

DETECTIVE FICTION WEEKLY

Formerly Flynn's

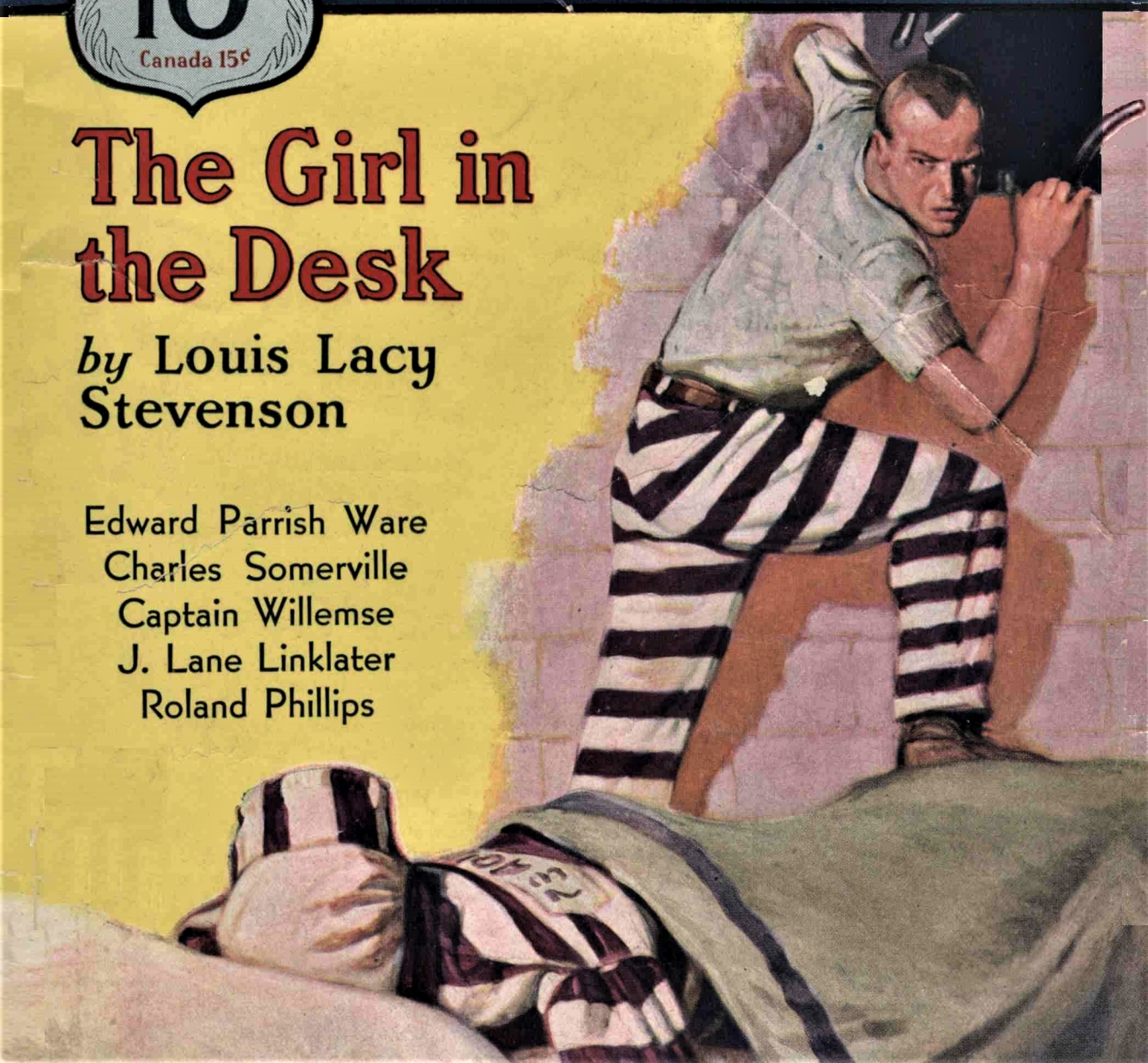


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The Girl in the Desk

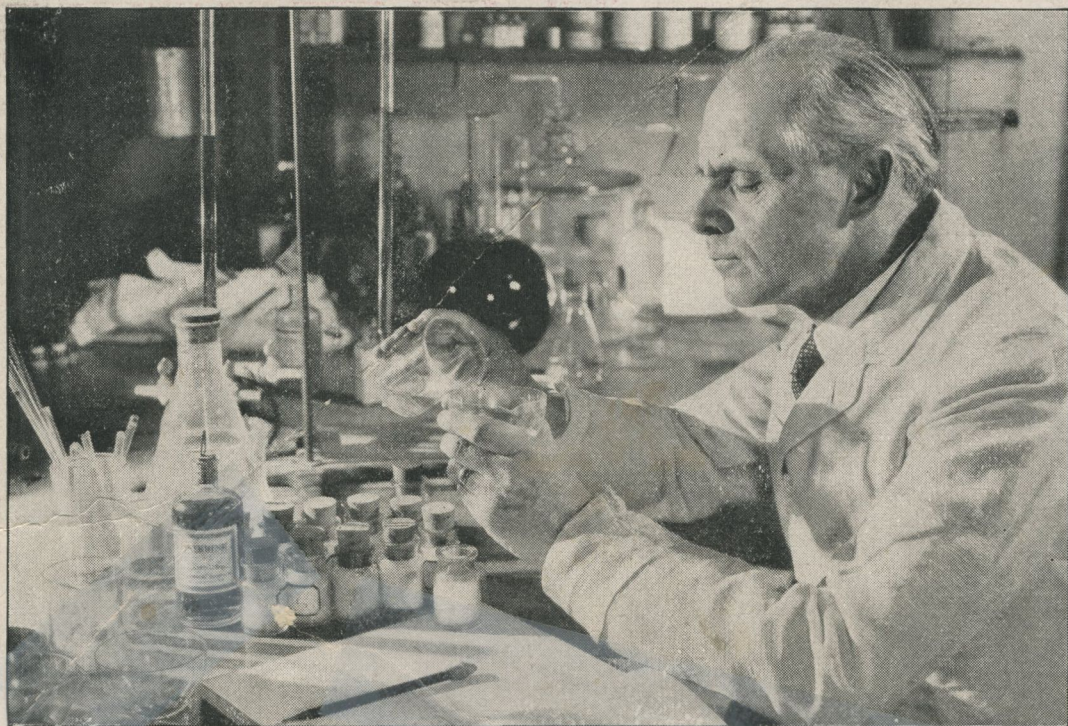
by Louis Lacy
Stevenson

Edward Parrish Ware
Charles Somerville
Captain Willemse
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Roland Phillips



