wiped from his face. A cup of tea and a plate of cake went to the floor with a crash. But Sergeant Tierney was not going to the aid of a lady. He was heading for the doorway and the stairs. And

Danny was right at his heels as they burst outside into the patio that held the pool.

Even so, Timothy Ravel beat them to it. Taking off from the balcony above, pausing only to remove his coat, he flashed past their heads into the pool with a splash that sent water spraying into their faces.

He was under water for a full minute, and with the shadows of the trees across the agitated water, they could not follow him in its depths. When he did come up, it was only to take a deep breath and dive under again. And this time, when he broke the surface at last, he had Randolph Beyers with him.

The splash had been Randolph Beyers.

And Randolph Beyers was dead.

CHAPTER III.

TIERNEY POKES AROUND.

WHAT happened after that was routine.

Two hours later, Sergeant Thomas Tierney and Danny Kilgore stood there on the little balcony outside the second-floor living room and looked down at a scene of orderly confusion, as half a dozen headquarters men under the command of Captain Hodges rigged extension lights and prepared to drain the swimming pool. Not because anybody expected to find anything in it, but because there didn't seem to be anything else to do. On the same theory, the grounds had already been searched—nothing, of course, being found.

The whole story lay in the bedroom whose lighted windows were only thirty or forty feet from the sarge and Danny Kilgore. In that room on a bed lay Randolph Beyers.

And Randolph Beyers was dead.

Try as hard as you wanted to, you couldn't make any more out of it

than that. Randolph Beyers had been alive, and then all of a sudden he wasn't alive any longer. He had been standing staring at the cracked tiles of his swimming pool, and then he had been at the bottom of it—as if, gruesomely, he was seeking the answer as to how they got broken, down there.

Mrs. Randolph Beyers had spoken to him. She had turned away. She had turned back as the splash came, to see him vanishing into the water, not to reappear. She had screamed. Timothy Ravel, Sergeant Tierney and Danny Kilgore had gone to the rescue, but when they fished him out—Timothy Ravel doing most of the work—he was dead. And no amount of artificial respiration or oxygen inhalators had brought him back.

Tentatively, the M. E. pronounced that death had occurred from drowning. There was a bruise on the forehead, probably made when Beyers slipped or fell from an attack of dizziness—brought on by his rage—and struck his head on the tiling before striking the water.

Hitting the pool unconscious, he had breathed water into his lungs and had sunk, drowning immediately.

They had all heard him fall in, they had all been in the room together, and they could all testify to that fact. Under the circumstances, then, there was nothing to do but issue a judgment of accidental drowning.

In view of the somewhat unusual circumstances preceding the evening—especially the three requests for a bodyguard that had been made to Sergeant Tom Tierney—Captain Hodges chose to bustle around asking all the questions he could think of. But after it was all over, including a little talk with the widow, who explained in detail everything, while she vainly tried to stem the

tears that dampened the beautiful violet eyes, he was sympathetic and understanding to a degree that was almost human, not even having any words of censure for Tierney, which was extraordinary. He agreed—they all agreed—that the best thing would be to withhold from the newspapers all the story except the actual facts of the accidental drowning. The presence of two detectives could be accounted for—well, say they were there to guard the stones Mr. Beyers' assistant was expected to bring.

As Timothy Ravel had so clearly stated, just before the accident, his position and that of the lovely Mrs. Beyers might have been very tough if Tierney and Danny Kilgore hadn't been there. But their presence gave the two a clean slate. They had all been in the upstairs living room together when it happened.

And the arrival of Peter Duween, the assistant Beyers had been expecting to produce testimony that would convict Timothy Ravel and Mrs. Beyers of robbing him of a hundred thousand dollars' worth of diamonds that he couldn't prove were missing, added nothing to their knowledge. Because with Beyers dead, there was no way to check on the stock in hand. Duween knew what there *had* been, but Beyers might have sold those missing stones in his absence.

So there was no proof that either of the two had done anything wrong. Beyers was dead, and everything else was just routine.

Even the look of unhappiness on Sergeant Doubting Tom Tierney's face was routine. Danny Kilgore would have been surprised if it hadn't been there. He would have thought the suspicious old grouch was sick, or something.

Sergeant Tierney stood staring unhappily down into the murky

waters of the swimming pool. He had been standing like that so long that a line of little red ants, crawling with busy aimlessness back and forth under the balcony rail, had ventured daringly onto his heavy brogans when Timothy Ravel came to the window behind them.

"Whew!" he said, with an air of relief. "Sergeant, it was certainly lucky for us that you and your assistant were here tonight."

Tom Tierney turned, grumbling something under his breath that sounded like "Don't you believe it!" to Danny Kilgore. But it couldn't have been, because the sarge nodded.

"Yeah," he said gloomily. "Yeah, I guess that's right. For him to die right after he'd told us he suspected you was planning to bump him off—well, I guess it would 'a' been pretty tough for you. If we hadn't been here to know the facts."

"That's what I mean," Timothy Ravel answered, wiping his forehead. "It's the kind of coincidence writers are afraid to put in books, but which happens in real life pretty often. Considering his bad heart and his temper, it's surprising something like this hasn't happened sooner. As soon as he saw those broken tiles he began to swell up like a turkey gobbler and—"

"Yeah," Sergeant Tierney interrupted. "How *did* those tiles get broken?"

The broad-shouldered man gave a negligent shrug.

"Nobody can find out," he said. "Burr, the gardener, thinks the moving men who took the trunks away yesterday must have dropped them on the tiling and broken some. Well, I see they're draining the pool. Guess I'll go down and see if I can be of any help."

He turned away and, suddenly ac-

tive, Sergeant Tierney stepped into the room.

"C'mon, Danny," he grumbled. "We'll take a look around and see what a swell joint really looks like."

HALF an hour later, when they reached the kitchen, after Tierney had covered all the rest of the house in his slow, rolling walk that was halfway between a slouch and a waddle, Danny Kilgore had no more idea than at first what, if anything, the sarge had been looking for.

Probably, he hadn't been looking for anything in particular. Anyway, they hadn't seen anything in particular. Furniture shrouded in dust-cloths in silent empty rooms was what they had mainly seen, with a few side views into gleaming tile-and-chrome bathrooms and lacy-satin bedrooms.

When they reached the kitchen finally, the sarge did stop at last. It was the open pantry that had attracted his attention. More accurately, it was the bountiful supplies of food inside the pantry that had taken his eye. The sarge loved food. He even liked to stop in front of grocery stores and stare in. Danny had known him to stop in front of a high-class restaurant for half an hour on end, looking at the juicy red steaks and the fish cutlets on view in the window.

But because the sarge stared, Danny did too. The shelves were pretty empty, but stacked on the floor were things like two cases of canned milk, two cases of assorted soup, a case of soap, a barrel of flour, unopened, a hundred-pound sack of sugar newly opened and almost full, two cases of beer, two or three cases of canned vegetables; stuff like that, mostly still unopened.

