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# GANG

TEN BIG STORIES



THE DEAD FIGHT  
BACK

action novel by

MARGIE HARRIS





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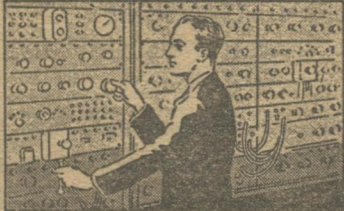
"I had an \$18 a week job in a shoe factory. I'd probably be at it today if I hadn't read about the opportunities in Radio and started training at home for them."



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COMPLETE!

# GANG

STORIES OF TRUE GANG LIFE

## TEN HELL-ROARING STORIES

Vol. 2, No. 1

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Feb., 1939, Issue

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This was the death-house watch . . . killers all . . . banded together with bonds of steel and blood to watch a right gee pass on . . . via the gas chamber route!

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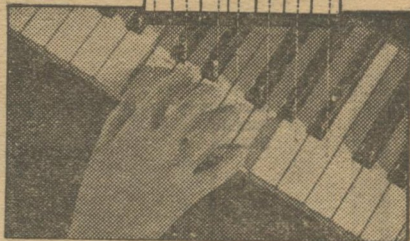
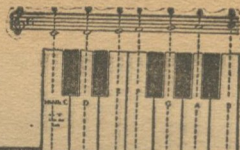




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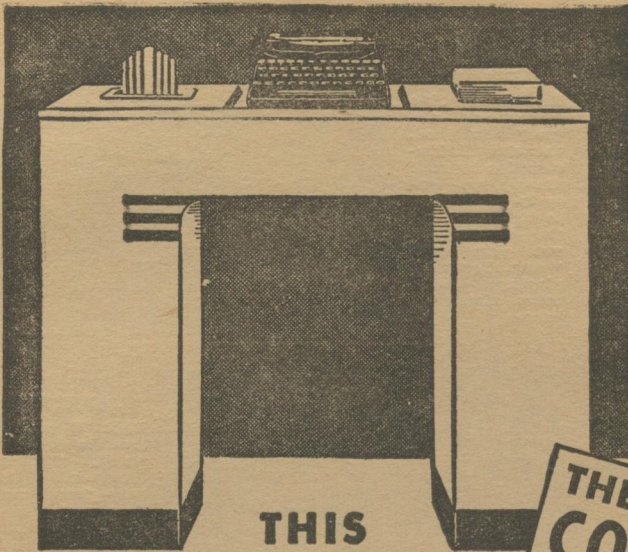
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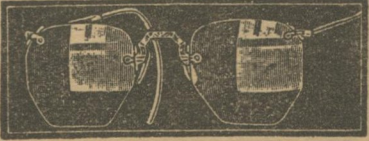
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---



# BACK



*Before he could level the gun, Mollie was fastening strong fingers about his arm, and Willets, black-jack ready, was diving in for him.*

## CHAPTER I

**J**EFFREY STEELE, stopping suddenly at the foot of the stairs leading to the second floor, set hard fingers about the elbow of his guide.

"This will be far enough," he said grimly,

"until I get some information. Who are you? Where is my brother? What has happened—and why all of this pussy-footing along alleys, through cellars and now into a deserted mansion?"

"I'm just following orders," his companion answered crisply.



Jeffrey's hand flashed to his armpit and came out with a German Luger. The safety latch moved clear under the pressure of his thumb.

"One of you is going to talk," he warned. "Either you or the gun. Where is my brother—and who are you?"

The other stared briefly at the cold lights in Jeffrey's green eyes before he replied:

"I'm the one man in the world, except yourself, whom Brandon Steele trusts. I sent the cable that brought you back from Europe. I had the note slipped under your door early this morning, and now, as the note directed, I'm taking you to Brand. Is that good enough, Mr. Jeffrey Steele?"

Jeffrey eyed him speculatively, marking the angry flush in the other's cheeks, and said in pleasanter tones:

"Provided it is as good as it sounds. You may keep going—but don't make any clear moves."

At the second landing the guide halted and pointed to a paint spot.

"Step on that," he directed. "There's a booby trap here that'll spill you into the basement if you miss."

Jeffrey nodded his understanding, duplicating the other's long stride in safety. Thence they proceeded to the top floor where the guide unlocked a heavy steel door that barred the hallway.

"Here we are," he said evenly. "Brad's in that room." He pointed to a door that showed neither lock nor knob. He knocked twice, once, then twice again, ending with a fingernail tattoo.

A metallic click followed instantly and the door swung wide. The outer room was in total darkness but a warm glow in a doorway to the left drew him forward. His hand still clung to the butt of the Luger.

"Jeff?" a heavy but musical voice called from within. "You've been a long time making it."

At the sound of the well remembered voice, Jeff sprang forward, pausing briefly in the doorway to stare in amazement at a

robed figure in an invalid chair.

Anyone would recognize them as brothers. Both were big men with finely moulded features, high foreheads, prominent noses. Each had the same humorous quirk at the mouth corners: the same sparkling, insolent eyes.

**B**UT the man in the chair was a tragic, shrunken hulk, his face marred by lines of suffering, great shadows about his eyes, while Jeffrey, in the prime of his middle thirties, was athletic and powerful.

In a flash he crossed the floor and took both of the wasted hands in his own.

"My God, Brand!" he whispered fiercely. "Why didn't you send for me before? What are you doing here—and what has happened to you?"

"Quite enough!" the other said evenly as he drew back a heavy robe and disclosed the glint of steel.

A heavy, latticed brace circled his body from thighs to shoulders. The sides were bolted to the arms of the heavy invalid chair, while extensors, padded like crutch-tops, fitted under his armpits.

There were deep pneumatic cushions, but Brandon Steele hung from his shoulders, day and night, in a metal framework! He drew the robe tight again, looking up at Jeffrey with a sardonic grin.

"Soft-nosed forty-fives," he explained. "They literally shot the legs out from under me. One, though, went higher and nicked my spine, so I'm dead from the ribs down."

Jeffrey closed his eyes to hide the horror that was in them, and the pity. But he opened them as quickly for before his mind there had passed the vision of the Brandon Steele of other days, debonnair, resourceful, New York's squarest, fairest gambler since the days of the great Canfield.

"Good God, Brand," he said again. "Who did it—and why?"

"Moses Keller, Judge Holman Black, John Ison, Lew Willits and Joe Speer," the other answered, checking each name with



the tap of a finger. "It all is too involved for me to waste my few remaining hours in reciting, but Keller and Judge Black agitated a fake wave of reform, then came to me and demanded to be cut in on my place—and profits.

"Naturally I told them to go to the devil. I was quite sure of myself, confident that my friends in high places would not let me down. In the years of your absence I had rolled up a surplus of three millions. Two-thirds of it I sent to a London bank. The remainder is in safety deposit boxes here in New York.

"Then one night Keller and Black came to renew their demands. It was right at closing time and I always have thought that one of their men had hidden away in some closet. Anyway, Ison, Willits and Speer came in suddenly through the rear and held me up at the point of a gun.

"I went through hell that night, a worse hell than I'm enduring now. They beat and tortured me until my senses left me. When I regained consciousness they were searching the vault. They were five against one but I was too dazed to realize it. Somehow I dragged myself to my desk, got out my gun and managed to shoot Willits through the shoulder before they sensed their danger.

"I don't remember much after that, just the roar of their guns, the thud and slash of their bullets—and then a flaming agony that I hoped was death.

"It was Keller's plan, his and Judge Black's. The others were just helpers—but one of them, Jeffrey, fired the shot that paralyzed me."

He paused, staring straight before him in grim introspection.

"There are two of us now, Brand," Jeffrey said softly, but paused as Brand held up three fingers. "You, me and Harry Magruder," he said, "the chap who brought you here. He used to be one of my dealers, and he's sworn to help in a plan I have made."

"A plan?" Jeffrey echoed. "Is it workable? Can I help?"

Brand drew a deep breath and the hell flame of hate burned in his sunken eyes.

"I want these men," he said with grim emphasis, "one at a time: I want to wipe the slate clean before the month is gone. I may not be here—after that."

He opened a panel in the arm of his chair and produced an oblong steel box. From it he took a packet of big bills.

"Twenty thousand expense money," he said, handing the money over to Jeffrey, "chickenfeed. I want first of all a new hideout. Something tells me that Keller and company suspect that I'm here."

"Good!" Jeffrey replied. "I don't like the idea of you hidden away on the top floor of an untenanted house."

"But less than a year ago the finest of New York's gambling spots," Brand defended. "The furnishings were sold and the place was stripped; I thought it would be the last place where they'd look for me."

They were interrupted by the sound of hurrying feet. It was Magruder, in a state of wild excitement.

"We've waited too long, Brand," he announced. "They've found us! Ison and Speer are prowling the back right now; they'll be inside any minute."

**B**RAND grinned icily. A click sounded and a heavy automatic came up from inside the right hand arm of the chair.

"I'm able to hold this room," he said softly. "You and Harry take care of things downstairs, Jeff; he'll show you the tricks."

They hurried out, closing the steel door behind them. At the bottom of the second flight of stairs Harry opened a panel which disclosed a hideout high and wide enough for two men.

"Cashiers' hideout—with the bankroll—when they raided," he breathed. "Inside, quickly!"

He closed the covering except for a slight crack. The mumble of heavy voices came



to them as from a distance, then the scuffing of feet on bare boards. The footsteps came nearer on the stairs and a husky whisper said:

"Stay here while I scout around."

Jeff could hear heavy breathing. Suddenly a shadow cut off the knifeblade of light from the hall.

Then there was a muffled click, a shouted curse that changed to a yell of fear.

"Down the chute!" Harry whispered. "I'm following. The rest is up to you."

Peering cautiously around the edge of the hideout he glimpsed the second man on the next to top step. He was leaning forward, staring into the dark opening. Harry caught at his coat collar, heaving forward and down viciously. The pull carried the man into the hallway and on his face, his body bridging the trap.

As he fell, Harry went clattering down the stairs. Jeffrey leaned forward, bringing his gun barrel chopping down hard against the sprawled man's head. He moaned once, then lay still.

Sounds wafted up the trap on the upcast of air. Someone moaned weakly down there as he was dragged out onto the floor. A voice said:

"All under control down here; how's about up there?"

"Mine's out colder than a wedge," Jeffrey replied. "He'll be here if you don't come back until dark."

Stepping over the prostrate form, he swung it free of the trap then searched the clothing methodically. There was a needle pointed knife in a sheath sewed into the coat lining, and there were letters, bills, a wallet, cigarets and a pocket lighter.

Harry came hurrying up the stairs and looked at the still form.

"Joe Speer," he said, "one of the bunch that tackled Brand. He's a knife man—an expert. A dollar gets you ten that he doesn't tote a gun."

He stretched and grinned.

"I've got John Ison tied up downstairs.

They sure would have spelled bad luck for Brand if we hadn't stopped them."

"Yes, Harry, we've got them, but what will we do with them? I've been a war correspondent and I know my way about, but there's nothing in my book about potential killers—unless you hand them over to the police."

Harry shook his head briskly.

"You haven't got the picture. To the world and the police Brandon Steele is dead. It was announced from the hospital and some poor bum got a fine funeral.

"Dr. Bruce Lipton had kept him alive. He designed the chair and the braces and he helped smuggle Brand back here as soon as he could be moved. Somehow, though, Keller and his outfit learned the truth and they've been combing the city night and day for him for months.

"So we'll leave Ison and Speer tied up while we get Brand into a new hideaway. By the time they work free they'll be out of luck—too late."

They carried the burly Speer to the basement where they left him trussed and gagged, beside Ison. They found Brand awaiting them coolly in the secret room at the top of the house. Jeffrey let Harry tell the story. At the end Brand said:

"That means move and in a hurry." Noting Jeffrey's worried expression, he went on: "It's simple: the way I came from the hospital. Harry has a friend with a covered half-ton truck. You just move me, chair and all, to the new place. It's as simple as that."

He wrote an address on a slip of paper and handed it over to Harry. "Hurry it up," he grinned. "I'm anxious to go motor-ing again."

## CHAPTER II

THE trip from the old mansion to the new hideout was short as to miles, but Jeffrey and Harry drew sighs of relief as the closed truck drew up



finally in the rear of a red brick house in the East Twenties. There had been deadly moments of suspense. Once another car had locked bumpers with the truck and a spill—fatal for Brand—had seemed certain.

The rear door was unlocked. Among them Jeffrey, Harry and the friendly driver managed to smuggle Brand and his chair into the rear hall unseen. Harry disappeared in the front, to return soon with a tall, cadaverous man whose burning black eyes somehow seemed to belie the lines of pain in his face.

"Brandon!" he said heartily. "So they finally flushed you, did they? Well, you've come to the right place. As I promised, there's a room waiting for you."

"Thanks, Doctor," Brand replied. "And this is Jeffrey; you two should remember each other."

"Surely I remember him," Lipton said, shaking Jeffrey's hand heartily. "He's the chap who's been chasing all over Europe following war rumors, while you were getting yourself shot up in your platinum and gold gambling hell, eh."

There was a strong odor of liquor about him. He saw that Jeffrey had noticed it, and said, defensively:

"Brandon's not the only one who holds onto life by a toenail, Jeffrey. I've an aortal aneurism—like a blister on a tire. When it blows out, I'm through. Meanwhile I keep going on brandy, so don't hold the odor against me."

Jeffrey held his eyes for a long moment. "If you could know my gratitude for what you've done for Brand—" he began, but Lipton interrupted gruffly:

"Forget it, Jeff. I owe Brand more than I even can repay, so let's cut out the sentimental bosh before we all start crying like a lot of old women at a wake."

He directed the transfer of Brand's chair to a hospital-white room at the front of the house next to the tiny surgery, then brought an extension cord to restore life to the lights and fittings of the chair.

"You understand," he said quietly, "that you'll be safe here until the house falls. However, I may have some patients who are on the wrong side of the law." As he left the room, Brand responded to the question in Jeffrey's eyes.

"They dumped him out of the hospital because of the brandy. He made a slip in an emergency operation and lost his license, so he moved down here where the underworld knows him for a 'right croaker' who will patch up their injured and keep his mouth shut."

Dr. Lipton came back and took down a bottle of Three Star. He drank greedily, donned a hat and drew his coat about him.

"What's the next step," he asked of Brand, who smiled wearily.

"I'm squaring a few accounts before I move along—which will be soon, now."

"So, they told you?" Lipton snapped angrily.

"They didn't need to. A month ago I had feeling in my hips, a little. Today I'm dead to the lower ribs, but that doesn't interest me in the least if I just can deal back to the men who put me here, some of the same kind of grief."

"I'm buying cards then," Lipton answered, "provided there's a place for a brandy-soaked ruin to fit in."

"Why, you're part of the plan," Brand told him eagerly. "We're both fighting on borrowed time—from the brink of the grave."

Lipton grinned crookedly. "Two dead men and two live ones in a nice exciting race to see who gets to the gates of hell first," he answered. "And I've got fifty dollars to say that you and I'll outlast Harry and Jeffrey, Brand."

Jeffrey, thrilling at the outward unconcern of these dying men, pledged himself inwardly to measure up to them. He caught Harry's gaze and read there something of the same thought.

Lipton, getting to his feet, announced that he was going out for a short time.



"I'll lock up," he explained, "and if there are any patients don't pay any attention to the bell."

The three sat, largely in silence, while the clock ticked off half an hour. Then a key turned in the door and Lipton strode in. He seemed badly in need of the drink he sloshed down directly from the neck of the bottle.

"The underworld's buzzing," he announced levelly, "with a reward of a thousand apiece on your heads. John Ison and Joe Speer have been bellowing around, looking for you, but Keller's behind the reward offer. They're going through the district around the old mansion, room by room. That's how badly they want you."

Brand's answering smile was icy.

"And did it occur to you?" he demanded, "that their hunger for us is only about the official one-half of one per cent, of how badly I want them—each and every one of the miserable five?"

### CHAPTER III

**B**RANDON STEELE took another journey on the following night, through back streets from the Lipton house to an unused East River pier, and in the same covered truck.

A trim prow crept in out of the darkness. For a moment collision mats ground against the pier. Then Jeffrey attached slings to Brand's chair, and the others helped to lower it gently to the deck of the yacht "Morela."

Presently they had him installed comfortably in the main cabin with its luxurious fittings, burnished metal ports and soft lighting.

"I think it's worth the \$25,000 price they asked," Jeffrey said, "but wait until you see the crew."

As though answering a stage cue, Harry came down the companion stairs. He wore a sag-top blue cap with shiny visor, blue

flannel coat with flat black buttons, and white trousers.

"Crew's ready for inspection," he announced, adding, sotto voce, "and everyone's a lulu." At Brand's nod he trilled a call on a bosun's whistle. Five men came trooping down.

"Limey, the engineer," he said, jerking a thumb at the nearest. "Beached for knifing his chief; McDade, second, used to run rum but shot his way out of a Coast Guard trap in Florida; Gus and Chuck, the 'typewriting' twins, handy with tommies."

Last he thumbed the ribs of a rolypoly negro.

"Little Joe—ace-deuce, you know. Pullman nigger; carved up the chef. Says he can cook anything that walks, swims or crawls."

Little Joe chuckled. "Jess lemme at a cookstove," he rumbled. "Gimme some li'l pieces of meat 'n some aigs—an' Ah guarantees to bus' de buttons offen you' vestes in four-five days."

Brand cut him short by saying:

"All right, you men. We're taking you on Harry's sayso. The pay will be a hundred a week and no shore leave until I give the word. What goes on is nobody's business, particularly yours. We're buying guns and hands, not partners."

"Like them, Brand?" Jeff asked when they had gone.

"Perfect! Hard as nails and just what we want. I'd say we've bought four good guns and a razor blade. Well, it's time to be moving. I want to be in Brooklyn before ten, and you've got a big job on your hands, Jeff."

Jeffrey left after donning a shoulder holster, pocketing spare clips and a flat case that looked like a jeweler's box. He found Harry waiting for him in the fast motor launch. As they pulled away the other said wryly:

"None of us'll live long enough to make yachting a habit, but it surely is the life, isn't it?"



Jeffrey threw him a quick glance. "Not going yellow, are you, Harry?"

Harry spat out a curse and barked: "Next after you, my fran'. But here we are—two dead men, a roulette dealer who's fair with a gun, and a greenhorn, yourself. You'll find this different than running after wars and writing about them in hotel rooms.

"And aren't we the smart ones? We chose five of the toughest killers in the rackets and start making plans for next Tuesday or maybe Saturday. Don't do it, Jeffrey; the morgue's yawning for us right now."

The words rang in Jeffrey's ears an hour later as he stepped into the dark areaway of a house on the lower East side and pressed a bell. A voice said, almost in his ear, "You lookin' for somebody, pal?"

"Yes—Lew Willits; I'm from Denver. Mickie Burns sent me."

A latch clicked and Jeffrey stepped into a dimly lighted hall. He grinned as the beefy, hard faced doorman touched his waist, pockets and armpits—finding the Luger.

"Whatcha all heated up for?" the other demanded suspiciously. "Bringin' a load of trouble?"

"No trouble," Jeffrey smiled. "Just a few drinks, a safe place to park the hips—and maybe a little deal with Lew—later."

For answer the man touched a button. Instantly the inner door opened and two well dressed men walked through.

"Guy lookin' for Lew," the doorman mouthed. "Gotta heat under his arm, too."

"And a roll on his hip for spending purposes," Jeffrey drawled. "Mickie Burns of Denver sent me here; said I'd find good liquor and a safe hangout."

The taller man nodded. "Come in," he decided. "We'll drink with you."

Jeffrey mentally blessed Harry for the Mickie Burns name and history, as he followed them into a well appointed club bar. There were tables along one side, at the extreme end a railed enclosure fitted with

a rug, rolltop desk and easy chairs.

The suave barman set up three Scotch-and-sodas.

"I'm Tug Malone," the taller man said. "My friend's Louis Mamos; the boys call him 'The Greek.'"

"I'm Jeff Smith, out of Denver—and out fast," Jeffrey admitted.

"Denver?" Mamos asked. "How's Rudy Blackman getting along?"

"Just like he has for the last five years," Jeffrey grinned, "just like anybody else who's in his grave."

Malone guffawed, said, "That's drinks on you, Greek."

Jeffrey, studying the pair covertly in the mirror, decided against too much talking.

"Here's to crime!" he toasted, but Mamos' expression still was wary, and he asked:

"So Mickie blew to Denver, did he? What's he doing out there?"

"Finger man for the Songeler confidence mob. He says it's better than running rum here in New York."

The outer door clicked at that moment and the barman suddenly was tensely watchful. A tall, ferret-eyed man entered, closing the door carefully behind him. He moved directly to the bar exchanging curious glances with Mamos and Malone. The latter told him:

"Meet Smith — from Denver — Lew Willits."

"Glad to know you," Willits said casually. "This is my place. How'd you come to drop in on us?"

"Mickie Burns," Jeffrey replied. "He said you had a safe place and good liquor—and that I might interest you in a deal. But first how about a drink?"

**W**ILLITS said: "Tom Collins," and in the same tone: "You figuring on sticking around?"

"Probably—it depends on prospects."

The other's eyes narrowed slightly. "She's a tough town for chisellers; sure you



won't be crowding somebody."

"I've got a dollar that's ready to go to work," Jeffrey retorted, "and I've an idea you may like to hear."

After a moment of scowling thought, Willits took up his glass and led the way to the rolltop back of the brass railing. There he said brusquely:

"All right, Smith—or whatever your name is—say your piece but don't get yourself out on a limb. What's your gag?"

"German dope—synthetic—by way of Canada," Jeffrey whispered. "And it kicks like the pure stuff."

"I knew you were nuts," Willits rasped. "That racket's sewed up tight."

Jeffrey grinned. "Yeah, by Mose Keller, but I can buy good stuff for a quarter of what he pays for diluted stock—if that means anything to you."

As he talked he saw Willits' eyes turn slaty. A little nerve in his cheek was twitching as his hand stole toward his arm-pit. Jeffrey beat him to the draw, covering the gun with his body.

"Hold it!" he advised. "I'm not through talking."

Willits' face flushed a brick red, but he hooked his thumbs in his belt and grunted: "Talk then, and be damned to you—chiseler."

Jeffrey unscrewed the nib from a fountain pen, removing a thin metal tube from the barrel.

"Synthetic cocaine," he said in a half whisper. "Let Mamos try it; he goes for sleighrides."

Willits nodded, gestured to the Greek. When the other joined them Jeffrey put a pinch of white glistening powder on the table top and said: "Test it!"

Mamos wet the tip of his finger, touching the flakes of powder to the tip of his tongue. Jeffrey then lifted the other's hand and dumped more at the base of his thumb-nail.

"Take a ride!" he urged. "We want your opinion."

Mamos took the okay sign from Willits and inhaled appreciatively. Presently he said:

"Cripes! It's the pure quill. Better than—"

"Than Mose hands out to you," Jeffrey suggested.

Willits motioned for Mamos to leave. When they were alone he rapped out: "Now, chiseler—talk."

Smilingly Jeffrey removed his hat, turned down the sweatband and produced two waxed paper spills.

"Mamos okayed the 'C,'" he said evenly. "Now here's morphine and hyoscine—equally good. And the best of it is that where others buy it in ounces, I can get it by the pound."

"There's a bug in it," Willits objected craftily. "Show me."

"I've told you already. It's German—synthetic—and it costs quarters where the other costs dollars. There's seventy-five per cent profit in it on the open market."

"I see!" Willits crisped. "You get a sap to lay down big money—and then something goes wrong and he's stung. So you came all of the way from Denver to put the tap of a smart fellow, eh?"

Jeffrey laughed in his face, coolly.

"Take it or leave it," he yawned. "But I can show you a full pound of each—tonight."

"Where? How?"

"At my room in the Claridge: three metal map cases with a full pound in each."

Willits' fist hit the top of the desk resoundingly.

"Right now!" he snapped. "I'm coming with you. No 'phoning to make a build-up on me."

Tug and Mamos started to follow them, but Jeffrey shook his head.

"No parade," he negated. "Stay here—if you're afraid."

That started Willits cursing, but he motioned the others back.

"I'm going to the Claridge with this guy," he said significantly.



"Room nine-fourteen," Jeffrey added. "You can call us there."

He saw the exchange of glances with Tug and Mamos and grinned to himself later when they passed at high speed in a small black convertible coupe.

#### CHAPTER IV

SILENCE held between them, Willits apparently lost in his thoughts—or suspicions. That it was the latter became apparent when he whirled about suddenly and snarled:

"I still think it's screwy; that you're trying to pull a fast one, Smith. What's the trick, anyhow? You might as well spill it here."

"This!" Jeffrey answered grimly. The Luger was in his hand and tight against Willits' ribs like a flash.

The car swerved sickeningly as Willits tried to draw away from the menacing bore. But habit overcame fear and he straightened the wheels. Color flooded back into his cheeks and turned to the dark flush of hot anger.

"Why the hijack, you damn' fool?" he raged. "I never carry more than a grand in cash."

"It isn't a hijack, Willits, just a trick. I knew you'd send Mamos and Tug ahead so I gave the wrong address. Turn left at the next corner and we'll go to the right address."

"It's okay with me," Willits grunted, "but stow that gun away—if you're not going to use it."

He drove east obediently on a cross street, finally over a half block of rough cobbles and thence onto the old stone wharf. Harry and Doctor Lipton were in the shadows and, as soon as Willits stepped down, Harry put the car in gear and leaped out.

"Hey!" Willits yelled. "Stop it! He's sinking my car!"

"Right, Lew!" Lipton said at his shoul-

der, "but we're going to trade you a yacht for it. You'll see it in just a moment."

Willits turned half about and stared. "The crook doctor!" he mumbled. "Have you all gone screwy—or have I?"

"I'll match you for it," Lipton told him with a chuckle. "I call it an even money bet—either way."

Harry, facing the river, was flashing a lamp with a green lens in the cap. Instantly the beat of powerful engines sounded and a white prow loomed out of the darkness. Lipton held the bow line with a turn about a cleat, while Jeffrey and Harry saw to Willits' transfer aboard.

The motors took up their song again, driving the yacht out into the stream. Willits, standing between Jeffrey and Harry in mid-deck forward, seemed more curious than fearful.

But suddenly he flamed into action. Tripping the unsuspecting Harry, he straight-armed Jeffrey backward and ran for the side, tugging at his coat.

Jeffrey recovered his balance quickly and threw himself forward in a long, diving tackle. His arms circled the runner's knees and brought him heavily to the deck, Willits still fighting desperately.

Breaking one arm free, Jeffrey brought the hard side of his hand sweeping back at the other's throat. It took effect low, just under the larynx, and Willits' breath left him in a bubbling gasp.

"Into the cabin with him quickly," Lipton ordered, "or he'll strangle before we get anything out of him."

Willits' face was purple and the breath wheezed painfully in his throat as they carried him below and held him erect in a straight chair. Instantly Lipton's long fingers began prodding and massaging about the windpipe to induce normal breathing again.

Brand sat watching silently. His face was a frozen mask of hate as his eyes feasted on the puffed, bloated features of this first of his enemies.



"Easy does it now," Lipton warned at last. He'll be out of it in a second or two."

Willits' eyes flickered. His hands moved spasmodically and a tinge of color showed in his cheeks. His eyes opened—to encounter the still hatred staring out of Brandon Steele's eyes.

With a swift gesture Brand thrust aside the shielding silk robe baring his shrunken chest and the steel basketwork that held him erect.

"Do you see it?" he blazed. "Do you see what you and your filthy friends did to me—a man who never had harmed one of you?"

He swallowed hard to drown the rush of words that seemed about to choke him. Then a cold, acid smile wreathed his lips as he drawled:

"And now, Mr. Lew Willits—what do you suppose—that I am going—to do to you?"

Willits' jaw clamped in a faltering attempt at defiance, but no words came to his lips.

"Answer me!" Brand raged. "Do you hear? Answer!"

Willits shrugged and let his gaze rove the circle of grim faces. When it came to Jeffrey he gasped and looked back quickly at Brand.

"Hell! The brother from Europe," he mumbled. "And I walked right into it."

Then his hand strayed to his bruised throat and he worked his jaws like a pugilist after a gruelling fight.

"So, I get the works!" he whispered. "I go out like a rat in a trap."

Brand shook his head slowly.

"You still have a chance, Willits. You're just a flea on the back of the big dog I'm after—Mose Keller."

Willits stared back at him appraisingly. "So what?" he demanded.

"I'll give you back your life, and freedom, if you'll help to get him here like I've got you—helpless, at my mercy. Do that and I swear I'll turn you loose to walk the

streets again, as free as you were this morning."

"Fat chance!" the other grumbled. "Mose won't go anywhere without his guards—and he wouldn't be sticking his head into any trap of my setting, either."

"Then how about Judge Black? Could you land him?"

"A cleanup, eh?" Willits countered. "Mose, the judge, me! Who else?"

"John Ison and Joe Speer. The five of you from hell who put me in a steel basket. And of them all, Willits, you get the chance to double-cross your way to freedom. Now, what about it?"

"You can have them, and welcome," he answered quickly. "And it's a deal—if you mean definitely that I go free when the job is done."

**T**HERE was greed in his eyes now at the thought of the pickings which might come his way with the others eliminated. The thought robbed him of his habitual caution.

Brand nodded, said: "All right, Lipton." The physician opened his case and took out a vial of yellow liquid from which he drew a small amount, precisely, with a medicine dropper.

"Give him the stuff, Doctor," Brand said quietly, "but be sure that it is just right."

"What stuff?" Willits howled. "What's going on?"

"Insurance against a double-cross," Lipton answered sardonically. "A sort of anti-treachery time clock."

"I'm not taking anything!" Willits grated. "What the devil is it?"

"A poison," Lipton told him coolly, "that kills in exactly forty minutes, but a few drops out of this other bottle is a sure antidote. Jeffrey will carry that, and if you've done your stuff within the time limit, you'll get the life saver. You're gambling with your own life if you fail, or if you try to cross him."

Willits lurched forward in his chair, but



subsided as Jeffrey hooked his forearm about the bruised throat.

"You'll take it—and like it," he grated, "and you'll play the game my way, or you'll be dead forty minutes from now."

He nodded to Lipton, keeping his hold on Willits' throat. Lipton stepped in close, drew the prisoner's lower lip out and sent the liquid squirting between his teeth.

"Down it!" he ordered. "If you don't take it all, the antidote will kill you. The two doses have to be perfectly balanced."

Willits, perspiration dewing his forehead, swallowed hard—twice.

"That's the way!" Brand said. "Now, Jeffrey, you'd better get moving. Forty minutes isn't too much for what you have to do."

Harry touched a button and instantly the motor whine rose to crescendo. The long hull vibrated and the cutwater threw up a bow wave high on each side. Minutes later they brought up beside a commercial wharf, dark except for a light at the street end.

Willits followed Jeffrey to the planks. Twenty feet short of the street, Harry stopped and unlocked a door which opened on complete blackness.

Jeffrey clicked on his flashlight, revealing a partly filled warehouse, at one side a tiny office of wood and glass. Within there was a telephone on a desk.

"Call Black," Jeffrey commanded. "Tell him the same story I told you: that you've seen and tested the stuff and that you're going to take him in on the richest racket in the world."

"Where'll I tell him to come?"

Taking a river map from his pocket, Jeffrey pointed to a penciled cross.

"The Bull-Meyer wholesale wharf," he answered. "Tell him he'll know the boat, for there'll be a man in the bow with a green flashlight. And, if you're interested in living, make it strong."

Willits fumbled his first attempt to dial

the number and suddenly clutched at Jeffrey's wrist.

"God, Steele!" he pleaded. "Give me that antidote. I'm dying; I feel it in my heart, right now."

"You should," Jeffrey answered callously. "You've still eighteen minutes of life left, so you'd better put that call over right. If you miss, I'll smash the bottle here—on the floor."

Willits dialed again and this time they heard the ringing signal. Jeffrey put his hands tight about the other's shoulders and said gruffly:

"Steady now, Willits, and make your voice right—convincing."

Suddenly a heavy voice bellowed: "Hello! Hello! What the hell?"

"That you, Judge?" Willits said. From somewhere he had drawn on his reserve of strength, for his voice was clear, natural in tone. "Listen, I've just run into the side door to the mint—the damndest, richest graft in the world."

"You sound hysterical, Lew," the other said gruffly. "Are you sure you haven't had too much to drink—or been hitting the pipe?"

"Listen, Judge," Willits pleaded, "I'm giving it to you straight. I'm not saying it twice, so be sure you get it."

He paused to take a deep breath, then went on:

"Synthetic 'M,' 'H,' and 'C,' Judge, at a cost of a quarter of what you're paying now—and the kick is just about doubled. I've had it tested; I know!"

"How [M]ose would love that!" the other said dryly. "No, I don't think I'd like any—competing with Keller."

"Hell, why not? We could sell to him at a cut price and still let everybody make big money. Come on down here and see for yourself!"

"I still don't like it," Black argued. "What good is money if you're loaded down with Keller's bullets?"

"Forget it—and listen!" Willits urged



desperately. "It's dynamite to talk this stuff over the wire. There's millions in it and if you say so, we'll cut Mose in, too. Now I'm through, you're either in, or out. Which will it be?"

The lawyer was silent for a moment. Then he asked: "Where?"

"A yacht, foot of Forty-fifth West; old gravel wharf. We're making the fix on board with a big gun from Canada. You'll know the boat, for there'll be a green flashlight in the bow. But come alone or we'll both get tossed out on our ears."