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DETECTIVE FICTION WEEKLY



TITLE REGISTERED U. S. PATENT OFFICE

"The Magazine With the Detective Shield On the Cover"

VOLUME LX

Saturday, July 4, 1931

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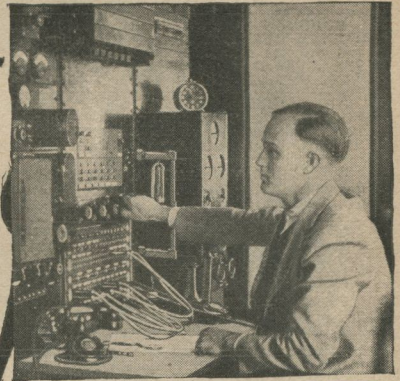
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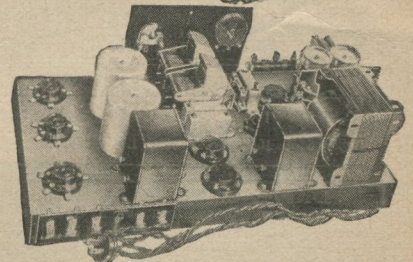


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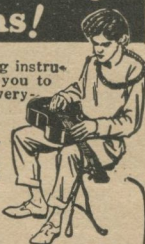
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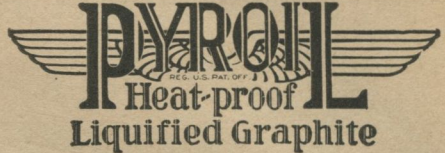
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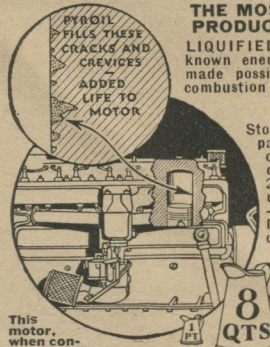
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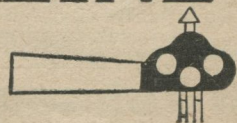
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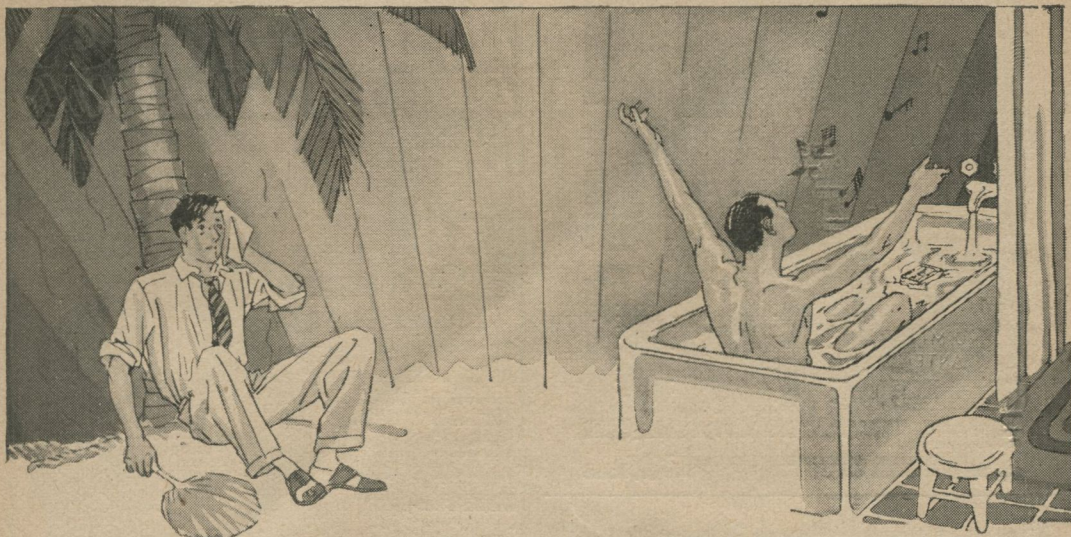
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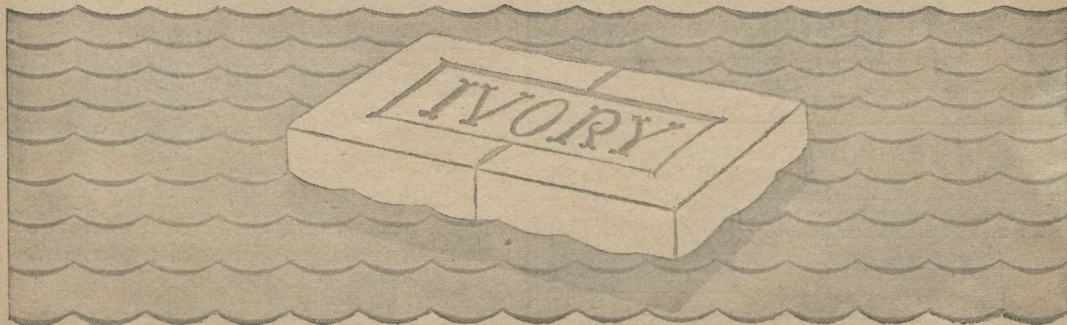
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SATURDAY, JULY 4, 1931

NUMBER 1

The Girl in the Desk

By
Louis
Lacy
Stevenson



There was the sound
of tearing cloth

*The Gray Ghost Mocked in the Darkness of
the Tremont Building—and a Madman Laughed*

CHAPTER I

The Laugh

FARNSWORTH raised his eyes from his littered desk, looked at the wall clock, and then glanced at a heavily-jowled, compact companion nodding at a desk in the corner.