Then Danny saw the sarge wasn't really looking at the food at all. He

ONCE IN A LIFETIME!



3 FULL-LENGTH BOOKS ONLY 25c!

Each set, handsomely boxed in groups of three, contains full-length novels by Nick Carter, Rudyard Kipling, Bertha M. Clay, and others.

Nick Carter's books are considered to be among the best adventure and detective stories ever written.

The mysterious charm of tropic India has been captured in the pages of Rudyard Kipling's books as no other author has caught it. The sweltering heat, jungle herds, weird adventure are all here.

Bertha M. Clay is the foremost writer of love romances which have never failed to thrill the hearts of her readers. Other books, by equally famous authors, are included.

Three wonderful books—each containing more than 225 pages—can be yours for only 25 cents! So fill in the accompanying coupon and mail it TODAY!

BOOK DEPT.

STREET & SMITH PUBLICATIONS, Inc.

Dept. A-B, 79 SEVENTH AVE.

NEW YORK, N. Y.

Inclosed please find \$.25 for which please send me, post prepaid, 3 books handsomely boxed.

NAME.....

ADDRESS.....

CITY.....

STATE.....

was looking at a thin line of little red ants crawling across the pantry floor, as if they had crawled across the balcony.

"Ants in the pantry!" Sergeant Tierney said, with something that was almost satisfaction. "These rich dumps can't keep them out any more than guys like us who live in bungalows can, hey, Danny?"

Then the sarge drifted on through the kitchen, and Danny followed him outdoors, to the garages behind the house. They paused again, this time before the outdoor incinerator which the Beyers mansion had in common with every other house in San Martino, the municipality supplying no trash-pick-up service.

Hopefully, Tom Tierney poked around in the incinerator for a moment, but found nothing of moment except some burned newspapers, unless you could call the head and part of the shaft of a golf club something. It was—or had been, before it got broken—an expensive spade niblick, in chrome steel, with a wooden shaft. But now it was the worse for wear, being somewhat battered around the edges as well as scorched and burned; all but a splinter of the wooden handle was gone, too.

Looking at it, Danny thought of the choleric Randolph Beyers and could just see, in his mind's eye, the old boy breaking the golf club on a rock and cursing until the surrounding bunkers rang. Grinning, he spoke his thoughts to the sarge.

Gloomily Tierney nodded and tossed the thing back into the incinerator.

"Likely, Danny," he murmured, likely," and ambled over toward the house, where the job of emptying the swimming pool was still going on.

Progress there, though, had come to a halt. Captain Hodges, slender and whiplike, was there, waiting boredly while the gardener Burr,

tramped around in the lowered water in boots. Timothy Ravel was there, too, peering in, and presently Mrs. Randolph Beyers herself, wrapped in a long blue opera robe, came tripping down from the house to watch.

"What's the matter?" she was asking Captain Hodges in a silvery voice as the sarge and Danny came up.

"Something's plugged up the outlet pipe," the captain told her. "The gardener says it happens sometimes. The screen over the outlet is loose."

"Aye," the gardener below them spoke. "There's something in the pipe."

He bent, and getting himself wet to the shoulder, fumbled for a moment. Then he came up with a soggy handful of cloth.

Danny, who was closest, reached down and took it from him, handing it on to Captain Hodges. But there was nothing interesting in the bundle that had stopped up the pool outlet. It was only a pair of black cotton stockings that had caught on a bit of waterlogged wood.

Hodges unwrapped them and turned to Mrs. Beyers.

"Yours, Mrs. Beyers?" he asked, and the lovely violet eyes thanked him as the woman took them.

"Yes, captain," she said. "They must have blown into the pool. I had them on the railing of the balcony to dry, and then I missed them. Oh, dear! And I accused one of the maids of taking them, too."

She made a small bundle of them and held them in her hand until it was apparent it would be some little time before the pool was emptied. Then she turned back to the house, and Timothy Ravel followed her. Hodges assured them he would not have to disturb either of them again before morning, and then he also left, putting Tierney in general

charge of finishing the routine examination of the pool.

Tierney devoted himself to an examination of the half-dozen broken tiles that had attracted the attention of Beyers just before he died. Danny noted that they were all cracked, as if something heavy had fallen on them, chipping a little piece away in the center of the crack. He figured the gardener was probably right. The expressmen might have dropped a trunk in carrying it to the driveway and done the damage. Anyway, the sarge found nothing informative in the damage. Nor in the pool itself, when it finally emptied. There was nothing in it but some sediment, a few leaves, and an old rubber bathing cap.

Nevertheless, after he had dismissed all his men to their homes and with Danny stood beside his jellopy in the clear cool shadows of midnight, the sarge jammed his hands in his pockets and his face was unhappier than Danny had ever before seen it.

Danny Kilgore drew in a deep breath of the clear air.

"Gee, sarge!" he said. "Don't feel so bad. It's just one of those funny coincidences that old man Beyers should get a stroke and fall into his swimming pool on the very night he's afraid of being murdered, and we're sitting inside to protect him so he won't be. That's all it is."

Sergeant Tierney let out a snort.

"It's a coincidence, yeah," he said sourly. "But it's not funny. It's not a bit funny, Danny. And if anybody tells you it is, don't you believe it!"

CHAPTER IV.

QUICK WEDDING.

DANNY KILGORE was pretty sore at Sergeant Tierney. It was all right to be a suspicious old grouch

part of the time; sometimes it paid dividends. But to sit around biting your fingernails day after day because a guy died all accidental while you were there to see nothing happened to him was a sure road to the bug-house.

It was taking away all of Danny's fun in life to have to be cooped up with the sarge these days, the way he spent his time mumbling to himself and scowling, and looking like a bulldog with indigestion.

"Jeepers!" he was muttering this afternoon, with the whole case long settled and the will probated and Randolph Beyers decently in his grave two weeks. "Jeepers, Danny, the more I think about it, the more suspicious I get. *Could* it 'a' been murder? Could it be that we been used? That we been made fools of? I wonder. *I do wonder!*"

"Aw, sarge," Danny said wearily. "Of course it couldn't. You know yourself you said a dozen times there's no human way anybody could 'a' murdered him."

"Then maybe they did it an in-human way," Tom Tierney rumbled doggedly. "Accidents don't happen like that—not in real life. In the morning, maybe, they were two crooks about to be found out with proof. When night came, Beyers was dead, there wasn't any proof against them, they had everything they'd stole safe, as well as the whole estate and about two million dollars."

Sergeant Tierney snorted like a horse taking its nose out of water.

"And all because of an 'accident.' A mighty damn lucky accident, if you ask me. If it wasn't that they came to me themselves, and asked me to be there, I'd— Well, I dunno what I'd think."