Before there could be a reply, Jeffrey depressed the cutout lever. Instantly Willits was out of his chair, clawing at his coat lapel.

"The stuff—the antidote," he pleaded. "I'm dying."

Jeffrey held the small vial to his lips, smiled as Willits swallowed. "You see, Lew," he said softly, "we don't double cross even a rat like you."

"And I can go now?"

"Not until Black is in our hands. I told you we'd put you back on the street—free—and there's no string to it."

## CHAPTER V

**J**UDGE BLACK'S driver pulled onto the wharf gingerly, parking in the shelter of a big pile of sand and gravel near the end. John Ison and Joe Speer, each armed with a tommy gun, were hidden in the back.

The lawyer, tall, eagle beaked and with the cold eyes of a New England school principal, stood looking about suspiciously.

"Probably it is all right," he muttered, "but if it isn't it will be dead wrong—so shoot first and ask questions afterward if anything goes bad."

"Check!" Ison answered. "Joe and I'll skin up there to the crown of that gravel pile. You'd better duck if trouble starts."

Black, nodding, walked to the stringpiece. There, holding his pocket lighter against

his chest, he flicked the tiny light several times. A green flash showed twice, out in the stream, paused, glowed twice more. Motors roared and a white shape came curving in from the channel.

Black crouched in the shadows, a hand on his gun butt. He remained there as the propellers reversed and a dark form leaped ashore with the bow line. Suddenly someone turned on a blinding white spotlight that outlined the crouching form distinctly.

Harry, his uniform cap low over his face, called:

"Come ahead, Judge! Willits is waiting."

"Just a moment," the lawyer grated. "Who else is aboard?"

"Me, the engineer and his second, and the Big Shot from Canada. What are you hung on? Afraid?"

Freeing his gun and flipping off the safety, Black leaped onto the deck.

"You hold that line," he grated, "while I look around."

He moved into the shadows, looking about warily. Lowering his head at last, he started down the companionway. That made a good target for the swishing blackjack, that knocked his hat to the deck and laid him out cold in the shadows.

Jeffrey, handing the blackjack to Lipton, scooped up Black's hat, set it on his head and walked to the rail. Ison and Speer saw the familiar pearl headgear and took it for granted it was Black speaking when Jeffrey called to them:

"It's all right, boys; you can go back now."

When Jeffrey entered the cabin he told Brand:

"You were right. Black brought his torpedoes along. Two of them answered almost at my elbow when I told them to go back."

Willits, staring at the unconscious lawyer, said:

"Look, Steele! You've got him now. Why'n't you turn me loose back there at the dock?"



"Because I'd like you to ride to Ossining with us," Brand told him matter-of-factly. "There's a safe place up there where we can hold Black until we collect the others—and I'm offering you ten grand apiece if you'll help us trap Ison and Speer. With them and Black in my hands, it'll be easy to get Keller."

Willits walked the length of the cabin twice before he replied:

"Why not? I'm in for it anyway now, and the more I help you to land, the safer I'll be. But you've got to get Keller, too. With him alive, I'd have to take it on the lam."

"It's a bet then," Brand answered. "You'd better turn in now." He turned to Lipton and asked: "He won't have any bad effects from the poison, will he?"

"Not unless it keeps him from sleeping. I guess I'd better give him a little shot that'll be good for about ten hours. He'll be fresh as a daisy then, in the morning."

In a moment he was pushing Willits' sleeve back and burying the shining needle in a vein.

"Better hike right along," he suggested affably. "That stuff works fast and you don't want to go to sleep standing up."

When he was gone Brand said:

"I don't suppose we can work the poison-and-antidote gag on Black, too?"

Lipton shook his head. "No, it's too dangerous. He might call our bluff, stick out the forty minutes and tell us to go to hell. What I'm going to do with him is to give him a shot of novocaine in his left leg. When he comes to, I'll tell him I've given him a shot to paralyze him just like Brand is fixed up—that it'll spread slowly, surely, and kill him unless I give him the antidote."

"Perfect!" Brand applauded. "Give it to him now."

Brand rested his head against the back of the chair when the job was done, waiting patiently until he saw Lipton glance at his wrist watch and nod.

The other lifted Black's eyelids and let the light set up a slow reflex until the muscles began to jerk. Then with a sure touch he pressed torturing fingertips against the nerve centers just above the inner corners of the eyes.

Black shrieked with the sudden, intense pain, fighting to rid himself of the torture. Finally Lipton sat him erect and pointed toward Brand's chair.

"An old—friend: waiting for you," he said coldly.

Black, frowning, squinted to focus his eyes on the still figure in the invalid chair.

Recognition was slow. With it came awed fear.

"Brand—Steele!" He mouthed the name incredulously. "Great God. How did—?"

"Yes, Chester—it's Brand Steele!" The invalid waited, added the single word—"Collecting!"

Black tore his eyes away from Brand's burning gaze and pretended a casual inspection of the cabin. He was fighting hard for composure, marshalling his mental forces for one of his courtroom bluffs. After a moment of this, he said:

"At least I'll die a luxurious death. Anyway, it's a new wrinkle in 'rides'—isn't it, Brand?"

Suddenly he paused, scowling.

"Willits!" he barked. "You used him to trap me?"

"And sold him his life in exchange. But the job we're going to do on you, Judge, will be anything but nice. You're sure not to like it."

**B**LACK managed the ghost of a smile. "What difference between a gun, a knife—or poison?" he asked rhetorically. "The net result is the same—and the Law has taught me to deal in results only."

"But this will be, ah—different," Brand answered. "I got the idea from my own predicament. One of the slugs your tor-



pedoes fired at me that night at my place nicked my spine. I'm dying by inches, a bit every day—and I've decided that you'll go out the same way. There's a dead spot in you now—one you haven't sensed as yet."

"Dead spot?" Black parroted. "You mean that I—?"

"Put your hand on your left knee," Brand taunted. "See if you can feel anything. Press hard, pinch yourself. And then tell me if you, too, haven't started to die by inches."

He obeyed, his eyes widening fearfully. They saw him increase the pressure of his fingers, finally pinching the flesh brutally. White, stiff-lipped, he stared at Brand, his eyes dilated with horror.

Suddenly he shouted: "God, no! Not that! I couldn't stand it."

"But you can," Brand taunted. "I have—and I'm still doing fine."

With the words he opened the robe and for the third time showed a stranger the metal casing that held him erect.

"Ask Doc Lipton," he went on. "He shot the stuff into your sciatic nerve."

"He's right," Lipton volunteered. "The numbness will go in an hour or so. But it will be back tomorrow—and after that it will spread upward, a little, every day. You'll live for maybe fourteen days; Brand has about ten left. You'll be company for one another."

"What is it you want?" Black demanded. "Money?" The color was gone again from his face. His voice had turned shrill.

"Money!" Brand echoed. "I've plenty of that. But I've sold myself short on seeing you die a lingering death, Black—and I'm going to cash in."

He nodded then to Jeffrey.

"Tie him and put him away in a corner somewhere so I can get the bad taste out of my mouth. Tomorrow we'll start him on the way to the grave—and maybe have some of his old friends at the party."

HURRYING feet clattering down the companion stairs roused Brand from a fitful sleep next morning. The yacht was at anchor off the hill town of Ossining and the tender's engine still was sputtering rhythmically at the port rail.

"Aren't you the early bird?" Brand grinned. Lipton, with a nod, hurried to a locker and was addressing himself to the brandy bottle. "How did you make out?"

"Hundred per cent, Brand. I laid five grand in Nurse Mollie's hand and there'll be no argument. She gets ten more when we're finished. Her place is at the top of a steep hill. There are only a few neighbors and these all know that she's running a dope cure. They're not curious any more."

As they talked, Jeffrey entered, rubbing sleep from his eyes.

"Doc has it all fixed," Brand told him happily. "His former nurse is turning her jimjams retreat over to us—five thousand down and ten to come."

"Cheap at twice that," Jeffrey commented. "Now what do we do with Willits and Black?"

"Dope their coffee," Lipton suggested, and bellowed for Little Joe.

"When you take coffee to the two men in the righthand cabin," he told the grinning negro, "put this white powder in ahead of the cream and sugar. Later on, most of us will be gone, and I want you to help Captain Magruder to take care of Mr. Steele. Remember, Joe, nobody's to come aboard while we're gone."

"Then nobody ain't goin' to," Little Joe said earnestly. "I got me a two-foot knife out yondeh, and does anybody come messin' eround, I suah will whittle on his neck."

"How do you think we'd better work it?" Lipton asked when they were alone.

"Identify yourself as a doctor. Find a



dumb boatman and hire him to transport some patients from the yacht to the sanitarium. That will look all regular and we should get away with it nicely."

Lipton went out, grinning. Brand, opening a flap in his chair, handed Jeffrey a heavy linen envelope.

"Take this when you go ashore," he said soberly, "and mail it to yourself in care of Attorney H. A. Hillis, 300 Broadway. It's my will, leaving everything to you, along with instructions how to get the money out of the Paris and London banks; also how to open some safe deposit boxes here in town. Hillis has the keys and I've already sent him written instructions pending your arrival."

"Oh, the devil!" Jeffrey fumed. "I don't want—"

"Who should get it but you, Jeff? All I want is your help in squaring accounts with this gang of crooks who downed me. Doc Lipton says he'll keep me alive until it's done, and I want you to see that he's cared for when I'm gone."

Twenty minutes later Lipton hailed them from the deck.

"The launch is here," he called. "Break out your patients."

Jeffrey stopped for a brief moment to grip Brand's hands.

"Be seeing you," he said lightly. "But don't take any chances: beat it if you smell trouble."

"Don't worry, Jeff, about trouble. Just bring me my tame rats, all fixed up like we've agreed, and I'll be happy."

Two of the crew carried the unconscious Willits and Black to the deck and stowed them in the cockpit of the launch. The lackluster eyes of the owner surveyed them enviously.

"Stinko?" he asked. "Cripes! I never got myself that stewed in all my life!"

"You probably never put your mind to the job," Lipton grinned. "This pair hasn't been really sober in two years."

The pilot grunted, let in his clutch and sent the launch in a graceful arc to a tumble-down wharf near a lumberyard. A black sedan was backing out onto the pier and Jeffrey nodded at sight of a fleshy, black haired woman at the wheel.

"Nurse Mollie Nellis," Lipton explained. "She's the goods, too."

Grunting and tugging they finally got the two inert forms ashore and into the rear of the sedan. Nurse Mollie, moving close to Lipton, said:

"You picked a lemon, Doc. That boatman's a born stoolie—and he's cousin to the chief of police. Did he see anything out there at the yacht?"

Lipton shook his head. "I'll square him," he whispered. "Watch!"

Returning to the stringpiece, he squatted down and tendered a twenty dollar bill.

"I may have to go back and forth again," he said with a smile, "so wait here—about twenty dollars' worth, will you?"

"For twenty bucks I'd be camped here on Christmas: wake me up when you come back." With that he snuggled down in the stern and clamped his hat over his eyes.

Nurse Mollie slowed the sedan at the top of the hill so that they might see the spacious two-story house with its many windows and neat grounds.

"It's a sweet set-up," she said. "Nobody can get within a block of us from any direction without being seen—and there's a burglar alarm on every window."

She paused, looked back toward the waterfront, and muttered:

"Oh-oh! Don't tell me I can't pick 'em! Look!"

She pointed to the right of the lumber wharf and the road they had just traversed.

A solitary form, gangling and unmistakable, had detached itself from the shadows of the lumber wharf and was angling across to a store building.

"The boatman—on his way to telephone the Chief," she said grimly. "I told you



that you'd picked a sour one. Now the Chief'll be out here in jigtime."

"We'll take care of that," Lipton answered. "We'll douse 'em with whiskey and pour some down their throats. If the police come they'll see two of the most complete souses in history."

"I sure hope so, Doctor, but something tells me I made a bust when I let you talk me into this deal. I smell sulphur—and sulphur always reminds me of hell."

"We'll rouse Willits, then," Lipton said after a moment's thought. "Come on, Jeffrey, it's cold water for him."

**F**ILLING a bathtub with ice cold water, they disrobed the unconscious man and began a round of dipping, hoisting and dipping again until he was partly roused. After that Lipton flicked the end of his nose several times with a fingernail, finishing with an application of smelling salts.

Finally Willits' eyes opened and he struggled free.

"Whee!" he howled. "Why try to drown a fellow? What's up and where am I?"

"In a private hospital: our new headquarters," Jeffrey replied. "You were slow awakening from the shot so we just brought you along as you were. We've got visitors coming now—official ones—and we'll need you to speak your piece convincingly. Take a shot of bourbon, light a cigaret and then get natural."

"Coppers?" Willits asked. "Locals?"

"Yes, the Ossining chief of police. And your story is that we're all good friends and that we're getting you off a long drunk. Get it?"

Willits grinned. "I'd sooner lie to a copper than tell the truth to my mother," he mumbled. "Bring 'em on."

Presently there was a gentle tapping at the door and Nurse Mollie said:

"Doctor, a moment, please—it's business."

"Come in!" Lipton rasped. "What's

wanted, anyway?" As the door opened he seemed to be finishing a pulse count after which he thrust a stick thermometer into Willits' mouth.

"Well?" he said again, brusquely, "What's wanted?"

"This is Chief Barnes," Mollie answered. "Somebody telephoned him that you'd brought a couple of dead men up here."

"So?" Lipton roared. "That look like a dead man?" He pointed at Willits, who watched them, wide eyed. "Tell him what you died of, Lew."

"Cripes!" the other wailed. "I wish I was dead! My head's—"

"All right!" Lipton broke in. "He's alive, what? Want to see the other one? Come along!"

He caught the Chief's arm, dragging him into the adjoining room.

"There he is!" he barked. "And if you think that smell is death, you're crazy. That's the booze he's been licking up for weeks. Now get the hell over there, feel his pulse—kiss him if you want to—and then beat it out of here. He's got a bad heart and I'm trying to beat the horrors, which *would* kill him."

He put the final touch on his act by seizing the Chief's hand and literally forcing him to touch Black's pulse, which was pounding regularly. The Chief stepped back, red of face.

"Hell!" he mumbled. "I've been kidded. I'll be going now."

Nurse Mollie hurried back after seeing the Chief to the door.

"You put it over all right, this time," she breathed, "but I wish you'd go into your dance and finish up this horse opera of yours. I'm getting jittery—and no fooling."

"She's right," Jeffrey declared. "You get Willits on the 'phone before that hick chief of police thinks twice and has our line tapped."



Lipton called the number of Mose Keller's Riverside Drive home, then handed the instrument over to Willits.

"The same talk you gave Black," he ordered, "only he's to come up here. If you want to fall heir to a lot of rackets, Lew, you'll get this man into our hands and do it quickly."

"There is your party," the operator said at that moment, and then a grumbling voice said: "Mose Keller talking—who's this?"

"Lew Willits, talking from Ossining—a private hospital. Listen, Keller! I'm up here with Judge Black and we've got the big racket of the world—for the three of us. How soon can you make it up here?"

"Probably never," Keller snapped. "Something smells fishy! Who's in it—and what's the deal?"

"A dicker with a man from Canada—the white stuff, 'C,' 'H' and 'M.' It's uncut, kicks like a mule and costs a quarter of what certain people are paying for it now—and you know who I mean. We've had it tested and it checks a hundred per cent. There's seventy-five per cent profit in it over the old deal—and it'll double within a month."

"Why choose me?" Keller growled. "You know how I'm hooked up. And you wouldn't try chiseling on me, would you, Willits?"

"Chisel, hell! We're offering to cut you in on a heluva big profit. It's worth millions every year, and it's so plentiful we can supply the whole country."

"You sound like you've been sniffing some of it, Lew—but if I should come—where'll I find you?"

"The Mary Nellis hospital, top of the hill on past the Big House. Bring anybody along you want, but remember, they'll be barred from the meeting."

"Let me talk to Black," Keller said suddenly.

"He's down town: I'll have him call you back."

"Forget it," Keller answered. "I know a better way." He cut the connection without further words.

"You heard it all?" Willits asked, eagerly. "You think he'll come?"

"Sure he's coming, but he'll try to make some checkup first. Probably he'll ring back before your call gets cold."

HOWEVER, half an hour passed without the prediction coming true. At last Lipton and Jeffrey went to Judge Black's room and rolled him out onto the floor without ceremony. A brisk slapping and a touch of smelling salts revived him. He was stupefied and surly, but a cool shower and rub brightened him considerably.

"What is this?" he demanded. "And how did I get here?"

"A private hospital—and you're here because that was how I'd planned it," Jeffrey answered. "You remember what we told you about the way you are going to die—your knee—?"

Black's eyes widened as memory returned. He touched the member experimentally, straightened with a groan of relief when it seemed all right. "I can feel it," he said simply.

"Right now you can, but in a few hours it will be dead again—and this time it will stay that way."

He shuddered. "What can I do—to—beat it?" he asked fearfully.

"Just how far would you go, Black?"

"Just whatever is the difference between life and death," he said resolutely. "Provided you're telling me the truth."

"Then here it is," Jeffrey told him. "We want Jack Ison and Joe Speer: they handled the guns that downed my brother. Deliver them to us—here—and I promise to let you go free. You can go on about your business—and nobody will bother you."

Black eyed him narrowly.



"You mean exactly that? No tricks—equivocations?"

"Just that. Do what I ask and we'll never molest you again."

"It's a bargain," Black answered, "but first you must give me the antidote so that I'll know I'm not going to—die." He shuddered at the word. Jeffrey's eyes glinted dangerously as the picture of Brand came before his eyes.

A warning buzz from downstairs halted further talk. Mollie, on the house 'phone, said:

"Jack Paine, a local racket guy's at the door. He says he's got a message for Willits and Judge Black. Things gone screwy again?"

"No, everything is just right. Bring him up."

He called to Willits and when he came, said:

"You and Black will back our play now. A local racketeer named Paine is coming to check up for Keller. Tell him you're waiting for Keller—and be convincing. This is the big break, so don't muff it."

Jeffrey and Lipton retreated into a bathroom just as Nurse Mollie entered.

"Here's Mr. Paine to see Mr. Willits and Mr. Black," she announced.

Paine, red faced and sly in appearance, said out of the corner of his mouth:

"I just got a call from a certain Big Shot in Noo Yawk. He said to see you and ask was you expectin' him?"

Willits rasped out an oath.

"Yeah, tell the damn' cold footed rat that we're waiting—but that we won't wait very damn' long. Ask him what he thinks I called him for if I didn't want him."

"Yes," Black interrupted. "And tell him that the Judge says to be careful when he passes the applegirls on the corners—they may bite him."

Paine backed out, mumbling apologies. Mollie returned after a moment and said:

"Talk about horseshoes! You sent him away twittering." She fell silent, however, as Black leaped to his feet abruptly.

"I did my part!" he said in a shrill voice. "He's coming. Now give me that other shot so the death won't start toward my heart."

Lipton, nodding gravely, brought out the hypodermic. This time he punctured the vein at the base of the forearm—and within a few moments Black was sleeping soundly.

He turned then to Nurse Mollie.

"There he is, out for hours, Mollie. Move him into another room and forget him until—well, just 'until.'"

He and Jeffrey laughed at the sudden evasion. Mollie's peppery temper rose. "I suppose my face is on crooked or something?" she raged. "Why not let me in on the big snicker, too?"

"Remember Monte Cristo, Mollie?" Jeffrey asked, "and the big line, 'The world is mine!'" Well, that's what my brother will be saying out there on the yacht pretty soon. Things are moving, Mollie—and hell is pleased."

## CHAPTER VIII

THE afternoon shadows were falling when Mollie sounded the buzzer again and warned that a limousine was starting up the hill.

"I can see a New York license through the glasses," she told them, "and there's maybe four or five in the car beside the driver. Maybe hell's pleased about that, too."

"I wouldn't be surprised," Jeffrey answered slowly, "or maybe it will prove to be 'the breaks.' I'm coming down."

With Willits at his heels he hurried to the windows of the reception room and took the glasses. After a moment he handed them to Willits to see whom he could identify.



"Keller's there," the other reported. "And there's a big mugg I never saw before. Yes—and he's got Ison and Speer in the back with him! How's that for luck—the two men who gunned Brand down, and the remaining two we've been wanting?"

Jeffrey whistled softly. "That's going to take some doing!" he muttered, "but even if we have to let them go—today—we've got to land Keller. Brand wouldn't survive the disappointment if he got away."

The car stopped halfway up the hill and Jack Ison alighted. He came along slowly, eyeing the place suspiciously, furtive as an alley cat. Finally he turned in at the gate and strode toward the door purposefully.

"Mollie!" Jeffrey called. "You let him in and take him to the waiting room. He can talk with Willits there and if he insists on seeing Judge Black, tell him that he's asleep. I'll be inside the office door, watching through the crack."

The muted buzzer at the door sounded with the last word.

"Yes, they're here," Mollie told him a moment later. "Mr. Willits is in the reception room."

She left the door ajar and went to the second room where she said: "Somebody see you, Mr. Willits."

Lew came to the doorway and waited there. Briefly he and Ison eyed one another narrowly. Then he said: "Hi-ya, Jack. Come in. Where's Keller?"

"Around," Ison grunted. "I'm casing the dump first. Where's the Judge and how about this Big Shot from Canada?"

"What about him?" Willits snapped. "Is he any of your damn' business? Black's here though; he's upstairs, resting. Now, how do you get in on this and what the hell, anyhow?"

"I'm making sure that everything's jake," Ison answered. "Keller ain't coming in until I give the word."

"Then you'd better give it quick." Willits' eyes narrowed and he managed a fero-

cious scowl. "Mister Mose Keller's not the only big shot with dough in the world, and if he keeps on stalling and bucking, you can tell him to get the hell back to New York. That's the last word, Ison: take it or leave it."

The big torpedo frowned and got as far as the door before he answered:

"I don't know what she's all about, Lew, but Mose is skittish. He's hunched that there's something screwy here and I'm supposed to give the place the once over."

"You've done it—as far as you're going to, Ison. This is a private hospital. The woman who let you in is the superintendent. She'd raise hell if I took you prowling around the place, so make up your mind. So far as we're concerned, Mose Keller can blow out. The deal's too big to let one guy hold it up."

Ison half nodded and went to the door. "I'll tell him I saw you—and what you said," he mumbled. "That's the crop—for me."

Willits turned to stare fearfully at Jeffrey and Lipton as they emerged from the office.

"I couldn't see any other way—" he began nervously, but Jeffrey laughed contentedly.

"Keller'll be here in a matter of minutes," he predicted. "But he'll probably try to crash the door with two or three of his gunnies. Mary'll admit him, and you'll have to hold the others, even if it takes a gun to do it."

His prediction held good. Ison stood at the window of the limousine and talked for a brief minute. Then the door opened and Mose Keller got down, waving his hands and issuing orders.

After that he started for the gate, followed by Ison. Speer and the stranger paced slowly behind him, stopping at the gate as Mose and Ison rang the bell. Jeffrey and Lipton were in opposite rooms now, each with his gun ready for business,



their muzzles set at the crack of the partly opened doors. They heard the click of the latch and then Mollie said:

"This is Mr. Keller, isn't it? They're waiting for you. Come in."

She opened the door only far enough to admit the portly racketeer. Willits, midway of the hall, barked:

"Scram in, Keller: your torpedo can wait outside. The Big Shot from up north isn't standing for any tin-earing."

Briefly, Keller waited in the open door. Then he waved Ison back and stepped inside, his hand snaking across his vest to the armpit holster. Before he could level the gun Mollie was fastening strong hands about his arm, and Willits, blackjack at the ready, was diving for him.

The weapon landed with a dull "plop" and sent Keller's soft hat spinning against the wall. The blow did not floor him, but he was rubber-kneed and only half-conscious.

Then Jeffrey and Lipton came out of their hiding places. The weapon thudded again and Keller expelled a great, sobbing breath and fell on the rug. Instantly Willits and Jeffrey were dragging him into the reception room, where the latter remained to see that he did not recover too quickly.

Willits hurried back to the hall, and motioned Lipton back of the door.

"I'm letting Ison in," he whispered, "and when we've got him sewed up, we'll get Steele. Did you hear Keller's noodle go pop when I bopped him the second time? Well, watch what I do to Johnny Ison."

He opened the door suddenly. Ison was standing on the doormat, frowning and listening intently.

"C'mon!" Willits grunted. "Big Shot wants you, after all."

Ison obeyed unquestioningly. It was a logical procedure. Stopping only to wave reassuringly to the torpedoes at the gate, he stepped inside with one hand lifted to remove his hat.

HIS hand stayed in that position, for he found himself covered miraculously by a heavy gun that had sprouted suddenly in Willits' hand. A split second later, before he could cry out, Lipton slapped a strip of adhesive over his lips and drew his free hand behind him in the dread hammerlock of the wrestling ring.

Willits, grinning acidly, stepped in and cuffed Ison viciously above the right ear with the barrel of his automatic. The victim bleated chokingly through his nostrils and went down on his face. A glance through the window showed the two remaining gunmen leaning patiently over the gate. No sound of the double attack had reached them.

"Get Keller and Ison both tied up," Jeffrey said. "Then, after a little while we'll call Joe Speer in—and the score will be perfect. You all right, Lipton? You look pale around the gills."

"Nothing's the matter with me that brandy won't cure," the other answered. "And thanks for reminding me."

When Ison and Keller had been stowed safely away in locked rooms, and Lipton's face had lost its pallor, Jeffrey suggested:

"Why can't we repeat the trick with Joe Speer that we used on Ison? But to make it good, tell him to send the others away; that we'll all come down on the yacht."

"It might work: we can try it, anyway," Willits replied. "And here goes."

He opened the door wide and crossed the veranda, carrying in his gun hand a partly finished highball.

"Joe!" he called. "The Big Shot says for you to come on in and for the others to go back to New York. We'll all come down together on his yacht."

Speer laughed and jerked a derisive thumb at the big gunman and the driver.

"Take your funny gas-buggy and go home," he taunted. "Me, I'm traveling like a rich guy—on a yacht."



Grinning proudly, he strode up the walk and joined Willits on the gallery.

"What's the big deal?" he said in a half whisper. "Mose said it was millions—our the biggest bust of the year."

"Let Mose tell you," Willits answered, stepping through the door. He stood aside, waiting for Speer to precede him down the hall. But suddenly, and before Jeffrey could thrust the door shut and cover him from the rear, the big torpedo's eyes sighted Keller's soft hat on the floor by the wall. Across its crown was the dent of Willits' blackjack and on the brim were two splashes of blood.

A quick step to the right brought Speer's back flush against the door, penning Jeffrey firmly against the wall and automatically preventing Willits from flashing a shot at him. The act was unwitting but yet it was stalemate. His gun was out, finger white on the trigger.

"Who'll take it first?" he snarled. "So Mose was right! This is a frameup, after all."

Willits flashed a quick glance at the tell-tale hat. He forced a grin and stood flat footed, staring sardonically at the fuming gunman.

"Nuts!" he said derisively. "You lost your buttons, guy? Why the rod and what brought on the big hissy?"

"You're the goofy one," Speer raged. "Look! There's Mose's hat on the floor, bloody and all messed up—and here's you, calling us in one at a time. I'll lay down the rod when Mose tells me to; until then it's gut shooting for you if you make the wrong move."

Willits grinned pityingly, said: "Have it your own way, Joe, you're wearing the gun." He turned his head, calling over his shoulder:

"Hey, Judge! Bring Keller 'n come on down here! Speer's gone dough-brained and he's waving a gat."

It was done so naturally that some of the

suspicion faded from Speer's eyes. He even took two hesitant steps forward as Willits calmly turned his back and went toward the reception room.

Jeff, free to move again, was quick to grab his chance. He set his fingers around the edge of the door, lifting so the hinges would not creak, and moving it outward a few inches. Then, gun in hand, his weight on the balls of his feet, he stepped lightly forward. Willits was holding Speer's attention with a gaze of almost hypnotic force.

With a swift surge of movement he lifted his gun level with his shoulder, snatched at Speer's left elbow and swung him half about. In the same split second his gun barrel slammed hard against the side of the gunman's head. The other weapon roared, but the shot went wide as Speer's hand tightened, then released its grip. The gunman fell, his right arm doubled under him.

"And that's Number Four," Jeffrey said, "down and out. And by the way, that was good acting on your part, Willits. If you had looked past him just once he would have killed both of us."

Lipton and Mollie came rushing in and in a matter of minutes Speer had been carried up to a room adjoining those occupied by Keller, Black and Ison. All now were deep in a drugged slumber. Lipton stopped to give Speer a numbing shot, then joined the others in the second floor room.

There he crossed to an icebox and carefully mixed five highballs.

"This," he said gravely, "is a toast to Brandon Steele and the vengeance he is exacting. Drink it down—for our work is done."

He turned back to the tray and for a brief flash one hand stopped over one of the glasses. This one, he saw to it, was left on the tray for Willits.

Lew grinned broadly, paused with his glass at his lips.

"I can go now?" he asked. "Any time?"

"Any time," Jeffrey confirmed, "but if



you want to we'll take you back with us on the yacht. We'll leave about midnight."

Willits downed the drink with a nod of approval. "Not such a bad idea at that," he answered.

He sat back in his chair, lighted a cigaret and gave himself over to dreams of the riches that would be his with Keller and Black out of the way. Presently his eyes closed. The cigaret fell to the floor, and he slept.

"There he goes," Lipton said. "Now for the yacht and Brand—as soon as it gets dark."

"I hope there won't be any slip-up," Mollie muttered. "Think of it, fifteen thousand of my own—and the cockeyed world in which to spend it!"

## CHAPTER IX

**M**IDNIGHT chimes were sounding in the City Hall tower when the launch, carrying four inert bodies, swept in to the rail of the yacht and a deck man took their painter.

Harry met them at the sea stairs, tense and anxious eyed.

"Doctor," he called cautiously. "Brand—his needing you, badly."

Lipton and Jeffrey were aboard in a flash and down the steps into the cabin. Brand greeted them with a wan smile. He had slumped so deep into the steel framework that his shoulders were level with his ears.

The avid, gleaming eyes alone held the life spark and Jeffrey knew, instinctively, that the Black Agent stood at his brother's side.

Lipton, opening his black bag hurriedly, bared one of the wasted arms and sent a restorative coursing through the blood stream. Soon color came back into Brand's cheeks and he let them lift him into a more comfortable position. His first question was:

"Our—friends? You succeeded?"

"Yes, Brand; they're bringing them aboard now. "They should be a sight for sore eyes."

He went on deck to help with the transfer. Judge Black was moaning, moving his head about jerkily. Willits, partly conscious, was as yet unmoving. The others, still in a torpor, were breathing naturally.

One by one they carried them to the cabin and arranged them in a semi-circle at Brand's feet. His eyes brightened at each addition. When Speer, the last one, was laid down, the invalid said:

"I want them to know, Doctor. Can you—restore them?"

Lipton stretched wearily, drank heavily from the brandy bottle and held smelling salts under the noses of each in turn. Willits opened his eyes and started cursing monotonously. The others stirred and shifted about clumsily in efforts to lever themselves erect.

They were an eerie crew, white-faced, unshaven and, as yet, unable to use their arms and hands. Keller was the first to speak.

"What in hell's the matter with my hands?" he snarled.

"And mine, too?" Black demanded, "—and the others?"

Keller's eyes narrowed suddenly.

"Gawd!" he whispered, "Brand Steele! How'd I get here?"

After a moment he went on: "That house—the hospital! So it was a trap, after all."

Brand laughed acidly, eerily.

"A trap? Yes, Keller—a rat trap; *my trap!*"

He paused and drew a deep breath before he continued:

"I'm dying; maybe it's just a matter of minutes now, but I took a solemn oath to square things with you five before I went."

He pressed the plunger that lifted the heavy automatic within reach of his fingers,



let out a booming laugh as Black began to plead for his life.

"I'm giving you a chance," he said softly. "We're going to shoot it out. My brother will put a gun on the floor beside each of you. After that he will count five. We'll start shooting then—until the guns are empty or until one side wins."

Jeffrey laid out the weapons and said, "Ready?"

After that he counted, "One!—Two!—Three!—Four——FIVE!"

An acid grin etched Brand's lips as the count progressed. At the final word each recumbent form twitched. Feet kicked spasmodically and shoulders jerked, *but not one hand moved to a gun butt!*

Judge Black was first to sense the trick as Brand aimed his weapon at each in turn, and then thrust it aside with a sardonic chuckle.

"You lied to me—you Steeles," Black protested thinly. "I was to go free—never be molested—if I'd just help—"

He let the words die in his throat aghast that he was about to admit the double cross. Brand answered:

"Yes, provided you'd be traitor to your own kind. You did it and you're going free—all of you—but every minute of the rest of your life you'll live only to curse my memory."

"Kill him, Brand!" Keller raged. "Shoot him in the teeth. Just let me see that—and I don't care a damn what happens to me."

Brand shook his head slowly.

"No, Keller. I was going to kill you all, take you with me, but my brother and Dr. Lipton found a better plan—and I agreed. Tell them what you did, Doctor."

Lipton sloshed more brandy into his throat and leaned wearily against a table. His voice was weak, his breathing shallow as he said:

"Jeffrey Steele and I argued that killing would be too good for such men as you; that instead you should be made to suffer some

of the agony you caused Brand Steele. So last night I killed the nerves in your arms, killed them past all repair. You will live normally, eat, breathe, think—but you'll have to be tended like babies. And each time you want to move your dead arms, you'll think of Jeffrey Steele, Doc. Lipton and Brand Steele, the man you put into a steel basket months ago so that he might die by inches."