"It's after midnight, Darwin," he said finally. "You'd better go on home."

Darwin's round, brown eyes snapped wide open.

"Are you through, inspector?" he asked sleepily.

"Not quite; I have some reports to

complete. But you needn't wait for me. You've had a long, hard pull."

"Inspector, let them reports go till to-morra. You've got 'nough time now, the Pope case's closed."

"All closed," remarked Farnsworth, with a smile.

"The newspapers is sorry. They'll have to dig up somethin' different for the first page. You got a lotta publicity outta the Pope case."

"Publicity doesn't help," asserted Farnsworth.

"Let me fall down just once and see what'll happen to whatever reputation I may have made."

"I ain't worryin' 'bout you fallin' down, inspector. Anybody that broke the Pope case like you done, ain't gonna fall down. You don't only recover Mrs. Garfield Pope's pearls but you put Red Lyons and his mob away. And that big gorilla, Lyons, ain't no more dangerous'n a rattlesnake neither. When he stood up in court and said he'd kick his way outta stir and—"

"This discussion isn't clearing up my desk," interrupted Farnsworth.

Turning, he started to sort his papers only to be stopped by the ringing of the telephone.

"I'll take it," he said, lifting the receiver.

For an instant, with an unreadable look on his young, strong face, he listened.

"What was that?" inquired Darwin sharply.

"Didn't you hear it?" asked Farnsworth.

"Thought I did—sounded like some one was givin' you the laugh."

"That's all it was—just a laugh."

"Mebbe it's a nut or a junker. There's a lotta dope in this town, inspector, been comin' in heavy for some time. But dope's outta our line. Let's

call it a day and go home. Even if you don't never get tired, you'd oughta take some rest."

"I have more work to do, Darwin. I—"

"You've always got work to do. But if you're goin' to stick, I'll roost right here with you."

Darwin clasped his big hands over his stomach and leaned back in his chair.

And Farnsworth, instead of giving his attention to his papers, sat as if waiting for another telephone call.

The clock ticked loudly. Darwin lighted a cigar.

Ten minutes passed. Darwin shuffled his feet uneasily. But Farnsworth, his chin cupped in a slender hand, sat immobile.

"You look like a bank cashier," commented Darwin. "Wish my clothes wouldn't wrinkle but'd stay pressed like yours do."

"If you're tired, you can go," returned Farnsworth in a preoccupied voice.

"We both need some rest. We'd—"

The telephone bell rang stridently.

"Take the extension," said Farnsworth, picking up the receiver.

"That same laugh!" exclaimed Darwin, his hand over the transmitter.

"Keep still," snapped Farnsworth, working the hook.

Miller, late watch headquarters operator, came on the wire.

"Trace that call," ordered Farnsworth.

"O. K., inspector," replied Miller alertly.

"Somebody's kiddin'," asserted Darwin.

A few seconds of silence followed.

"Central can't give me anything," reported Miller. "Says something's wrong with her board."

"She's kiddin' too," drawled Darwin.

"Watch all my calls, Miller," said Farnsworth.

"I'm on the job, inspector," responded the operator.

Farnsworth put on his hat, and sat on the edge of his chair, the telephone within easy reaching distance.

Darwin's cigar ash grew longer and longer. Finally it broke and dropped on his vest. Five minutes passed. Inspector Farnsworth moved slightly and Darwin's drooping head came up suddenly.

"Prohibition booze does funny things," he observed, tossing his cigar into the cuspidor and lighting another. "Some stew's got you on his mind 'cause you been in the papers so much lately."

Farnsworth gave no indication that he heard the remark.

Darwin's head again began to sink. The ticking of the clock was the only break in the silence.

Of a sudden, a woman screamed shrilly just under the window.

Darwin, his hand on his service revolver, bounded to his feet.

"That's your prohibition booze," asserted Farnsworth. "They're bringing in a drunk downstairs—I heard the wagon come up."

Darwin's hand dropped.

"I must be gettin' jumpy," he said sheepishly.

Stepping to the window, he looked down on the sidewalk.

"Somebody'll be broke for this!" screamed a feminine voice. "I know Inspector Farnsworth."

"And so does everybody else in town," responded a deep voice. "Come on, Molly, your old cell's waitin' for you."

"I'm a respectable working woman

and you haven't any right—don't twist my arm!"

"Mebbe it was Molly doin' that laughin'," Darwin observed.

"Molly?"

"Sure, the broad they just brought in downstairs—Molly Davis, shop-lifter, street walker and dope. She knows you. She oughta. You run her in a coupla times when you was new. Mebbe she called you up and give you the laugh for old times—"

Seemingly, even before the bell of the telephone started to ring, Farnsworth had the instrument in his hands and even as he was lifting the receiver, Darwin was at the extension.

"Worse this time," whispered Darwin. "'Nough to give you the shivers. Don't sound human."

Farnsworth motioned impatiently for silence.

Only for a moment did his tension continue. Then Miller came on the wire.

"Horace G. Thompson's office, Tremont Building," the operator reported.

"Thanks," answered Farnsworth. "Darwin and I are going out. But don't let any one know we have left the building. If any calls come for me, trace them immediately, and keep a record."

"O. K., inspector."

Farnsworth replaced the receiver and with a catlike movement was on his feet. Thirty seconds later, Darwin and he were being driven rapidly across the city.

"Mebbe Thompson's throwin' a gin party," observed Darwin.

"Do you know Horace G. Thompson?" asked Farnsworth.