He settled back into a profound gloom. Danny looked over at him cautiously. If he wasn't careful, the

sarge would be having a breakdown. Maybe they *had* swiped the diamonds. That was possible. Maybe they'd done it so they could get away from the old crab, Beyers, go off together and be happy. If so, Danny didn't blame them. But murder? It wasn't possible.

Danny shook his head and picked up the day's paper. There, right on the front page, was a nifty picture of Mrs. Beyers herself. And a smaller one of Timothy Ravel. And a headline:

LOCAL COUPLE TO FLY TO YUMA FOR NUPTIALS TONIGHT

Danny sighed. She was a swell looker, all right.

"Aw, sarge," Danny said placatingly, "c'mon, cheer up." He passed the paper over to his superior. "Look at them. Two swell-looking people and if Beyers' dying gave 'em a break, who's to begrudge 'em? You said the other day you'd learned she was in Hollywood a while. Well, she can go back any time. Look at those gams! She's not wearing cotton stockings in this picture, either."

"Huh? What's that?"

"I said, she's not wearing any cotton stockings in this picture."

"Cotton stockings?"

"Yeah, like the ones plugged up the pool the night Beyers fell in. She probably wears 'em around the house. But in public—"

"Jeepers!" Sergeant Thomas Tierney said slowly and heavily, fixing a glazed look on Danny Kilgore. "Creepers!" he added. "Cotton stockings! And ants in the pantry!"

Then he grabbed for the telephone.

"Is this Mr. Alfred Havers?" he asked, when he got his number. "Attorney for the estate of Randolph Beyers? This is the police. We got a question to ask you. What

golf club did Mr. Beyers belong to? ... None? On account of his heart? Of course not! And what grocery store did the Beyers deal with, do you know? ... You have bills from the Superfine Market? Thanks a lot—"

He hung up.

"He didn't play golf!" he said hoarsely.

"Cripes' sake, sarge!" Danny began, but Tierney was on the phone again.

"Superfine Market? This is police business . . . Wanta ask you a couple questions. The first is, what was the last order you delivered to Mr. Randolph Beyers before he died?"

He waited a moment, then with a pencil jotted down the answer.

"Two cases of assorted soups, a case of soap, two cases of beer, a hundred pounds of sugar, a barrel of flour, three cases of assorted canned vegetables, and a bushel of potatoes. Delivered when? . . . Yeah, I got it. Now for the other question. Did Mrs. Beyers usually order stuff in that quantity? She didn't, huh? O. K., that's all."

"Hey," Danny put in questioningly, "you think she was planning to feed him to death—"

But Tierney was still working the phone. This time he was calling the residence of the late Randolph Beyers.

"This Mrs. Burr? Well, listen, Mrs. Burr, this is the police . . . A couple questions . . . When Beyers was alive, did the cook do much baking? No? Well, listen, have tea ready for half a dozen about five this afternoon. Yeah, tea. And have your husband fill up the swimming pool. Yeah, turn the water in it. Yeah, Mrs. Beyers is gonna have company—about five. And don't tell her I called."

He hung up, and as he swung



Complete Training For You

**NO MATTER WHERE YOU ARE
OR WHAT YOU DO**

FREE BOOK
gives full details
Mail the coupon
below. Book sent
postpaid. No ob-
ligation.

If you are sincerely ambitious and interested in making good in the fast-growing Diesel and Gas Engine field, immediately investigate National's training plan. It will fit your circumstances. A Plan for every Man. For those seeking immediate shop-training as well as for those who cannot give up present employment and income.

A Flexible Pre-tested Training Plan

We are definitely interested in helping men of limited income and "blind alley" job holders. This plan fits your needs. For 34 years National Schools, a recognized leader in trade education, has helped thousands of men to success. Time-tested shop methods. Fascinating, efficient preparation. Get the facts immediately.



NATIONAL SCHOOLS
Los Angeles

Request for **FREE BOOK**

NATIONAL SCHOOLS

Dept. 8-BS, 4000 So. Figueroa St., Los Angeles, Calif.

NAME _____ AGE _____

ADDRESS _____

CITY _____ STATE _____



**FOR
HOME
STUDY**



**TO WHAT EVERY
RADIOMAN SHOULD KNOW**

Information in a handy form covering modern Radio & Television in theory and practice. An entirely New Book that Points the Way to Success in Radio & Television—JUST OUT!

772 PAGES—400 DIAGRAMS & PHOTOS. Featuring Authentic, Clear & Concise Radio Information.

Physics of Sound—Radio Fundamentals—Ohm's Law—Batteries—Measuring Instruments—Power Supplies—Resistors—Inductors—Condensers—Transformers—Broadcasting—Radio Telephony—Vacuum Tubes—Radio Diagrams—Receiver Construction—Control Systems—Loud Speakers—Antennas—Phonograph Pickups—Public Address Systems—Aircraft & Marine Radio—Radio Compass—Radio Beacons—Automatic Alarm—Short Wave Principles—Coil Calculations—Electronic Television—Testing—Interference Suppression—Trouble Pointers—Underwriter's Standards—Tables—Review Questions & Answers—Ready Reference Index.

\$4

Get this practical information in handy form for yourself—Fill in and mail coupon today.
COMPLETE • PAY \$1 A MO.

THEO. AUDEL & CO., 49 WEST 23rd STREET, NEW YORK
Mail AUDELS NEW RADIOMANS GUIDE for free examination. If O. K., I will send you \$1 in 7 days; then remit \$1 monthly until price of \$4 is paid. Otherwise, I will return it.

Name _____
Address _____
Occupation _____
Reference _____ JACK

Watch **FREE** with every ring ordered and paid for in one year!

ONE YEAR TO PAY FOR RING

Choice of Man's or Lady's



TINY SMART JEWEL

To introduce our new Sterling Silver Simulated Diamond Rings, decorated in 1/30 14K Gold, we will give you your choice of man's **gold plate front** or ladies' 1939 **jeweled wrist watch** with every ring ordered **NOW** and **paid for within one year** on our new easy two \$2 payment plan! (total only \$4). The watch comes to you as a **Gift** It does not cost you one cent extra! Wear 10 days on approval! Mail **coupon or postcard NOW!** **SEND NO MONEY** with order! We pay postage. **We Trust You!** Your package comes by **return mail!**



WE TRUST YOU!
We pay postage and ship **AT ONCE!**

Gold Standard Watch Co.
Dept. A-527, Newton, Mass.

Rush offer. ☐ Lady's ☐ Man's

Name _____
Address _____

STOP *the* ITCH of Insect Bites—Heat Rash

For quick relief from itching of insect bites, heat rash, athlete's foot, hives, eczema and other externally caused skin troubles, use world-famous, cooling, antiseptic, liquid D.D.D. Prescription. Greaseless, stainless. Soothes irritation and quickly stops the most intense itching. 35c trial bottle proves it, or money back. Ask your druggist today for **D. D. D. PRESCRIPTION.**

WILL YOU WEAR THIS SUIT

and Make up to \$12 in a Day!