His voice died suddenly as his face purpled and breath came in wheezing gasps in his throat.

"Hypodermic—the blue one!" he managed to gasp.

Jeffrey leaped to the case, bared the sufferer's arm and plunged the needle deep into the pallid flesh, massaging the spot to spread the dose quickly.

L IPTON'S breathing strengthened and soon he drew a deep, sobbing breath. Brand was watching him with deep sympathy in his eyes but when he saw Lipton straighten and start toward him he said:

"Take them away now, Jeff. I can go out now—happy. Your way's best after all."

"Best!" Keller shouted. "Why, you stinking yellow rat, I can take it—and I'll be glad, glad, do you hear—that I was the one that got you; that it was my slug that smacked your spine. And I'll be laughing—while you're pushing up daisies."

Somehow he managed to spin on his hips, then to one knee and from there erect.

"No hands—no arms!" he whispered, "but by God I still can butt like a goat."

He set his heavy muscles and lowered his head for a vicious, smashing dive that would break Brand's neck if their heads collided, but Jeffrey cut him off. Two quick steps carried him to a point before the invalid chair and a sizzling right splashed Keller's blobby nose over his cheeks.

The blow broke his armless balance,



twisted him, sent him crashing to the floor on his face. He moaned once and lay still.

Brand's eyes were shining with a light of unholy triumph.

"Good!" he whispered. "That makes— it—just—perfect!"

He laughed then, slyly, bubblingly.

"Keller, Black, Willits, Speer, and Ison," he went on in the same harsh whisper, "killers, chiselers, crossers, fenagelers—and now look at them—helpless like me, afraid—"

The words died in a gasp and the derisive grin left Brand's lips. His eyes closed gently, slowly, like those of a child overcome by sleep.

"The end!"

Dr. Lipton said the words slowly, reverently. He knew Death too well to mistake.

"Brand won—the race," he said as he closed Brand's eyelids with the gentle touch of a sympathetic woman.

And then, quite suddenly, he too was gurgling horribly. His face was purple, eyes distended. Even as Jeffrey caught him in his arms, pallor replaced the livid shade.

"The big—blowout!" he whispered. "I hope Brand's waited."

They laid him on a transom and let kindly Nature smooth away the pain lines, leaving the face tranquil, at peace.

## CHAPTER X

THE setting sun bathed the Montauk Point headland with a mellow glow as Jeffrey, Harry and the one trustworthy engineer they had retained, came together in the yacht's cabin with the engines idling.

Two still forms lay on the padded seats as though sleeping. Brand's wasted body had been removed from the basketwork and now was covered with a silken sheet from one of the staterooms. Opposite lay Doctor Lipton, also covered with a gleaming shroud.

Reverently Jeffrey turned the fabric up over the two still faces after a last, lingering downward stare, and gestured for the others to follow him on deck.

"Get the tender overside," he directed. His eye followed a light line that came from below and lay on the deck. "To the throttle?" he asked, pointing.

"Yes. Just a jerk and she'll be at full speed—when we're in the tender and ready to cut loose. I opened the sea cocks when I came up."

Jeffrey said, "That's good!" absently. He was frowning as he took a Mills bomb from a grip at the rail and worked the stop pin free.

"You agree that I'm right?" he said to Harry. "I know that Brand planned it the other way, but I can't forget the picture of Keller in that final moment, diving at Brand, boasting that he was the one who fired the bullet that cut his spine. I can't let a mind like that live—or minds like those of the other four."

Harry stared back at him with blazing eyes.

"Right from the start I fought to knock them off as we came to them," he rasped. "Whatever you do with them is all right with me."

Jeffrey took a deep breath into his lungs and made his way below. When he returned without the bomb he joined the others in the tender.

"I put it next to the sheathing on the port side," he told them dully. "Now, let's cut loose."

Harry threw off the bow line in the same instant that the engineer jerked hard on the engine line.

Instantly the great motors began to chant their song of power and a bow wave began to grow under the forefoot. The small motor also burst into life and, with Harry at the wheel, they took up a course slightly south of west, paralleling the course of the yacht.



Already the larger craft was drawing away from them and in five minutes it had diminished in size by two thirds.

And then, even as they watched, it seemed to stand still. A muffled sound followed and spray and bits of flotsam jettied high in the air.

Suddenly the stern rose high and the dying rays of the sun glinted on the spinning propeller for what seemed unending seconds. Slowly, majestically, the bow dug deeper into the sea and the stern sank lower. Finally there was nothing—and the surface was calm.

Harry laid a hand gently on Jeffrey's arm.

"Brand and Doc would have liked it that way," he said evenly, "and I'll be proud always to know that you and I sent Keller and the rest of Brand's enemies along with them. It will be a pleasant secret for us to keep—even when we're old, Jeffrey."

"Nightmare!" Jeffrey replied dully. "Two dead men and five who were alive who couldn't fight forces from beyond the grave."

**H**ARRY cleared his throat with a grim chuckle.

"Two dead men who won by living on borrowed time, Jeffrey; and five rats—who couldn't leave the sinking ship!"



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A thousand wild driven taxi-cabs roaring through the streets—hot on the trail of the racketeering rats who had turned their union into a killer's blood-soaked paradise—and at their head, the leader, seeking more than just an honest working man's organization, seeking vengeance for the life of a brother who had died rather than knuckle down to gangland rule!

---

FROM the penthouse window Bennecke could look down into the canyon of steel and stone known as Swing Lane. Even at four a.m. on a dark November morning this narrow street in the Fifties was brightly incandescent. The red and green neon signs inviting jitter bugs to the Jive Club, the Barrelhouse, and the Delta, the lighted marquees, and taxicab headlights all combined to give the effect of daylight, even though dawn was still two hours off.

Byron Bennecke looked, felt pleased. He was a big, smooth man and wore both this expression and his tailored clothes well. In fact, Bennecke felt something like a feudal baron surveying his domain. Every night club in town that stayed open more than two weeks paid tribute to Bennecke's organization. The take included contributions from head waiters, hat check girls, chorines, band leaders, even gent's room attendants. Now Bennecke was branching out. He waved a lighted cigar at the line of taxis crawling down Swing Lane for the four o'clock "break."

"All over the city! Thousands of organized hackers. Every one of 'em kicking through with ten bucks a month dues."

"Boss," opined Tug Hand, Byron Bennecke's muscle man, "It's the softest touch since numbers was good."

"It would be," complained Sondra, whom Bennecke had long since considered too

delectable to waste her time plugging bum songs, "If you guys would get off the dime and organize those eight thousand independents."

"That, my dear," Bennecke said confidently, "Takes time. This next week I expect—"

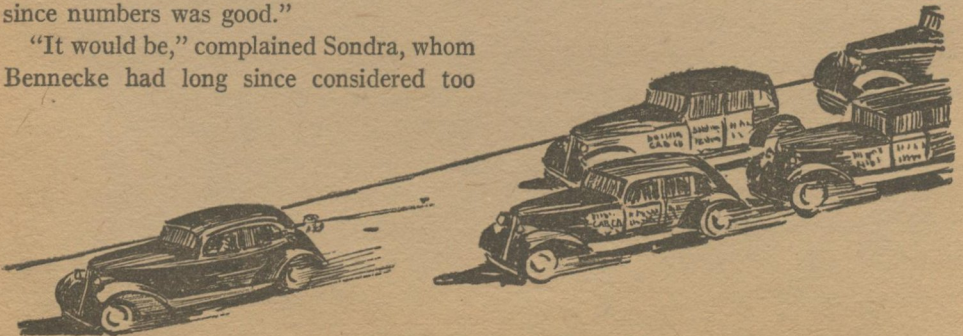
Suddenly a crash cut through the chill night air. Metal slammed against metal. Torn rivets squealed.

IN THE street below two cabs had sid-swiped violently. One was a "Pur-Pull" company cab. The other was a lemon-colored independent. As the three people in the penthouse looked down the independent, a lighter model than the streamlined "Pur-Pull," caromed across the street.

Shards of glass spilled on the pavement. The independent skated into a fire hydrant, teetered, miraculously remained upright.

An enormous, thick-shouldered man brandishing a jack handle got out of the "Pur-Pull." He began to swear. Then the door of the independent flung open and a short, red-headed, snub-nosed young man in a leather jacket leapt to the street. He too carried the jack handle.

The two improvised weapons glinted as the rival hackers circled each other. The big man lashed out savagely. The red head





parried the blow. The night air reverberated with the clang of steel. A crowd gathered to watch the fray.

"The Mick looks familiar," Byron Bennecke said. "Know him, Tug?"

"An' how! That's Paddy Brady."

"Tom Brady's kid brother?"

"That's it, boss. The bud of the guy that's keeping them independents from coming into the union. The bird scrapping him is Pappas. The Greek will handle him all right. He's good with a jack handle."

"I'm afraid that won't do. Tug, suppose you hop downstairs and tell Paddy Brady I want to see him."

"Bring him up here?"

"Sure. Send Preznack up too—if he's sober."

Tug went out, bewilderment on his thick, battered features. Two minutes later the street fight ceased. Five minutes later Tug ushered Paddy Brady into the penthouse. He was a tough Irish kid of about twenty, the kind they used to raise in Hell's Kitchen, before the tunnel demoralized that section. Paddy Brady still carried the jack handle.

"Hello, Toots," Sondra greeted.

Paddy straightened his leather jacket, ignoring Bennecke's negligee-clad moll. "Speak your piece, big shot!" he jerked out at the night club czar.

"Won't you sit down, Mr. Brady?"

"It'll hear as good standing."

Bennecke shrugged. "Brady, I understand your brother carries a lot of weight with the boys down at the Independent Teamsters and Public Chauffer's Social Club?"

"He's president. So what?"

"For some time I have been trying to get his men together to explain the manifold benefits of the Taxi Mutual Protective Association, which I head."

"The 'many-fooled benefits,' the boys call 'em."

Bennecke smiled slightly. "Now, Mr. Brady, this is no time for pleasantries.

Surely the men can at least give us a hearing."

"And get stampeded like the muggs that went into Mutual. No thanks."

"If you and your brother could see your way clear to arrange a hearing," Bennecke went on, "I think something might be done about rehabilitating your fleet—say four new 'Pur-Pull' de luxe models—"

"The answer remains the same—no!"

"Think it over, Brady."

"You'll make your talk—over my dead body!"

"I should truly regret to do it *that* way."

Paddy Brady jerked down the vizor of his leather cap and stalked out.

"Boss, I told ya he was tough like that!" Tug insisted. "I tell ya, them Brady muggs gotta be rubbed!"

"Don't be crude, Tug. I thought you told Preznack to come up."

There was a knock on the door. Sondra opened it. A thin, bald-headed man with a face like a lizard walked into the room. Bennecke nodded.

"Preznack, I want you and Tug to listen carefully," he lectured. "Tug, you will have a chance to indulge your rather uncivilized instincts. As for you, Preznack, we shall watch the phenomenon of a criminal lawyer returning to type. Ambulance chasing used to be in your line, I believe.

"Here's the picture! In approximately ten minutes I shall telephone the doorman at the Jive Club that Paddy Brady is to be allowed to pick up a fare."

"But that's what the door jerker is for, boss!" Tug protested. "To keep the business in the union hacks!"

Bennecke smiled indulgently. "Meanwhile, Tug you will go to the garage and get the 'juggernaut' out. After that I believe you know how to handle the situation."

"Oh boy!" Tug beamed.

"There is only one reservation. If anyone is killed the entire scheme fails. I want a hospital case, understand. All right, Tug."



THE muscle man made an exit. "Preznack," Byron Bennecke went on, using the tone of voice with which a financier might discuss a complicated business deal. "Your role in our little drama should be clear. You will stick with the victim until you get the proper signatures. Then we'll sue the Brady Brothers for damages, attach their cabs, and put them out of business. If I do say so myself, it's a clever little scheme, far more intelligent than resorting to unpleasant bump offs."

After the gang lip went out Bennecke accepted an admiring kiss from Sondra, picked up a telephone, and talked to the doorman at the Jive Club. Then he went to the window to watch.

Paddy Brady's passenger was one of the last people to leave the now closed Jive Club. She came out after the musicians themselves. She was aged, poorly dressed, obviously the ladies' room attendant.

The shabby independent hack lurched forward unevenly, its motor spluttering. Paddy Brady drove it down the short, glittering length of Swing Lane towards the traffic artery, now deserted, to the east.

Simultaneously with his arrival at the intersection, another vehicle appeared, moving fast. It was a huge but non-descript five-ton truck owned by Byron Bennecke and used for specific purposes, ranging from destruction of property to mayhem and murder.

The ominous growl of the "juggernaut's" motor bespoke a power plant far more powerful than the wheezy cylinders usually found under a hood so rusty. The hulking vehicle, surging along at forty miles an hour without lights, seemed to leap out of the night at the independent.

A woman's scream, the aged attendant's, rang out. Then that sound was blotted by a wild jumble of noises—the splash of splintered glass, the squeal of skidding rubber, the tortured howl of wrenched metal.

The independent slammed into the air

with terrific force. It struck the pavement on one end, went into a series of leaps and rolls, throwing off fenders and wheels with each crashing movement. Two figures, their limbs flailing about wildly, shot out of the cab like dummies from a cannon. They skated entirely across the intersection and piled against the concrete curbstone with a hollow, squashing sound.

The force of the impact merely served to break the heavy truck to a full stop. The shatter proof windshield remained intact. Its massive steel bumper, constructed to serve as a battering ram, had absorbed the shock.

A crowd, surprisingly large for the hour, appeared from nowhere. Some one yelled "Hit and Run!"

Gears meshed in the truck. Its souped-up motor roared. Tug backed up, circled the wreckage, and started to highball down the street.

A copper's whistle shrilled. But the juggernaut kept going, disappeared into the darkness with the speed of a racing machine, its exhaust laying a blanket of brassy sound over the scene.

Byron Bennecke watched the ambulance arrive through binoculars. The interne examined each victim briefly. Then sheets were drawn full length over the bodies of the aged woman and the young Irishman.

Bennecke cursed. "Deader than herrings, both of 'em! Damn the blundering fool anyhow!" He watched his cigar arc twenty stories down and land on the street in a shower of sparks.

THE headquarters of the Taxi Mutual Protective Association, unlike the Independent Social Club, was nothing but an office. There were no garage or recreational facilities. Just a set of offices for filing membership and collection reports, and a suitably expensive desk for Bennecke to sit behind. The headquarters was housed in a two-story, low-rent brick building at the



termination of a dead end street on East River.

When Byron Bennecke, with Tug Hand at the wheel of his comfortable, but not-too-expensive blue Buick seven-passenger sedan, drove up the following afternoon a woman sat crying on the steps.

"That's him!" the woman cried as soon as Bennecke alighted. "The murdering devil!"

"Back in the car, boss!" Tug warned, moving towards the woman. "There's an independent hack parked in that alley!"

"Probably just another scab coming over to join up," the racket boss commented. Then he saw the man moving towards them from the shabby independent.

The man, although nearly thirty, was a dead ringer for the bog Tug had killed the night before. His brick-red face was set in grim, determined lines. He carried a jack handle in one, red-knuckled hand.

"Take your hands off the lady!" the hacker ordered.

Tug tried to quiet the young woman who kept screaming, "You devils killed him! He said you'd stop at nothing! You murdered my husband!"

Bennecke gripped an automatic concealed in the pocket of his Chesterfield. "What's this all about?" he snapped suspiciously.

"I'm Tom Brady," the hack pusher explained. "The lady is Paddy's widow. There now, Maggie, I was tellin' ye would do no good to come here. Wait for me in the cab like a good girl."

Tug dusted his meaty hands and straightened his tie. Tom Brady faced the muscle man and the racketeer.

"To you, I'm sayin' this," he told them in a tight voice. "I'm accusin' no man! But this morning at the wreck I found a piece of copper radiator tubin' jammed into Paddy's spotlight mount. That piece was easy traced—to a 1927 Liberty truck, five-ton model."

Tug's cigar glowed ruby red. Bennecke's

dark, well-packed face was immobile, inscrutable.

"Those trucks aren't common these days," Tom Brady went on. "So help me, if that piece is traced to one your organization, Bennecke, I'll tear you apart with me own hands!"

Byron Bennecke looked hurt. "Tom, I'm powerless," he protested, spreading both palms. "This rivalry among the drivers has gotten completely out of control."

"Among the drivers, nothin'!" Tom Brady cut back. "We was all making out until you and your racketeers muscled in. You and your 'protection'!"

"Protection," Bennecke said oratorically, "Is just what I can guarantee. Please believe me, Tom. I want to do everything in my power to stop these senseless killings. Your organization meets tonight. If you'll let me lay the facts before the men—"

"Remember what I told you, Bennecke," Brady interrupted. "If you had a hand in the death of that boy, God help you. Good day!" The hacker's bloodless lips clamped down in a stiff line.

Bennecke watched him climb in the shabby independent with an expression of helpless innocence. Brady's starter growled.

"Get that call box number, Tug," Bennecke said out of the corner of his mouth. "Then come inside. We have work to do."

"What kinda work, boss?" Tug inquired a few moments later, tossing a slip of paper on Bennecke's spacious desk.

"A rather nasty kind of work, thanks to your bungling last night."

"You mean we gotta rub Brady?"

"Unfortunately I have no alternative. This time Sondra will spot him for you. You will follow my orders implicitly. Wait outside, Tug."

Byron Bennecke leaned back in his swivel chair and reached for the telephone.

The hack stand usually occupied by the Brady Brothers two-cab fleet, now reduced to one, was opposite a cigar store in upper



Manhattan. It wasn't much of a spot, but it represented the best thing available now that the Mutual squeeze had throttled business.

Tom Brady parked there after quieting Maggie and assuring her that any fears for his own safety were unfounded. Ordinarily, with a death in the family, Tom would not have been working. But there would be more mouths to feed now that Paddy was gone. Tom would need every nickle he could gross.

The call that came over the stand telephone just after dusk suggested a good "load." The low, feminine voice sounded faintly impatient, gave a gilt-edge address.

Tom was there within five minutes. His passenger turned out to be a tall, sinuous brunette dressed in a squirrel cape and a quiet but well-tailored oxford grey suit. It was Sondra, but Tom did not know that.

AT FIRST Brady wondered why the doorman had not called a union hack. Bennecke had every doorman in every apartment house, hotel, and night club lined up. The efficiency of the Mutual racket depended upon that.

"I went to the trouble of calling you myself," Sondra explained. "My sympathies are with you poor independent men."

"Thanks," Tom grinned as the doorman placed two pieces of airplane luggage in the front compartment. "Where to, m'am?"

"154 East River street, Brooklyn. It's a yacht landing. Quite a trip, isn't it?"

"About four bucks worth, lady. I'll take the shortest route."

Tom wheeled the hack over to the Hudson River Parkway, slipped into the high speed traffic streaming down that major artery, cut east at Canal, and took the bridge. He calculated he'd just about have time to dump his load and get back to the independent Social Club for the monthly meeting and get-together.

Once in Brooklyn Tom began to feel his

way through the jumbled, narrow streets of weathered frame buildings and warehouses that sprawled towards the river. Neither he nor his passenger paid any attention to the old Ford roadster that had tailed them every block of the way. It was dark now and traffic, even in the quieter streets, was moderately heavy. The roadster was just another pair of headlights among hundreds.

"154" turned out to be a warehouse, apparently deserted.

"The yacht landing is at the end of the steps," Sondra assured him. "If you'll carry my luggage."

Tom picked up the bags and followed his passenger down the rough planks under which water lapped uneasily. He had taken only half a dozen steps when a gun muzzle leapt into the small of his back.

Tug Hand's voice said, "You can let go of the bags now, chump!"

Tom Brady's heart thudded hollowly in his chest. He let the bags tumble onto the boards.

Then, as Tug frisked his side pockets cautiously, a girl's voice grated, "And now *you* can drop that gun, mister."

Footsteps sounded lightly behind. Tug's hands were taunt. Then he breathed out disgustingly and his automatic thudded against one of the suitcases.

Maggie Brady moved towards them, her blue eyes very cool, Paddy's old .38 revolver very steady in her small, white hand.

"Maggie, you're a wonder!" Tom said breathlessly.

"And you're a fool, Tom Brady. As if I didn't warn ye!"

Brake lining squealed against steel drums. Lights flared against the side of the warehouse. A heavy black car slid to a stop. A dim figure jumped to the ground, yelling, "Down, Tug! I got it!"

Tom Brady grabbed the .38 revolver. As he moved, Tug half-tripped him, then went diving into the darkness. Tom brought the revolver up, peering into blinding blaze of



the twin spot lights that seemed to pin him against the warehouse wall.

He snapped one shot and one spot went dead. Then there was an orange gash in the sable blackness and, instantly, hot, warm numbness in his gun arm. He struggled to hold the revolver with nerveless fingers. Blood dripped, and the rod with it.

Byron Bennecke stepped out of the night.

Maggie started a long, piercing scream that was cut short by a quick, deft stroke of Tug's blackjack. The girl crumpled. Tom lashed out with his left hand at the ex-pug. Tug caught him over the temple with the sap and he went down. What followed was like a bad dream. He felt himself dumped into the rear seat of his own cab, along with the unconscious girl. Then Tug drove the cab into the warehouse.

Byron Bennecke said, "Hurry up with it, Tug. We haven't much time. That meeting starts in thirty minutes. Right off the dock end—cab and all."

A door at the end of the warehouse opened. The clammy smell of the river rushed in. The cab motor roared. Tug jumped from behind the wheel. The cab kept going, seemed to float through space. Then the icy shock of the river—

"GENTLEMEN!" declaimed Byron Bennecke sonorously, lifting both hands towards the ceiling and looking out over the thousand-odd tense-visaged, shabbily-dressed men assembled in the main pavilion of the Independent Chauffeurs' Social Club. "You have heard the Honorable George G. Prezneck explain to you the enormous (Bennecke omitted the word, manifold) benefits of the Mutual organization—its cooperative buying plan, its disability insurance, its annuity and old age policies. You have heard my own halting but heartfelt plea for unity, for cooperation, yes, my friends—for fraternity. A house divided cannot stand. In these days of

strife and uncertainty we must band together like brothers!"

"He's right!" shouted an honest-looking man planted in a back row.

Other stooges took up the cry. Chairs scraped and men mumbled throughout the hall.

Bennecke, demagogue that he was, realized he had his audience on the fence now. He'd play his trump card, then wind-up the meeting with a motion for a ballot.

"And now, my good friends," he continued after a well-timed pause. "We have the privilege tonight of hearing from that tireless little pal of every taxi driver in this great metropolis. I refer to none other than Miss Sondra Sanders, president of the Taxi Drivers' Women's Auxiliary! Miss Sanders!"

Bennecke bowed and backed to the row of chairs where Prezneck, Tug Hand, and officials of the Independent association were grouped around the speakers' table. Sondra stood up.

Her tailored suit looked neat, but not costly. There was little, if any, makeup to be seen on her face. Sondra turned on the school girl personality that had made her the toast of night clubs and advanced across the rostrum, smiling until the applause died down.

At that instant a door at the extreme rear of the hall burst open. Tom and Maggie Brady, wet and disheveled, rushed down the aisle. Tom's right arm rested in an improvised sling.

"Easy, everybody!" Bennecke told his cohorts in a low, urgent voice. "Keep your heads!"

He came to his feet, pointed to Tom Brady, and waved wildly for applause. The astonished mob, seeing their leader and urged by Bennecke's gestures, began to clap, shout, stamp, whistle.

That was the effect Bennecke wanted. Under the cover of excitement it would be



a not too difficult matter to get Tom Brady and the girl on the stage, rush them through the side door leading to the cellar stairs. An explanation could be made while Bennecke's hoodlums, staked outside, spirited them away.

The plan might have worked except for Tug Hand. The muscle man heard Tom yell, "There's the guy that killed Paddy! The cop's traced the truck. They're coming for him!"

Brady's finger pointed accusingly. Tug's feeble mind did not stop to reason that Brady could scarcely be heard in the tumult. He jerked out his automatic and snapped a shot at the hacker. The slug went wild.

The detonation was a signal for pandemonium. The applause stopped. Chairs were overturned. The mob of outraged hackers rushed towards the stage.

The "Honorable George G." Preznack was the first to reach the exit. He was closely followed down the stairs by Sondra, Tug, and finally Bennecke, who realized that no bluff could convince the mob now.

Bennecke's Buick was parked in the street alongside the clubhouse. Two carloads of hoods waited there. That circumstance, and the fact that the cellar level served as a parking space for several hundred independent hacks, enabled the mob to make a getaway.

"Follow me, men!" shouted Tom Brady, running towards the garage door.

He took the wheel of the nearest hack and, driving with his left hand, urged the vehicle up the ramp. Inside of thirty seconds the garage steamed with exhaust smoke. Motors thundered. Gears clashed. A veritable avalanche of steel swarmed into the streets.

The three mob cars were headed north on Water Street. One-third of the cabs turned a block east to Nestor, which paralleled Water. Another third took up the chase along Dearborn, a block to the west.

The remainder, headed by Tom Brady, poured directly down Water.

Water was a brick thoroughfare, badly worn by heavy truck traffic. Any speed over fifty miles an hour on its undulating surface was suicidal. The gang cars, though several blocks in the lead, failed to gain appreciably.

Tom Brady had driven brick streets for years. He knew just where to use the brakes, and the throttle. At intersections he threw his hack into a side skid, drifted over the dips, turned on the power down the more level straightaways.

Tires slammed against fenders. Bolts and windows rattled. Through his mirror he could see the headlights of dozens of hacks. They seemed to cover the street like a tidal wave.

After ten blocks the winking tail lights of the gang cars grew larger. Brady grinned. Scattered shots came from ahead. A slug shattered half the windshield. Tom only jammed the throttle into the floor.

Hacks swayed and weaved on either side now. A milkman coming in the opposite direction drove onto the sidewalk and jumped for safety. Brady's speedometer needle shaded fifty-eight. The hack was rolling now!

UP AHEAD red traffic lights indicated Spring street. The gang cars slowed, started to turn west. But the flank line of hacks was already closing in from Dearborn. The Buick reversed and careened east on Spring with the other cars following suit.

Brady shouted triumphantly. Tug, handling the Buick, had been stampeded into a fatal decision. Spring was a dead end at its eastern terminus. Tug should have known that. The Mutual headquarters was located at the end of the street.

If the muscle man realized his mistake there was no turning back now. As he crossed Nestor the eastern flank line of hacks nearly ran him down.



Brady took the corner on two wheels and prayed for more speed. Hacks poured into Spring until that narrow thoroughfare was literally solid with them. They closed in on the trapped gang cars.

Suddenly the speeding Buick's spot swept across the "DEAD END" sign. Tug hit the brakes and threw the wheel over. The Buick slued to a stop.

"Tommy gun—inside!" Bennecke yelled.

Tug Hand ran up the steps to the Mutual headquarters and hurled himself at the door. Gangsters scrambled from lurching cars to the pavement.

Brady jerked on the emergency brake and hit the street before the hack swayed to a stop. He clutched a jack handle in his left hand.

Byron Bennecke, his smooth shaven face pasty with fear, raised an automatic. Brady set himself and hurled the steel bar. It went with the deadly accuracy of a bushman's boomerang, caught the racket boss across the throat. Bennecke uttered a twisted cry and went down, squirming in agony.

Other jack handles came hurtling out of the night. A few sporadic last rounds of ammunition answered the barrage. Then the hoods were throwing their empty guns futilely, trying to dodge the singing steel that came at them from all angles.

Two hackers rushed Tug as the muscle man got the door open. He kicked one in the face and used his now empty automatic to cold cock another. Then he disappeared inside. Brady scooped up a fallen jack handle and followed.

For a moment he lost his man in the strange office layout. Then he heard a steel locker rattle open, sprinted through an open partition. Tug, Thompson sub machine gun cradled, spun from the wall. The safety clicked.

Brady swung desperately. The steel bar rang against the chopper as its muzzle began

to spew lead. Splinters flew off the floor. A chair jumped four feet in the air.

Brady followed through his blow. The jack handle slid down the barrel, smashing Tug's fingers. He cursed and struggled to bring the gun up. Brady gave him a quick, backhand blow across the wrist. The chopper went down in a clatter.

Tug looked at Brady in terror. "Where the hell did you come from?"

"Out of the river, mugg. You forgot to close the cab windows. The river woke me up like a cold shower. I learned to swim in it when I was a kid."

Tug breathed heavily, rubbing his wrist. "So the cops traced the truck, huh?"

Brady smiled tightly. "Just a bluff to stampede your act at the meeting."

Tug's pulpy lips peeled back. "Wise guy, huh?"

"Let's go, mugg. I heard the radio cars coming."

"Take this, wise guy!"

Tug's injured hand suddenly flashed a sap. Numbness scraped Brady's cheek. He lashed back with a vengeance. The steel bar squashed against the muscle man's already well-flattened nose, seemed to part Tug's face. Tug stumbled out in agony.

Infuriated hackers rushed the building, began smashing furniture and windows. Brady went outside as three prowling cars threaded the cluttered street. Hackers armed with jack handles had rounded up the entire gang.

**B**YRON BENNECKE had passed out on the pavement. Preznack and Sondra were huddled near the Buick. There was nothing particularly "Honorable" about the appearance of the gang lip now. Nor did Sondra look the part of that "tireless little pal of every hacker in our great metropolis." Her defiant snarl was all out of character with Miss "Sanders," president of the "Mutual Women's Auxiliary."



# ONLY SAPS WORK

by RAY ROBRECHT



*She was holding the telephone, and all she did was cry "My God! My God!"*

**J**OE SMITH graduated from High School and like most boys started looking for a job. He finally landed one as a runner for the Hudson National

Bank. The twelve years since then had passed rather uneventfully for Joe. Nothing had happened to him that doesn't happen to a million other people. He was

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Far more preferable to Joe Smith was the easy money he could get by casing the bank in which he worked for a stick-up than was the slow and arduous work as teller—but bullet spawned blood money could only lead to the death house's sizzling squat, Joe and the gorgeous wife he adored!

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married, had two children, owned a small house with a big mortgage, and was now the Loan and Securities Teller in the Hudson National Bank. He was a typical bank clerk living on a small salary which never seemed quite enough to take care of a middle class family. He agreed with Roosevelt in his heart and hoped the bank clerks might have a union, but he kept these thoughts to himself because he knew the name of Roosevelt was taboo in financial circles.

During the five years of his married life Joe had always tried to make ends meet and most of the time he had managed but lately he was slipping behind and some of his creditors insisted on payment in full rather than on account. It wasn't much money Joe owed—but he did need one hundred dollars right away to bring payments on the ice box and radio up to date, and take care of a dentist bill which had been hanging fire for a long time, and also a little present for his wife's birthday.

**IT SEEMED** so easy when he borrowed the money. Joe was ashamed he had made his wife scrimp and save on meals while he himself always refused to have a beer or two with the boys when they worked late at the end of the month. Joe had it all figured out—pinch a bit here, eliminate there—he'd be able to pay off his loan without too much trouble. He knew of course the 10 % interest was high but the loan company kept everything confidential, and Joe couldn't afford to have the bank officials know he was borrowing.

Everything was fine until the first payment came due. The note had been changed, that was easy to see. It now read 10% per month. Joe laughed as he told the agent of the loan company—the fellow who ran the cigar counter in the building across the street. There must be some mistake—it was ridiculous—why it was even illegal. No sir—Joe wasn't going to pay anything like that. Why he'd be

paying for the rest of his life and still owe money.

The cigar man looked serious. "Jeez, don't talk like that. These babies collect or else—I don't know what those guys might do—I ain't in the know—but you better pay up quick."

Joe laughed again. "I'll wait till the management comes to talk it over."

The cigar man laughed also. "There won't be no talk. But—" he looked nervously up and down the lobby—"You ain't bein' smart. You been buyin' smokes here maybe ten years. I don't wanna see you get roughed up. You ain't doin' business with no sissy bank—these guys don't fool. You're liable to get yourself into the receiving end of a good beating. You better ante up."

The cigar man was just trying to give him a scare, Joe knew that, so he laughed. "O.K. pal. Don't worry about me. We've got laws in this country. I don't get scared by any cheap crooks."

It was on the way home, that night. Joe was packed in the subway with the other human sardines who had the misfortune to live in Brooklyn. Suddenly there was a strange feeling, like a pin prick in the small of his back. He turned to the tall, swarthy individual pressed close behind him, and the funniest light feeling took possession of his head and knees. He tried to thank the tall man for keeping him from falling to the floor, but he couldn't because a black sheet of darkness was gathering around him and his jaw was much too heavy for him to move. . . .

**JOE'S** next sensation was the illusion of a 4th of July pin wheel whizzing around inside his head. He wasn't sure where he was and as a matter of fact he wasn't sure he was alive. The buzzing in his head continued and his eyes refused to focus, but he seemed to be feeling better and his senses were returning rapidly.

An exploring hand told him he was lying



on cobble stones and soon his eyes could discern the dark walls of buildings. No one was about and with returning consciousness Joe discovered he was lying on the pavement of a narrow unlit alley. He struggled to his feet and lurched about like a Bowery bum loaded with "smoke."

The evening was a complete blank—Joe didn't have the slightest idea of what had occurred. But of one thing he was certain—he reeked of whiskey, yet he could have sworn he hadn't had a drink.

Steadying himself against the grimy wall of a building, he made a frantic inventory of his belongings. His watch pointing to 2 A. M. was still in its proper pocket but the wallet containing the expense money which he needed to pay the household bills was gone.