"Know him when I see him. Bachelor. Lives in a big house out on Russell Road. His father left him that house 'long with plenty dough. Funny

thing too, he's got an office in the old Tremont Buildin'. I was in there the other day. Only new thing in that dump's a fresh elevator kid. But with all his jack, Thompson's got his office there."

Farnsworth was about to speak when the car drew up to the curb.

"Wait here, Rickey," he said to the driver.

CHAPTER II

The Sixth Floor

STANDING among modern, tall office buildings, the begrimed six-story Tremont looked like a stunted, dirty-faced orphan.

Not a light showed from any of the windows, and the lobby being equally dark, Darwin fumbled as he reached for the night bell.

In response to the faint summons, there was the sound of a chair scraping over tiling. A light was turned on, and then a gnome-like figure shambled out of the shadows and peered through the dirty glass of the front door.

Hardly more than five feet tall, the man had the head, shoulders and torso of a giant. His muscular arms hung down almost to his knees and black bristles covered the backs of his huge, gray hands. His face was gray, darkened by black beard stubble.

He drew from his pocket a large bunch of keys and grudgingly opened the door.

Darwin and Farnsworth pushed their way into the ornate but dingy lobby.

"Whatta you want?" demanded the gnome.

"Are you the watchman?" asked Darwin.

"I'm Henry Starr, the night superintendent."

"On which floor is Horace G. Thompson's office?" asked Farnsworth.

Starr gazed at him with blank, black eyes.

Farnsworth repeated his query.

"Top," answered Starr after some hesitation.

"Take us up there."

Again Starr stared as if not comprehending.

"Something wrong with your hearin'?" demanded Darwin. "Get busy."

"No use goin' up there."

"Why not?"

"Nobody up there."

"We'll see for ourselves."

"You won't; I know my job."

"We know our job too."

With that avowal, Darwin pushed Starr aside.

Starr's hand darted to his hip pocket.

Darwin caught his arm and a short-barrelled thirty-two caliber revolver clattered on the stone floor.

Farnsworth picked up the weapon and thrust it into his pocket. As he did so, he drew out his gold badge and held it so Starr could see it.

"Thought it was a stick-up," Starr mumbled. "Can't be too careful now days. You're law, so it's all right for you to go up to the sixth. But it won't do you no good. There ain't nobody but me in this whole buildin'."

He shambled to the elevator, and Farnsworth and Darwin followed.

When they were inside, though he closed the door, Starr did not start the car.

"Why the delay?" asked Darwin.

"I want my gun; I got a license to carry it."

"We'll go into that later, Starr," said Farnsworth. "Take us to the sixth floor."

Starr pushed the lever forward. The car started slowly to ascend, creaking

and complaining. At the sixth floor, it stopped automatically.

Farnsworth and Darwin stepped out.

"Come along," said Darwin to Starr.

"I won't," retorted the superintendent stubbornly. "You may be law, but my place's down in the lobby."

Farnsworth's keen gray eyes met Starr's sullen black eyes. Muttering, Starr left the car.

As they walked away from the square of light, there was a sudden scurrying in the darkness ahead.

"What's that?" asked Darwin.

"Rats," answered Starr. "We got plenty of rats. They're under foot all the time."

"Turn on the lights," ordered Farnsworth.

Starr took his large bunch of keys from his pocket and sorted them until he found one which he thrust into a switch.

A long, narrow corridor, very dirty and disorderly, was revealed, the floor looking as if it were entirely vacant, as on the doors was no lettering.

"Follow this hall to the end and turn to the left and you'll find Mr. Thompson's office at the end," mumbled Starr. "Hurry up. I gotta git back downstairs, that's where I belong."

"You lead the way," ordered Farnsworth.

"Me?" asked Starr.

"Yes, you," answered Darwin.

Starr, followed by Darwin and Farnsworth, walked down the corridor. The dead air seemed clogged with something rank and heavy.

"Here you are," announced Starr.

No light came through the frosted glass door which bore the name, "Horace G. Thompson," and no sound came from within the office.

"Told you nobody was here," mum-

bled Starr. "Hope you're satisfied now."

Farnsworth tried the door.

"Unlock it," he snapped.

"Can't."

"You have a pass key."

"Not for Mr. Thompson's office. It's got a special lock."

A rat scurried down the corridor and Starr's heavy body jerked.

"Give me your keys—all of them," ordered Farnsworth.

Starr extracted the bunch from his pocket.

One by one, the inspector tried them. He turned toward Starr.

"Search him," he said to Darwin.

Starr's thick lips snarled back until black toothless gums were exposed.

Darwin went through the superintendent's clothing swiftly and expertly. From the watch pocket of Starr's trousers he took a key, which he handed to Farnsworth. The inspector unlocked the door, threw it open. Drawing his flash light, he sent a white beam traveling along the wall, until he had found the switch. Then he snapped on the lights.

Thompson's office was large. It extended all the way across the end of the building. Being at the rear, no street noises could be heard. The shades of the six large windows were pulled to the sills. A heavy green carpet muffled their footfalls.

Entirely in keeping with the size of the office was the furniture, all of mahogany.

In the center of the room, right under the high powered ceiling lights, stood a long, glass-topped table about which a dozen chairs were arranged in an orderly manner. At the end wall, nearest the door, was a deeply upholstered couch, and at the farther wall, a desk. Large and heavily con-

structed, it was not the flat-topped desk of the modern business executive; it had a roll top, which was pulled down.

CHAPTER III

Yellow Hair

"**W**HEN was anybody in here last?" asked Farnsworth.

Starr raised his head, but did not answer at once.

"Not for a long time," he said at last.

"How long?"

"I don't know—mebbe a coupla months."

"Where's Thompson?"

Starr's eyes dropped.

"Where's Thompson?" insisted Farnsworth.

"He's outta town."

"But you know where he is."

"I don't. Nobody knows where Mr. Thompson is when he ain't in this office. He don't go 'round tellin' the help his business. You can see for yourself he ain't in here. I gotta git—"

"Are you sure nobody has been in here to-day?"

"I told you wunst nobody'd been in here for a long time."