Let me send you a fine all-wool union tailored suit **FREE OF ONE PENNY COST.** Just follow my easy plan and show the suit to your friends. Make up to \$12 in a day easily. No experience—no house-to-house canvassing necessary.

Send for Samples—FREE OF COST

Write today for **FREE** details. **ACTUAL SAMPLES** and "sure-fire" money-getting plans. Send no money. **H. J. Collin, PROGRESS TAILORING Co., Dept. W-103, 500 South Throop Street, Chicago, Illinois.**

DO YOU

Then become a foot correctionist, and in a few weeks earn big income in service fees—not medical, not chiropody—easy terms for home training, no further capital needed, no goods to buy, no agency. Established 1894. Address

Stephenson Laboratory, 33 Back Bay, Boston, Mass.

BE A RAILWAY TRAFFIC INSPECTOR

Let Us Help You to a Good Job!

Simple, home-study course trains you quickly in Railway and Bus Passenger Traffic Inspection, and upon completion we place graduates at up to \$135 per month, plus expenses to start, or refund tuition. Interesting work—travel (outdoors) if you like. Plenty of opportunities for ambitious men—19 to 50. Free Booklet.

Standard Business Training Institute, Div. 3408, Buffalo, N. Y.



around, there was sweat on Tierney's brow.

"Jeepers!" he said feebly. "Jeepers, that clinches it! There it was staring me in the eye. Ants in the pantry! If I'd only thought to ask did the cook usually do much baking!"

Danny shook his head weakly, unable to grasp any of it. The sergeant was mumbling to himself as he reached for the telephone for yet a fourth time.

"Murder!" he groaned. "With two cases of assorted soups, a case of soap, two cases of beer, a hundred pounds of sugar, a barrel of flour, three cases of assorted canned vegetables a bushel of potatoes, and a golf club the weapons! And a pair of cotton stockings. Sweet murder! And me practically an accessory. I'll never live this down!"

WHAT arrangements Sergeant Thomas Tierney made after that Danny could not know, because before he made them he sent Danny out on an errand.

"Make a list, Danny," he mumbled. "I want you to do some errands for me and buy some stuff. Here's ten bucks to pay for it. First I want a set of bathroom scales, the kind they sell in drugstores. Then I want a clothing-store dummy. Get it at that place on Ocean Street. Get a dummy of a man; the kind that stands out in front of cheap stores and grins at you like an idiot. Then get me two pairs of ladies' black stockings. Any kind, so long as they're cotton. Then a spade niblick with a wooden shaft. Have the black stockings and the set of bathroom scales brought to me here. Right away. Keep the dummy and the mashie niblick in my car. And have my car parked at the end of the tile walk by the swimming pool outside the Beyers joint at five o'clock exact."

Danny Kilgore goggled at him helplessly.

"You want me to get you a clothing-store dummy, a set of bathroom scales, two pairs of black cotton stockings, and a mashie niblick?" he gulped. "You really want me—"

Sergeant Tierney rose up, two hundred pounds of wrath, and Danny fled hastily. The last words he heard as he beat it through the door were the sarge's bellowed:

"And a pair of football shoes, the kind with cleats! Pick out a pair to fit you, Danny. And I don't wanna see you again before five sharp. I'm gonna be busy!"

CHAPTER V.

COTTON—AND SUGAR!

DANNY knew when to stop asking questions. He also knew that either the sergeant was completely batty at last, or else he, Danny, was. Baking! Ants in the pantry! Bathroom scales! Danny shook his head mournfully, but he did as the sarge had ordered. He had a messenger rush a set of bathroom scales and two pairs of black cotton stockings to police headquarters. At a sporting goods shop he picked up a bargain in a spade niblick, cheap because the shaft was warped, and a pair of shopworn football shoes that he didn't dare not get, even though how you could work football shoes into a murder—if it was a murder—would have stumped Einstein.

Finally, down on Ocean Street he got a dandy dummy, life-sized, with a round wooden bottom to stand on and a wooden shaft running up into a plaster bust clothed in a natty morning coat with a gardenia in the buttonhole and a flowing Ascot tie. The dummy stared at him with a fixed smirk that was as inane as Danny Kilgore felt. He bought a cheap hat to go on the head of the thing, and shamefacedly hid it away

in the back of the sarge's sedan.

And at five sharp he parked as ordered outside the expensive residence that had been Randolph Beyers'.

"Come on upstairs and report," the sarge had ordered, so Danny ambled past the swimming pool, which was full of clean blue water that glinted brightly in the California afternoon sun, and let himself into the house through the invitingly open door.

That something was happening was evident. There were half a dozen other cars parked in the driveway when he arrived, and among them was the sedan that belonged to Theodore Wells, the D. A., and the fast coupé peppery Captain Hodges drove around in.

But there was no one in sight around the grounds, and Danny Kil-

FLASH!



King of them all—for camp—hikes—night signaling—to find things in the dark. This powerful flashlight is the best.

All you have to do to get yours is to send us three one-year subscriptions to **CLUES-DETECTIVE STORIES**. Two subscriptions must be sent to addresses other than your own. Easy, isn't it? Send for yours soon.

STREET & SMITH PUBLICATIONS, Inc.
Dept. A-B, 79 Seventh Ave., New York, N. Y.
Here are three one-year subscriptions to **CLUES-DETECTIVE STORIES** along with the money, \$3.00 (\$3.75 in Canada). Attached are the additional subscriptions. Send my flashlight to:

Name

Address

City State

This offer is good in the United States and Canada until November 1, 1939

gore entered the house and went upstairs with a lively curiosity.

He reached the head of the stairs and paused. A muffled voice was emerging from behind the closed door of a nearby room.

"I demand to be released. This is un—"

That was the cultured voice of Timothy Ravel, all right, and it had broken off abruptly as if a big hand had been clamped over Mr. Ravel's mouth. Danny looked sidewise at the closed door, and then knocked at the door of the little upstairs living room, entering when he heard the sarge answer.

INSIDE, there was the D. A. sitting pompously in a chair and balancing a cup of tea in his hand. Captain Hodges was perched stiffly on the edge of a couch, also juggling a cup of oolong. The sarge was there, standing awkwardly beside the door. And last, but most noticeable, there was pretty Mrs. Beyers, all dolled up in some swell new clothes, with a ring on her finger that glittered like a locomotive headlight.

Not as brightly as her dusky violet eyes were glittering, though.

"Please!" she was saying, and her voice was simple and eloquent of her disturbance. "Won't you tell me what this is all about? Something to do with Randolph, you said. But surely there's nothing new to know about Randolph. The poor dear had a stroke and fell into the pool and was drowned—"

She gestured outward, and half turned. Then she gasped.