The shock of the evening's events had a sobering effect on Joe's mind and he determined to get a policeman at once. He still walked with an unsteady gait for the effect of the drug which had been injected with a hypodermic needle by the man in the subway had not yet fully worn off. He wandered, not certain where in the city he was, but finally it was with joy and relief that Joe saw a white and green radio squad car parked on the next block.

He hurried to it as quickly as he could, confident he would get aid in his trouble. When he steadied himself against the car and the cops caught a whiff of the liquor, Joe never had a chance to tell his story. "Scram, bum, go sleep it off somewhere."

Joe stumbled off to find a subway headed for Brooklyn. His wife was waiting for him when he finally got home. He opened the front door and quietly passed out at her feet.

**T**HELMA SMITH still thought her spouse had been on a toot so naturally he did not get much sympathy when he woke up late next day. Joe felt repentant about everything, but still couldn't figure it out.

The telephone rang and Joe could his wife talk in monosyllables until she cried "My God, My God." Joe hurried from the bedroom and saw his wife, still holding tight to the receiver, leaning against the wall, gazing at the phone with a look of horror.

Minutes later the story of the phone call was sobbed out on Joe's shoulder. A strange voice over the phone had said politely and smoothly—"Mrs. Joseph Smith? I have a message for your husband. Will you take it? Fine. After you hear it just tell your husband and nobody else—get me?" "Mum's the word. Just tell him next time our collectors will get a little rough with him. It's smart to pay up prompt and easy. Goodbye."

Joe sat down, his head in his hands. His wife's sobbing didn't make it easier for him to think, but he knew he was in a corner. He'd like to fight back but he didn't know how.

The next week was a nightmare for Joe. He couldn't figure things out, so he just let them slide. He thought seriously of stealing from the bank, but he knew he'd get caught—that was only postponing the agony. He'd gotten two phone calls at the bank, each one merely saying "Don't forget next pay day." All this with the tension at home, didn't help his mental attitude.

Then came the climax. Joe's wife announced she expected another child.

By this time his mind was near the cracking point and Joe could almost feel himself behind bars, gibbering like a mad man.

He didn't feel surprised when a well dressed man addressed him as he left the bank on Saturday afternoon, but he almost fainted when the stranger, after a few casual remarks, told Joe he could end his financial worries.

"Smith" continued the man who introduced himself as Mr. Cash, "I represent the Loan Company and after looking into your case we feel we've been a little hard



on you. Would you care to take over an easier method of repayment?"

Would he? My God, Joe Smith was ready to do anything to save the wife and kids.

They took a cab for a nearby hotel. In the hotel room were glasses, ice and liquor, and Joe needed no second invitation to pour himself a drink—He needed it badly.

Cash was a smooth salesman, nothing rough about him, but with his coat unbuttoned it was easy to see the gun in his shoulder holster wasn't any toy. His eyes were cold and unwavering. A doctor would have picked him for a "snow bird." To Joe, however, he seemed the answer to a prayer.

"We've been watching you, Smith, and we have decided you could be a useful member of our organization. I'm offering you a part-time job. You can do us most good by staying right on with the bank. In fact we shall insist upon it."

Joe was thunderstruck—he was beginning to realize that he was being used to "case a bank job." That was too tough and lousy for him, even now—he wouldn't do it. He started to protest, but Cash held up a restraining hand and calmly went on, "Now Smith, don't interrupt. I don't like that quality in an employee, and if you know what's good for your two kids, you won't turn this job down."

**H**E SAID this in a smooth voice, but it was clearly a threat. Joe gulped and said nothing.

"So you can see we're on the level with you—here's your note—tear it up and forget it. Of course this job isn't real work, because only saps work and we don't want any saps with us."

"Now, here's the low down, and listen careful because we don't keep employees who make mistakes. We cure 'em of that habit right away." Cash patted his gun suggestively and went on. "Every Mon-

day you get a tin box from the Armored Express Co. with all the week's cash from the Great Atlantis Chain Stores. Just one box and it only has around fifty G's in it, but it's nice and easy to handle for a quick get away."

"Here's where you come in handy. One of our boys walks up to your window, which you left unlocked after the box was delivered, and sticks a rod in your phiz. That makes everything look O. K. and you've got an alibi—we've got the cash and are out before anybody knows what's up. Easy. Only other thing you gotta do is pull the switch in the alarm system beforehand, so it won't go off if some wise guy tries to call the cops. We split even steven of course."

"Monday will be here awful fast, so you won't have much time to change your mind. Keep your lip buttoned—if you don't you'll feel mighty bad having anything happen to your kids."

Joe left the room and started walking. He was at a crossroad in his life and as he walked temptation became greater. His steps on the pavement seemed to click out a steady haunting rhythmic phrase "only saps work—only saps work—only saps work — saps — saps — saps — work — work—work."

He entered a drug store and phoned his wife he would have to work late. Yes, he was O. K., but probably wouldn't be home till late. Goodbye—kiss the kids good-night.

Joe was now planning to do the first sensible thing he'd done in a long while—he was going to think. He went to the most logical place in the city of N. Y. for a person wishing solitude. He hired a boat in Central Park.

A strange thing was happening inside Joe. He wasn't sure just what it was, but for the first time in years he felt free. He no longer felt that he was drifting with the tide of human events in a rudderless ship. He was going to make a decision and



for better or worse he'd stick to it, have no regrets. He'd be a player, and no spectator, in the game of "life."

Joe rowed idly about the lake not living in the present but the future. Cash's offer had allure—stealing from a bank seemed so impersonal—nobody lost anything but the insurance company and who the hell could have an insurance company for a pal, or a friend or a wife. An insurance company was nothing but a stack of policies wrapped around some high salaried stuffed shirts inside a pile of bricks made into a building. It was funny he'd never thought of all this before.

The tower of the Plaza caught his eye and his day dream swung around to a picture of Mr. and Mrs. Joseph Smith sipping a cocktail in the terrace cafe. All eyes were turned on this well dressed young couple of obvious wealth. God how he'd like to give his wife fine things and send the kids to a private school.

Joe took a firm grip on his imagination and brought it back to earth. He resolved he would look at the facts and not the fancies. How long could he retain the love of his wife if she knew how he got his money? What would his children think? Suppose he went to jail? Well suppose he did—was that any worse than being a numbered cog in a big bank. Sure it was respectable work, but how could he support a wife and family on respectability. Only sparrows could eat that stuff.

Thoughts crashed through Joe's mind with the speed of light. Thoughts he had never dreamed of. Some of them jolted into his brain leaving an indelible mark. For the first time in his life he was weighing cause and effect. He was actually deciding things and the experience gave him a thrill.

His body was soaked with perspiration as if he had been doing hard manual labor and he felt physically exhausted when he finally came to his decision. Joe felt relieved—he was at peace with himself—he

was master of his fate for better or worse—his worries dropped from his shoulders and he felt like a truck horse turned loose in a green pasture.

THE next few hours were busy ones for Joe. He made several phone calls. Met a man named Faulds in whose automobile they took a ride and had a long talk.

Monday morning dawned clear and the sun was just beginning to send its golden shafts down into the canyons of N. Y. City as Joe and a multitude of other office workers were hurrying to work.

The Hudson National Bank opened its doors to the public at 9 A. M. and by 10 o'clock there were a sprinkling of customers at the tellers' windows and officers' desks. At exactly five minutes past ten the Express Company's armed guards delivered the tin box containing the week-end receipts of the entire Chain of the Great Atlantis stores in the city.

Joe greeted the captain of the guards, opened his teller's window, took in the box, closed the window and stamped the guard's receipt book. He glanced nervously about the banking floor and apparently the only people about were there on legitimate business.

Joe was scared stiff for the next few minutes were to decide his life course.

Meanwhile "Cold" Cash and his four companions were cruising about the neighborhood at a moderate speed to make sure the avenues of escape were open. Cash sat in the back seat talking. "All the way to the river, Speed. We don't want any broken down trucks across the road. Everything looks O. K. Any W.P.A. guys on West Street, drive over 'em. This lam has gotta be made fast, an' sure. Slow down—we got four minutes yet."

Speed, the driver was on edge. "Never mind the wise cracks. I tend to drivin'. Make sure you tend to gettin' the haul."

The gorilla next to Speed was busy pick-



ing his teeth and he paused to question Cash. "Listen Boss, you ain't really goin' to cut in that sap at the bank, are yuh? Lemme give him the hot pill."

Cash's eyes narrowed and he puffed on a cigaret. "Get this straight, you mugs—I'm boss. I'm no dope. Follow orders and we collect again. Keep your trap shut Butch! That sap at the bank gets his cut right out of the end of my heater. Soon as he hands over the green stuff. Smap to! Get the car parked ready to go, Speed. You mugs—listen—no wild shots—squeeze the trigger and make it count. Remember, I go to the window. Butch covers the officers' desks. Ginzo and Manny take the middle of the floor. Let's go."

Four men briskly walked into the bank. They didn't have the lazy saunter of a company book-keeper making a deposit on company time, nor the happy rush of a clerk cashing a pay check. They walked in like busy executives sure of their power and not having any time to waste in small talk.

One man stationed himself in a position commanding a clear view of the officers' desks, two others stopped near the middle of the banking floor with watchful eyes on the customers. Each had his hand on a gun ready for use. The fourth man stepped to the right and went directly to the loan and securities cage. He was Cash.

As he stopped at the teller's window he unobtrusively whipped out an ugly short barrelled "belly gun." "You know what I want," he snarled, "Make it snappy."

Joe broke out in a cold sweat—he had to go thru with his plan now. It was too late to back out even if he wanted to. He opened the window of the cage and passed out the tin box. As Cash reached for the box with his left hand, the knuckles of his right hand whitened with increasing pressure about the grip of his "belly gun."

"Thanks kid—now here's your pay off." The gun in Cash's hand barked but it came almost as an echo to the roar of a Colt

service automatic which Smith held in his right hand under the tin box. Joe felt a jolt in his left shoulder but no pain. He looked out the teller's window and saw Cash's blinking eyes looking at the ceiling. A crimson spot bubbled and spread on his white shirt while he sank to the floor.

On the banking floor it sounded like the battle of the Marne.

**T**HINGS were happening mighty fast. Joe kicked the alarm pedal and the siren's wail added to the general confusion of noise. The few customers were huddled like frightened sheep in one corner and sprawled on the floor like a carelessly dropped rag doll, lay "Cold" Cash, ex-bank robber.

The three remaining thugs swung toward Smith's cage and let fly. Bullets shattered the wood and glass all about Joe's head. The surprise of having "Cash" getting the works instead of the teller made the shots fly fast but wild. Joe squeezed the trigger of his automatic again and again. He saw "Butch" stagger and head for the door. He took two steps and dropped to the floor like a loose sack of grain. Other guns were speaking—efficiently. Men who a few minutes before were apparently customers crouched on one knee and with steady hands squeezed triggers.

Ginzo and Manny turned their fire. Bullets zipped and ricocheted on the stone floor. A "Tommy" gun started in like an extra loud typewriter and Ginzo and Manny squealed, like the rats they were, as a string of red periods came from the "typewriter."

The firing stopped as the last thug twitched on the floor. The deathly silence that followed was broken by the roar of a short barrelled riot gun just outside the bank as it sprayed a load of buckshot through the getaway car and into Speed.

**I**NSPECTOR FAULDS rounded up his Federal men with a few brisk commands and instructions. Then he went to



look after his sister's pride and joy—her husband—Joe Smith, who had planned the capture with him on Saturday night.

He imperiously waved back the bank officers who were beginning to crawl out from under desks and were shakenly inquiring what was up.

"Well, Joe," beamed the inspector, "this is the nicest piece of work in the history of the department. You arranged for the round up of one of the slickest, toughest, bank hold-up gangs in the country. Every one of those birds has a price on his head, dead or alive, and believe me its a real pleasure to take 'em back dead—including the hop head driving the getaway car. Also let me add that your share of the rewards won't be exactly chicken feed."

Joe was by now sitting down waiting for the police surgeon to examine his shoulder wound. The wound didn't amount to much but it looked rather impressive with

his arm in a sling while he awaited the arrival of the bank's president.

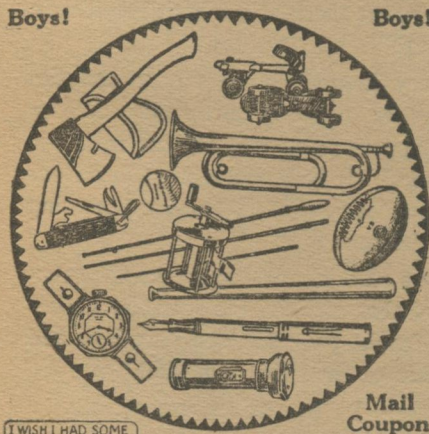
The president was a man of action, and it didn't take him long to arrive. He looked things over in a glance and said, after a moment's chat with Federal Inspector Faulds, "Smith, let's talk this over in private, if you feel up to it."

Smith did, so they walked into the directors' room. The president took a chair and motioned Joe into another.

"Smith, you've done something I've wanted to do all my life—you've become a hero. More than that, you've performed a distinct service to every banker and business man in the country. You've proven yourself a man in every sense of the word and I'd like a real man to manage the new branch we're opening in Brooklyn. How about it? You'll take it? Fine. Be sure and ask for enough salary, because only saps work—for nothing."

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Boys!



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# SAWBONES



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The underworld had been good—had turned Harry Davis from a starving interne to the ace bullet picking medico of racketland—until his own evil double-cross put him on the receiving end of his own bloody scalpel, wielded by the hand of a gangland butcher!

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**T**HE constant blinking of the multi-colored bulbs in the mammoth Wrigley sign across the street above the International Casino dyed the wet streets a hundred brilliant hues. It was in the midst of a learned discussion on the vagaries of a public taste that weaned a million dollar industry on a one cent item. By my side Barney Zimmerman, famed Tenderloin dick, nodded absently as his sharp little eyes scanned the ever moving throng that advanced like some giant tidal wave and engulfed the length and breadth of Broadway.

Suddenly his stubby fingers bit into my arm. "See that little hunchback, Kelly?" he asked in a low voice. "Watch him for a few moments and maybe you'll get that story you've been moaning about."

I followed his glance and saw the object of his interest. Standing under the protection afforded against the slight drizzle by the Astor marquee was the most horribly deformed creature I had ever seen. His head seemed almost lost between two badly hunched shoulders, one arm was painfully twisted behind his back, while the other supported his dead weight on a padded crutch. But it was his face that caught my

attention! From where I stood he appeared to be constantly leering. The corner of his mouth was lifted in a perpetual grin, and was almost connected with the eyeless socket above by an ugly scar. His nose was a painfully shattered mass, slit disgustingly through the center, the split extending down through the upper lip.

I shuddered involuntarily. "Ugh!" I turned back to Zimmerman. "What kind of a story can there be in a human epidemic like that?"

Barney hushed me to silence and the pressure on my arm increased. "Watch what happens when that big car pulls up. That one." He indicated a large, luxurious limousine that was at that moment drawing up to the curb.

I got a start when I recognized the occupant of that car. It was Dorothy Gainswood, daughter of "Big Tim," my boss and publisher of the "Evening Mail."

"But——" I started to expostulate.

"Watch," Barney hissed through set teeth. I was surprised to see that he was actually excited. He was breathing very hard, his eyes wide with interest.

I turned in time to see Dorothy step from the car with the assistance of the chauffeur. I could see that she was even lovelier than when I had last seen her several years previously. Her raven tresses were cleverly supplemented by the whiteness of an ermine



# -SAY YOUR PRAYERS

by **HUGH J. GALLAGHER**

(Author of "Internes Can't Prescribe," "Red Headed Woman," Etc.)

## A NOVELET OF UNDERWORLD VENGEANCE

*The girl screamed  
and jumped back  
into the car.*



wrap. About her neck sparkled an indubitably expensive diamond necklace.

She had already taken a step toward the hotel entrance when she saw the hunchback for the first time. Her reaction was startling. Her hand shot to her throat and she stood stock still. From where I stood I



could see the blood drain from her lovely face, leaving her the color of old ivory. She stood for a second as though hypnotized by what she saw, then putting her hand slowly behind her, she caught the chauffeur by the sleeve, turned, whispered something and disappeared into the darkness of the limousine. The last view I had of her was of her frightened little face framed in the rear window of the car as it sped away from the curb.

I TURNED to my companion. His eyes were again scanning the ever moving throngs. The breathless interest was apparently forgotten.

"She looked like she'd seen a ghost," I said.

"She did," was the laconic answer.

And that was all I could shake out of him, pump him though I did for the next ten minutes. "How can I write a story if I don't know what it's all about?" I complained.

"Forget it," he grinned, "you wouldn't have the nerve to print it even if you did know. Not if you wanted to keep working for old man Gainswood, you wouldn't."

I tagged along uncomplainingly as he made his rounds from club to club, but it wasn't until we'd anchored at a quiet table at Leon & Eddie's that I could open the subject again.

"How'd you know what was going to happen, Barney?" I begged.

He tapped a cigarette on the edge of the table thoughtfully, wet the end with maddening deliberation and inserted it between his two full lips. I scratched a match and in its futile glare I could see him studying me. "All right, newshound," he said finally, "I'm going to give you that story. You won't print it," he grinned. "Chances are you won't even believe it, but that's up to you." He ordered another round of drinks, and I settled back expectantly.

"Twelve years or so ago I was an inspec-

tor's man down on the East Side," he began. "Around about that time Bobby Dolan was trying to grow big enough to fit his pants. He was running wild with liquor and dope, and had a pretty good trade on the side in women. 'Member Bobby?"

I nodded and mentioned the million dollar funeral that the "boys" had given Dolan, New York's "mad dog" of gangdom. It had been my first big time assignment.

"Well," the detective continued, "Bobby's been building himself up from a fourteen carat heel into a regular big timer for a couple of years when I first meet him. The afternoon I'm talking about, me and Johnny Mercer—he's my partner in those days—we're cruising down Grand Street when we spot a crowd in the middle of the next block. We shoulder our way through the mob, and there's Dolan stretched out on his back with half a dozen punctures in his hide and an interne sticking little squares of gauze on him.

"Anything serious, doc?" I asks, flashing my tin.

"Just flesh wounds," the kid grins. "We'll fix him up as good as new at the hospital." And he signals the driver to get Dolan into the wagon.

I drop around to the hospital several times to see what I can get out of Bobby on the shooting, but he ain't the kind to spill his lip to a copper. Finally I give it up in disgust.

Meanwhile, him and this kid doc, Harry Davis is his name, get plenty friendly during the five weeks that Dolan's on his back. Bobby's interested in this medicine racket, and the kid is evidently fascinated by the gunman's rep. Anyway, Davis gets into the habit of dropping by Dolan's room every minute he has off.

One day about a week or so before Bobby is due to be released, Davis drops by for his regular chat, and he's feeling kind of low.

"What's the matter, Doc," Dolan asks him. "You look like you lost your best friend. What's eating on ya?"



"Just got some bad news, Bobby, that's all," the kid says, parking himself on the foot of the bed. "My last chance to nab myself a residency fell through this morning."

"I don't follow, kid," the gangster wanted to know, "what's this residency stuff about?"

"Well," the doc explains, "it's like this. You see, my internship here is up next month. That means I've got to do one of two things, either land myself a residency at one of the other hospitals or set up my office."

"I get it, doc. What's an office cost about?"

"Oh, I guess about three thousand should do it about right," the interne tells him. Then, with a rueful smile, "but the way my finances stand at the moment, it might just as well be three hundred thousand."

"Say now, that sure is tough," Dolan sympathizes. "Feature that. Here you put in all that time and dough getting yourself educated, then you gotta ante up another three grand into the pot before you can begin to cash in on it."

"That's about it. Guess I'll have to go out and dig a few ditches to get myself a stake."

"Aw, now, don't take it so hard. It ain't as bad as all that." Dolan clapped him on the arm. "Say, I like you, and I don't let no friends of mine go digging ditches. You let me sleep on this, kid, and I'll figure an angle for you."

THE following night when the kid drops by for his nightly chat, the gangster has a proposition ready for him. "Look, kid," he says, "suppose I advance you the three grand for an office." The doc starts to object, but Bobby waves him off. "Hold your horses, doc. This ain't no charity proposition. I been giving this plenty of thought and this here is a regular business opportunity. Interested?"

The kid nods. "I'm listening."

"That's the ticket, doc. It don't cost you a cent to listen. Now, it's like this. Sometimes me and the boys get in the middle of a family quarrel and some of us get a little scratched up like I am now. Now we go to some local sawbones to fish the slug out, and what does he do? He calls the coppers and they ask a lot of embarrassing questions."

"That's the law, Bobby. Every physician must notify the authorities whenever he treats a gunshot wound."

"Law or no law, kid, it's a damn bother. Now," he gets up closer to the kid and winks, "if we had our own doc—get me?"

The kid gets up from the bed. "I see what you mean, Bobby. Sorry, no dice. That's not in my line. Thanks, anyway."

The gangster drops back on his pillow and shrugs. "Okay, doc," he grins. "No hard feelings. Just thought I'd ask."

Well, for a couple of days Davis stays away from Dolan's room, but on the fourth night he drops in. He looks like he ain't been doing much sleeping. "I've been thinking over what you said the other night," he says.

"Yeh?"

"Well, if it's still open, I'd like to change my mind," he says. "I can't say that I'm exactly crazy about the whole thing, but it's my only chance and I'm taking it."

"Good boy," the racketeer tells him; "that's using your head!"

"There's only one provision," the interne insists. "Medicine is my profession. I'm no gunman and I'm not a bootlegger, that's out of my line. If I come in with you, it will have to be strictly as a physician."

"That's okay with me, doc," Dolan tells him. "I got enough torpedoes. They're a dime a dozen——"

"I'm not finished yet, Bobby," the doc interrupts. "I want to practice my profession. In return for my services to the gang, I want a legitimate office of my own in



town, entirely separated from the gang's activities. My identity must be kept a secret from the other members of the gang. You'll have my private number, and whenever any of the boys need me, I'll come. But under no circumstances are you, or any of the rest of the boys to come to my office. Those are my terms."

"Sounds okay to me, doc," Dolan says after a moment's thought. "Want to shake on it?"

And so, Harry Davis, M. D., became gang doctor for Bobby Dolan's mob.

Well, sir, Dolan gets out of the hospital a few days later and the first thing he does is buy up a little place on Long Island, and proceeds to fit it out with everything a doc could need. Operating room, x-ray, sterilizers, instruments, everything. The other rooms he has fitted out like a private hospital.

The kid, meanwhile, has gotten a cool five grand for his end of the bargain and buys himself in on a Park Avenue practice and makes a bid for the class trade.

For a year or so everything goes along swell. The kid doesn't do so hot on Park Avenue, but that's because he's new and nobody knows him. The arrangement with the mob is working out swell, too. In the beginning some of the boys showed a little curiosity as to the identity of the doc who always wore his operating mask and gown topped off by a pair of heavy horn rimmed glasses, but Bobby let it be known that he personally resented any curiosity and the doc was soon taken for granted, operating mask, gown, glasses and all.

**Y**OU know what that guy said about the best laid plans of mice and men? Well, in this case it's an old society war horse that upsets the apple cart. You know the kind? They get fallen arches from the load of jewelry they tote around in broad daylight. Anyway, this Mrs. Van Dipp is one of these old gals that is positive that she's

got everything in the book, and her own doctor don't treat her case with enough respect. So, this day she's barging down the avenue and she sees this new doc's shingle and decides to give him a buzz.

He gives her the O-O and tags her right off the bat. He tells her she's a very sick woman, holds her hand a few minutes and gives her a spiel about needing to take care of herself. She eats it up, and can't wait to spill the news to her girl friends.

Almost before you can say Calvin Coolidge, the doc's waiting room is overrun with a bunch of old hens who want him to hold their hands and tell them that they're only ten steps ahead of the undertaker. This Davis kid is no chump and he plays his cards for all he's worth. In two years time, he's the medical sensation of New York.

Society takes him up in a big way, and the first thing you know he's going places and doing things with the right people, knows which fork to use, spends more time in evening clothes than a head waiter, and is in constant demand on all occasions. His practice becomes a bonanza and soon his fees begin to read like his telephone number, in four figures.

This is about the time that he meets Dotty Gainswood. You know Dotty, what a dream she is? Well, she takes the doc like Grant took Appamotax, and he ain't exactly poison to her. He's good looking, eligible, in with the right people, his future is assured and he's top man society doctor in town.

Daddy Gainswood puts his okay on the kid, and passes word out to the society editors on his various rags that they can start linking Dotty and the doc in headlines. Davis is riding the crest and Daddy Gainswood sees to it that his name and face are kept right in front of the People That Count in every way possible.

In the meantime, Bobby and the lads are having their hands full keeping the upper



hand in the liquor situation. This is around the time that "Dutch Eddie" Martin tries to muscle in on Dolan's territory. There are plenty of fireworks, and when the smoke clears there are ten Martin sharpshooters ready for planting, including "Dutch Eddie" himself, and six more in the hospital. Bobby Dolan and his mob have dropped completely from sight, but we're sure that at least several of them are carrying Martin slugs in them. So, we have a close watch kept on all hospitals and infirmaries, but none of the boys show.

That night Davis is getting into his monkey suit when the phone rings. It's Bobby Dolan.

"Hello, doc," Bobby says, and his voice is kind of weak. "Get out to the place right away. Me and the boys need you. We're——"

"Oh, damn!" Davis answers pettishly. "Can't you get anybody else, Bobby? I've got a very important appointment I can't break and——"

"Whadda ya mean you can't break," Bobby snarls. "Get this, sawbones. I'm not asking you to come—I'm telling you, You get out here in the next hour, or I'll send for you!" and he punctuates the threat with the click of the receiver.

The society doctor's face is very grave as he dials a number. He is conscious of the situation having grown beyond his control. Something must be done, he knew, and fast. A voice answered at the other end.

"Miss Dorothy, please," Davis requested.

"Hello, darling," he said when she answered after a brief wait. "How are you, dear? I'm afraid I must beg off again this evening, sweet. Business, you know. Yes, dear, I know this is the third time in two weeks, but I promise you that very shortly I'll wind up my affairs and we'll go on a long vacation, just we two. Like that? You'll make my apologies to the Longworths, won't you, dear? I'll try to be along later, but I can't promise. Call you at any rate. Bye."

WHEN he returned the receiver to its hook that worried frown returned. He had decided what was to be done. It was a grave step, but he had no other choice. One man stood between him and the future he coveted. Very well! that man must be removed. He walked into his private office, rummaged for a moment until he found the vial he sought, then dropped it into his trousers pocket.

On the drive to Long Island he went over each step carefully. He was surprised to note how cool his mind was, how completely unabashed at the thought that he was about to commit a murder—the perfect murder!

He guided the car into the driveway that was reserved for his exclusive use and garaged it. Then, selecting a key from his chain, he opened a little door that revealed a flight of stairs to his private office, where he divested himself of his topcoat and hat and put on his operating gown, mask and horn rimmed glasses. Drawing on a pair of rubber gloves, he opened the door to the corridor that was always locked from the inside and strode resolutely down the hall to where he knew the injured would be awaiting him in the "receiving ward."

Impersonally he eyed the seven men stretched out, waiting for his ministrations. His roving eye noted the lack of movement in "Red" Denton, and he strode over to feel his pulse. Glancing over his shoulder, he motioned one of the unscathed boys to have "Red" removed to the private morgue. From bed to bed he strode, examining the wounds, gauging the extent of the damage done. At last he came to Bobby, himself. A cursory examination revealed two flesh wounds in the shoulder region and one which promised to be more serious in the abdomen.

"We'll take you first, Bobby." His voice was curiously muffled by the mask. His eyes bored into those of the gang leader.

"No hard feelings, doc?" the gangster



asked weakly. "After all, a bargain's a bargain, ain't it, doc?"

"Sure, sure," Davis assured him. "Just take it easy, pal."

In the operating room, he hurriedly prepared Dolan for an operation. The instruments had been carefully laid out and sterilized by one of the boys in anticipation of his coming and were ready for use.

"We'll give you gas, Bobby," the doctor told him.

"Ain't gonna hurt much, is it, doc?" the gangster asked.

"No more than pulling out a splinter," Davis assured him. "You've had it before, Bobby. Didn't hurt then, did it?"

"No, doc," Dolan whispered; "it's just that I got a funny feeling about this one. Is that a bad 'un down there in the belly?"

Davis lifted the sheet and peered at the little raw lipped hole that still bled a little. "I'll have to get that slug out, or it may be, Bobby," he said without a tremor. "It won't take a second."

He arranged the gangster's head comfortably on a pillow, then adjusted the ether mask. "This is the best way, Bobby," he whispered.

His next actions would have surprised a fellow surgeon. He took the carefully sterilized scalpel from the table and immersed it in a vial he took from beneath his gown, then deliberately lifting his operating mask, spat on his sterile gloves.

Dolan was under the effect of the anesthetic in but a few minutes, and the operation was under way. Instead of probing for the bullet in the usual manner, Davis made an incision at the point of entry, extended it, laid back a flap and exposed a portion of the peritoneum, callously thrust the unsterile finger of his glove through it. He then probed for, and removed the bullet and put a dressing on the wound.

Of the others, two had succumbed by the time he reached them, and had been re-

moved. The other three were resting easily, so he prepared to leave.

"Doc," Legs Waldman grabbed him by the arm as he walked down the corridor. "You better come take a look at Bobby. He's kicking around like anything. I don't know what's wrong with him."

Accompanying Waldman, Doc Davis looked in on the gang leader. He noted with satisfaction the evidences of nausea and the patient's unhealthy yellow color.

"How do you feel, Bobby?" he asked solicitously, taking the man's wrist between his finger-tips. The pulse was reassuringly irregular. Bobby Dolan was dying, and no doctor in the world would be able to label it anything but a natural death—due to peritonitis.

**D**OLAN tried to say something, but fell back on his pillow weakly. His eyes blazed accusations.

"There, there," Davis said soothingly. "You'll be all right. Here, take this," and he placed two white tablets on Dolan's tongue. "They'll make you sleep."

Outside the room, he warned Waldman. "Stay by the door and see that he gets everything he needs. He's a very sick man. I'll drop by to see how he's getting along in the morning."

Once in his own little office, Davis locked the door behind him, discarded his mask and gown, destroyed everything that might conceivably be traced to him, and left by the private driveway.

Bobby Dolan, he knew, would be dead by morning, and the only link that bound him to the underworld would have been severed. Doctor Davis sang on his way back to the city, otherwise he might have noticed the car that followed him.

Dorothy was agreeably surprised when he was announced at the Longworth home that evening. Late for dinner, true, but not entirely too late for a walk in the garden.

"Darling," she said softly, snuggling



against him when at last they were alone, "I was lonesome for you."

"I missed you too, dear," he whispered. "Happy now?"

She nodded and offered her lips. The kiss was long and sweet. She shivered as though cold and held him very close. "Don't ever leave me, darling," she whispered. "I couldn't bear to lose you."

His voice became husky. "I'll never leave you now, never. Let's be married now. Right away. And go away together. Far away."

"No, darling," she said. "I want you as much as you want me. But I want our wedding to be something to remember, something to plan for. I may never have another," she smiled, "and I want this to be done up right—veils, flowers, music, oh, everything!" Her eyes were bright in anticipation.

So it was that the following morning while he was reading the announcement of his engagement in one of Daddy Gainswood's sheets that Dr. Davis' phone rang.

"Hello, doc," a muffled voice said, "Bobby Dolan died this morning. Thought you'd like to know. We'll be seeing you."

A cold sweat broke out over Harry Davis' body. They knew! They were coming for him! But how could they know? Bobby Dolan had promised—

He was weak with fright but there was one thought foremost in his mind—he must leave—get far away. He hastily jammed some clothes in a bag, left a note for Dorothy that he was called out of town and ran down the stairs into the street.

"Taxi, mister?" a hard looking character on the sidewalk accosted him.

"I don't want a taxi," Davis growled, starting to push past the man.

"I think you do at that, doc," the man persisted, showing the outline of a bulge in his pocket. "Either a taxi or a morgue wagon."

He found himself sitting between two of

Dolan's favorite lieutenants in the cab. His brain was swirling. "What is this, a snatch?" he managed to croak. "If it's money——"

"Shut up, you rat," one of the mobsters snarled, hitting him across the face with the back of his hand. "You ain't got enough money to pay for the little finger of a swell guy like Bobby. Why, I oughta——"

"Nix, Max. Lay off the rough stuff. You got your orders," the driver hissed. "He'll be taken care of."

The three men lapsed into a sullen silence, leaving Davis to his fears. The cold perspiration formed on his forehead and ran in an icy stream down his neck. Dorothy! She'd notify the police, the wild hope brought a moment's consolation. But the message he'd left. He thought of throwing himself from the cab, but the continued pressure of the guns in his side dissuaded him.

Their destination was obviously a garage on the lower East Side. The taxi pulled right in through the entrance, and the doc was dragged up to a room over the garage proper. The remains of the gang were sitting around. So was Bobby Dolan. His body, stretched out on the cold floor, was bloated and discolored from the septicemia that had spread as a result of the infection Davis had inspired.

"Look at that, rat," Maxie snarled, throwing the medic forward on his face. "Recognize him?"

"I never saw him in my life," Davis whined, shrinking from the court of judgment selected to sit on his fate.

"I ain't no doctor," Maxie said slowly, "but I'm gonna perform a better operation than you done. My patient's gonna live. Not saying how long, but he's gonna live."