Farnsworth drew a finger tip along the glass top of the table and held it before Starr's eyes.

"The night woman's cleaned that!" exclaimed Starr.

"But she didn't clean anything else," declared Farnsworth, glancing at the dust-covered furniture.

"Them women skimp their work. You can't thrust 'em much. Don't blame 'em much. They only git two dollars a night. No use'n workin' your fingers to the bone for two dollars a night."

"But you said nobody had been in here for possibly two months."

"I didn't think 'bout the night woman. The night woman slipped right outta my mind."

"Isn't the night woman supposed to keep the corridor clean?"

An expression of utter stupidity came into Starr's face.

"That's so," he mumbled. "That's so. I'll speak to her 'bout the hall on the sixth. Looks like a pig pen. She never touched the hall on the sixth!"

"What time did she quit?"

"Ten o'clock. They all git through at ten o'clock, and none of 'em stay a minute later."

Farnsworth walked toward the desk, and Starr eyed it earnestly.

With his right hand he made an almost imperceptible movement and Darwin stepped behind Starr.

"Have you a key to this?" asked Farnsworth, turning, but still standing so that he was between the desk and Starr.

"No," replied Starr, his eyes on the carpet.

"I'll put the frisk on him," said Darwin.

"It won't do no good," declared Starr. "I ain't got no key."

"You lied about the key to the door."

"I ain't lyin' now. Search me."

He raised his hands.

"Wait," said Farnsworth. "Where does the porter keep his tools?"

"You goin' to break open Mr. Thompson's desk?" gasped Starr.

"Answer my question."

"Down in the basement."

"Can you run that elevator, Darwin?"

"Sure, inspector."

"Go down to the basement and find some kind of an iron bar."

"I'll run him down," said Starr eagerly.

"You'll stay right here. Hurry, Darwin."

Darwin passed through the door.

"Whatta yuh keepin' me up here for?" asked Starr.

"I want to talk to you," Farnsworth declared. "How long have you worked for Mr. Thompson?"

"Ten years," said Starr surlily.

"Does Thompson ever come up here nights?"

"When he's in town he does."

"Does he have any visitors—I mean at night?"

"Sometimes."

"Who comes to see him?"

"I don't know all of 'em."

"Name some of them."

Starr's low forehead wrinkled.

"Mr. Timmons, the lawyer; Mr. Conroy, the real estate man. He comes most of all. He handles Mr. Thompson's property and he's the agent of this buildin'. That's all I can think of now."

"Don't the tenants and visitors register in and out at night?"

Starr shook his head.

"We ain't got no register. It ain't no use. Nobody comes in here at night except once in a while and I know 'em."

"Couldn't any one come into this building without you seeing him?"

"Nope. If I don't run 'em up in the elevator, I see 'em when they go up the stairway—I set so I can see the steps."

"What about the basement?"

"Nothin' doin'. That's locked tight and a bar acrost the door. Say, what does all this mean anyway?"

Farnsworth, who had not changed his position, did not reply.

The silence seemed oppressive.

Starr's eyes went to the door.

"He's comin' back," he remarked, uneasily. "I hear the elevator."

"Look here!" snapped Farnsworth, stepping to one side.

Starr glanced at the desk.

"Come closer," ordered Farnsworth, taking him by the arm.

Starr took a step forward, only to stop as if he had encountered some invisible yet impassable barrier. A gurgle escaped his throat and his eyes seemed about to burst from his head.

"You understand now why I'm going to break open Thompson's desk?"

"That's hair stickin' out from under the lid! Oh, my God, yeller hair's stickin' out from under the lid!"

He staggered back, his mouth hanging open. Farnsworth kept his keen gray eyes on Starr's ashy, twitching face.

A tower clock boomed once.

Then, just outside the door, could be heard the light footsteps of Darwin.

As if his body had suddenly come to life, Starr leaped toward the door.

Farnsworth's foot shot out and Starr struck the carpet on his face.

"Don't try that again," said Farnsworth, pulling him to his feet.

He spoke in a low, calm tone, but in his voice was something metallic.

"Got just what we need," said Darwin, entering briskly. "It's for openin' packin' cases."

With only a glance at the protruding strand of golden hair, he thrust the bar under the lid of the desk.

The stout lock resisted. Finally, he thrust his full weight on the bar. Metal snapped and the top flew back with a bang.

The lights played on the blond features of a slight young woman; features so fine and beautiful they might have been carved from rarest marble.

Yet those features were marred by a purple hole in the center of the smooth, white forehead.

Farnsworth started and something that might have been a gasp escaped his throat. Darwin glanced at the corpse, then kept his eyes on Starr, who had turned his back with the breaking of the lock.

The telephone rang. In the silence, the bell's vibrations fairly assaulted the eardrums. Farnsworth lifted the receiver. From it, came an eerie laugh, and then the lights went out.

CHAPTER IV

Terrible Laughter

THERE was a movement in the darkness, a streak of fire, and a terrific report.

"Halt!" Darwin shouted, dashing forward, ready to fire again.

Instead of obeying the command, Starr fled faster.

Darwin plunged after him, crashed into the door to the hall, recovered. He fired a second time. Starr was rushing down the hall, invisible. But the fleet-footed Darwin closed the gap sufficiently to grasp him as he leaped into the elevator.

In the narrow confines of the old car, snarling like an animal, Starr wrested himself from Darwin's grip, and lashed out with heavy blows.

Darwin closed with his antagonist, and locked together, the two men burst from the car.

In the corridor, Darwin, with a mighty heave, endeavored to bear the superintendent to the floor.

With seeming ease, Starr broke free, and for an instant, since in the darkness he was guided only by his ears, Darwin was not sure of the other's position. Suddenly two long, muscular arms encircled his body pinning his arms, holding him as if he were caught in a vise.

Against that crushing clutch, Darwin threw all the strength of his compact, hard body. But Starr's arms only closed about him the tighter, and he was as helpless as if bound.