"You've filled the swimming pool!" she exclaimed. "Why?"

"In a moment, Mrs. Beyers," Theodore Wells said suavely, "Sergeant Tierney will explain."

And he shot a glance at the sarge

that said plainly the sarge had better be ready to do some pretty fancy explaining in a hurry, or else—

Tierney ambled forward to stand near the windows. His face was still that of a bulldog who has lost his master.

"Mrs. Beyers," he mumbled, "I was wondering of you'd mind answering a couple of questions occurred to me. I got a copy of a grocery order was delivered here only the day before your husband died. If you was closing the house, I was wondering why you ordered so much stuff. Here's the list."

He read it. Danny saw Hodges and the D. A. turn inquiringly toward Mrs. Beyers. She smiled at them.

"For Mr. and Mrs. Burr," she said simply. "Merely staple supplies for their use while we were gone."

Hodges and the D. A. nodded. Tierney nodded, too.

"Yeah," he said, "but I was wondering. I understand your cook never did much baking. And Mrs. Burr says she don't bake. I was wondering why you wanted a hundred pounds of sugar and a barrel of flour for just two people for three months, when they ain't going to do any baking."

Hodges and the D. A. looked impatient, but Mrs. Beyers did not seem to mind the inconsequence of Tierney's question.

"Maybe I'm not an awfully good housekeeper," she said, and her silvery laugh tinkled through the room. "I just wanted there to be enough."

"Sure," Tierney nodded heavily. "But Mr. Beyers didn't play golf."

The D. A. turned angrily, but Tierney spoke quickly.

"I found a broken golf club in the incinerator the night Beyers died," he said. "I was just wondering where it came from. Well, that's

enough questions, Mrs. Beyers. Except a couple I want to ask somebody else."

He raised his voice.

"Joe, bring in Burr."

The door opened, and plainclothesman ushered in the lanky form of Andrew Burr, the gardener.

"Burr," Tierney rumbled, "the swimming pool can't be seen from your part of the house, can it? From the kitchen, the garages, or the servants' quarters, I mean."

"It can not," the gardener replied promptly.

"Tell me, Burr, did you hear any strange sounds the night before Mr. Beyers died?" Tierney asked next. "From the direction of the pool?"

"Aye," Burr answered, "a hammering sound for about five minutes. Naught else. I did not investigate because it ended soon, and I was abed."

"Thanks," Tierney sighed, and waved him out. "The noise," he remarked to the D. A. and Captain Hodges, "that was somebody bustin' those tiles, the way I figure it out."

"What the devil for?" Hodges rapped.

"So," the sarge said patiently, "Beyers would see them and get mad and stop to look. We know how easy he got mad. A thing like that could not fail. But now I got something more to show you. It'll be easier to show you than to tell you. Ex-

GET BIG HUSKY MUSCLES!



\$2.99
Send No Money



WALL EXERCISER

AMAZING NEW 37 FEATURE

Big Muscle Building Training Course

Save money on this amazing course of physical culture. Big Husky 10 Cable Muscle Builder Exerciser. 200 Lbs. Resistance (Adjustable). Two Heavy Duty Hand Grips. Wall Exerciser for back and shoulder development. Head Harness (adjustable) and Foot Gear. Rowing Machine Attachments. Skip Rope. The Great Shadow Boxer. Completely Illustrated Course "HOW TO GET STRONG". FOODS-EAT AND GROW STRONG. Secrets of Jiu Jitsu. Wrestling Holds. Feats of Strength. Special Ways to Get Big Biceps. Strengthen Your Back. Muscle Gauge. Test Your Own Strength. Secrets of Chest Expansion. Stomach Muscles. Power for Legs and Thighs. "For Men Only," facts you should know. Developing Husky Legs. Special "30 Day Training Schedule" that tells you what to do each day and numerous other features. All this—for only \$2.99. Send your name and address. We'll ship everything out by return mail. Pay postman only \$2.95 plus postal charges. Outside U. S. cash with order.



ROWING MACHINE

30 DAY TRAINING

FOR MEN ONLY

HOW TO GET STRONG

HERCULES EXERCISES

49 East 21st St. Dept. G-13
New York, N. Y. © I. P. D. Inc.



UP TO \$32.50 IN A WEEK IN ADVANCE

HOSE for Your Personal Use Sent With Outfit

WEAR HOSE WE FURNISH and make money taking orders. Supply amazing hosiery (men's, women's, children's). Guaranteed to wear without holes, snags, or runs for as long as HALF YEAR (depending on number of pairs) or will be replaced FREE. Fords given as bonus. Grace Wilber earned \$37.10 in 9 hours, received 3 new cars. Mr. Porer earned \$127.00 in 6 days. Send penny postal for quick starting offer Now! WILKNIT HOSIERY CO., Midway G-16 Greenfield, Ohio

ACCOUNTING

the profession that pays—

Accountants command good income. Thousands needed. About 47,000 Certified Public Accountants in U. S. Many earn \$2,000 to \$10,000. We train you thoroughly at home in your spare time for C. P. A. examinations or executive accounting positions. Previous bookkeep-

ing knowledge unnecessary—we prepare you from ground up. Our training is personally given by staff of experienced C. P. A.'s. Low cost—easy terms. Write now for valuable 48-page book free, "Accounting, the Profession That Pays."

LASALLE EXTENSION UNIVERSITY
A CORRESPONDENCE INSTITUTION

Dept. 765-H, Chicago



Classified Advertising

Detectives—Instructions

DETECTIVES EARN BIG MONEY. WORK HOME. TRAVEL. DETECTIVE particulars free. Experience unnecessary. Write GEORGE WAGONER, 2640-A Broadway, New York.

Patents Secured

PATENTS—Reasonable terms. Book and advice free. L. F. Randolph, Dept. 513, Washington, D. C.

Old Gold Wanted

GOLD—\$35 OUNCE. Ship old gold teeth, crowns, jewelry, watches—receive cash by return mail. Satisfaction Guaranteed. Free information. Paramount Gold Refining Co., 1500-G Hennepin, Minneapolis, Minn.

Correspondence Courses

CORRESPONDENCE COURSES and educational books, slightly used. Sold. Rented. Exchanged. All subjects. Satisfaction guaranteed. Cash paid for used courses. Complete details and bargain catalog Free. Send name. Nelson Company, H-215 Manhattan Building, Chicago.

Photo Finishing—Developing

AT LAST! ALL YOUR SNAPSHOTS IN NATURAL COLORS. Roll developed, 8 Natural Color Prints, only 25c. Reprints, 3c. Amazingly beautiful. Natural Color Photo, Janesville, Wisconsin.