Doc Davis let a scream out of him when he saw them coming for him and passed out when they strapped him to the table. Maybe it was just as well he did. First, they marked him with the sign of the traitor,



the long gash from the mouth to the eye. Maxie had been a butcher in his hard working youth, and he had a pretty good idea what tendons and nerves to sever and what not. The eye had to be taken out later at the hospital.

On that same afternoon, another gang of boys were planning a revenge of their own. "Dutch Eddie's" mob had a meeting of the clan on the west side and it was decided that only complete annihilation of the Dolan mob would wipe clean their slate of honor.

YOU remember the famous July 19th massacre, don't you? A gang of torpedoes dressed as coppers drove up to an East Side garage, lined up the Dolan mob, presumably to frisk them, turned them face to the wall and then sprayed them with lead.

We got there about twenty minutes later, and Kelly, you've never seen a worse slaughter in all your life. Ten of them, practically cut in half by the rain of lead from the typewriters, lying side by side. "Dutch Eddie's" boys hadn't missed a trick. The Dolan rats never knew that it wasn't a pinch. They never got time to go upstairs to see how their patient was, but we did!

Bob Elliott, he's your city editor now, but then he's just a plain leg man, he's snooping around when suddenly he comes back to me white as a sheet. "Barney," he says, "come with me and see if you see what I saw."

I follow him up the stairs and there's Dolan's body puffed up fit to bust, and lying right beside it in a pool of blood is the most badly carved up guy I ever did see.

"Who is it?" I ask Elliott.

"I'd bet my bottom buck it's Doc Davis, that society son-in-law to be of Big Tim's," he turned the thing's face with his toe. "He's still breathing. Should I fan him?"

I think a minute. If it's Big Tim's kid's

beau, he'd appreciate a break. "Yeh," I tell the leg man, "go to it."

His wallet told us all we wanted to know, so we closed off the room and got Big Tim on the phone. He was there in ten minutes with the Commissioner. He took one look at the carcass and he identified it as Davis.

"Mr. Commissioner," he boomed in that purple necked way of his, "I've never asked anything of your department, but I'm asking this. I want news of Dr. Davis' er-ah accident suppressed."

The Commissioner fidgeted and hemmed and hawed for a second. "How about these men, Mr. Gainswood? They discovered the er-ah accident."

Big Tim turned those bushy eyes on us. "One of these men works for me, the other for you. I think they can be depended upon to keep silent. After all, there can be no useful purpose served in blasting the memory of a dead man and the reputation of an innocent girl."

We agreed, and if you'll remember, about a week after that Bobby Dolan funeral you were talking about (which "Dutch Eddie's" mob paid for incidentally), Doctor Davis was reported killed in an automobile accident in New England. Remember?

Well, to the end Davis was a rat. He didn't die. It would have been better for everybody concerned if he had, but he didn't. That was Davis you saw tonight outside the Astor. That was why Dorothy Gainswood turned and ran as if she had seen a ghost. She had!

I shook myself mentally as Barney Zimmerman finished his tale of horror. I wasn't cold, but I felt a desire to shiver.

"I—I don't believe it," I said with little or no conviction. "I knew Doc Davis from the paper. He always used to stop at my desk and say hello while he was waiting for Miss Dorothy——"

"Funny thing," Zimmerman said, paying no attention to the interruption, "if he had only waited, 'Dutch Eddie's' mob would



have taken care of everything for him. Somehow they learned of the Long Island hideout and rubbed out every one of the wounded boys they found there."

"I don't believe it," I said, fighting back a hysterical desire to shout very loud.

"You don't believe it, eh? There's only one way to find out for yourself. That hunchback shows up every night, rain or shine, at the Famous Door across the street at 12:30 sharp." He looked at his watch. "It's almost that now."

I looked at his face for an indication that he was pulling my leg. The interest had evaporated leaving his eyes inscrutable. Once again they were tirelessly scanning the merry-makers at adjacent tables.

Unaccountably I found myself hatless in the cold drizzle running across the street. Inside me was a dread I couldn't explain. When I got to the Famous Door I experienced a feeling of relief when I saw the hunchback wasn't there. Zimmerman had been kidding me, then.

ALMOST lightheartedly I grinned a salutation to Jerry Kruger on her way to her nightly chores and started to return to my table at Leon & Eddie's when I saw him! He was propped against the stairway above the entrance to Lou Richman's. I felt a cold sweat break out all over my body as I strove to reconcile the handsome, dashing face of Harry Davis with that harshly mutilated mass of flesh.

Straightening my jacket and taking a deep breath I walked up to the gargoyle. "Evening, doc," I said in a voice I hoped was steady.

The one good eye regarded me owlishly for a moment in its inflamed socket. "Hello, Kelly," it croaked.

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*They put a pillow over the girl's head, while the women watched the door for intruders.*



# Gangs of Days Gone Bye

A FEATURE STORY BY  
THE EDITOR

**A** LITTLE more than a century ago the British Isles were in the grip of a horror the like of which they'd never known. People were afraid to die for a reason beside Death itself. The body snatchers were afoot.

And so, to quiet the citizenry, legislation anent grave robbing was tightened, and though the medical schools cried their need for "stiffs," the law-makers paid no heed. This gave rise to the formation of two criminal gangs that began business at approximately the same time—within four years of one another. In Edinburgh the year 1827 witnessed the first venture of the Burke and Hare mob, and in London, in 1831, John Bishop and Thomas Head joined forces and

began terror operations more awful than mere dead body burglary had ever been. These two gangs reverted to an age-old method of corpse manufacture which was both quick and easy: They took live bodies and killed them.

William Hare ran a cheap hostelry in Tanner's Close, Edinburgh, called Log's Boarding House. He'd inherited the business by marrying Maggie Laird, mistress of its late proprietor. Guests of the establishment included an aged and ailing Highlander named Donald, who lived on a pension, and William Burke, a cobbler, and his doxy, Helen McDougal.

Donald died, owing rent. The Parish supplied a coffin and Burke and Hare filled



it—but not with Donald's body. This they stuffed into a tea chest and they buried the coffin weighted with tan bark. On December 1, 1827, they sold Donald's corpse to a Dr. Knox of 10 Surgeon's Square for 7 pounds, 10 shillings, no pence.

Burke and Hare had had their taste of easy money. They bided their time and another lodger came to the house, Joe the Mumper. He fell ill of a fever, perhaps incurred, perhaps induced. He failed to pay his rent but he likewise failed to die. Helen McDougal and Maggie Laird grumbled—they had to wait on the fellow, and without pay in the bargain. . . . The inevitable happened. Hare held the enfeebled man's legs; Burke wielded a pillow. Their two disreputable consorts listened at the door, acting as lookouts. The pillow pressed against his face, the life of Joe the Mumper was cut off. The next day, because he'd been younger and because his body was in better condition, Burke and Hare got 10 pounds when they made their second trip to Surgeon's Square.

John Bishop, before he began killing for bodies, was already a notorious London body snatcher and he later confessed to having raised between 500 and 1,000 corpses. His associate, Thomas Head, was married to Rhoda Bishop, a girl of 17, daughter of Bishop's wife by Bishop's dead father. The four of them lived in a house in Nova Scotia Gardens which adjoined another house which was empty. It was shortly after Head's marriage to Rhoda that he and Bishop committed their first murder.

It was late Saturday night, October 15, 1831. The two men were drinking in a tavern in Shoreditch. Across the way they saw a pock-marked, shrivelled woman standing shivering in the shadow of a church. They left the tavern and went over to her and asked if they could help her. She told them that she was destitute and homeless, that her name was Frances Pigburn, widow of a cabinet maker late of Bethnal Green.

They invited her home. She accompanied them. They took her to the vacant house next door and told her she could live there. Delighted at the prospect of a roof she could call her own, she drank the toast they offered of rum—of rum mixed with laudanum.

Five minutes later she fell unconscious. They drowned her in a well. Then they hauled her out, ripped off her clothes, and corded up her body in a trunk. Hiring a public porter, they carted her through the streets at four in the morning and sold her to Mr. Grainger's Anatomical School in Webb Street for 8 guineas. Afterwards they went to the Flower Pot, a saloon in Bishopsgate. Head drank a pony of brandy to the first success of their new racket. "Neater business than bloody body snatching!" he said.

ON FEBRUARY 11, 1828, Burke and Hare, happy with their successful disposal of Joe the Mumper, went in search of another victim whom they found in the person of Abigail Simpson, vendor of salt. They took her home and got her drunk and smothered her. Out came the tea chest again and off they trundled her to Dr. Knox for another 10 pounds.

In March of that same year they killed a prostitute named Mary Haldane. Hare had picked her up and brought her home. A month later, on April 9, 1828, Burke, trying his luck in the same field, snared two girls of the streets at once—Mary Paterson (whose body was said to be famous in all the night world of Edinburgh) and her friend, Janey Brown. They got Mary drunk to the point of dozing, but their money and liquor ran out with Janey still on her sturdy legs. They couldn't kill Mary with Janey present and they couldn't kill Janey while she was still conscious. Further they couldn't get rid of Janey, not easily. But Helen McDougal did with all a cunning woman's sly acumen. She stormed into the room and wanted to know what her husband



was doing with two such sluts. Janey fled. Mary was promptly stifled and sent to the butcher.

Then Burke and Hare killed two nameless female derelicts and then a jaundiced Englishman, and then Mary Haldane's half-witted daughter, and then an Irish begger-woman and her deaf-mute grandson. Burke strangled the old woman after supper one evening and broke the boy's back across his knee before breakfast the next morning.

Then they killed Daft Jamie, an Edinburgh half-wit, one of the pets of the town. This was their first mistake—they made but one more. Daft Jamie, familiar figure that he was, was recognized by the medical student to whom his body was assigned for dissection. An investigation was launched as to the manner of his death. It got nowhere, but it set people talking.

By Friday, October 21, 1831, six days after their murder of Frances Pigburn, Bishop and Head had found another victim. Prowling about the Smithfield section of London just before midnight, they found a young boy sleeping in the shadow of a market. They awakened him. He was startled. He thought they were policemen. They reassured him. He told them he'd run away from his mother because she hadn't the food to feed him. They offered him employment and puffed him up with the prospect of earning money and returning home a breadwinner. They took him to the house in Nova Scotia Gardens and gave him a glass of rum. He drank it only under protest and because they said it would warm him. He fell drugged. They seized him. They bound him and rushed him to the well. Five minutes later he was drowned but they let him stay in the water draining all night. In the morning they sold him to Mr. Smith, St. Bartholomew's Hospital, for 8 gleaming guineas.

They became drunk with the success of their commerce and they became, like all drunkards, careless. On Thursday, No-

vember 3rd, they enticed home a 14 year old lad from London's Italian quarter named Carlo Ferrari. They gave him a shot of laudanum that sent him spinning. They took him into the garden and were about to lower him into the well when he came around. He fought viciously, but they finally got him drowned. Then they stripped him, buried his clothes, and put his body in a trunk. Afterwards they canvassed the dissecting rooms, leaving the body behind. At Mr. Carpue's school in Dean Street they agreed to sell their plunder for 8 guineas and promised delivery the next day.

Later, at a tavern called the Fortune of War, they met a rogue named James May with whom they'd occasionally worked in their old days of grave robbing. They took him into their confidence; they told him of the body. He wangled his way into a share by telling them that Carpue was cheating them and that they could get a higher price through him. They listened to May; they employed him. Fetching the body along, he took them to King's College and contacted a Mr. Partridge. They asked him 12 guineas; he offered 9. This infuriated May—his share was to be all he could get over 9. Bishop, however, agreed to sell.

May angrily threw open the trunk and dumped the body out on the floor. It landed sitting up, strangely, grotesquely. Partridge noticed its peculiar condition, its peculiarly life-like condition. The body looked as though it had not been at all long dead—as though it had never been buried.

Partridge stalled. He told Bishop and Head and May that he'd have to send a porter for a 50 pound note to be changed. He sent him to the police instead. A cordon of officers returned. Bishop, Head, and May were collared and carted off fighting to the Bow Street police station. The house in Nova Scotia Gardens was searched. The Italian boy's clothing was found, also the garments presumably belonging to a man and a woman—bloodstained.



BURKE AND HARE'S last murder was that of the Widow Docherty. They killed her and stuck her body under the straw ticking of a spare room bed. Later, Helen McDougal, unaware of their final deed, rented the room to a beggar couple named Gray. They found the corpse and quietly went for the police. A Constable Ferguson was assigned to investigate the matter. But before his arrival Burke and Hare, not knowing about the Grays, stuffed the body in a sack and took it to Surgeon's Square. They returned to the house to find the police officer there.

"Where's the Widow Docherty?" the constable had inquired of Helen McDougal. Innocently she'd answered him: "Why she—she left last night."

The officer, about to fold up his notebook and get back to his chair in the station house, about to attribute the charges to some wrangling between the beggars and their landlady, happened nevertheless to accost Burke with the same question on his arrival: "Where's the Widow Docherty?"

Burke, swaggering, foolish, proud to the point of insolence of his vile accomplishments—of Knox's gold clinking in his pockets—replied: "What's it to you, Bobby? . . . She left this morning!"

Constable Ferguson rushed into the spare bedroom. He examined the straw of the bed. He found blood. He rushed out of the house, blew his whistle, beat his nightstick against the cobbled street. The watch came running. Burke, Hare, Helen McDougal, and—later—Maggie Laird, were taken into custody.

Maggie, it turned out, had long secretly hated Helen McDougal. Maggie turned state's evidence. Hare, now with Maggie a traitor, with no other means to save his own skin, joined her. The couples split and testified one against the other. By some freaky miscarriage of justice only Burke was found guilty. The other three were released; a mob pursued them. Whether

or no they eventually escaped is not known; they were never seen or heard from again.

William Burke was hanged on the morning of January 28, 1829. Afterwards his body was cut down and taken to the dissecting rooms of a Dr. Munro. There, in a medical theatre, before being put to the uses to which Burke had himself consigned so many, it was viewed by all the fashionable of high Edinburgh society.

Bishop, Head, and May were tried at Old Bailey on Friday, December 2, 1831. Bishop confessed to being a dealer in bodies but declared that he obtained them principally from workhouses. He denied murder. He testified that he'd stolen Carlo Ferrari's body from a grave but he refused to say what grave.

Head denied everything. He swore he wasn't even a body snatcher, much less a murderer. It was only an accident, he claimed, that he happened to be in Bishop's company.

May admitted to grave robbing activities but denied dealing in any bodies other than those which had come to a natural end. He produced a prostitute to alibi him at the time of the Ferrari killing.

The jury was out 30 minutes. All three were found guilty and all three were sentenced to death, but May's sentence was later commuted to life imprisonment. Forty thousand persons attended the hanging of Bishop and Head at Newmarket. Their bodies were allowed to swing for an hour. Bishop's went to King's College and Head's to a surgery on Windmill Street, Haymarket.

IN 1832 Britain passed the Anatomy Act. It provided for the distribution of bodies from the prisons and the workhouses, from charity hospitals and poor houses and asylums, to the medical and anatomical schools. The law made it a crime to improperly purchase a body. The law ended the body racket and the body racketeers.





Red came busting thru the window, "slut!" he screamed as the girl leaped from the gangster's lap. "Giving yourself to the rat who framed me!"

# THE DEATH KISS

by LEW McCOY

---

Just one thing could save her man from the big house sizzle-squat—lust for her gorgeous body would turn a killer into a stoolie—to put the finger of death on himself!

---

**T**HE girl paced the floor of her room like a restless leopardess. Her attractive face was set hard with desperation; the red lips, drawn to straight lines, looked as though they were about to curl back in a snarl. Waiting. . . Nervously



smoking one cigarette after another. Would Nate come? The time was growing short. In four short hours, Red, her man, would be strapped into that awful chair. At midnight he would be legally executed for killing a copper. Red had been framed . . . she knew that. She was obsessed by a vivid picture of that big lean body lunging against the straps as the terrific current ripped through it.

"Oh, God!" she moaned. "Not that! Not that!" Would Nate come? Nate Boroni knew who killed the cop. It was her only chance to save Red. A light rapping at the door brought her to a quivering stop. She composed herself with a deep breath, whispering, "Oh, Red, dearest!" She took a quick glance into the mirror, ran a powder-puff lightly over her face, fluffed her loose hair into luxurious abandonment, and went to the door. A bulky-shouldered figure stood in the dim-lit hallway, a slouch hat, pulled low, shaded his features. She welcomed him with a warm smile, opening the door wide.

"Hello, Nate, come in," she said invitingly. He stepped into the room, one hand in his coat pocket, his eyes darting about with suspicion.

"What's the idea of you wantin' to see me?" he asked, turning to her. "You always hated me." She gave him a slow, provocative smile.

"Yeah? Maybe you were wrong, Nate. Maybe I acted like that because . . . well, you know how Red was with me. I couldn't even look sideways."

His dark features wrinkled with amazement as her meaning came to him. His cold eyes glowed with sudden fire as he looked down upon her deliberately alluring face, and over the voluptuous symmetry of her body, not too well concealed by the filmy, black negligee she wore. His hot hands closed around her bare arms. His black, intense eyes bored into hers. You mean you don't hate me, after all?" His power-

ful hands shook her in his eagerness. "Is this on the level, Kid?"

She brought up a bubbling laugh. "Oh, Stupid," she said. "I've always been strong for you, Nate. You've got something that gets me! But come on, sit down; I'll pour you a drink." His eyes followed her hungrily as she went over to a wall-table for the liquor. This was almost too good to be true; he had always wanted Red's Moll, but she had never given him a tumble; now she was practically jumping into his lap. A deep, protective instinct within him was sounding a warning; but the clamor of his senses deafened him. Never had he wanted a woman quite so badly.

**T**HE girl, with hands that shook, poured a stiff slug of whiskey for Nate, and a smaller one for herself . . . she needed it! Nate had settled himself comfortably on the lounge. He grinned appreciatively as she moved toward him with undulating hips. "Kid, you sure got what it takes," he said, reaching for his drink. The girl lifted her glass.

"Here's how, Nate!" she cried gaily. "To . . . us!" Her thought flashed to that curtained cell in the Death Row where Red was sitting, accompanied by a quiet, watchful guard, waiting out the last few hours. A sob welled into her throat. She downed the fiery whiskey.

**B**UT in that grim, grey pile of stone the death cells were open. Prison riot! Grey-clad men were raging through the corridors. Guns cracked viciously; convicts and guards, alike, lay huddled in the halls; the warden was held captive. Three men shot their way through the outer gate. One of them managed to plunge into the cold water of the river, the whine of bullets in his ears.

"You sure had me fooled, Kid," said Nate, reaching for the girl's wrist to pull her closer. "I thought you were solid for Red." She went to one knee on the couch.



His hands slid upward over her curving hips.

She laughed, short and hard. "Me? Solid for Red? I was afraid of him, Nate. I don't mind a bit of a brute in a man . . ." Her lashes lowered as her eyes traveled slowly, significantly, over his bulky, powerful torso. "But Red was . . . cruel . . ." she choked slightly, then added vindictively: "I'm glad you framed him, Nate!"

Nate's hands dropped away as he stiffened abruptly. His eyes narrowed with returning suspicion. "Who told you that?" he questioned sharply. She threw back her head and laughed softly, richly, deep in her throat.

"Nobody. I figured you were making a play for me. Who else would have had the nerve?" She sagged down against him, her face close to his, the soft mouth tremulous, letting the warm, fragrant delight of her creep into his brain. His arms went around her, pulled her down; his thick lips crushed her mouth hungrily, then dropped and fastened on the soft spot where neck melted into shoulder.

Her eyes filled with loathing; her breast tossed with a sudden access of hate. Red had always loved to kiss her there. Nate mistook her agitation for passion. He pushed her away to look at her. Her eyes were veiled, now, with false amorousness.

"Sure!" he exclaimed gloatingly, drunk with her unexpected surrender. "I croaked that cop; he knew too much! And I pinned the rap on Red; he was in my road! He'll burn for it, damn him! And I've got the moll he was so crazy about. What a break!" His arms closed around her.

The window crashed inwards. A man landed in the room, crouching, a heavy gat in his hand. A man with an unruly tangle of coppery hair. The two on the couch broke loose and leaped to their feet. The girl cried out as she faced the intruder:

"Red! . . . oh, Red! I thought you were . . ." She checked her motion to go to him

at sight of his distorted face—the face of a man about to kill. Thinking only of the fact that he must not kill Nate, the girl stepped before the gangster, stretching her arms pleadingly toward Red.

"Red . . . no!" she cried in an agonized voice. "Don't shoot him; he . . ." Red's snarl interrupted her.

"Yeh. You thought I was on my way to the hot-squat, fixed for keeps! Well, I busted loose. I come back to burn down the dirty rat that framed me . . . an' I find you in his arms! You was in on it. You double-crossed me, an' I'm gonna . . ."

Nate had stood, white-faced and tense, waiting for a chance to reach for his rod. He took it now. The gun came out and flamed over the girl's shoulder. Red took a backward step as though struck a violent blow with a fist. The roar of his heavier gun was deafening in the small room. The steel-jacketed bullet slipped through the girl's soft flesh, and smashed into the gangster behind her. Nate's rod thudded to the floor as he staggered backward against the bureau.

The girl stood, swaying, staring wide-eyed at Red. One hand was clutched tightly to her breast—between her fingers crept trickles of crimson.

"Red . . . you . . . shot me!" There was only wonderment in her voice.

"No moll can . . . double-cross me an' . . . get away with it," gasped Red painfully.

"I didn't, Red, I . . ." she choked, and pointed past him. "Cassidy . . ." She collapsed to the floor.

Detective-Sergeant Cassidy stood in the doorway of the adjoining room. Too late to do any good. "A bone-headed play, Red," he observed casually to the drooping Red. "Your moll had the goods on Nate. A dictaphone record of confession—you'd have got reprieve."

Red heard, but the voice sounded far off. He was looking down at the limp figure, crumpled on the floor. His woman—he had



killed her. He dropped to his knees beside her and turned her over gently.

"Sorry, Baby . . . I was . . . wrong," he mumbled. Slowly, senses fading, he slumped down, one arm across her, his face coming to rest, his dead lips caressing the curve of neck and shoulder.

Detective Cassidy, inured to violence through his long career, looked with grim pity on this tragic finish. It was a tough break. He looked up at the wounded Nate, who was supporting himself weakly on the bureau, and spoke, half to the gangster and half to himself.

"It's a great game you guys play; with the deck stacked against you . . . and the Joker pops up to trump the trick." He

jerked his thumb toward the door. "Come on, Nate, we've got an armchair warmed for you up-river." He put away his gun and pulled out his bracelets.

**N**ATE, in spite of his apparent weakness, suddenly made a dash for the door. Cassidy was caught off guard by the unexpected break, but he made no move to pursue the escaping gangster. He stood still, listening. A muffled shout, a brief pause, then the sharp rat-tat-tat-tat of a machine-rifle echoed through the building. Cassidy shrugged his shoulders.

"Three of a kind," he murmured, "but the joker took the tricks."

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Of Double Action Gang, published bi-monthly at Chicago, Ill., for Oct. 1, 1933.  
State of New York }  
County of New York }<sup>ss</sup>

Before me, a Notary Public, in and for the State and county aforesaid, personally appeared Louis H. Silberkleit, who, having been duly sworn according to law, deposes and says that he is the publisher of the Double Action Gang and that the following is, to the best of his knowledge and belief, a true statement of the ownership, management (and if a daily paper, the circulation), etc., of the aforesaid publication for the date shown in the above caption, required by the Act of August 24, 1912, as amended by the Act of March 3, 1933, embodied in section 537, Postal Laws and Regulations, printed on the reverse of this form, to wit:

1. That the names and addresses of the publisher, editor, managing editor, and business managers are:

Publisher, Winford Publications, Inc., 60 Hudson St., N. Y. C.; Editor, Cliff Campbell, 60 Hudson St., N. Y. C.; Managing Editor, Cliff Campbell, 60 Hudson St., N. Y. C.; Business Manager, Louis H. Silberkleit, 60 Hudson St., N. Y. C.

2. That the owner is: (If owned by a corporation, its name and address must be stated and also immediately thereunder the names and addresses of stockholders owning or holding one per cent or more of total amount of stock. If not owned by a corporation, the names and addresses of the individual owners must be given. If owned by a firm, company, or other unincorporated concern, its name and address, as well as those of each individual member, must be given.)

Winford Publications, Inc., 60 Hudson St., N. Y. C.; Harry Kantor, 60 Hudson St., N. Y. C.; L. Metsel, 60 Hudson St., N. Y. C.

3. That the known bondholders, mortgagees, and other security holders owning or holding 1 per cent or more of total amount of bonds, mortgages, or other securities are: (If there are none, so state.) None.

4. That the two paragraphs next above, giving the names of the owners, stockholders, and security holders, if any, contain not only the list of stockholders and security holders as they appear upon the books of the company but also, in cases where the stockholder or security holder appears upon the books of the company as trustee or in any other fiduciary relation, the name of the person or corporation for whom such trustee is acting, is given; also that the said two paragraphs contain statements embracing affiant's full knowledge and belief as to the circumstances and conditions under which stockholders and security holders who do not appear upon the books of the company as trustees, hold stock and securities in a capacity other than that of a bona fide owner; and this affiant has no reason to believe that any other person, association, or corporation has any interest direct or indirect in the said stock, bonds, or other securities than as so stated by him.

LOUIS H. SILBERKLEIT (Signature of publisher.)  
Sworn to and subscribed before me this 20th day of October, 1933. Maurice Coyne (My commission expires March 30, 1940).  
Notary Public, N. Y. Co., No. 562.

(SEAL)

BEFORE BUYING YOUR MAGAZINE, LOOK FOR THE  
DOUBLE ACTION DIAMOND!





A SMASHING  
NOVELET



*They shoved the door open and walked in on the rat. The girl yelled, "he's the man, make him talk."*

# NEW FLESH FOR THE WHITE SLAVE BOSS

by CHARLES BOSWELL

*(Author of "A Mouthpiece Speaks No More," "Bullet for the Numbers Czar," Etc.)*

**H**E'D taken the stand in his own defense. He was fighting for his life. His own attorney had done with him and now he was in the prosecution's

hands. He braced his tall, broad, youthful body for the onslaught he knew would come. It came.

"Your name?" the district attorney began.



"Paul Fenlon," he answered.

"You are the person named in this indictment for the willful, malicious, and premeditated murder of George Cozzins, alias Cozy Cozzins?"

He looked the district attorney straight in the eye. "I am the person," he answered, "named."

"What is your occupation?"

"Newspaperman, reporter."

"What, particularly, did you report?"

"Crime."

"You've written news stories about the deceased—Cozzins—and about his connection with the so-called prostitution racket?"

"I've written stories about prostitution—the prostitution racket. I don't know as I was ever able to definitely connect Cozzins up with it, although, frankly, I suspected as much and may, possibly, have hinted at it in what I wrote. . . . As far as definitely connecting him as boss or party to the racket, however, I felt that that was a bit out of my province. I never made any tremendous effort to prove such a connection. I left that up to the office of the district attorney . . ."

"Cozzins resented your stories about him—your insinuations?"

"Possibly. I don't know whether he did or not."

"He threatened you!"

"No! . . ."

"And instead of taking his threats to the properly constituted authorities you handled the matter in your own way—am I right? . . . You plotted to get him! You got him! You killed Cozzins without his threats materializing sufficiently for you to call them self-defense and so you plead not guilty . . ."

Paul's attorney rose and shouted: "Your honor, I object!"

Paul cried: "No! No! No!"

And afterwards he slumped in the witness chair. The whole business had unnerved him. It was a nightmare, all of it—from the moment of his arrest, through the gruelling police questioning, the days and weeks spent waiting without bail, the confinement, the sleeplessness, the lousy food. . . . He knew that he was being made the goat of somebody's pretty game but he couldn't figure whose. And his hands were tied to do any more than figure. If he were free—well, maybe he could look into a couple of places and find out a few things. If he were free—but he wasn't free. He'd been jailed. And now he was



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Only a life would save a life, and to Millicent Hapgood the life of the underworld blood sucker that she must take would balance the life that she would save—the life of the man she loved!

---



being tried—for murder! . . . He gathered his jangled nerves. They directed his wits and his muscles. He stiffened for the next barrage . . .

"Fenlon, in 1925 you were convicted for the illegal possession of a firearm?" the district attorney rasped out.

He whitened as he saw the jury lean forward. "Yes," he answered straightforwardly, "in a juvenile court. In 1925 I was only fifteen years of age . . ."

"You were sent to a reformatory?"

"Yes."

"You grew up with a crowd of young felons many of whom have since become racketeers?"

"I grew up in a reformatory. When I became of age I was released and I got a job delivering papers. I studied in my spare time. I . . ."

"Answer the questions directly," the district attorney snarled, "and don't elaborate. . . . You finally got a job on the reportorial staff of a newspaper—the *Morning Observer*, I believe?"

"Yes. I was picked from the ranks of the newsboys . . ."

"You covered crime?"

"Yes."

"Because of your wide acquaintance among criminals?"

"Because of . . ."

"Because of your knowledge of their haunts and their habits and . . ."

"I was picked . . ."

"Because of your expert knowledge of their methods? . . ."

The district attorney turned abruptly from him without awaiting his answer, pulled a handkerchief from his pocket and wiped his brow. He addressed the judge: "Your honor, may I respectfully move to recess inasmuch as it is well past the noon hour . . ."

**P**AUL FENLON moved down from the stand to the table before the judge's bench where his attorney was sitting. He

took a chair with his back to the railing which separated the inner area of the court from the part occupied by spectators. Directly across the railing from him was Millicent Hapgood, the girl who'd stuck by him through it all, the only one who had—his girl. As he looked at her, she leaned her trim body forward, raised her pretty blonde head, and smiled reassuringly. The smile he returned was feeble.

"It's all right," Millicent whispered in the voice he loved to hear, "the jury's smart. They see how the dog is trying to trick you . . ."

He consulted with his attorney in between frantic bites at stale sandwiches and hurried gulps at bitter coffee. All the time he was being watched by the ever present court guards—watched as he'd been watched ever since his arrest. All too soon the recess closed, the court returned to session, and he resumed the stand.

The district attorney, fresh from his rest, fired at him: "You admit being apprehended by the police in Cozzins' apartment with Cozzins' dead, shot-filled body there?"

"Yes."

"Perhaps you will explain to the jury how you happened to be in the apartment . . ."

His lips tightened. His pulses pounded. "I'll be glad to," he said.

"Briefly," the district attorney warned.

He turned and faced the jury. "I received a phone call," he told them. "I was at the office of my paper and a man was on the wire—a voice I didn't recognize. He gave me Cozzins' address and apartment number and told me that if I went there I'd find something interesting. I went . . . I frequently got such tips. All newspaper reporters get tips—sometimes equally as anonymous as this one. . . . I acted on it . . ."

"I found Cozzins' body. I found a gun near by it—wiped clean. Both were in the living-room of the apartment and in the bedroom . . ."



"That's enough," the district attorney interrupted him, "stop there!"

But he didn't stop. He went on. "And in the bedroom I found a pile of cigarette stubs where somebody had been smoking a lot and waiting and on the bedroom window sill the marks of shoes and on the fire escape outside further marks . . ."

"Your honor!" the district attorney shouted at the judge. "Your honor! Will you reprimand the witness . . ."

The judge leaned down. "I warn you," he said, "you'll be held in contempt! . . ."

"Contempt!" Paul snapped over his shoulder at the judge. "What do I care about contempt when I'm being railroaded to the chair?"

Paul continued talking to the jury feverishly: "Back in the living-room was an ash tray with cigar butts and cigarette butts—fresh ones. It looked to me as though some man had been having a talk with Cozzins, they'd disagreed, fought, and Cozzins had been killed. . . . And all the while somebody else listening in from the bedroom and then, after the shots, fleeing out of the window. . . . Possibly heard escaping by Cozzins' killer but not soon enough to be stopped. . . . And then the necessity on the part of whoever it was who actually killed Cozzins to find someone to take the rap for him. . . . A phony tip to me. . . . It must have happened that way because just as I was about to pick up the phone to call the police, the police broke in and I was it! . . . Gentlemen, I'm being framed! Framed, I tell you! Framed . . ."

Paul had leaned forward in the witness chair. Now he fell back and lifted his hand up across his face to wipe the perspiration from it. He breathed heavily. His ears were ringing. His vision was blurred by the nervous excitement which he felt and which had hold of him.

The district attorney stood before him, calm, collected, his voice arrogant with sarcasm: "So, Fenlon, your paper hired you

because of your knowledge of criminals and criminal methods. . . . Because you were one of them, eh? . . ."

"No!" Paul cried "No! No!"

"That's all," said the district attorney.

Paul stepped down from the witness chair. His own attorney did not re-examine. The prosecutor addressed the jury with words that bit into and chewed up what he'd testified and which falsely construed the other evidence until it was a pointed barb that punctured Paul's whole story. Paul himself had waited in that bedroom, the district attorney intimated. It was he who'd smoked those cigarettes. He'd waited in ambush and when the time was ripe he'd killed! . . . Nothing that Paul's own lawyer could say could wipe the look off the faces of the jury that the prosecutor's speech had left there.

MILLICENT HAPGOOD waited with Paul's attorney in the empty courtroom the long hours the jury was out. She believed in the boy and that was why she was there. She'd do anything, she told herself, to help him—anything. She loved him with a love that surpassed even her own understanding. In the months she'd known him he'd become a part of her—the most important part. She knew of Paul's past; he'd confessed that to her ages ago, long before this awful tragedy had entered their lives. It hadn't made any difference to her then and it still didn't. She was not of the belief that because a man had been reared with a tough element that he would necessarily follow along with such a crowd the balance of his days, do the things they did, commit the crimes—especially such a young man as Paul. He was hers. She was willing to fight for him. She was ready for that fight.