Gradually, Starr bent him further and further backward until it seemed as if his spine would crack. Suddenly he sagged forward. The move was a trick. They toppled and as they were falling Darwin twisted and when they struck the stone floor, was on top.

Darwin managed to wrest one hand free. That hand darted beneath the tail of his coat. It darted out again. Then there was a soft thud and Starr's body became limp.

As Darwin bounded to his feet, the beam of Farnsworth's flash light pierced the blackness and came to rest on the face of the unconscious superintendent.

"I hadda feed him the sap," panted Darwin. "He was fightin' like a crazy man. Jeez, it feels like he busted a coupla ribs. He's as strong as a bull."

"Why didn't you call?" asked Farnsworth.

"I knew you hung back for somethin' and I thought I could handle him."

"I wasn't worried about you."

"Find anything?"

"Nothing. The lights going out might have been coincidence."

Starr's limbs twitched and his eyes opened.

He blinked at the ray of light and his lips started to move.

Darwin assisted him to rise, and kept a firm grip on his arm, his revolver in readiness.

"I didn't turn out them lights," whined Starr.

"No," answered Farnsworth. "I'm certain of that."

"It musta been a fuse blowed.

Coulda been nothin' else but a fuse blowned."

"Where are the fuses?"

"They ain't up here; they're down in the basement. All the fuses is down in the basement."

"Take him down and see if it was a fuse, Darwin. Don't waste any time — and don't take any unnecessary chances."

"I won't take no chances with this bozo. You'll wait here?"

"I'll wait in Thompson's office."

"We'll be right back. Aw, hell!"

"What's the matter?"

"My torch won't work—busted it in that little tangle."

"Here's mine," said Farnsworth handing him his flash light.

"Get goin'," said Darwin to Starr.

The door of the elevator banged shut and the old car started to creak.

Unerringly, Farnsworth made his way back to Thompson's office and, quite as if he were able to see in the dark, approached the desk and picked up the telephone.

He had to work the hook several times before he obtained a response.

"A call came in here a few minutes ago," he said. "Where was it from?"

"It was a mistake, excuse it, please," replied central sweetly.

"Mistake—"

"Excuse it, please."

There was the click, and Farnsworth hung up the receiver.

He went to the farthest window, raised the shade and looked outside.

The rear of the Tremont Building, which was toward the east, looked out on a court. An alley connected the court with the street.

He raised the other shades one by one until at last, he reached the window nearest the desk. When he had raised that shade and glanced at the night sky,

he stepped back and stood by the telephone.

The door being open, squeakings and scurryings could be heard plainly, the rats having once more taken possession of the corridor. The minutes dragged by.

Near the door, there was a slight rustle. Revolver in hand, Farnsworth crept stealthily across the carpet.

The rustling sound ended abruptly and he halted. In the corridor, the squeakings and scurryings ceased an instant, then seemed louder.

The lights flashed, went out, then came on in full brilliance.

Taking Starr's revolver from his pocket, he noted the number and methodically entered it in his little black book. That done, he examined the weapon with his magnifying glass. Finally, he put it into his coat pocket and went wandering about the office, scanning various objects with his glass, his brow puckered in a deep frown.

He was standing before the desk when Darwin dragged Starr through the door.

"What took you so long?" asked Farnsworth.

"This bozo tried to put up an argument," replied Darwin. "He didn't wanta come up here again."

"Why?" asked Farnsworth, his eyes on Starr.

The superintendent's thick, bloodless lips worked, but no words issued from them and his red-rimmed, black eyes looked glassy.

"He put the fuse in all right," said Darwin. "But he didn't wanta come back with me. Hadda work on him a little."

"What are you afraid of, Starr?" asked Farnsworth.

The superintendent stared at him as if his words were unintelligible.

"Let go of him, Darwin."

Darwin obeyed, but moved so that he blocked the door. Starr looked relieved.

"What are you afraid of?" repeated Farnsworth.

Starr moistened his lips with his tongue.

"Down there, I heard a dog howlin'. That means death!"

"Death has occurred already, so it means nothing."

"One death. And she's got yeller hair. Oh, my God, she's got—"

Starr's voice had risen to a shriek and Darwin thrust his hand over his mouth.

"Sit down, Starr," said Farnsworth, pushing forward a chair.

His whole body trembling, Starr seated himself.

Farnsworth waited until he had calmed somewhat.

"That's better, old man," he remarked soothingly. "You haven't anything to fear. You're in the presence of death, that's true, but there is nothing to fear in death. That little girl over there"—he nodded toward the desk—"couldn't have hurt a strong man like you when she was alive. Dead, she is even more powerless. We're officers of the law and we're armed. You're safe."

"Safe," mumbled Starr.

"Yes, safe. Then there's another thing you've forgotten. You're the night superintendent of the Tremont Building. Mr. Thompson owns the Tremont, and because you're the night superintendent, you're Mr. Thompson's representative. Isn't that correct?"

"Mr. Thompson's my boss," answered Starr, a note of assurance in his voice.

"That being true, you have a duty

to perform. It's just as much of a duty as seeing that the night women do their work, that no one without a right gets into this building, and running the elevator."

"I mop up the lobby, too."

"But you have still another duty."

"What's that?"

"There's a dead woman in Mr. Thom—"

"Oh, my God, don't I know that?"

"Somebody killed her. You must help us find the murderer."

Beads of perspiration stood out brightly on Starr's low, slanting forehead.

"You must help us," insisted Farnsworth.

"How can I help?" asked Starr in a barely audible voice.

"Who is the night woman on this floor?"

"There ain't no night woman on the sixth."

"But the night woman cleaned this table top."

"The night woman from the fifth's supposed to keep the sixth floor clean."

"Who is the woman on the fifth floor?"

"I just can't think of her name," Starr replied slowly, his forehead wrinkling. "She's only been here about a week. I'll have to git my book. The names of all of 'em is in my book. They're in my book with the floors they work on."