ROLLS DEVELOPED—25c coin. Two 5x7 Double Weight Professional Enlargements, 8 gloss prints. Club Photo Service, Dept. 17, La Crosse, Wis.

CAMERA ROLL DEVELOPED and 2 Deep View Prints of each exposure, 25c. 35mm fine grain, and 36 3/4 x 4 1/2 glossy enlargements, \$1.25. Immediate service. Satisfaction guaranteed. Photolab, Box 5544, Chicago, Dept. DD.

cuse me, ma'am. Excuse me, captain. Only—would you watch out the window for a couple minutes?"

He waddled out of the room before anyone could question him, and the D. A. and the captain looked uneasily at each other. Tears trembled in the lovely eyes of Mrs. Randolph Beyers.

"What . . . what is he trying to do?" she whispered. "It seems so awful . . . to be reminded of poor Randy . . . after it's all over with—"

"If this is some cockeyed notion of Tierney's," the D. A. said wrathfully, "he'll—"

He left the threat unfinished as the captain, scowling too, joined him at the French windows. The beautiful widow, biting her lip and bravely holding back the tears, joined them. Danny edged up close enough to peer over their shoulders.

"Batty!" Danny heard Hodges mutter under his breath. "Completely batty!"

INDEED, anybody who watched Sergeant Tierney then had a good reason for calling him batty. The first thing the sarge did was to go to his parked car and reappear with a golf club in his hand. He paused beside the pool and suddenly attacked the tiling around it with a maniacal fury. From above they could see the tiles cracking beneath the blows of the golf club. Then the golf club snapped in the face of such violent misuse.

Apparently that was just the first act. For now he went back to the car, and this time he returned carrying the clothing-store dummy, which Danny had named Oscar, under his arm.

Mrs. Beyers drew in her breath sharply. The D. A. muttered something under his breath.

Down below, at the point where he had just broken the tiling, Tierney stopped. He pointed to the damage, and the dummy ducked its head, as if interested. Tierney stood

the thing up on its base and moved away a few feet. Then he spoke—first in a deep rumbling basso, then in a higher and more cultured voice, like an actor playing both parts of a drama.

"Thunder and damnation!" That was the basso voice. "Who cracked these tiles?"

"I really couldn't say." That was the other voice. "Let's go in and have some tea. I'm starved."

"Holy mackerel!" the D. A. whispered. "He's pretending—"

"—that he's Ravel!" Captain Hodges gulped. "And the dummy is Beyers! But what in heaven's name—"

"Hell's hot fires!" That was Tierney using the deep voice again—the voice that was supposed to be Oscar the dummy, alias Mr. Randolph Beyers, speaking. "Here's another one. And another! God knows how many more are broken, but I'm going to find out!"

"Suit yourself," Tierney answered the deep voice in the higher register. "I'm going on in!"

"Jumping Jehoshaphat!" Captain Hodges whispered harshly.

For now Sergeant Tom Tierney, leaving the dummy standing there gazing vacantly away into space, ducked swiftly into the bushes behind it. He came out in an instant with something black in his hand. Swiftly he strode up behind the unsuspecting dummy. The hand holding the black object rose. The thing he held came down viciously against the dummy's plaster temple.

Oscar the dummy toppled over, and the sergeant caught it tenderly, lifted it in his arms, and lowered it with care face down into the still waters of the pool. The black object he tossed in beside the floating figure, and it sank instantly from sight.

Then Tierney turned and came swiftly into the house, up the stairs, and reappeared in the room.

"Now," he said grimly, in his own voice, "figure five minutes have passed, while the guy out there in the pool finishes drowning. Then—"

He crossed the room to the French doors and stepped outside onto the balcony, while they stared at him with incredulity and dawning horror in their eyes. Mrs. Randolph Beyers' face had drained to a dead white, on which the make-up was a harsh splash of color. And in her violet eyes something dark and terrible seemed, to Danny's gaze, to be crawling.

ON THE balcony, Sergeant Tom Tierney gazed down at the pool.

"Randolph!" he cried in a horrible travesty of a woman's voice. "Do come in before the tea is all cold."

Then he turned back toward them. And even as he turned, from the pool outside came a loud, chunking splash, as if a large figure had belly-flopped into it.

Danny Kilgore felt something cold snake up his spine; something of utter horror. Something that seemed to crawl with icy feet over his skin as he stared at Mrs. Beyers' face.

"It's fantastic!" she cried, the words coming from her throat as if they were sharp-edged and had to be forced out. "Mad!"

She turned to the D. A. and to Captain Hodges for support, her lovely face agonized, twisted.

"He's crazy," she whispered. "He's trying to shock me. To hurt me. Take . . . take him away! He's imagined something. It isn't so! It's a plot. Oh, you're all in it. All of you! I tell you it's not so!"

Her voice rose into a scream. Her hands were clenched so that the long



AMAZING BOOK VALUES FOR YOU

3 BOOKS FOR \$1.00.

USUAL PRICE \$2.25!

Each novel is clothbound, contains over 250 pages, and has a full-color jacket illustrated with a scene taken directly from the contents.

SEND NO MONEY IN ADVANCE!

You Pay When The Postman Delivers!
Check the three books you want on the handy coupon below.

MAIL THIS COUPON TODAY!

CHELSEA HOUSE PUBLICATIONS, Dept. A-3
79 7th Avenue, New York, N. Y.

Send me three books which I've checked below. I will pay the postman \$1 upon delivery.

ADVENTURE STORIES

- ☐ The Rubber Mask.....F. L. Stickney
- ☐ The Golden Ball.....Thompson & Hubbard
- ☐ Mr. Chang's Crime Ray.....A. E. Apple
- ☐ The Sheriff of Vacada.....Joseph Montague
- ☐ Wanted—Sonny Tabor.....Ward M. Stevens
- ☐ The Call of Shining Steel.....Don Waters

LOVE STORIES

- ☐ Mood For Love.....Vivian Gray
- ☐ Half a Wife.....Audrey D. Mountain
- ☐ Hollywood Star Dust.....M. G. MacGill
- ☐ Fool's Heaven.....Mary Frances Doner
- ☐ Here Is My Heart.....Ellen Hogue
- ☐ Marriage Is Arranged.....Philip Fair

Name.....

Address.....

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

blood-red nails looked suddenly like a vampire's claws.

But Sergeant Tierney was coming swiftly into the room, directly toward her, and something grotesque was in his hands. It was as if he carried a woman's black-stockinged leg in one hand, and the foot to match in the other—horribly lumpy, shapeless leg and foot.

And now he dropped them with a solid thud at Mrs. Beyers' feet.

"Black cotton stockings!" he said grimly. "Filled with sugar. One, only the foot filled, hidden behind the bushes, used as a slungshot to knock your husband out when the damage to the tiles, made in the night by Timothy Ravel, was pointed out to him. The other, filled to the knee, hidden on the balcony, pushed over with your foot as you turned, so that it fell into the water with a splash—as if a man had just fallen in.