The jury came back to the box in sombre procession. Paul was led in from the guard room below the courtroom, white, haggard, but erect and stalwart of mien. The judge



mounted the bench. The attorneys arranged themselves. The clerk questioned the jury foreman. He answered.

"We, the jury," said the sour faced foreman, "find the defendant, Paul Fenlon, guilty as charged . . ."

"It's not true!" Millicent screamed. "It's not true! It's a lie!" She broke out in sobs. She couldn't help herself. But the sobbing didn't relieve the pain she felt, the gnawing, biting pain. She dashed through the gate in the railing around the judge's bench, rushed up to Paul before anyone could stop her, and threw her arms around his neck.

"Oh, darling!" she cried.

He put his arms about her. That helped her some. It was a brief moment of pleasure to be shortly ended, however. Rough hands tore her away and at the same time she heard the judge intone:

"First degree murder with no recommendation for mercy . . . my judgment is mandatory. . . . Paul Fenlon, stand before the bar!"

She saw Paul—her Paul—moving away from her. She heard the judge question him and his negative reply. And then she heard:

"I hereby sentence you to death in the manner provided by law . . ."

She swayed in the grasp of the court attendant who was holding her.

". . . to be delivered to the warden at Sing Sing during the week of June 3rd . . ."

Her eyes closed. Her heart seemed to suddenly halt its rapid pace.

". . . and may God have mercy on your soul!"

She didn't faint. She seemed suddenly to come to her senses—acute scheming senses that had hitherto been tempered by the civilization which had always been around her, by the breeding which had been her background, but which now broke loose within her with the realization that all culture was false, that the world was still inhabited by cruel, grasping anthropoids who

called themselves men, and that Paul—her mate—was being led from her to the slaughter. . . .

She fought with the court attendant like a wild thing. She tried desperately to break away and to get to Paul. But she couldn't, no matter how she scratched and bit and kicked she still couldn't. Not one guard had her now, but two. Paul was taken away before her bloodshot, excited eyes. His attorney came over to her and tried to quiet her, but his efforts were of little avail. Finally, though, she did become quiet when she thought of something, of someone—a man. She hadn't seen him for a long time but she knew that he would still be glad to see her. She believed that he would be happy to help if she offered him something that would make his help amusing. She thought of the man—fat, sleek, and horrible; when she thought of him she shuddered. But then she thought of Paul—of Paul's freedom through the influences of this man—and that made her happy.

**S** CABBY SNITZEL was nervous. He was a little fellow with a wasted body and a thin, drawn face, and he'd been nervous most of his life. But now he was more excited than he'd ever been. Always the underdog, he'd tried this time to get the upper hand, and he'd succeeded. But his success was almost too much for him. He paced his apartment frantically contemplating his position.

He had a newspaper in his hand. Its headlines announced Paul Fenlon's conviction and sentence. Suddenly he stopped pacing and plunked down in a chair and read the story beneath the headlines and he knew that his time was almost up. In the dangerous game he was playing he had as long to live and prosper as Fenlon had to live. When Fenlon died he'd best, for the life of him, beat it out of town.

But before he went, and before Fenlon was executed, Scabby was anxious for just



one more haul. That would put him on easy street and he could stand considerable fright for such a situation. With dough he could make his getaway comfortably and with dough he could live one whole hell of a sight better wherever he happened to wind up. He didn't care where he went. All he cared about was money.

And there was only one way of getting more money and that was through the information he possessed about the Fenlon-Cozzins affair. So far it had been a profitable piece of business for him. He'd achieved several fat sums for working hard at saying and doing nothing. Now all that he yearned after was one last wad of bills and he'd be more than willing to pass on to other towns and other ventures.

It had been a lucky incident, he remembered with a lick at his thin lips, that visit of his to Cozy Cozzins flat. He was to've gotten a job out of Cozzins as a call house collector and look what he'd gotten instead—a G a week for a dozen weeks hand running, and now, maybe as a final present, ten or fifteen Gs all in one nice lump. . . .

He'd gone to Cozzins apartment to sign up for the job and hadn't found the prostitution boss at home. Finding his apartment open, he'd entered and waited. Later Cozzins came in with another mug. Scabby saw them but they didn't see him. Thinking Cozzins might resent his presence inasmuch as he had a guest, he'd ducked into the bedroom with the idea of waiting until Cozy's pal had gone. But the guy with Cozzins had hardly turned out to be such a pal after all and he hadn't left Cozy in a condition where any further business with him could be transacted.

The guy and Cozzins argued. The guy pumped Cozzins full of lead. Scabby got a look at the guy and saw who he was and then he beat it out of the bedroom window and up the fire escape with the guy after him. But he got away. He was still away. And he was having a swell—though nervous

—time of it shaking down Cozy's murderer in return for silence . . .

But the guy couldn't always be shaken down; Scabby knew that. As soon as Fenlon paid the price for the crime the district attorney's office would be far from interested in a new criminal who'd actually done the shooting. Fact of the matter was, Scabby believed, the district attorney would rather discourage anybody who attempted showing up a mistake of his after that mistake couldn't be corrected . . .

Scabby waited for a month. By that time, he felt, the guy would have gotten over gloating about Fenlon's conviction and would be more susceptible to reason. Scabby couldn't wait much longer than a month. He was getting broke for one thing and besides if he waited much longer—too long—Fenlon would be gone and the club he wielded over the guy's head would be broken.

He telephoned around midnight. He got the guy's number and the guy on the wire. He said, his voice trembling: "This is Scabby . . ."

The guy said: "Yes."

"I've got to have more jack!" Scabby marveled at himself being able to talk to the guy like that. The guy was a big shot . . . But he—Scabby—had to have dough and he had the upper hand . . .

"Now come on, Scabby," the guy answered, "you've been gettin' yours—haven't you, fellow? It's time this thing between you an' me came to an end. It ain't worth it, see?"

"It's worth it," Scabby told him, "as long as our friend's still breathin'. . . I've got valuable information that it isn't too late to take over Centre Street way. The boys there'd be glad to profit by their mistakes without first havin' to make 'em. . . . You know it's worth it an' I know it!"

"How much this time?"

"Five grand!"

Scabby heard the guy whistle and then



he didn't hear anything else for a long minute. "All right," the guy finally said, "tell me where and when . . ."

Scabby shot a question instead: "Who'll the messenger be?"

"Don't know yet," the guy answered and then Scabby heard him kind of laugh and say: "Maybe a woman. You wouldn't be afraid to meet a woman, eh, Scabby? . . . Don't know definitely yet. Give me another call about that . . ."

Paul Fenlon lay in the Tombs for a month after his conviction awaiting the outcome of his application for appeal. Millicent Hapgood visited him there, entering—Paul knew—through the little door in the wall on Leonard Street, taking her place in the queue of motley women bent on visiting their penned-up males. It was degradation the girl was subjecting herself to; Paul knew that. He hated seeing her in the prison but he knew that he'd hate worse not seeing her.

When she came he was called from his cell to talk with her through the heavily meshed wire screen with a guard in the offing.

"It's good that you've come," Paul told her, "because as soon as my appeal is denied they'll be taking me up the river and I don't want you to visit me there . . ."

"Denied!" Millicent whispered aghast. "But, darling, it won't be denied! You can't believe that! It must be that the trial court will be found in error!"

**P**AUL smiled wanly. He said: "That's what we thought about the jury, Millicent—that they *must* bring in a verdict of not guilty. . . . But they didn't and here I am . . ." He stopped short, seeing that he was hurting her. He didn't want to hurt her. She was the only one he didn't want to hurt. "If only I could find out who it is that's framing me, then I'd have a chance. Who it was that made that

phone call? Who it was that sent me to that apartment? . . . If only I could get out of here and listen to some voices!"

"Paul, I've got a plan," the girl told him. "I'm going to see . . ."

He didn't listen to her. He was talking on: "It's one hell of a way to treat a guy—slap him in jail for a crime that he alone could solve. I'm the guy that got that phone call! I alone can recognize the tones that made it! Voices! Voices! Voices! If I could only get out of here and hear some voices! . . ." He walked nervously back and forth in the tiny cubicle in which he was enclosed. He pounded crazily against the wire grill. "Oh, Millicent, darling," he cried, "if only for one day—one night—one hour—I could get out of here!"

The guard at the end of the corridor looked up and then down at his watch. He shifted impatiently from one foot to another.

"You aren't paying any attention to me," Millicent said to him, "and time is precious. Listen! I'm not going to take any further chances. I'm going to see somebody—somebody with influence with the governor. I'm going to get you a pardon or a commutation or a stay of sentence or something before it's too late to start trying . . ."

Paul halted his raving and listened to her soberly. "Who," he asked, "are you going to see?"

"Somebody," she answered.

"Who?" Paul demanded. He saw her eyes fall, her lips whiten. Suddenly he knew of whom she was speaking without awaiting her answer. In time past, Paul knew, Millicent had worked for a man, a big, fat, sleek crook of a politician. She'd quit him because he'd demanded more of her than mere labor . . .

"Dodson?" Paul queried.

Millicent nodded her head.

"No!" Paul shouted.

The guard started down the corridor towards them.



"It's the only way," Millicent told him hurriedly. "He can swing it. He's a pal of the governor's—a pal of the district attorney's. Maybe I can pay him—in money. I haven't got any and you haven't got any, but maybe he'll accept our promises. Oh, Paul, I've got to go to Dodson! I've got to! Paul, I'd do anything in the world for you. . . . This is nothing. . . . Nothing is nothing. . . . Anything that Dodson wants . . ."

"No!" Paul cried. "No, Millicent, don't! I forbid you . . . Oh, Millicent, my life isn't worth it! You know and I know the only way Dodson will take payment. . . . It wouldn't do any good because if it got me out I'd get Dodson for having had you . . . I don't know him—have never seen him—but the thought of him with you would drive me wild and I'd search him out and kill him! . . ."

"I'm going to Dodson," Millicent answered simply, "if the appeal fails . . ."

"I'll kill him, myself, and you . . ."

"No, Paul, it's the only way."

The guard reached them. He tapped Millicent on the shoulder and moved her off down the corridor. Paul cried after her: "No! No! No!" He tried to get through the grill to her but all the time he was trying he knew there was no use. He was caught. He was trapped. He was framed. He knew, even as another guard came up to take him back and lock him in his cell, that there was nothing he could do unless he was free . . .

**T**HE appeal was denied. Butch Dodson heard it over the wire from the D. A. and he laughed. His fat sides shook and the telephone wobbled in his hand. His laughter interrupted what the D. A. was saying.

"Why th' hell does it matter so much to you?" the D. A. asked. "What've you got against the fellow?"

"Nothin'," Dodson said and then he

laughed some more and then he hung up the phone.

Afterwards he lay back on a lounge in his apartment, bit off the end of a cigar, and lit it. It wouldn't be long now, he knew. Things were working out well for him because he was a smart guy, smarter than girl secretaries, newspapermen, and even district attorneys. Smarter even than—rats! He thought of one mug and then he spat in disgust. One mug had cost him a lot of money; there was a lot more he thought he was going to get. But the rat wasn't going to get a dime more. He was going to get something else instead . . .

Dodson figured the girl would be getting in touch with him any minute now and he already had it planned what he was going to do with her. Once, when she'd worked for him, she'd been obstinate and he believed she'd be coming to him now with all guards down. But he was going to fool her because he no longer wanted her, because he no longer wanted any woman. Recently he'd gotten enough of women. Since . . . Well, he figured he'd better not even think of that. But anyway he'd gotten enough of fillies now that he—owned them . . .

She'd be coming to him with all guards down, he reasoned, and he'd surprise her. He'd promise to intercede for her, well enough, but in payment she'd have to do more than an easy little tumble into bed. There was something worrying him—a rat—and he had a nice use for the girl as an exterminator. And afterwards—well, then he'd see about his promises.

Later the house phone rang and Dodson answered and spoke to the doorman in the lobby downstairs. "There's a Miss Millicent Hapgood here," the doorman told him, "and she wants to see you. She says it's important . . ."

Dodson chuckled. "Send her up," he said.

A moment later Millicent entered the apartment and Dodson greeted her cordially. He was solicitous after her health



and welfare; he took her wrap and offered her a chair. For fifteen minutes he talked with her about unimportant matters, without once making a pass at her. He was playing a waiting game; he wanted her to come to the point; he wanted her to take down those guards that, in the past, he'd never been able to get under.

"I guess you wonder why I came here," he finally heard Millicent say, "why I've ever come back to you after the things I said when I quit my job in your office . . ."

The girl was biting her lip. The words were paining her; Dodson could tell that. He reveled in her pain.

"It's about Paul Fenlon," the girl went on, "I want you to help me save him. . . . I want you to go to the governor. I know you've got influence. He's been convicted of the murder of a man he didn't kill. His appeal has failed. He's going to the chair. He's . . ."

"I know the story," Dodson interrupted her, "but what I can't see is where it's any concern of mine. I don't know this Fenlon except by name. I've seen stories of his in the papers, that's all. If I could wring a stay out of Albany where would it profit me?"

"We'd pay you," the girl told him, "Paul and I . . ."

He laughed at her.

She got up from across from him and came over to him. She lifted a leg and sat astride an arm of his chair. She put an arm about his neck and leaned her soft cheek against his bearded one. She whispered in his ear: "I'd pay you . . ."

This time he laughed louder because now he was really amused. It was a pleasure to him to have the girl humble herself—and her body—before him when once she'd been so distant and so cold. "Maybe once," he chuckled, "but not now, Millicent . . . It's not enough. You—yourself—you're not enough . . ."

"What is," she cried, "anything—anything!"

She'd leaped from his chair and was standing with her back to a wall. Dodson pulled his heavy body to his feet, crossed in front of her, and over to a chest. He opened a drawer and fumbled for a moment within it. Then, with his hand behind him, he turned again and faced her.

"You want to save your sweetie—Paul Fenlon—from burning, eh?" he snarled. "Well there's only one way to do that . . ." He brought his arm around and opened his fist before her face. There was a gleaming gun in his palm; he shoved it beneath her nose. Her horrified looks tickled him. He grinned as he rasped out: "You want to save your Paul from croaking—then the only way is to croak somebody else!"

**P**AUL was on a train, his last train. Two detectives were taking him up the river to Sing Sing and its death house. His whole world had gone mad, madder than it ever had been even during his early years in the streets of New York and his later confinement to the reformatory. He was handcuffed, shackled to one of the detectives. Both of them had guns. They were carrying him, he felt, to the sacrifice and it was his body that would be placed on the altar of injustice . . .

"How's everything?" the bigger of the detectives asked. He was trying to be pleasant, Paul realized.

"Not so good," Paul answered weakly, "I feel sick . . ."

He did feel sick. His stomach, his heart, and his liver were awlirl. His brain hummed. Voices buzzed in his ears—voices! . . . His whole awful predicament was traceable to a voice—a single voice. In his mind's ear Paul heard that voice again, as clearly and as distinctly as he'd heard it that terrible day the moment before he'd gone to Cozy Cozzins' apartment. All through his trial and subsequent im-



prisonment the voice had lived with him constantly. It was part of his waking thoughts—a component part—and more a part of his dreams. He knew that if he ever heard it again—actually heard it—he'd recognize it immediately, but he also knew that where he was going it would be extremely unlikely that it would come across his ken.

A trainman came through the coach and bawled a station.

"I feel sick," Paul said, "I'd like to go to the lavatory . . ."

It was the smaller of the two detectives that he was braceleted to. The fellow got up from his seat, helped him to his feet, and led him down the aisle of the car.

Along the way Paul was struggling with his stomach and hating himself for being a weakling and hating the district attorney for being a dog and hating the words the district attorney had said . . . His knowledge of crime and of criminal methods! His criminal associates—their habits and haunts and practices! . . . One thing the reformatory had taught him that he remembered and that was to fake . . . But now, as he and the detective entered the lavatory, a great nausea overcame him and that wasn't faking. And afterwards, as he was being led back down the aisle and everything turned black before his eyes, that wasn't faking either—not all of it.

He half-fainted. He made it appear that he'd fainted entirely. The detective fanned him and with his free hand slapped his face. He didn't stir. The big detective came up and consulted with the little detective and he heard them whisper:

"Poor devil's out . . ."

"Yep. You're right, he is!"

"We can't move him locked to you . . ."

"Nope!"

He felt the steel slide from his arm. He let them carry him back to the seat. The train slowed down, brakes grinding, and stopped for a station. The big detective

left to go to the other end of the car to fetch a cup of water. The people in the coach rose to their feet, some to get off at the station, some to look curiously at what had happened to him. Through half-closed eyes he saw that the aisle was blocked between himself and the little detective who was administering to him and the big detective at the other end of the car after the water . . .

In the past, as a reporter, he'd witnessed an execution. He thought now of what he'd seen then and of the similar fate that awaited him. Of the white-tiled electrocution chamber, the grim-faced witnesses, the heavy chair, the struggling victim, the straps, the electrodes, the mask—the wisps of smoke, the lurching, shudder of the body, the odor of burning flesh . . . He thought and it gave him courage . . . And then he thought further of Millicent and her faith and her purity and her white, chaste body, and of Dodson. . . . This thought gave him strength.

The train lurched to start. Paul's hands came up slowly, quietly towards the detective bending over him. Of a sudden his fingers shot out and beneath the detective's coat. He grasped the butt of a gun in the detective's shoulder holster. He yanked it out. He kicked. His heels caught the detective full in the stomach and bowled him backwards. With the same motion he leaped to his feet and made for the door of the car, gun in hand. He made the platform. He jumped the steps of the coach to the cinders of the station. He ran . . .

Behind him the brakes of the train screeched, a whistle blew shrilly, and voices rose up in violent, vicious shouts. Shots sounded. He felt the wind of bullets and heard their whining warning as they sped past him. He ran, zigzagging, ducking, butting into people and objects, stumbling, falling, frantically picking himself up and urging himself on.

He dashed through the station and



reached a street. He saw a car with the motor running. A man approached it, reached it, and put his foot on the running board. Paul flung himself at the man and with one mad swing of the gun flattened him and jumped to the seat of the car.

More gun shots sounded, closer. With a frenzied jerk Paul meshed the gears of the car, twisted the steering wheel, and the vehicle lurched forward, rolled over a curb, and then headed down the street. Paul gave it gas, all the gas to the bottom. The motor responded with a roar. It tore down the street.

Paul looked back. He saw the detectives standing far behind, one standing and firing without aiming, the other yelling and shaking his fists. Paul pressed his foot down again on the accelerator and kept his foot down.

MILLICENT waited in her apartment. She sat stiffly in a chair by a window and watched with dull eyes the light of day fade and the night come on. The darkness pleased her. It was the only thing that did. The darkness made it so that she couldn't see the telephone on a nearby table and the thing that lay beside the telephone.

In a short while the phone would ring; Millicent knew that. That was why she was sitting there, waiting for a call. And after she got the call she'd pick up the thing by the telephone—the gun—and she'd go out of her apartment and use it.

Dodson wanted a man killed. Dodson didn't want her. Her body wasn't as valuable an asset as murder, so Millicent, willing to do all for Paul, was willing to do murder. Dodson had agreed to intercede with the governor; Millicent had agreed to kill for Dodson. It was a fair exchange, a life for a life, even though it did sound a trifle crazy. But then, to Millicent, the whole world sounded crazy of late. Why else had her Paul been tried for a killing he did not commit? Why else was her Paul

sentenced to die, and, even now, was being transported to the place of his death up the river? Crazy or not, Millicent was resigned to playing the world's game as a world played it. If killing was the only way to save Paul's life, then she'd save it by killing.

She didn't know who she was to murder or where or exactly when. She didn't much care who she was to murder. She was only positive that the life she'd take could be not half so precious as the life she'd save. She was sitting waiting for the call that would tell her who and where and when. She was waiting for a call that would be a signal to her to pick up the gun and go out and shed blood that the blood of the man she loved might be saved.

A bell rang. But it wasn't the phone. The phone had a more ominous tinkle. It was the doorbell and Millicent, wondering who it could be that was visiting her at such an hour, got up from her chair by the night-blackened window and went to answer the door.

She threw it open. A man was standing there. At first she didn't recognize him he was so muffled around the neck and lower face and his hat brim was so far turned down over his eyes. Even when he removed his hat she hardly knew him because the shock of seeing him was so great as to almost throw her senses off kilter.

It was Paul. His eyes were two black holes of peering nerves and his face was as white as a lone cloud on an otherwise cloudless day. He stepped into the apartment quickly and closed the door softly behind him.

"I escaped," he told her in the voice of one who'd escaped from the dead, "I broke away . . ."

She threw her arms about him. She hugged him to her. "You shouldn't have," she told him, choking. "If they find you they'll shoot you down without giving you a chance . . . You shouldn't have come here.



They'll look for you here. You've got to hide until it's all over . . ."

"All over," he murmured, "what's all over? What . . ."

"I've got it fixed," she said. "Dodson . . ."

Paul had switched on the light. He was looking at her. Then she saw his eyes leave her and move to the phone and to the gun lying beside the phone. He looked back at her.

"Dodson . . ." she began. "Paul, I went to him. You told me not to but I went to him anyway . . . Don't look at me like that, Paul! . . . He didn't want what you thought he'd want—what I thought he'd want! . . . He wanted more . . ."

She ran to Paul and put her head on his heaving chest and sobbed out her story to him. He patted her shoulder. She told him all—all she knew. It felt good to her to be able to tell it.

"He said he'd call me here tonight with final instructions," she said. "He said he'd give me a name and a place and a time . . ."

"No," Paul said, "you can't! Millicent, darling, I won't let you! If you try any such thing I'll turn myself over to the police without even attempting to work for freedom. Millicent, you can't! . . ."

He was looking at her. She was looking at him. Dimly, vaguely, through all the confused medley within her mind she heard something. It was a bell. It was the phone. The phone was ringing.

Paul picked up the receiver. Afterwards he couldn't have told why he did it except that he was standing nearest to it and it was an involuntary gesture to reach for it and grab it up. He was about to speak into the mouthpiece when Millicent clapped her hand over his mouth and whispered into his ear: "Ssh! Don't let anyone know you're here!"

Into the phone Millicent said: "Hello!"

Paul still had the earpiece. He heard a guttural, deep-throated voice emerge with:

"Hello! Hello! This is the guy that was going to call . . . This is the guy that was going to give you a name and address . . ."

Paul handed the receiver to Millicent. He patted his hip pocket and felt the gun there he'd snatched from the detective. He leaned over the table where Millicent was phoning and picked up the other gun. His lips were set grim; his eyes were narrow. He listened to what Millicent was saying:

"12 Commerce Street, yes . . . A half hour from now—30 minutes exactly . . . He'll be there . . . Apartment a flight up on the right . . . A skinny guy with a narrow, pock-marked face . . . Name is what? . . . Scabby Snitzel, eh? . . . Yes. Yes. I've got everything correctly . . ."

The girl hung the phone up and turned to him. He questioned her: "That was Dodson?"

She nodded.

He asked: "That voice was Dodson's voice—that voice . . ."

"Yes, Paul . . ."

"And the man he wants you to kill is Scabby Snitzel?"

"That's who he said," the girl told him.

"You know who Scabby Snitzel is?"

"No. No, I don't. What difference does it make? I'll kill him! Taking his life means saving yours! Taking his life means . . ."

HE stopped her. "Taking his life means taking mine!" he shouted. "That's why Dodson wants you to murder Scabby Snitzel because with him gone my fate will be certain . . . I know Scabby. I've known Scabby ever since I was knee high. He's a rat and a dirty little two-timing mug who's been a pimp and a stool and a blackmailer all his life, but we can't kill him. He deserves dying as much as anybody deserves dying, but we've got to save him because saving him means saving me . . ."

"Scabby was trying to get tied up with the Cozzins mob at just the time that Cozzins was killed. He was hanging around



Cozy all the time and licking his boots plenty. I knew that all along but I'd never before connected it with Cozzins murder but now I see where it fits in . . . I'm positive, Millicent, that Scabby Snitzel was the guy who was hiding in Cozy's bedroom when he was shot—that Scabby was the guy who smoked those cigarettes—who saw who Cozy's murderer was—who beat it out the window and up the fire escape . . .”

Millicent stared at him incredulously. “But why, darling, why?” she asked. “What makes you jump at such conclusions. You've got to have proof! You just can't go . . .”

Paul answered her quickly: “For my own peace of mind I've got proof enough and from Scabby we can get the rest. Listen to this: That voice on the telephone. The voice I just heard. Dodson. I've never seen the man. I've never heard his voice before—except once. Only once before have I heard that voice and it's lived with me through all these weeks of torture since my arrest. I'd know that voice anywhere! That voice—Millicent—that voice that called you a minute ago! . . . Dodson's voice! . . . *That was the voice that called me at my office on the day of the murder and that sent me to Cozy Cozzins' apartment! . . .*”

Paul stopped, breathing jerkily. Millicent looked up at him. He could see that her eyes were full of wonderment and newfound hope and bravery and love.

Millicent said: “That makes . . .”

Paul nodded, interrupting her. He ordered: “Get on that telephone and do as I tell you. Call the police. Thank God I've got some friends in the department. Get hold of Inspector McGrath—he came to see me in the Tombs and told me that he believed in my innocence and that he and some of the other boys were working for me . . . Get hold of McGrath and tell him you want him to stage a raiding party at 12 Com-

merce Street and that you want to be in on it . . . And tell him . . .”

Millicent dialed. Paul gave her further orders. He watched her, heart buoyant, as she located McGrath and gave him her story. Then she hung up the phone and turned to him radiant. “He says he'll do it, Paul!” she breathed excitedly. “He says he'll do it!—And, Paul, it'll just have to work! . . .”

Millicent left the apartment. Paul saw her to the door. He kissed her goodbye as she hurried out and then he closed the door and locked it and went and sat in a chair by the window that overlooked the darkened city. It was a better view, he knew, than he'd have from the death house at Sing Sing. It was a view of freedom. He hoped against hope that he'd always have such a view.

SCABBY SNITZEL paced his flat back and forth. Every now and then he looked at the clock and then, in between times, he'd go and listen at the door. His suitcase was packed. He had his hat and coat on. He was waiting—waiting for a messenger.

The guy'd said it'd be a woman. Scabby was leary of anything and everything the guy said. But he had an upper hand on the guy and he was playing it for just this last once. Still, the guy was a killer, and Scabby wondered but what it might enter the guy's head to save himself some dough and come around and rub him—Scabby—out. Scabby knew he was taking a chance but then he'd taken greater chances before for a lot less than five grand. With his hands on the dough Scabby planned to bolt and leave the town and the state and the country, if necessary, for a long, long time. He'd seen something. It had been worth plenty to him. Scabby didn't want it to be worth too much . . .

There was a knock on the door. Scabby went to it and listened. He pulled his gun



and then opened the door cautiously. Through the crack he saw a woman—a woman alone. The messenger . . .

Scabby didn't let her in. He stuck out a hand. "Gimme," he said.

The woman had a package. She extended it almost to his fingertips. He opened the door a little wider in order to be able to reach it but as he did the woman seemed to step back slightly. "You're the right man," she said.

"Yeah," Scabby told her annoyedly. "Yeah, I'm the right man—Scabby Snitzel—that's me. You ain't making no mistake. Gimme . . ."

"I'll need further identification," the woman went on. "Tell me, who does this come from and what does it contain?"

"Listen, sister . . ." Scabby opened the door wider and shoved his gun through the crack. "Gimme . . ." he commanded.

He heard a pounding of feet on the corridor floor and a rush of bodies from around the corner. The door burst inwards upon him and before he had an opportunity to use his gun a flying squadron of heavily muscled men were upon him. Through fear-widened eyes he saw the woman toss the package down and join in the mob attacking him. He believed his time was up.

Two of the men pinned him down. Another stood in front of him and flashed a badge.

"You're under arrest," he heard a stern voice say.

"What for?" he yelled.

"For murder . . . For the murder of Cozy Cozzins!"

"Fools!" he screamed. "I didn't do it! I can prove I didn't do it! This woman—ask her—she was bringing me somethin' from the man who did . . ."

"Your fingerprints," the officer told him. "Chemicals brought out your latent fingerprints on the murder gun!"

"I didn't do it!" he cried. "For the love

of God I didn't do it. You can't pin this on me. You know damn well you can't. I didn't do it! I didn't! I didn't! I didn't! . . ."

"Then who did?"

"Butch—Butch Dodson!"

"Don't try to kid us!"

"I ain't kiddin' you. I saw it. Butch Dodson shot Cozy an' I saw him do it an' I been shakin' Butch down ever since . . . This dame was bringin' me the last of it tonight! Ask her. Put the screw on her. Don't let her get away . . . I done a lot of things but not murder. No. No. No! . . . Not me . . . Not the chair . . . No!"

Suddenly the officers eased up on him and he looked with amazed eyes as he saw the girl and one of them shaking hands.

He heard the cop say: "Thanks, Miss Hapgood, you sure steered us right . . ."

He saw the cop turn to the other cops and order: "Three of you boys go and pick up Dodson. Being the friend of the D. A. and the governor won't get him out of this . . ."

He heard the girl say: "Thank you, Inspector McGrath. You've done a fine job. I know that Paul will want to thank you from the bottom of his heart!"

SCABBY saw the girl turn and start for the door. He heard the cop she'd been talking to say: "Wait a minute, where are you goin'—don't you want to stay and see the fun? Down to the station house they'll be bringin' in Dodson. Get Paul. He'll want the story for his paper. Oh, hell—pardon me—I forgot he was a fugitive . . ."

Scabby saw the girl smile and disappear through the door. Scabby held up his arms and let the cops put the bracelets on him. The cops. The package. The girl. The talk . . . He wagged his thin head from side to side and let his tight jaw drop . . . The girl. The package. The cops. It was all too much for Scabby.





AN UNUSUAL NOVELET

*The con's were screaming and firing and yelling to beat holy hell!*

# A BULLET'S TOO GOOD FOR A FINK

by LEO HOBAN

*(Author of "The Perfect Snatch.")*

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This was no ordinary gang—this was the death-house watch, killers all, banded with bonds of steel and blood to watch a pal pass on—waiting to exact the law of the big house, "a fink must die when a right gee is framed for a gas-chamber rap!"

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**E**IGHT men sat at table in a little room off the main mess hall in Alarado state prison. All, except one, had been convicted of assault to kill. Only bald and pot-bellied Sackman, an ex-banker doing an easy misappropriation-of-

funds, wasn't a killer in intent. His presence in the little room was unusual; for only embryonic killers as a rule witnessed gas chamber executions.

Which explains the special dining room and the segregation of the eight men from



their fellow convicts. In less than an hour they would watch Muggsy Green die for a murder he had not committed—a killing Green accused Sackman of, and which Sackman with horrifying sputterings denied. Since the men were grim reminders of impending doom they, for tonight, were forced into an aloof, detached world by prison edict.

Six of the men voraciously scraped their tin plates clean of slum. Only Sackman, holding his clenched hands in his lap and staring bleakly down at them, and sparrow-like Mace Wannald, who sat at Sackman's left, didn't eat.

"You can talk," the guard repeated for the third time. "You're almost privileged big-timers tonight."

Gibbs, the bullet-headed con on Wannald's right, rasped in scornful whisper: "You'll hafta change your fink-pal's didies tonight."

"To dirty didies a guy's gotta have something this Sackman fink ain't got!" Wannald snapped. His thin lips didn't move, his dead-pan face didn't change, his bird-like head didn't turn. But his snaky eyes did crawl right to Sackman, who started and tried ineffectually to pick up his spoon. His puffy hands were all thumbs as panic grew.

"No guts!" Wannald drew the back of a hand over his mouth.

Sackman's loose lips moved soundlessly in and out. A few short months ago he would have sputtered with a fat man's indignation under the unexpected lash of Wannald's bitter tongue. Now his was a whipped hopelessness; and he realized only that he had to watch an innocent man die soon, and that—worse yet—he had lost his only friend behind bars, Wannald, at just the time when Wannald's comradeship and services would be needed most urgently.

The six convicts, even the guard, looked at Wannald in amazement. With cause.

For Wannald, months back, had applied for and received the second bunk in Sack-

man's cell when no right gee would associate with the fink. He had acted as nurse to Sackman also, when any right gee would gladly have seen Sackman croak.

**I**N FACT, stir-screwy Pat McCoy had tried to drop Sackman. Wannald, in the recreation yard, had seen McCoy come up with a shiv made from a spoon. It'd been hidden in a shoe sole holster. Before the sharp edge could reach Sackman's fat belly Wannald's spread left hand drove rigid fingers into McCoy's eyes. It didn't seem to bother Wannald much that now McCoy's making brooms with fingers that are getting right nimble, and that stir-screwiness has been replaced by the great serenity of the blind.

For acting as Sackman's guardian angel, Wannald had lost the only thing in the world that he thought worthwhile — his prison prestige. To right gees he was known as a fink's heel, a Judas to cellblock righteousness. Sackman had plenty dough.

The ex-banker also had a bad heart. Consneered and said that "heart" in the ring and "heart" in stir are one and the same and the only trouble with Sackman was that he didn't have any "heart" at all.

During his many attacks Sackman couldn't help himself. That's where Wannald came in—keeping him alive. A whiff of smelling salts usually snapped Sackman around, which disappointed everyone from the warden on down.

After the warden had heard Green's story, Sackman had been removed from the infirmary and placed on the sickening fumigation detail. Wannald had himself serviced to the detail also so as to be protectively near Sackman.