Through the wide-open window, the light night wind again carried a long drawn, mournful cry.

"There it is!" exclaimed Starr, jumping to his feet, his face greenish.

"It's only a dog," assured Farnsworth. "A lonesome dog."

"Let's go downstairs in the lobby. Please let's go downstairs in the lobby," begged Starr huskily. "I could hear it

there, too, mebbe, but I'd feel easier downstairs in the lobby."

Shivering violently, he turned so that he could not see the desk.

"Do you know that girl?" asked Farnsworth, stepping closer.

"I don't know her!"

"She was young—not more than twenty-one or twenty-two years old. She was five feet tall. She didn't weigh more than a hundred pounds. Her dress, shoes, and other clothing are expensive. She was accustomed to luxury. Her nails were manicured only a short time before her death. Her complexion's fair—extremely blond—and her eyes are blue—a deep blue."

Starr did not seem to be listening and Farnsworth paused.

"She was shot squarely between the eyes. Do you know what that means, Starr?"

"No," whispered the superintendent, his lips again dry.

"It means she was facing the person who shot her. It means she knew the one who killed her!"

Farnsworth's eyes were fixed on Starr's greenish face.

"I don't know her," said Starr in a trance-like voice.

"You haven't seen her distinctly."

"I seen her plain enough."

"Come over here and look at her again."

Starr moved toward the desk, but did not raise his eyes.

"Look at her," ordered Farnsworth quietly.

Starr stepped forward slowly, did not stop until he was within a couple of feet of the body. His eyes rested an instant on the face of the corpse.

Then he leaped to the open window and sprang to the sill. Below him was a clear drop of six stories. Simultaneously, Farnsworth and Darwin bound-

ed forward. Just as Starr leaped they caught him. There was the sound of tearing cloth.

For an instant, it seemed that Starr must surely plunge to his death.

But the cloth held and Farnsworth and Darwin got the man back into the office.

As if he were rubber, he bounced to his feet.

Before he could offer any resistance, Farnsworth had the irons on his wrists.

Starr's lips parted in a smile.

"A fine joke!" panted Darwin. "A fine joke. If we hadn't caught you, you'd been smashed to pieces down there on the pavement!"

At that Starr began to laugh.

His mirth, silent at first, quickly gave place to guffaws—guffaws which grew heavier and heavier—laughter curious and outlandish, with a beautiful dead girl at his elbow, yet laughter that caused his wide shoulders to shake and his stomach to roll; such laughter as if, even in the presence of death, he had encountered a mighty joke, such a tremendous jest that he could not control himself.

Darwin looked into the laughing man's eyes.

"He's gone off his nut!" he exclaimed. "He's gone clear off his nut!"

Farnsworth picked up the telephone and called headquarters.

CHAPTER V

What the Dust Told

A DEEP silence hung over Thompson's brilliantly lighted but deserted office. The big mahogany desk was empty. The corpse had been taken to the morgue where, on a sheeted slab, it awaited identification.

Apparently, no autopsy was necessary. The bullet that had left the pur-

ple hole in the center of the white forehead had passed through the brain and lodged in the spun-gold hair just back of the left ear. Therefore, death had come quickly indeed.

Black stained the tips of the small, tapering fingers. At headquarters experts were comparing those fingerprints with smudges on neatly filed cards, while ballistic experts were examining with their microscopes the leaden pellet that had ended a young life. Below, in the Tremont Building, Farnsworth and Darwin were poking into dusty corners.

Starr, his tremendous laughter changed to low moans and animal-like sounds, had been taken to General Hospital. Closely guarded, he was under observation in the psychopathic ward.

Dawn grayed the East. The door to Thompson's office opened, without a sound. A slight rustle followed. Then the switch clicked and the office suddenly became dark.

Into the gray room slipped an uncanny figure, a thing which, emerging from the shadows, seemed of no more substance than the gray shadows themselves, since it, too, was gray and nebulous.

All the more unreal did it seem inasmuch as it had such little definiteness of shape that it could not be told whether it was man or woman or child, and it might not have been human save that it carried itself upright.

After a moment of hesitation, the gray thing sped noiselessly over the deep green carpet to the table, where it stopped. Then the gray figure turned back and disappeared through the door.

From the hall came the sound of light footsteps.

The door opened and Farnsworth and Darwin entered; Farnsworth, as

usual, immaculate and showing no signs of a sleepless night, Darwin dusty and disheveled, eyes black-ringed.

Just inside, and with the door still open, Farnsworth stopped suddenly.

"What's the matter?" asked Darwin sharply.

"We left the lights on in here."

"I thought we did, too. Mebbe the fuse—"

"They're still on in the hall."

Farnsworth gave the door a quick look, then turned his attention to the switch, an expression of dissatisfaction on his lean face. Up and down the brass plate his magnifying glass moved. At last, with a shake of his head, he replaced the glass in his pocket and pressed the button.

As the lights came on, Darwin, whipping out his revolver, dashed into the corridor.

In less than a minute he returned.

"Nothin' doin'," he growled.

"You saw nothing?"

"I didn't see nothin'."

Farnsworth's high, white forehead puckered.

"Whatta you tryin' to puzzle out now, inspector?" asked Darwin, stifling a yawn.

"When we entered, I felt certain some one was in this office. I had that same feeling before."

"Yeah?"

"When you were in the basement with Starr, putting in a new fuse, I heard a rustling noise like bare feet running over the carpet."

"A rat come in to make you a visit."

"But when we come back up here we find the lights out."

"Mebbe I turned 'em out and forgot it. I'm always turnin' out lights at the house. Anyhow, I'll put the frisk on this joint again."

He closed the door and threw the

catch. For the next several minutes he was exceedingly busy, looking into and under the desk, under and behind the couch, and even opening the filing cabinet.

"Nothing's been disturbed," he asserted positively.

"We might just's well get a little rest."

"Not yet."