"Altogether, eighteen pounds of sugar. In that hundred-pound sack of sugar in your pantry, exactly eighteen pounds are gone. I weighed it. In the pool down there Beyers is dead, and the sugar is dissolving. When the pool is emptied nothing will be found. Nothing but two cotton stockings."

Sergeant Tierney's bulldog eyes fastened on the violet orbs of the girl like hypnotic fires.

"Murder under my nose!" he roared. "Murder with me almost an accomplice! Murder managed like a play, staged by Timothy Ravel, who used to be a stage director before New York ran him out, and played by you, who used to be a sort of actress. Murder to keep you both from going to the pen for stealing from him, in a conspiracy to take advantage of his absent-mindedness. Murder where you called in the cops first, instead of later! To make us think your husband was batty when he came to us. And to have us on the spot to alibi you, so there

wouldn't be no investigation. Smart murder! Sweet murder!

"But Ravel has talked, you hear? I put the pressure on him, and he's talked. I know everything now. How you ordered all those groceries you didn't need, so nobody would guess you had a special reason for needing the sugar. How Ravel broke the tiles. How you figured on all the servants being away to prevent any accidental witnesses from seeing him put the old guy in the pool. And how could I know unless he told me?"

Mrs. Beyers stood with her hands at her mouth, as if his words were whiplashes. And they continued to fly her.

"They never send a pretty girl to the gas chamber. So do you wanta talk to save yourself. Before it's too late? 'Cause he says it was your idea. He says—"

"It wasn't!" The words were a choked and panting scream. "It wasn't. He talked me into it all. First into stealing the memoranda. Then into killing—"

Then she broke altogether, and made a mad dash for the windows, to leap to the pool below, so that the sarge had to grab her and hold those long white hands tipped with crimson nails like bloody claws hard to keep them away from his eyes while she gasped and kicked and screamed.

BUT presently it was over. And Timothy Ravel, who had been the sarge's altogether illegal prisoner in another room, had added his confession in an effort to make her share the blame she had heaped on his shoulders.

Danny could see now, of course. The sarge's way of acting the thing out had made it much plainer than words could. And Danny could see why the two of them had come to headquarters to ask for a cop—to make them think the old man was dotty when he showed up, which was

Men DIESEL

IF YOU ARE MECHANICALLY INCLINED AND INTERESTED IN

INVESTIGATE Hemphill training programs—developed over a period of years combining the accumulated experience of many Diesel engineers.

PRACTICAL Diesel and Diesel-electric training. Start training at home and complete it in any of the resident Hemphill Schools, or enroll in full-time resident day or night courses.

INTERESTING Hemphill Diesel training is practical—absorbing—useable. Includes work on industrial, transport and marine engines. The "March of Diesel" describes the various courses.

HEMPHILL DIESEL SCHOOLS are located at

Boston, 134 Brookline Avenue; New York, 31-40 Queens Blvd., Long Island City; Detroit, 2355 West Lafayette Blvd.; Chicago, 2038 Larrabee Street; Memphis, 457 Monroe Avenue; Los Angeles, 2129 San Fernando Road; Seattle, 513-B Dexter Avenue; Vancouver, B. C., 1369 Granville Street. Enrollments accepted from English speaking students in foreign countries.

HEMPHILL DIESEL SCHOOLS (use nearest address)

Please send data on your Diesel courses, also booklet "March of Diesel."

NAME _____ AGE _____

STREET _____

CITY _____ STATE _____ m-39-ts

AGENTS UP TO 25 IN A WEEK

Big cash profits for you; full or spare time. Over 250 household necessities—things people must buy. Proven fast sellers; steady repeaters, earnings very first day. **FORD TUDOR SEDAN GIVEN YOU AS BONUS.** I'll show you how to start at once; send you everything—Big Display Outfit and quick cash plans. Details **FREE**—no obligation. Just send name on postcard. **E. J. MILLS, 9476 Monmouth Ave., Cincinnati, Ohio.**



IF I Send YOU THIS FINE SUIT—

Will You Wear It and Show It to Friends? I need a reliable man in your town to wear a fine, made-to-measure, all-wool **DEMONSTRATING SUIT**—advertise my famous Union clothing—and take orders. You can make up to \$12.00 in a day. My line contains over 100 quality wools, all sensational values, guaranteed. You need no experience or money. I supply everything required. **FREE** of extra cost. Write me today for **FREE** details. **H. J. GRAVES, STONEFIELD CORP., 1300 W. Harrison Street, Dept. U-952, Chicago, Illinois**



★ GET A GOVERNMENT JOB ★

START \$1260 to \$2100 Year

Thousands Ap- / **FRANKLIN INSTITUTE, Dept. M 194**
pointments each
year Rochester, N. Y.

Get ready
at once. Sirs: Rush to me without charge (1)
32-page book with list of U. S. Govern-
ment jobs. (2) Tell me immediately how
to qualify for one of these examinations.

Men—Women. Name.....
Mail Coupon Address.....
today sure. /

ONE YEAR TO PAY FOR RING

Realistic. Flashing. Simulated. Diamond. Hand. Set in Genuine Solid Sterling Silver. 925 1000 Pure. Also "Belcher" set in 1/30 14K. natural yellow gold.

WATCH FREE WITH EVERY RING ORDERED AND PAID FOR WITHIN ONE YEAR!

CURVED SHOCK PROOF.



Curved, "shockproof" GOLD PLATE FRONT watch with all the color and charm of natural yellow gold. Diamond-cut escape wheels, temperature compensated. Accurate. \$1,000,000 FACTORY GUARANTEE enclosed. Watch is FREE of extra charge with every ring ordered NOW and paid for within one year, on our easy \$2 payment plan. (Total only \$4 for watch and ring.) No charge for Credit . . . We trust you! No red tape. We'll ship at once. TEN DAY FREE TRIAL. SEND NO MONEY WITH ORDER! Mail Coupon or Postcard NOW . . . your package comes (postage paid to your door) by RETURN MAIL.

GOLD STANDARD WATCH CO., Dept. R-527, Newton, Mass.

RUSH OFFER

☐ Lady's Model

☐ Man's Model

NAME

ADDRESS

Burroughs

Adding, Calculating, Billing, Accounting, Statistical, Cash Registering, Form-Writing Machines; Correct Posture Chairs; Supplies

Write for information

BURROUGHS ADDING MACHINE COMPANY
Detroit, Michigan

25 000 000 FOR THE New LUX CLEANER



HOUSEWIVES ARE WAITING

Makes Mopping and Wall Cleaning Easy. At last, a discovery that supplants the old-fashioned type of cloth, fiber and rubber sponges with the amazing new, practical du Pont Cellulose Sponge that holds 20 times its weight in water. So soft when wet, it cannot scratch or mar delicate surfaces. Can be sterilized by boiling. The new Super Lux Cleaner, with its unique mechanical wringing feature, keeps housewives' hands away from dirty water. It is light in weight and easy to operate. Removable head is perfect for window and door washing.