The detail is a helluva job—killing rats, ants and vermin. Dead vermin gave Wannald the suggestion for the only righteous deed he'd probably perform during his lifetime.

"Did you two fink sweethearts have a



tiff?" Gibbs' voice rose in mocking falsetto. Then harshly, suggestively: "Or maybe he didn't pay you a bodyguard's salary this month, eh?"

Wannald cursed fluently, staring contemptuously at Gibbs. "Think I'd take the kind of blood money Sackman's holding?" he croaked. "The kind of money that's putting Muggsy Green in the box?"

"A rat like you'd take or do anything!" a crooked nosed con sneered. "Why you cheap P-fink chiseler . . ."

"Muggsy Green," Wannald said slowly, distinctly, "is like a brother to me. His folks took me in, a orphan. Muggsy taught me everything I know. All his life he's been helping me outa jams. All my life I've been trying to do something for him. But I couldn't. He was too big, never needing the kind of half-ass promots I deal in. He was big-shot. Me—I was just a pop-punk." His voice rose, going shrill. "But you watch, I'll help him! I'll help him! I'll—I'll . . ." He caught himself, going suddenly silent.

"Well I'll be damned!" the guard murmured.

"Why be guardian angel to a fink then?" Gibbs snapped.

"'Cause dead guys can't talk. Green's only chance was to keep Sackman alive. Hating his guts, I did so; and I'll keep doing so until—"

In the main mess hall a signal bell clanged. Spoons began dropping with an even rhythm into the wicker baskets of passing trustees. In the little room there was silence.

When the trustee passed behind him, Wannald sneered openly at Sackman's shaking hands, and dropped his own and the fink's spoons into the basket.

From the side of his mouth the trustee mumbled: "Finks, both 'a' yuh. He's a fink an' you're a fink's heel."

Wannald's eyes went black. It hurt a-plenty being called that when inside the

high walls. In the outside world, no matter what he did in late restitution, he was permanently rat by acclamation. He knew it . . . and didn't give a damn. People—homeowners, wageslaves, pappys and mammys and "nice" girls, etc.—always had been of a drab, dumb-cluck species to which Wannald thankfully was foreign. Psychologists said Wannald had a criminal mind. Perhaps. He had his own code, a code that had no slot in the social order. Still, it was disheartening to be called a rat in Con Can. Here, hitherto, Wannald always previously had found his sphere as the rightest of right gees.

"Tomorrow that small-screw will say Mr. Rat," Wannald told himself.

The signal bell clanged again; and eighteen hundred men stood up, banging the calfs of their legs against long benches, scooting them away from bare board tables.

Likewise in the little room; and Sackman slid like a bloated wheat sack off the bench when it shot from beneath him.

His left hand went to his heart as he sprawled upon the floor, and lay there whimpering softly.

The abject cowardice, the empty shell that should have been a man, was too much for the vicious streak in Gibbs. Cursing, he bent automatically, his clawing hands scooped down, and he was throttling Sackman as he jerked him upright; twisting and snapping the fink about as a ravenous cur might with a fat, live hen in its mouth.

The guard yelled: "Hey, there!" and jumped forward, billy stick upraised.

WANNALD acted more quickly. His spread left hand jabbed at Gibbs' eyes. Gibbs screamed, releasing Sackman, who slumped to the floor again, his eyes distended and rolling, his mouth working like a beached fish's. Wannald's knee shot up. Gibbs gasped and bent forward. Wannald crossed a whistling right to Gibbs' lowering chin just as the billy club crashed



against Wannald's head. Wannald fell atop Gibbs.

Red, flashing lights danced in Wannald's spinning brain. From afar he heard the rising roaring in the main mess hall; and the loud speaking system that boomed the cattle-headed men into abrupt silence.

Then he remembered — Sackman, who mustn't be permitted the luxury of death . . . yet . . . He pressed his hands against Gibbs' chest, and pushed himself to his knees, mumbling: "Tryin' to cheat me, yuh b - - - you, huh?"

As the room danced, whirled, he was vaguely conscious that the guard had the five nervous cons backed against a wall.

Blood streamed into his eyes from the skin-split in his skull. Jeest that guard could hit! Uncertainly, he crawled to Sackman's side, reached a shaking hand beneath the fink's pin-striped and numbered grey shirt, and withdrew a small green bottle.

Unscrewing its top with quivering fingers, he drifted the released smell of salts under Sackman's nose. Sackman gasped hungrily. Some of the tenseness left Wannald's slight body. The fink hadn't cheated him of his opportunity of doing a righteous deed. As Sackman's coloring slowly improved and his eyes stopped bulging, Wannald bent and pressed the smelling salts against his blouse. The guard was driving Gibbs into line against the wall. The fumbling of Wannald's hands passed unnoticed.

The crooked-nosed con said: "Betcha his didies need changin' now!" The billy club rapped against his knuckles. The guard said, "Silence." And to Wannald: "Get gutless to his dogs."

Wannald nodded, and the light of inborn cunning came into his eyes. He nodded at Sackman, saying: "If I get solitary for dropping Gibbs, one of youse guys fix-up this fink if he passes out when he sees Green." With elaborate casualness he replaced the green bottle beneath Sackman's blouse.

The guard nodded, inclined his chin.

"Get him up," he said. "The warden will take action against you and Gibbs after the execution. You can't dodge watching it. You just keep right on playing nursemaid yourself."

Wannald grinned mirthlessly, and jerked Sackman to his feet.

In the main mess hall the bell whirred again. Men turned, folded their arms, and single-filed-it into the cellhouse rotunda. The regular one-two-one scraping of their feet, as always, had a mood. Tonight it was surly.

Tautness, nervousness crept into the scraping as the disciplined lines broke into divisions and wriggled-up corkscrewing stairs leading to the circular tiers. Hot-cha, don't - give - a - damn - syncopation engulfed them.

Tier screws had lugged in wall cell loud speakers during mess. They always did so when a guy was due to breathe an egg. Lights would burn long past midnight. Central radio control would see to it that only carefree, swingo stuff was dialed. Rhythm was supposed to make you forget that a friend had to take a knockoff right smack in your front parlor while you stood by—helpless—, and your slum turned over and went sour.

Muggsy Green would breathe just once or twice, and go phfft to rock-strewn and barren Mockingbird Hill—because of Sackman—and the fink's heel, Wannald! And Sackman, who wore silk underwear without having to work for it, would be leaving Big Brig in a few short months—if he lived—to enjoy the heavy cush for which Green was being last-rapped. The music couldn't make you forget that . . . and your feet scraped along, surlily. . . .

A dollar for every palm that sweated and itched for the necks of Sackman and Wannald would have . . . Hell, it'd been plenty!

The main hall emptied. From the cellhouse a radio gargler blared forth with "Lost."



The guard said to his eight prisoners: "Single file. Let's go."

Getting behind Sackman on the tail of the line, Wannald yanked upward on Sackman's denim trousers, and shocked him forward, step by step. In Sackman's ear he said: "And how!" He spoke in answer to the radio. Sackman didn't understand. He started to sag badly, however, knowing a new and saffron fear he'd never cringed under before.

The line passed through the rotunda. At sight of Wannald supporting Sackman, "Yah—yah—yahs," burst forth in a booming of sounds. Curses, screams. In it was the fury of caged beasts.

Like a bullying tug taking a firmer snub on a giant liner, Wannald kept his groveling, weak-kneed burden upright. The unbridled roar of hate, fury impressed him not at all. Fools yelping their heads off because a right guy was trying to help a friend, because he was going to prove he was a right gee! Tomorrow it would be different. They would know—then.

The sagging weight of Sackman made Wannald sweat. His thin arms, his back, ached. Yet he forced Sackman forward. There was the same frightening efficiency, the terrific singleness of purpose, about Wannald that generally characterizes futile, little men who hope to win a belated, benign nod from Lady Luck.

Tonight Wannald was courting that elusive lady. He'd need her to complete his righteous deed. Never in his life had he weaved under her heady tang. Perhaps because of his eyes. A pampered lady flees the crawling thing. . . .

The line passed into the warden's office. The eight convicts seated themselves in chairs placed against the wall, and waited—waited to see a right gee die for a crime he hadn't committed.

THE prison physician came in and examined Gibbs. His eyes were red, be-

ginning to swell; but he hadn't played in the same bad luck as McCoy. Wannald was glad of that. Gibbs would've made a lousy broom-maker. . . .

Gibbs said to the guard: "Yuh should've let me work on the chump-charger." He jerked his head contemptuously at Sackman.

The guard grinned at Sackman. "You sure do rate high, big-timer. . . . Think that blinked pumper of yours'll hold out when you see Green go?"

Sackman's head came up. "Green's story isn't true," he whispered. "You shouldn't make me watch it. I'm a very sick man—ill."

Sackman knew the warden could compel men convicted of assault-to-kill to witness an execution. Colorado introduced the policy; and many states have taken it up. The supposition is that it teaches men of violent and ungovernable tempers how lucky they are that their victims hadn't died, and not to push luck too far when free again. He wasn't sure that the warden could do this to him, legally, but he'd heard that the warden skipped over minor rulings and ran his prison according to the dictates of the Holy Bible. An inner voice was whispering to him in the turmoil of his frantic brain that his canny frame-up of Green never would succeed as planned.

"Maybe you think Green's feeling pert, huh?" the guard clipped.

"Green's a right guy, you're a fink?" Gibbs butted in. "Who do you think we believe? . . . An' to think I had your slimy neck in my mitts. . . ."

"Didn't—didn't the jury find him guilty?" Sackman sputtered. "Was I mentioned? No! That's your answer."

"Not mine, not Green's; yours." Gibbs spat.

"Maybe you forgot what Green told," Wannald prodded, his little eyes gleaming at Sackman. "He says he came into that little toy bank you had when you were working late one night. Only the watchman



was with you. You had the vault open, and Muggsy grabbed ninety G's, and flit. The watchman probably wondered out loud how the doors happen to be open after he'd tested them twice, making sure they were locked. Anyway, when the police arrive the watchman has picked-up a bullet hole between his eyes. Green says he didn't put it there; but that that buttonhole that closed that watchman's lips could've been made by nobody but you. Remember that? Will you be able to forget it when Green goes?"

A shudder shook Sackman. He bit his lips, looked steadily at the floor, and remained silent.

Wannald hammered on: "So Muggsy, a square guy and an honest businessman, peeled off only twelve of the ninety G's; and left the rest for you. You weren't robbed; you only wanted people, police and insurance guys to think so. Muggsy don't know nothing about the murder until he finds that he's so hot he can't grab a breath of cool air without burning up. But before he gets collared you ups and pleads guilty to a chump charge, getting yourself stashed away where you cannot testify. Before Muggsy goes to trial a couple of biggie lawyers, your friends, come to him and tell him he'll get off easy if he keeps his yap shut and leaves you out of it. They mention a big political pull. Muggsy, the poor sap, believes them; and he keeps mum and gets—gets the gas chamber. He begins telling the piece as it stands when it's too late to do any good. You—Sackman—you—can—still—save—him. Just call for the warden." Wannald's voice was almost wheedling.

Sackman looked up dazedly, then laughed. "To save Green I'd have to be a liar." His voice was almost steady; yet his hands, his eyes, verged on hysteria.

The guard said musingly: "It'd be queer if you cracked, Sackman, and wound-up breathing the eggs instead of Muggsy. Of

course your execution wouldn't be pulled off for months, but . . ."

"Stop it! Stop it!" Sackman suddenly sobbed. "That expression . . . breathe eggs. It isn't decent. I'll never . . . don't have to . . . ever breathe eggs. Poisonous gas. Ugh! Curs are killed that way."

"Yeah," Wannald said stonily, "curs die that way."

"Muggsy ain't no cur," Gibbs snarled. "He's a good honest crook. But—but this fink here, a guy who'd rob hisself . . ."

A dry, harsh laugh came from Wannald's throat. "You know I sorta think Sackman will breathe some eggs. I might even be able to call the date and time."

"You've made pretty sure that the only eggs he'll get will be fish eggs—caviar," the guard grunted. "Maybe you'll be eating some yourself when you get out? You should have heavy sugar by then if you keep this fink alive."

"I don't think," Wannald rasped, "that I'll be going out unless Lady Luck smiles. But it won't matter—much."

"You—Lady Luck!" The guard snorted. "When you was born you had two strikes called and a guy named Frustration taking a purposeful wind-up in the pitcher's box. You and Lady Luck . . . Hah!"

Electric locks clicked. Three dour guards entered. Manacles were placed on the wrists of each prisoner. A long chain was attached to the left ankle and manacles of each man.

Sackman, his face pasty, walked in No. 7 position in the march to the yard. Wannald, his eyes wary, dogged the fink's heels. The little line stopped in front of the infirmary. The second floor—death row—was ablaze with light.

**L**IGHTS were out on the main floor, where men were physically ill; and on the third floor, where men were mentally ill. Still, all realized that Muggsy was going down the ramp inside the walls, ready to



breathe his eggs. From main, curses arose; from three, wails. The agonized sound of them volleyed across the courtyard; and contraband metal violently drawn across bars rasped in echoing answer from the cellhouse.

Above the bedlam, in maddening irony, hundreds of radio loud speakers screeched: "I'll Be Glad When You're Daid, You Rascal You. . . ."

Wannald looked, stony-eyed, at the cringing Sackman, and his mouth twitched in contempt. Again he said: "And how!" and a violent shudder shook Sackman, making his chains clank.

The warden came first, then Green and two guards at his sides. A hooded and sandaled monk, lips moving in prayer, walked behind Green. Two guards brought up the rear.

His breath wheezing, Sackman cowered back to stand behind Wannald.

Green saw him, and tensed. His large head, with its unruly mane of hair, jutted forward. The muscles of his neck corded, his huge chest expanded, his bull-like shoulders flexed, and he leaped forward, his big hands grasping. The guards spun about, tripping at Green and pinioning his arms. The warden put a restraining hand on his arm, saying sympathetically: "Don't make us drag you outside the gates. Go with dignity."

"But that heel should talk, come clean," Green's voice quivered in helpless rage. "I can make him talk. He should be the one about to die—not me. He—he . . ."

"I heard, know your story," the warden said, avoiding Green's eyes. "But only the governor could . . . uh . . . the governor and Sackman . . . uh . . . friendly . . . political bedfellows. All I can do is as the law demands. I've spoke for you . . . uh . . . but—unavailingly. Sorry. Don't try to cause trouble. Go as a man—with dignity."

"KO—KO!" Green's breath rasped suddenly. "Die as a dog dies, huh—but with

dignity?" He laughed bitterly. "Dignity a murder!" He shrugged off the guards' hands; but the blaze never left his hot eyes until they focused on Wannald. Then his mouth twisted sardonically. "Hello, foul ball."

"Hi, mug," Wannald's manacled hands moved in greeting.

"Silence men," a guard barked.

"Lemme talk to the punk?" Green's eyes sought the warden's.

"Talk as we walk if you wish."

Wannald took his position beside Green. The convict witnesses brought up the end of the line. A chilling wind swept down from Mockingbird hill. The crunch of gravel underfoot had a rattling, cold sound to it. The loud speakers were echoing with "I Found A Million Dollar Baby. . . ."

They walked in silence. The line paused as the front gates in the high walls hissed upward; and the straggling line passed out of the prison proper and started ascending the steep hill across the road. The clamor of helpless men and the screech of radios became an indistinct murmur.

Green laid a big-brotherly hand on Wannald's shoulder. "I—I glad you're here. I wanted to talk, but there's nothing to say except I hope you do all right when you get out."

Wannald looked up at Green, and his eyes filled, his throat grew tight. "Sure, mug, I'll do okay if—when—I get out. You taught me how to get along. I wouldn't have been anybody 'cept for you."

"Well, Mace, I ain't so sure I did you any good. Father Francis has been talking to me. He says there's an all-right and an all-wrong, and that you yourself knows which is which. I wouldn't be going out now if I'd have figured things differently. Now I did lots of things that Father Francis didn't think were on the up-and-up, but there's lots of things I didn't do either—like murder. I want you to believe me."

"Yeah—sure—I believe you. And I get



you on that all-right and all-wrong business. Right's right, wrong's wrong. A thing is—is just as a man sees it. I'm glad you said that."

"Why?"

"Well, uh, I've always been trying to do something for you. I never did. You started taking care of me when I was a kid. Remember the only good suit I ever owned then, you got for me? The minister was teaching us how gentlemen played basketball, his son being the example. You stole the son's suit from the locker an'—"

"Yeah, yeah," Green laughed. "I couldn't go right out on the street with it, so I put it away. Then I gets growing pains, and the wind-up is you get the suit. I—I was glad to give it to you. You was always a pretty right guy."

"Yeah, but I ain't been able to prove it—ever. Now I'm gonna take care of Sackman for you."

"Well, right's right, wrong's wrong, and a guy couldn't be all-wrong taking care of a fink like that. He's all-wrong hisself." He looked searchingly down at Wannald. "I wouldn't mind if you did. Only—only you was born with two strikes already called, and you never been able to hit anything but foul balls."

"Every guy's entitled to hit a homerun in the clutch in a lifetime; and I don't think there's any Dizzy Dean pitching tonight." He rubbed his hand against the green bottle under his blouse. His eyes grew hard, purposeful.

"Tonight?"

"If he don't crack and talk he goes when you go. The same way too—the way a gee like him should die—like a mangy cur."

"Careful," Green hissed, "careful. No more talk. Guys kill themselves with talk. And—well—thanks."

The line approached a square, sheet-metaled house with solid glass running head-high around it. A high mesh fence enclosed the ominous looking house. A thin

ventilating pipe swayed in the cold wind, its tip fifty feet above the house.

THERE were a score of witnesses awaiting, sordid thrill seekers, state execution officials and sweating newspapermen, who, as usual, had fortified themselves with liquor against impending horror. Yet there was about them an air of expectancy and carnival.

Green felt it, and his full-lipped mouth quivered, his face became pasty.

"Don't leave those b——s have any fun, Muggsy," Wannald whispered. "Don't let 'em see you go gutless. They're waiting for that. Disappoint 'em, disappoint 'em. . . ."

Green's hand clutched Wannald's briefly. "Luck," he said, "good luck!" He spun on his heel, shoved his way into the gas chamber. He looked at the straight-backed chair, at the pot of sulphuric acid beneath it.

He tossed back his large head, and laughed loudly. Finally he said, as the monk—Father Francis—stood beside him and prayed: "The first chair I ever sits in has a pot under it; now my last has, too. Some smart guy, I think, might call that irony. I dunno, but hah!—it's damned funny! Very funny."

Outside the witnesses crowded into the aperture between the chamber and the mesh fence. Guards took up positions at the fence's gate.

The eight black-eyed convicts were lined along the window on Green's left. Wannald shouldered Gibbs aside; and now the trembling Sackman was on his right. The warden came up behind Sackman, asked: "Have you anything to say. If Green's story is true you'll have to live with your conscience—forever. I've heard Hell itself isn't comparable to that."

"I've—I've nothing to say," Sackman said with an effort. "Green's story is false—false." His voice suddenly leaped into near hysteria. "False—false! You hear me. False! False! I say!"



The warden shrugged resignedly, moving away. Wannald's lips were peeled back over his teeth. He was breathing hard, and death looked out of his little eyes. He noticed, approvingly, that Sackman's coloring was bad. The fink was ready to keel over, unable to take it. . . .

On Wannald's left, Gibbs spewed a stream of blasphemy toward Sackman. A guard came up to stand watchfully behind him.

The official executioner entered the chamber. He asked Green if he'd need any help in stripping himself of all clothing except his shorts. Green's gaze swung around the square, little house, upon the whited noses pressed flat against the windows in the four walls and door. His eyes fastened on Sackman, then swung to Wannald, and held, as he stripped. His hands didn't shake much.

The executioner seated Green in the chair, and snapped a restraining leather band across his chest, and one across each wrist to the arms of the chair.

Green's eyes sought Wannald's beseechingly. Wannald's bird-like head nodded encouragement; and then the head jerked toward Sackman in steadying confirmation.

Green laughed again. Only the motions of his hands on the chair arms betrayed the torrent of almost ungovernable fear flooding inside him.

"You'd think this was the electric chair," he said, chucking strainedly, "'cept that your tail doesn't get toasted. . . . This is quick, ain't it?"

"One deep breath," the executioner said callously, "and blooey! No feeling, just nothing—just ain't and gone." As he spoke he drew a black hood over Green's head. It had slits made for his nose and mouth, yet it blotted out his face.

Green's tongue sped over his lips. His throat constricted, a wise-crack died aborning. Under cover of the hood his eyes became panicky.

The executioner touched the arm of Father Francis. The priest laid his hand

lightly over Green's head, then, still praying, stepped from the chamber. The executioner followed him; and shot the heavy door bolts home.

Green was alone with his straps and his chair and his fears, and the jar of sulphuric acid under him.

The executioner tossed Green's clothes to a guard. Clothing traps and holds gas dangerously long. He moved to the lever near the door.

There was a stir among the witnesses. Sackman was slobbering, Gibbs cursing; and in Wannald unbounded fury and hate was seeping searingly up through him and destroying the canniness of his brain.

The executioner emotionlessly moved the lever.

Inside the chamber a wooden "hand," shaped in the form of a spoon, moved over the acid crock and tilted. Egg-shaped cyanide lumps skidded off its edge and dropped.

Immediately grayish fumes arose, thickened, and spread over and above and beside Green. His mouth opened and closed with the first poisonous taste. The muscles along his jaw and neck stood out as he fought against breathing.

Wannald, his lips moving, his face set in a grimace of horror, muttered: "Liars! Liars everyone of you!"

Green was proving that everyone on the law's side was a liar. Almost two minutes had passed in a boiling madhouse of fumes. Green was breathing regularly, his lips worked in a prayer that only the fumes heard; yet the movement of his lips were tracing: "Holy Mary, Mother of God . . ."

Paralysis held Wannald in its grip. The prison physician "harumped" behind his hand.

Eight minutes; and Green's lips still moved.

"Mace! Mace! You good, little foul ball!" It was almost a cry. Green's head sagged, the choking hot fingers of death



gripped his throat. The index finger of each hand slowly rose, stiffened.

The fumes kept boiling.

MACE WANNALD was past seeing any of this. Muggsy Green's last thought had been of him . . . him who'd never done a righteous deed in his life.

He swung on his heel, his left spread hand extended for Sackman's eyes. The eyes were rolling in Sackman's head, and his knees were rubber. He was tottering, weaving.

Wannald drove him blindly down. First his spread left hand, the automatic crash of his right fist against—not the chin—just the heart. Sackman sobbed, collapsed; yet, strangely, he didn't lapse into his customary helpless coma.

A guard leaped upon Wannald. Gibbs lashed out, knocking the guard unconscious. He went berserk. A left, right, another left, he drove relentlessly into Wannald's contorted face.

There were cries of warning, curses, the helpless milling of witnesses when Wannald became conscious that he had dropped near the guard. There was a gun invitingly close in the prostrate guard's holster.

And Sackman had staggered to his knees! Sackman, who had murdered an innocent man; Sackman, who had killed a pal. . . .

Wannald reached for the gun.

It was out of the holster when the first shot struck him. It was blazing at Sackman in an unsteady, wavering hand when the second and third shots struck him. In the last dimness of sight he saw Sackman clutch feebly at his heart, and sprawl face downward.

He could taste blood, and there was racking pain that brought coldness.

"As you see it, Muggsy," he groaned. "As you see it, right's right. It was no foul ball I hit. It was—it was the real business, the McCoy, a real lallypaloosa. It was . . ."

A violent shudder shook him; and there was a great peace he'd never known before.

Two guards were beating on the frantic Gibbs' head. The warden barked orders to get the witnesses out of the enclosure.

The placid, calloused executioner took the brief, deadly fracas unconcernedly. The acid had stopped fuming; and Green was still, slumped against the restraining chest band. Electric blowers whirred, washing the chamber free of gas. The executioner and two stretcher bearers donned oxygen masks and entered the chamber. Green's shorts were ripped loose. His skin had a bluish tinge when he was carried out to be officially pronounced dead by the prison physician.

Gibbs looked down at the mottled face of Sackman. The ex-banker was struggling almost unavailingly for air.

"Don't leave that fink die," Gibbs yelled hoarsely. "His smelling salts are under his blouse."

A guard holding Gibbs spat out, releasing Gibbs. "Fix him up then, softie. Not one of Wannald's shots touched him. The chump just couldn't take it—passed out."

"For Cris sake," the flushed crooked-nosed con rapped, "that cluck Wannald misses again. Two strikes and Frustration pitching, somebody said awhile ago. Right! The poor dumb bunny gets hisself shot-up for nothing. Ain't that hell?"

Gibbs dropped to a knee beside Sackman, fumbled beneath the blouse for the green bottle. He uncorked it, jammed it beneath Sackman's nose. "You ain't dyin' yet," he muttered. "We'll keep you alive because someday, somehow, you'll get a payoff." Sackman breathed deeply, shuddered, lay still.

The physician was examining Wannald. He arose, shaking his head. "Done for."

Father Francis, his stole about his neck, the holy oils of the church in his hand, leaned over the stretcher bearing Green's body. He administered the church's last



blessing. Then—his eyes sad—he approached Wannald's lifeless body.

The prison physician examined Green. "I pronounce this man dead," he said officially.

Gibbs' voice suddenly roared out in helpless laughter. A guard cuffed him alongside the head. Gibbs spun about. "And I," he screeched, "pronounce this fink dead. Lookit him. His skin looks blue."

"IT'S AMAZING, simply amazing," the warden said minutes later. "Wannald—a dead man—murdered Sackman as surely as the state mur—uh—took Green's life."

"Undoubtedly," the physician said. "In the bottle of smelling salts taken from beneath Sackman's blouse were potassium cyanide crystals stolen from the fumigation detail. The breathing of them might kill

any man if held under his nose sufficiently long. But Sackman and his heart condition succumbed almost immediately. His skin has the same bluish tinge as Green's. Only cyanide would do that. It keeps the blood from absorbing oxygen."

The warden held another green bottle in his hand. "This was taken from Wannald's blouse. Actual smelling salts—ammonia carbones—here. Sometime tonight Wannald switched bottles."

Gibbs laughed. "So he finally got a break from Lady Luck. A queer turk, that little guy."

"A little rat, yuh mean," the guard who shot Wannald opined.

"Little rat?" Gibbs said, his eyes mocking. "No—not a little rat." He spat very deliberately. "Mr. Rat to you—Mr. Rat. Hell, let's go home. I gotta tell the boys; and it's cold out here."

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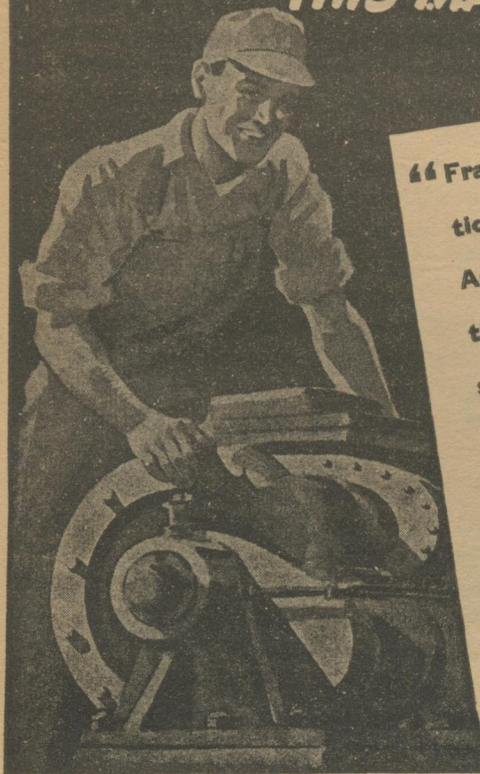
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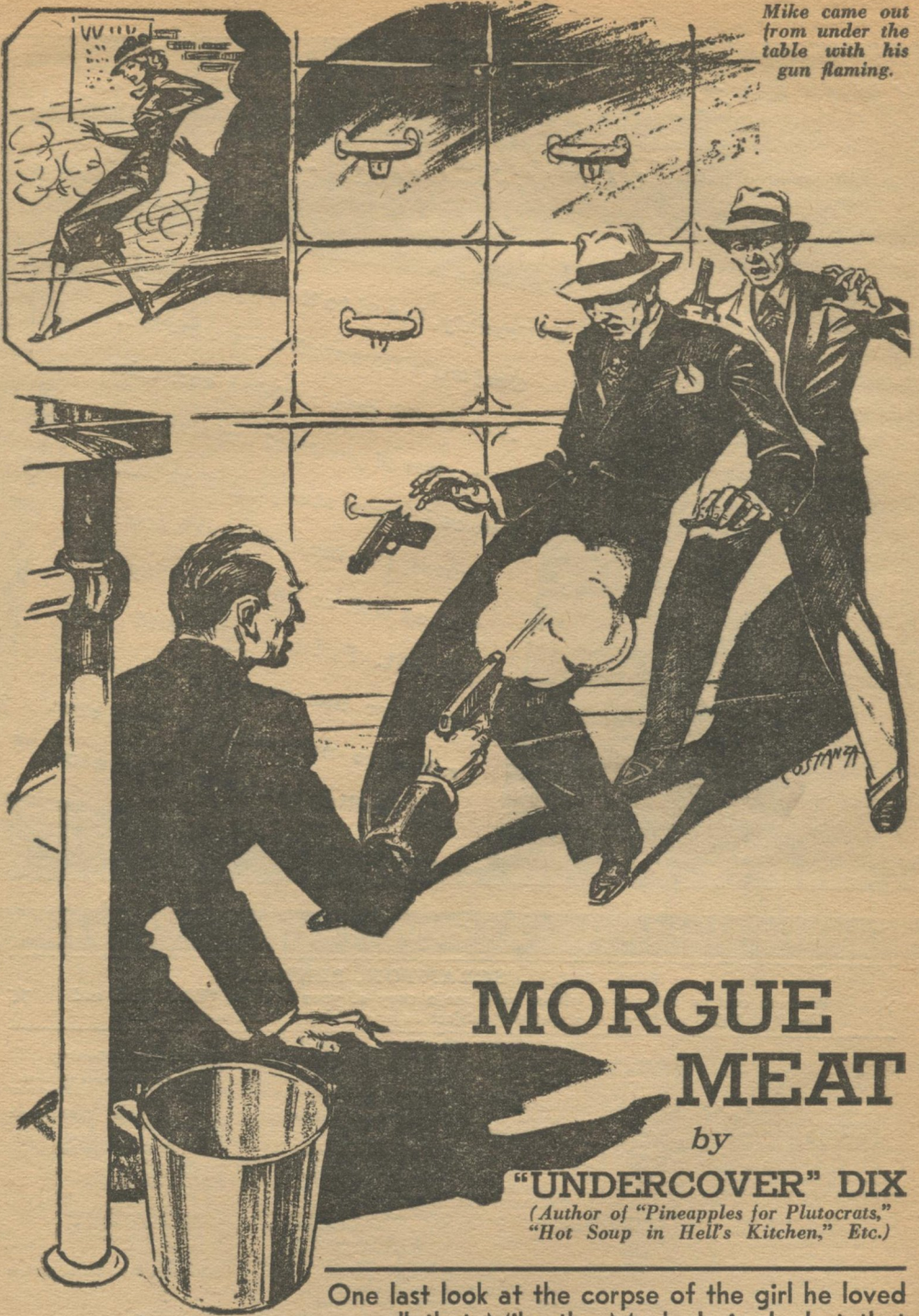
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Mike came out from under the table with his gun flaming.



# MORGUE MEAT

by

**"UNDERCOVER" DIX**

(Author of "Pineapples for Plutocrats,"  
"Hot Soup in Hell's Kitchen," Etc.)

One last look at the corpse of the girl he loved was all that Mike the Monk desired—but that double crossing trollop had been the victim of underworld vengeance—and all to whom she might have talked were on the list—scheduled for a one-way sleigh ride to hell!



**T**IME was when a good, fresh stiff, otherwise known as a cadaver, corpse or altogether dead human body might bring as much as \$50 on the open medical school market. Gang massacres, post-depression suicides and hectic and jittery modern methods of living-all-too-briefly have done away with all that. Nowadays a good fresh corpse isn't worth a nicked penny. An unknown or unclaimed dead body of either sex can be had, for purposes of dissecting, by any duly accredited medical school by simply applying to the city morgue, more politely known as a mortuary.

A dead human, otherwise known as morgue meat, is worth exactly nothing a pound as compared with around thirty cents a pound for dead cow, sheep or pig meat. This goes to show that butcher shop meat, which consists of the so-called dumb animals, is much more valuable to commerce than morgue meat even though morgue meat represents what is sometimes suspected of being the highest form of creation.

A good dead horse is worth \$8.75 up according to the condition of the hide. A dead dog will bring from 75 cents up to \$1.60 and a dead cat around 30 cents. The value of the dead horse is due to the demand for his hide for leather, his fat for soap, his meat for dog food and fertilizer, his bones for buttons and toothbrush handles and his hoofs for gelatine table delicacies consumed by humans. The dog food makers hesitate to let dog eat dog so dead dogs are valuable mostly for their hides out of which they make gloves, sometimes worn to prevent finger-print identification. The value of the dead cat is not because of cat-gut musical strings, but for the fur which, properly dressed, might become imitation seal, skunk or even ermine.

On the whole the value of dead animals—that is all save humans—often hinges on the condition of the hides. But dead

men and women even with the most perfect hides are still worth nothing, net. They can be had for the hauling away.