AGENTS!

Housewives buy on one minute demonstration. Make big money supplying them. Write today for full particulars and learn how you can get your mop free for demonstrating purposes by helping introduce it to others.

THE LUX COMPANY Dept. M-39, Elkhart, Ind.

just what they had thought. But there was still something he couldn't see. He didn't want to seem dumb, but finally he asked it.

"How'd I tumble?" Doubting Tom Tierney mumbled, rousing himself from the morose gloom he'd fallen into as he piloted them homeward. "The stockings. The cotton stockings that came out of the pool. I never even knew they was cotton till you told me. But, Danny, no dame like that would wear cotton stockings ever, any time, any place. She wouldn't be found dead in 'em. So if there was cotton stockings in the pool, there was something phony about them being there. Then I remembered the ants in the pantry."

"Ants in the pantry?" Danny gulped.

"Sure," the sarge told him. "They were attracted by the sugar spilt out of the big bag. And they were the same kind of ants that were crawling over the balcony, remember? What would attract little red ants to a bare concrete balcony? Sugar, Danny, the sugar that spilled outa the stocking full of it she planted there under the rail, then kicked over into the pool to make the splash we thought was him. It was in cotton stockings because they're tough—the silk would 'a' split open when Ravel slugged old Beyers with the one he hid in the bushes—and besides, cotton being more porous, the sugar dissolved quicker."

Sergeant Tierney drew a long breath.

Danny Kilgore hesitated. Then he asked the last question.

"But, sarge, the football shoes? What were they for?"

"To kick me with!" Tom Tierney said savagely. "To kick me with for letting a guy who came to me for protection be bumped off. And then to kick me with for not seeing right away that he had been bumped."

Learn ELECTRICITY

Pay For Your Training After You Graduate

Find out all about this wonderful offer. My big Free Book tells you how you can train for your start to a big pay job in Electricity . . . And through my "Pay Tuition After Graduation" Plan you can get your training now and pay for most of your tuition in easy monthly payments after you graduate.

STUDENTS BUSY AT WORK IN LARGE COYNE SHOPS

"LEARN BY DOING"

12 Weeks Practical Training in COYNE Shops

In the Big Coyne Shops you have individual help by expert instructors so that you quickly and easily learn Electricity by actual work. No advanced education or previous electrical experience is needed. You are taught Not by correspondence, not by books or embarrassing reciting but by the Famous Coyne "Learn-By-Doing" training method which has helped hundreds of successful graduates to get and hold the job they like, or go in to business for themselves.

At Coyne you do PRACTICAL ELECTRICAL WORK on real electrical equipment.

PART TIME WORK WHILE TRAINING

EMPLOYMENT HELP AFTER GRADUATION

If you are short of money and need part-time work to help pay for your room and board while training, my Employment Department will help you get a part time job. When you have graduated, they will give you Lifetime Employment Service.

You wind real armatures . . . run real motors, dynamos, generators. When you have finished each step, you KNOW HOW because you have done it yourself. If you are ambitious here is your chance to get the PRACTICAL TRAINING to qualify you for your start in the great electrical field.

H. C. Lewis

READ WHAT THESE GRADUATES SAY

I think the "pay after graduation" plan . . . offers the fellow who wants to get ahead in life a wonderful opportunity . . . I am now employed by the ——— Power Co. I have been employed by this Company ever since graduating from COYNE. I make almost double what I did at my previous work . . . COYNE School helped me in landing the job I now have. James Dible

I owe a lot to COYNE . . . I secured a job after returning home wiring cranes for the ——— Machine Co. Before going to COYNE I was clerking in a grocery store earning the usual clerk's wages. I was in doubt about quitting my job but I have tripled the cost of the entire course . . . in the first ten months. The school is everything you say it is and more. I was completely satisfied. Thanking you for your kind cooperation while at school and since returning home.—Jack E. Stroup



GET THE FACTS

Don't let lack of money keep you from sending in the Coupon now. My Big FREE Book is full of facts and photographs which tell you about Coyne Training. It also gives you the details of my Pay After Graduation Plan, Spare Time Employment Offer, Graduate Employment Service, Lifetime Scholarship and other advantages.

MAIL
COUPON



ELECTRIC REFRIGERATION AIR CONDITIONING

At this time I am including additional valuable instruction in these two important branches of electricity.

COYNE
occupies
this entire
Modern,
fireproof
Building



COYNE H. C. LEWIS, President FOUNDED 1899
ELECTRICAL SCHOOL
500 S. Paulina St., Dept. B9-45, Chicago, Ill.

Send Today for this FREE Book!

H. C. LEWIS, President,
COYNE ELECTRICAL SCHOOL,
500 S. Paulina Street,
Dept. B9-45, Chicago, Ill.

Dear Mr. Lewis:—Without obligation send me your big free illustrated catalog, with all facts about Coyne Training and details of your "Pay-Tuition-After-Graduation" Plan, as well as the details of your 4 weeks Radio Course you are including.

Name

Address

City

State

Mail in envelope or paste on a postcard

"I give Camels first place for good taste and mildness too"

—H. L. McNichols of the California Mountain Fire Patrol

H. L. McNICHOLS works on mountain fire patrol in southern California—fights fire with a tractor. Last fall Patrol No. 2 caught the report: "A blaze along a 6-mile front!" "Mac" drove directly into the flames. time and again ...battled on 18-hour shifts for 5 days. No wonder fellows with tough jobs like to get the best of smoking pleasure out of their cigarette. "Camels are smoother, mellower," says "Mac." "They add a lot of enjoyment to living."



BUILDING A FIRE-BREAK. Operators of these powerful Diesel caterpillars are called "skimmers." McNichols must negotiate treacherous slopes ... as he handles this mighty machine that takes rocks, brush, trees in its stride at a steady $\frac{1}{4}$ m.p.h.



"MAC" chats with a fireman friend who shares his liking for Camels. "I'm sold on Camels and so are most of my friends," he says. Try Camels—smoke 6 packs and give your taste a chance to appreciate why Camels are the most popular cigarette in the U. S. A.



AT THE CONTROLS of 16 tons of ripping, tearing Diesel power! McNichols enjoys happy smoking on the job. Let up and light up a smooth, mellow Camel yourself, and enjoy a matchless blend of finer, more expensive tobaccos—Turkish and Domestic.



Copyright, 1949
H. J. Reynolds
Tobacco Co.,
Winston-Salem,
N. C.

FOR SMOKING PLEASURE AT ITS BEST ..

Let up—Light up a Camel

the Cigarette of Costlier Tobaccos