And, speaking of the condition of human hides, the skin of Big Bat Sally, the junkie, wasn't so perfect when they carted her away. After an autopsy which all but ruined her usefulness even to a medical school her mortal remains was raised on a freight elevator and dumped in a vat of formaldehyde solution. Around Sally's long skinny cadaver in the big tub floated assorted arms, heads, legs and torsos. Sally was a sociable soul and a mixer to the last. If her ghost objected to the common pickling vat it made no audible protest. Sally's stiffened corpse simply sloshed and floated about in apparent perfect post-mortem peace. Thus Sally awaited her turn on the dissecting table.

**B**UT about the condition of Big Bat Sally's skin: She had mussed up her hide considerable with hypodermic needle jabs inflicted in the pursuit of happiness during the course of her career as a drug addict. She had been snatched by the mob of the sadistic Sam, the slasher and had been fiendishly tortured. The flesh on the palms of her hands and soles of her feet had been slashed with razor blades. Cigarette-butt burns marked the flesh under her arms and the inside of her thighs. The tips of her fingers and toes had been cooked where toothpicks had been driven up under her nails and then set ablaze to burn down to the quick.

Sally had undergone all of these tortures and lived. Not only had she survived but she had withheld her secret even under the most frightful tortures conceived by the sodden and sullen mind of the arch-fiend Sam, the slasher. There was a reason, of course. When it came to torture Sally was hardly a normal subject. She was so steeped in morphine that her nerves were practically dead. She was almost completely impervious to pain!



But it did not help the appearance of her hide any. If human pelts were worth nothing net on the leather market Sally's hide was worth less than nothing, for, she had finally met up with sudden and violent death in the form of a machine gun. Multiple bullets had ripped her once pretty skin fore and aft. Sally's body was more full of holes than a cheese grater.

And, all to no avail. In killing Sally, Sam, the slasher had defeated his own purpose. She was the only one who knew the hiding place of \$260,000 in currency, a treasure left by the extinct Gopher Gimp mob. Sally had died with her secret intact.

SALLY in the old days had been a sweetheart of Gopher Gimp while giving her true love to her man, Mike, the Monk, a handsome and high mannered, extortionist, who once escaped a police net, by disguising himself as a pious friar. This all happened before Sally had become addicted to hop. She was a pretty little chippie, in those days, and her fingers and mind were deft. Her own hands and apt needle had fashioned the friar's robes which Mike had worn under the very noses of the cops who were out to get him.

Mike was anything but an ingrate. He had remembered this service and had remained true and loyal to Sally even after she had sunk lower than a submarine dives. When Sally began dragging herself through the gutters of the underworld Mike was always there to help her up. He stuck to her even after she became a dirty little stoolie or informer with no more pride or gumption than a maggot.

Because of this fanatic loyalty to his busted-down doll Mike mourned her passing alone. He had become an outcast among outcasts—a much-shot-at buffer of the murder mobs. He was on the spot with more killers than a live rabbit on a dog track. Any minute now he was due to follow Sally's slashed cadaver to a sloush-

ing tub full of morgue meat. His life wasn't worth the air he took in in one breath. Yet his only crime had been in loving Sally too much even after Sally had turned out to be a snitch.

The underworld score of vengeance against Mike, the Monk, was complete and deadly. He had shot and killed two of Sally's torturers. He had saved her twice from the wrath of the murder mobs and their machine-gun slugs. The third time, when the spray of slugs was stuttering a vibrating whine, Mike had tripped Big Bat Sally as he fell flat on his own belly. But, Sally was so charged with hop that she failed to realize her danger. She scrambled back onto her feet. The slugs caught her across the small of the back. They emerged in a dotted line just under her pendant breasts.

Mike had rolled into a basement entrance just as the big car, showering death, had rounded the corner. The car made a quick stop and backed up to get Mike but he had bolted through a familiar cellar out the back and over a fence. From there he had climbed a fire escape, crossed a couple of roofs and had come down the stairs of a tenement emerging on another street.

Mike was now suffering not only from grief but loneliness as well. Sally had neither kith nor kin. Mike suffered at a distance from the remains of his beloved. He longed for a last glimpse of the shattered body that had once been a well of laughter and song. He dared not follow the dead wagon bearing her body nor dared he put in an appearance at the morgue. Watchers for the murder mobs, he knew, would be trying to pick up his trail at the mortuary.

Big Bat Sally's body was held for the usual ten days for possible claiming or identification. During this period, that had seemed a life time to Mike, he had remained in a furnished room hideout.



The house was in Chicago's South Side and was run by colored folk.

Mike, as a lone extortion racketeer, had prospered mildly. In his inside pocket he had a wallet containing \$3,800 in green money. This and a .38 automatic carried in a shoulder holster were his sole earthly possessions. He bribed the slap-footed negro boy whose room was next to his. The boy brought his meals. The negro was a good natured dolt. He liked Mike's money but rankled at Mike's refusal to let the radio blast strident swing music.

In his lonely moments Mike had been framing a scheme. The colored boy fitted into it like putty in a crack. The plan was to have the colored boy carry a bribe to a morgue attendant. It worked. Mike was to be informed when Sally's body went out of the morgue and where it was going. It was his chance, he believed, to get a last look at the beloved remains. He was in no way prepared for just what the last look was destined to look like. He had not envisioned the slender, adored form of his Sally batting about in a slosh of formaldehyde solution with a ghastly assortment of strange dead arms, heads, legs and torsos. He had no idea that such a human pickling vat existed. Neither could he count on other horrifying events that were about to happen.

**W**ORD had come. Mike was to pick up the morgue wagon bearing Sally and an array of other stiffs at Van Buren and Clark streets, on the edge of Chinatown, at 8 that night, and follow it to the medical school in Franklin street. It was still early in the day and Mike's nerves were so taut and strained they were sore. He was pacing the room talking to himself. What he was saying to himself was:

"Sally shouldn't of oughta turned stoolie. Just because that big narcotic dick was handing her a bunch of morphine every night she didn't need to tip off the

hang-outs of all the mobsters in town. She was dope crazy, that's what she was. Crazy with dope and from torture. If her mind wasn't all clabbered with dope she would a-been more careful about getting herself rubbed out and maybe me too. But Sally was a good kid. She didn't know what she was doing. But that don't help me none, now."

He strolled aimlessly to the window and looked out. What he saw caused him to start back. His tired nerves snapped into action. He was anything but a coward. Now, he was a lone warrior against the armies of the mobs. He realized now, fully.

There, down in the street, on the corner, was a burly form leaning against a pole. Directly across the way was another husky mobster walking up and down—up and down. These two, he knew only too well, were the death watchers for the murder mobs. They had found his hide-out. The colored boy had been pegged at the morgue. He had been picked up and followed back to the dingy rooming house. The death watch was waiting for him to emerge. Then a car would ease down the block and he would be sprayed with death like a gardener might sprinkle a prize peony. If he did not emerge, in due time, the death watch would wax impatient and come in and get him! He felt helpless and hopeless. But his instinctive courage rallied.

Mike knew he had to leave the place, not so much to escape death as to get the coveted last look at what was left of Sally. He decided to try an old ruse. He would try the roof tops. He patted the wallet containing his money. He unbuttoned his jacket to make access to his .38 automatic more rapid. He adjusted the pistol where his right hand could jump without a split-second's delay. Then he walked out and up the stairs.

Just under the roof was a hatch. Mike pushed it up ever so easily. His eyes could sweep the roof. The hatch dropped back



into position. Mike had seen. His eyes had caught the forms of two pairs of legs. Legs that paced the roof up and down—up and down. Mike bolted the hatch on the inside and walked back to his room.

He looked out again. The view was not reassuring. There, still were the restless pacers. But he had to chance it. He would take the street way. His chances would be better with firm ground under his feet. He was a fleet runner. He slid up the window and stepped firmly out onto the fire escape. He took a long breath. He had not yet been seen. He ran down the iron stairway. Suddenly a bullet tore bricks at his back. Others followed but all missed the rapidly moving target. They had found him. They were running across the street.

He swung out on the iron grating and dropped the last full two stories. He landed in a crouching position like a sprinter awaiting the gun. Not one gun but three cracked. The bullets whined past his ears and hips. Lead smacked the pavement. A mugg was shooting down from the roof. But Mike now was running like mad.

The waiting murder car came towards him. He saw the Tommies leveled. Just as the Tommies started to stutter Mike leaped into the air and caught the bottom rung of an overhanging fire escape ladder. The slugs from the Tommies cut the wall just below him.

The street suddenly was full of people and there was screaming and cursing. The murder car had gone by. The machine-gunners had been defeated by their own impetuosity. When the driver tried to back into range Mike had again dropped to the sidewalk. His fleet legs had carried him far down the street. He had distanced the gunners on foot. He had turned a corner.

He dived into an apartment entrance and ran up the stairs. His heart was hammering but his nerves were now steady. Directly to the roof he made his way. This time there were no stalking, walking humans.

He traversed one roof after another. Finally he let himself down through a hatch and ran down the stairway emerging on another street.

He walked rapidly to the elevated railroad and took a train downtown. Soon he was at Van Buren and Clark streets awaiting the morgue wagon. He followed it to the medical school. He rode up on the freight elevator, with the basketed bodies, to the dissecting room. The men with the morgue-wagon observed him curiously.

"Who the hell are you?" asked the stretcher-bearer, noticing Mike's deep interest in the stiffs in the wickers.

Mike's mind worked fast. "A medical student," he said.

IT WAS nine o'clock at night. The dissecting room seemed to be deserted. Only a feeble gas light flickered over the vats filled with human corned beef. Mike saw the driver and the stretcher bearer lift the stiffs, four of them, out of the wickers. They unrolled a soiled sheet and a body plopped out. They lifted the covers of a vat and tossed in the morgue meat. There was a splash as the stiff hit the formaldehyde solution. One, two, three cadavers were thus disposed of.

One was a hairy male, the next a slender bleached male with a dark moustache. Mike was about to blurt out words but checked himself. He recognized this second stiff—a tin-horn gambler from one of the fixed dice games. A bullet hole in the neck told the story. It was a tale Mike had no difficulty in interpreting. Either the guy was a welcher or some sucker with a rod had caught him rolling the phonies.

The hairy body splashed into a tub. The gambler's slender form followed. Mike was not so interested. He kept looking at the two remaining forms swathed in soiled sheets. He had not long to wait. The emaciated form of an old woman was revealed



under the third sheet. She was dumped into the tub with the gambler.

Then Mike beheld the chopped-up form of his beloved. It came out from under the sheet back up. The men had sort of over-rolled it in their haste. Mike wanted to tell them to please turn it face-up but he dared not. But when they lifted it up to the vat the face was revealed and Mike had his one last look.

He stepped forward when the body was tilted up against a third vat. Then the lid came up and the body was toppled over the edge. Mike jumped forward and looked into the vat just as Sally's body dived beneath the formaldehyde solution. He saw a swashing of the liquid and a bobbing of strange disconnected legs, heads, arms and torsos. Big Bat Sally, his beloved, bobbed with them, a fellow to the other human pickles.

It seared Mike's soul to see the remains of his beloved thus handled so carelessly. It nauseated him. He wanted to yell out in wild protest, but affairs of this mundane world are not tempered for the likes of him. He was forced to hold his peace. He found himself planning to steal the body from the vat. Then he realized that hunted as he was he would have no safe place to take it. Dour thoughts haunted him. How long would it be before he too was swimming in brine—a dead thing, awaiting the knives and curious stares of a flock of high-brows? A strange feeling came over him. He determined if his life was spared that he would turn straight. But, deep down in his soul, he knew that some lanes have no turning.

THE morgue men had left. Mike was still hanging about. Like some mourners delight in going often to the graves of their beloved, Mike found himself returning at intervals to the slosh of brine that was the temporary resting place of Big Bat Sally. A big wooden paddle, used to pry the bodies to the surface, rested against

the interior of the tank. Mike would raise the vat cover, grasp the paddle and raise Sally's remains to the top, thrusting the assorted arms, heads, legs and torsos aside, as he did so. Again and again he raised the now wet and glistening face of Sally up to where it could be dimly seen and studied in the feeble flicker of a single wavering flame of light. The stench from the tub was awful—heavy with pungent fumes of germicide and disinfectant—but Mike could not remain away.

Had he realized how almost certain death was bearing down upon him, riding the wind like the fates, he might have become interested in his own life rather than the life that once was Sally's. Then, of a sudden, he did realize that the murder mobs might soon catch up with him. They were almost sure to find his colored boy messenger. They would make the messenger talk by force of toothpicks driven under his nails and set on fire.

Suddenly he heard footsteps sounding down what appeared to be a long hall leading to the dissecting room!

THE room was built like a small prize-fight arena. Long benches were built in rows, tier upon tier, around the room. In the center, where the prize ring might have been, was the dissecting table. A sort of cat-walk led along one side of the table where the students might file past viewing the dissecting at close range. On the other side of the table was a raised platform for the operating and lecturing professor. Mike, when he heard the approaching footsteps, made a dive for it and hid himself under the dissecting table. He was not a minute too soon. A tall man carrying a broom and a mop and wearing overalls and jumper entered. He busied himself immediately in sweeping the floor and mopping up the swash about the big vats.

Mike realized he had nothing to fear from this fellow. Mike, himself, was well



dressed and could make himself quite impressive when occasion demanded. He crawled out from under the table and said:

"Hello, there."

The porter turned and looked more bewildered than frightened.

"What are you doing in here and who are you?" asked the porter.

"I'm a medical student," replied Mike, trying the ruse that had served him once.

"O no, you're not," said the porter, most emphatically. "I know every man in this place. You couldn't be a new-comer because the time to start new students is not now. You are a trespasser or a burglar—" Then catching sight of the slight bulge in Mike's coat, he said quickly:

"Don't shoot, mister. I can keep my mouth shut."

"Good," said Mike, "now keep your shirt on and listen. There is a body in that tub over there. It is the body of a woman. I want to get it out of here tonight and you're going to help me. If you make a squawk or a false move I'll drill you. I've got money and I'm willing to pay you well. Now drop the mop and let's get organized."

Mike expected the porter to protest, but he was mistaken. The man simply eyed Mike up and down and asked, "How much is there in it for me?"

"A hundred bucks," said Mike.

"O.K.," said the porter, "I can do a lot of good with that money."

"If they miss the body you got to frame your own alibi," cautioned Mike.

"With all those bodies chopped up like they are and mixed together, nobody will miss the lady. What are you aiming to do with her, study her brain, or something? I guess you *are* a medical student, at that."

"I positively ain't no medical student," insisted Mike, most emphatically. The two had sat down, as chummy as could be, on the edge of the dissecting table. "I'm a racketeer and a killer," continued Mike, patting his automatic which rested snugly

in its holster. "Don't get the idea that I'm a sap. I'd blow you to hell for a dime."

The porter's reaction to this effort at intimidation was a surprise to Mike. He could hardly believe his ears:

"Don't worry about anybody around here," said the porter, "I don't know any killers but nearly everybody around here is a sort of a racketeer."

Mike mouthed in an effort to find words. Then a wave of anger rolled over him. A flush ran up to his smooth, oily black hair. "Quit your damn kidding or I'll drill you," he almost shouted.

"Listen, Bo," said the porter, coolly, "don't get the idea there are no racketeers in medicine. This school delivers the quickest diploma on record. The more money you've got the quicker you get your finishing papers and you ain't seen nothing yet. This here, ordinarily, is a three-year course. I've worked my way through it and that gave me the right to practice medicine, but I wasn't satisfied. I worked here four more years to get money to continue at Rush. I graduated there and now, believe me, I *am* a doctor. My name's John Davis—Dr. John Davis—and I am not kidding you."

"If you're such a hell of a good croaker," asked Mike, incredulously, "how come you're still swinging a mop?"

"I've got to get enough ahead to furnish an office," said the porter. "I practice among the poor, out back of the yards, where I live. I accept fees as small as 25 and 50 cents and I often give it back to poor patients to buy medicine with. I'll relieve a lot of suffering with that \$100 you've promised me—and I never knew a guy of your kind to go back on that kind of a promise. If he did he didn't last long."

"How the hell do you know what kind of a guy I am?" asked Mike, boosting himself higher onto the table to get a firmer seat.

"Easy," said Dr. Davis. "I was raised



back of the yards. But don't get the idea that I'm a snitch and don't forget that I'll gladly help you steal that jane's body out of here for a hundred. It won't be the first chunk of hot morgue meat I've handled. The last guy was a brain specialist. He wanted the cadaver of a maniac who died after attempting suicide in a score of different ways. Finally the maniac took strychnine, slashed his wrists, shot himself and jumped off a bridge. The brain specialist wanted to look into his head. Do you blame him?" and Dr. Davis chuckled. "But we'd better get going. I'll just brush up here a little. This place always stinks anyway. We got to have a wagon or a bus of some kind. Have you got one down in the street?"

"No," answered Mike. "You go hire one and if you bring in the cops I'll drill you right between the eyes."

"Wait for me here and I'll get a wagon. I know a taxi-guy who won't talk." The porter-doctor was as good as his word. The remains of Sally were carried out to the lake front. Then in a hired power boat the body was taken a mile out into the lake and dumped.

"That," said Mike, as the body slid to rest among the fishes, "is what I call a decent burial. My old man was a sailor and that is how he was buried." He drew the back of his hand across his eyes. Dr. Davis, the pilot and Mike skimmed back to shore. And nobody talked! The simple funeral cost Mike \$400—a hundred each to Dr. Davis, the taxi-man, boat-renter and pilot. The taxi was waiting when the boat touched shore.

"Where to?" asked the taxi driver.

MIKE leaned over Dr. Davis. "I'm on the spot," he confided in the doctor's ear. "If you can hide me around that medical dump for a few days and keep me fed there is some more dough in it for you."

"Sold," said Dr. Davis, "I know an un-

dernourished family of six—all down with typhoid—and do we all need money? You don't look like Jack the Ripper to me. I'll take a chance on hiding you, if you help me a little financially with that typhoid family. They're friends of mine. I went to school with the mother of those four kids and the father was out of work a year before he took sick—"

Whatever good there was in Mike, the Monk responded to the utter unselfishness of Dr. Davis. Maybe it was because Mike was soft on account of just returning from Sally's funeral. Anyway, at that moment there was formed one of the strangest friendships in criminal annals.

"Never mind," said Mike, after a pause. "We'll take care of your friends. You're a swell skate and we're pals. We got lots of money and we can always get more." He paused, then: "I'm not what you'd call a stick-up guy. I just walk in on a small business man and I speak my piece."

"What piece?" asked Dr. Davis, who was hardly listening.

"Well, I got a set speech. I always say, 'Listen, mister, unless you would like your windows smashed in and your head busted how about giving me, say, twenty or fifty dollars?'" Mike grinned, "Just speak that piece four or five times a night, five or six nights a week, and say, it's the gravy—" But now Dr. Davis was thinking about the typhoid-stricken family and did not hear Mike at all.

They were riding west on Randolph street nearing Clark. They were stopped by a light. A car came alongside and someone shouted:

"Well, I'll be damned if there ain't Mike the Monk!"

Another voice said, "Sure is. *Get him!*"

Mike glanced up and saw three members of a far North-side mob. He hadn't seen any of this outfit for a couple of years but his ill-fame had traveled. He saw the mugg



in the back seat reach under the cushion. His hands came out holding a sawed-off shot gun. A Tommie poked its nose up in the front seat, from the lap of the hood sitting with the driver. The taxi-driver saw it, too. The light blinked and the taxi-driver stepped on the gas. The car leaped forward like a thing alive, just as slugs rained on its broad back. A shatter of glass fell about the head and shoulders of Mike and Dr. Davis.

Another volley of slugs fell short as the taxi gained. A Tommie rattled like an angered snake, but Mike and Dr. Davis were prone on the floor. The taxi driver was reaching up to the steering wheel, with just his eye-lashes topping the lower line of vision.

"Turn into the postoffice driveway," shouted Dr. Davis, and the taxi driver did as he was told. The taxi threaded its way through a bunch of mail-trucks and emerged on the other street. The mob car with the hoods still shooting wildly hit a backing truck, and turned over on its side.

The loading platform of the postoffice was alive with armed guards. They pulled the hoods out of the mob car, disarming them and placing them under arrest. The taxi made a clean get-away. The hoods in the mob car were held for attempting to hold up and rob a registered mail truck. They later drew stir stretches of from ten to twenty years in that lottery known as Federal court.

Mike and Dr. Davis dismissed the cab at the medical school. They went up the freight elevator talking like college chums. Dr. Davis suggested big steaks with French-fried potatoes and had the viands sent up on two big trays. The two ate heartily, using the dissecting table as a table de hote. The odor of formaldehyde-pickled human flesh bothered Mike a little, but after the first bite or two, he forgot it. He was an adjustable fellow, was Mike. As for Dr. Davis, manys a modest midnight lunch

he had eaten in this same room through the years of his struggle to win a profession and a career.

He voiced his ambitions wistfully, now, to Mike and got the jolt of his life.

"The reason they knocked off Sally," explained Mike, "was because she wouldn't tip off the stash of 260 grand, all in money. It was buried in Lincoln Park by the Gopher Gimp mob which gets itself wiped out in a argument with the G's. But Sally tells *me*. I'll tell you how to go and dig this up at night. You get it and I'll open the swellest doctor's office in town for you. You can have a secret room built in as a hide-out for me. Nobody would never think of looking for me in a swell doctor's joint."

MIKE took a small map from his pocket. "Here's a statue of Farragut," he said, "just three turns in from this gate. Eight feet west of the statue is a big cement water-trough. Under the north edge of this trough is the money." He handed Dr. Davis the map. "After all," he concluded, "I might not live."

Dr. Davis took the map and folding it carefully, placed it in his vest pocket. "That's right, Mike," he said, "you might not live. Not even with a good doctor for a pal!"

For two weeks Mike remained in and about the medical school. Everyone about the place knew and liked Dr. Davis. A friend of Dr. Davis was welcome. Mike mingled with the students and doctors and slept a little by day and bustled around with the porter-doctor at night. At midnight they would eat. The smell of formaldehyde no longer bothered Mike.

Then came the night when two lugs walked in from the fire-escape. They were ironed out like a Chinaman's day's-work. Mike's trained ears caught their foot-steps. He realized the colored boy had been snatched and forced to talk. Mike crouched under the familiar old dissecting table. Dr.



Davis had gone out for eats. One intruder stepped over the window ledge and into the room. Another followed. Mike's automatic barked twice. The bullets ranged up at an angle. One clipped the foremost mugg under the chin. The other hit the second intruder just to the right of his big nose. One spun and fell face downward. The other toppled across his body, forming an X. Neither moved.

Mike dragged both bodies to the pickling vats. One body squirmed and Mike sent a second shot into the temple. Then he undressed both bodies and tied the clothes in a bundle for the incinerator. He boosted the bodies up and toppled them into the nearest vat poking them down with the big wooden paddle.

"More morgue meat," he told himself, as he reached for Dr. Davis' mop. Then he wiped up the blood stains on the floor.

Dr. Davis entered bearing a big tray. The two cronies sat down and ate with gusto. The doctor-porter was unaware of any additional human corned-beef in the tubs.

Mike knew that other murder mobsters would come. Once his hide-out was discovered he realized the murder mobs would not rest night or day until his name had been scratched out. He did not tell Dr. Davis. Nor did he go to bed as usual in a clinic cot at daybreak. He deemed this his best time for escaping the relentless death-watch that he knew patrolled the neighborhood.

He spurned the elevators and descended a little-used flight of stairs. He might have done better the other way. He had hardly reached the street door when there was a familiar rattle. Mike fell perforated across the chest. His wallet containing the remains of his immediate supply of money was cut to fragments. They took the body to the morgue.

Dr. Davis found it there. "What do you know about this fellow?" he was asked the morgue attendant, pointing to the stiff that once was Mike, the Monk.

"He's been identified as a gangster by his finger prints," replied the morgue attendant. "Looks like morgue meat to me."

"No," said Dr. Davis, "I'll claim the body and give it a funeral. This guy fed me once when I was a kid and hungry."

Dr. Davis went directly to police headquarters and handed in the map that Mike had given him. He told a straight story excepting that he claimed he had been intimidated by Mike into harboring him. He was given a \$5,000 reward offered by the police for "information leading to the recovery of \$260,000 stolen money hidden by the Gopher Gimp gang, now extinct."

DR. DAVIS opened a little medical office in the back-of-the-yards-district. This is the poorest section in Chicago. In the old days it was a productive source of morgue meat, a fate from which Dr. Davis was saving others as he had saved Sally and her faithful Mike, the Monk.

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# CARNIVAL KILLER

by G. MORRIS SAND

STRANGE, pulsing music filled the carnival show tent. There was a wild rolling of drums. Then she flashed upon the brightly-lighted stage, the famous, featured dancer of the midway. Dark, slender, fascinatingly beautiful, they billed her the "Exotic, Sensational Zorine."

Tonight, automatically, almost unconsciously, Zorine's body dipped and whirled. Her eyes gleamed savagely. Her brain was a madhouse. Raoul, her lover, was lost to her. He loved Carolyn. He preferred Carolyn. The drums twittered her as she danced. Laughing devils, they beat out the steady tattoo: "Raoul prefers Carolyn; Raoul prefers Carolyn."

Zorine's thoughts became angry and confused. They heated her whole body, sweating it like an ever constant flame. Pertinaciously, she swept on until at last the music ceased. Then a fiendish echo reminded: "Raoul prefers Carolyn."

The tent-audience dwindled away. It would be twenty minutes before the last performance of the evening. Until then Zorine was free!

Snatching her long, black cape, she drew it closely about her. Shaking, breathless, fighting for control of herself, she walked to the open flap of her tent. A moment she stood there, gazing out at the carnival crowds jostling each other about under the glaring, white lights of the midway. The mob milled expectantly about a huge cannon that, in fifteen minutes, now, was to furnish them with the thrill of a lifetime. At ten o'clock, Herman, the human cannon ball, would be shot from the cavernous mouth of that iron monster. The noise of the ex-

plosion would be deafening. It would reverberate and fill the midway.

SHE must hurry. Recrossing to the back of her tent, she lifted the stiff canvas, bent and crawled out. How different from the midway's gaily-lighted front! No lights flickered here; thick blackness engulfed her. Carefully she picked her way over the uneven ground; avoided stumbling over tent ropes; circled trucks and packing boxes. Finally, beside the door of Raoul's trailer, she stopped. Raoul, the too-good-looking, too-popular, little French artist who so cleverly and quickly cut out lifelike silhouettes for carnival crowds. A slender, dark shadow, Zorine glided within; noiselessly she closed the door. Motionless as any statue, she waited, following with her eyes the graceful movements of Raoul's long, slender fingers as with scissors and black paper he toyed with some new idea for his cutting. The muscles of her angry face twitched. Raoul, sensing her presence, glanced up. Instantly, he understood. She had heard about his affair with Carolyn! Mentally, he shrugged his shoulders. Well, a man had every right to change his mind and, incidentally, his mistress!

Zorine stepped nearer. "Go on with your cutting; don't stop for me."

Without comment, he snipped the black paper. It gave him a moment in which to think, to cover his annoyance at her intrusion. He would speak to her, kindly.

Maddened by jealousy, she gave him no opportunity. Enraged, she flew at him:

"So! You thought to push me aside like you would an old shoe. Well, you can't, do

---

In among the circus tents and wagons, death would strike tonight—and none would ever know why, or from whence it came!

---



you hear? You can't. You thought I would step down like a lady. Let someone I hate steal your love. But I won't, do you understand? I won't." She stamped her small feet and stopped for lack of breath.

"Zorine," Raoul soothed, "my dear."

Choking back her rage, she mimicked: "I was 'your dear' once, but I certainly am no longer. If you don't believe me, look!" Her hand flashed in and out of her cape pocket.

Raoul's blood ran cold. Zorine's tiny, gloved hand held his own gun. He knew it to be loaded.

"Fool," he breathed, "to steal my gun." His hand shot out. "Give it to me."

Zorine was too quick for him. "Sit still. Don't worry. I'll give it you soon enough."

Raoul sat tense. Zorine must not guess his fear.

Lightly, he questioned: "Are you enjoying yourself? Just what would you like me to do?"

"What should I like you to do?" she repeated, "nothing. Nothing except sit where you are, and listen while I tell you I hate you. Hate you a thousand times more than ever I loved you! Hate you so much that I intend to shoot you. I came here, Raoul, to kill you!"

Her voice was icy; her hand steady; her eyes flaming, murderous. Obviously she meant all she said. This termagant, could she be that same Zorine whom he had held in his arms, soft and clinging, night after night? She was like some wild thing!

"You can't kill me now, Zorine. Put that gun down. Think. Just the other side of those tents, only a stone's throw away, a thousand people wait. I need only to call. They will be here. If you dared shoot that gun, Zorine, you could never hope to escape. You must be mad to plan so heedlessly!"

She laughed, mirthlessly. "So! You think me mad—crazy? Maybe I am. Crazy for my dead love. Crazy because I would rather look upon you lifeless than think of you in her arms." Her eyes shone, craftily. "But I am still smart, Raoul. Of course, I dare not shoot you, now. But suppose I fire this gun as Herman's cannon booms? *Who'll be the wiser then? That's all we're waiting for now.*"

Raoul's mouth opened. No words came. He was trapped, unless—

**T**HE cannon thundered. Simultaneously, the gun in Zorine's hand spoke. Raoul slumped forward, slipped grotesquely to the floor. Instantly, Zorine knelt, curled the fingers of his outflung hand carefully about the gun, rose, turned and without one backward glance, walked out into the night.

Next morning, someone found him. They came for Zorine immediately. Tightly clasped in his one hand they had found it. They held it out for Zorine to see—a small, perfectly-cut-out, black paper silhouette of Zorine brandishing a gun! They all knew that Raoul could make no likeness of anything unless the subject stood before him.

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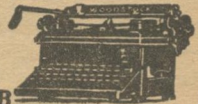


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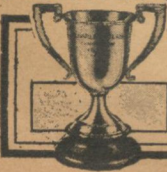
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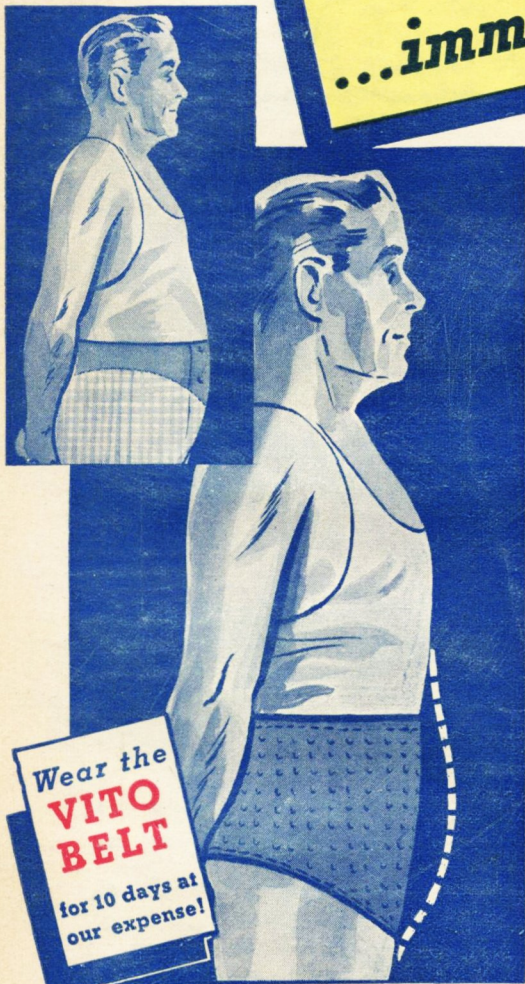






Appear  
**SLIMMER**  
...immediately!

Your friends will admire your slender figure and improved appearance!



Wear the  
**VITO BELT**  
for 10 days at  
our expense!

**D**ON'T let your friends poke fun at your "bay window"! If the Vito Belt does not make that paunchy belt line appear slimmer . . . it won't cost you a red cent! Whether "Nobody loves a fat man" is true or not, it is certain that no one admires his appearance. If you want to have that well-set-up look, just get into a Vito Belt!

**Safe Girth Control!**

■ No man wants to appear ridiculous, yet health is more important than looks. Take care of that ugly paunch the safe way . . . with a Vito Belt. Excessive exercise may strain your heart, especially if you are over 40 . . . dieting and drugs may be dangerous. The Vito Belt not only gives you that military carriage and improves your appearance, but also brings welcome support to strained abdominal muscles and sagging internal organs.

**Support With Comfort!**

■ The Vito Belt is made in several styles. The one illustrated is of pure Para rubber, molded to give maximum support. Hundreds of tiny perforations allow air to penetrate to the skin surface, keeping it cool and helping to evaporate the body moisture. The special lace back permits you to adjust the belt to take care of any change in your size and at the same time give you the needed support.

**MAKE A 10 DAY TEST... at our expense!**

■ You'll never know what amazing results are possible until you wear the Vito Belt. You owe it to yourself to take advantage of our 10-day TRIAL offer.

**SAGGING ABDOMINAL WALLS MAY CAUSE TROUBLE**



■ Waistline fat often stretches and weakens abdominal muscles, allowing stomach and intestines to fall forward and downward. When these muscles are comfortably supported with a Vito Belt you will feel more like going places and doing things.



**VITO BELTS**

HAMILTON BELT CO., INC.

182 Hill Street, New Haven, Conn.

Gentlemen: Send me FREE illustrated folder describing the Vito Belt and giving full details of your Trial offer.

Name .....

Address .....

City.....State.....

**MAIL COUPON or POSTCARD TODAY!**