"Why not? We're stopped till Thompson or somebody else who knows somethin' 'bout this dump's located. All we can do's wait till we hear from headquarters or the day superintendent shows up. We've searched the old Tremont from top to bottom and all we've found's junk, rats and dust. Might's well give headquarters a buzz and park right here."

With a great yawn he sank into a chair.

Farnsworth busied himself about the desk and Darwin's head began to sink toward his chest. Lower and lower it drooped and finally a gentle snore escaped his lips.

The sudden ringing of the telephone bell brought him to his feet.

Farnsworth lifted the receiver and listened, while Darwin leaned forward.

"That same laugh," he whispered.

Farnsworth worked the hook.

"Where did that call come from, central?" he asked.

"What!" he exclaimed, after a moment of silence.

He replaced the receiver slowly.

"What did she say?" asked Darwin tensely.

"She said there wasn't any call."

"She said there wasn't any call?"

"None showed on her board."

"Jeez, inspector, I'm hard-boiled but I can feel prickles on me! This whole damn' thing's spooky. You get that laugh at headquarters. I think some-

body's kiddin', but you turn up a dead girl in Horace G. Thompson's office. We're lookin' at that dead girl. The phone rings. You get that laugh again. Then the lights go out. And right in broad daylight you get that laugh again and central tells you there ain't no call!"

"I wonder where Starr keeps his book?"

"What book?"

"The one he said he kept the names of the scrub women in."

"If he'd had a book, we'd found it. He was just ravin'."

"We haven't found how that body was brought up here."

"Starr's the answer."

"Do you really think so?"

"Sure I do."

"Why would he kill that girl and hide her body in the desk of his employer?"

"He's crazy, and a crazy man's liable to do anything. Only a crazy man'd try to throw himself outta a six-story winda."

"You think Starr's the murderer?"

"I'm too old a dick to go that far at this stage of the game. But I'll say it was an inside job! Mebbe Starr didn't kill her, but he's got guilty knowledge. He either run the body up here on that elevator, or carried it up the stairway. He's strong 'nough to do that easy."

"That body wasn't brought up here on the elevator and it wasn't carried up the stairway."

"How'd it get here then—airplane?"

"We found all the doors of this building locked. Starr was on duty in the lobby. Nobody could have entered unless he knew it."

"That's what I say—he knew it."

The inspector shook his head dubiously.

"On the way over here, you said you knew Horace G. Thompson."

"I said I knew him when I seen him. I don't see him very often. He's outta town a lot. His old man left him 'nough dough so he don't need to work."

"As a matter of fact, about all his father, Ezra Thompson, left him was the big house out on Russell Road and the Tremont Building."

"Where'd he get his jack then? He ain't never worked."

"According to all reports, he got it in Wall Street in the bull market."

"I said he was a lucky stiff. A lotta others lost their shirts."

"I've heard a lot about Thompson. He's of the type that insists on strict obedience to all his orders. Lately, he's insisted on underlings jumping at the snap of his fingers."

"When was he 'round here last?"

"I don't think he's been around here for quite some time."

"We're gettin' a long ways away from Starr," reminded Darwin.

"Starr has worked for Thompson for ten years. He knows his temperament. Evidently, Thompson has given him orders to keep out of his office and never to touch his desk. Starr's the type that strictly obeys his boss's orders."

"That explains some things, but not everything. Why did he run when the lights went out, and keep on runnin' when I was shootin'? Why did he give me an argument when I was bringin' him back upstairs after puttin' in a fuse? Why did he try to throw himself outta the winda when you made him look at that corpse?"

"Terror—"

"Just the same I think Starr knew that body was in the desk. It was put there till there was a chance to dispose of it."

"How could it be disposed of?"

"There's a heatin' plant down in the basement."

"Let's go down to the basement."

"We've been down there. I ruined this suit down there."

"Let's go down again."

Darwin arose slowly.

"Elevator."

As they passed the various doors along the hall, Farnsworth glanced at each.

"I've been through all them offices," asserted Darwin.

"And the storeroom?"

"The storeroom too. It's got a light in it. Come on. The day superintendent'll be here at any minute and we'd oughta get to him the first thing."

The huge basement, even with all the lights turned on, was full of shadows and dark corners. It was all one room save for a portion at the rear, which had been partitioned off with stone. In the old days, that had been a kitchen. There was a range, covered with red dust and some pots and pans in evidence.

Rubbish also littered the floor of the larger portion and against the walls and in corners stood rickety tables, dressers and parts of beds, together with piles of chairs—furniture that had not been disposed of when a hotel that had once occupied the building had gone out of business. From the big furnace, asbestos-covered heating pipes extended upward like fat, gray worms and dust-covered wires webbed the ceiling.

There was a workbench, on which were tools and electrical equipment of various kinds. Near it hung two pairs of overalls, and beside them the uniform of an elevator operator.

"Nothin' doin'," said Darwin, after a quick search of the clothing.

Farnsworth nodded and started for the only exit—outside of the elevator and the stairs leading to the lobby—that they had discovered. It was a heavy iron door in the kitchen part which evidently opened into an area-way in the rear court. The door was locked and further secured with a great oak beam which fitted snugly in mortises in the stone.

The oak door showed no signs of having been disturbed for a long space of time, though Farnsworth scrutinized it inch by inch. When he had concluded that inspection, he sorted among Starr's keys until he found one that fitted the lock. But so rusted were the tumblers they would not turn.

Farnsworth, followed by Darwin, then searched the shadowy reaches.

"Nothin' down here," Darwin declared, after a violent coughing spell. "Let's go back up. I'm chokin' to death in this damn dust."

Briskly, Farnsworth walked over to a heap of furniture so far back that the light shone on it only dimly. Quickly, he touched a finger to a dresser top and holding the finger toward the light, stared at the thick smudge of dust. Then he ran his finger over the back of a bed, and again held it toward the light.

"Look, Darwin!" he exclaimed. "My finger is clean. No dust. We better move this furniture."

Darwin's lethargy vanished.

In the wall, behind the pile, was a steel door.

CHAPTER VI

The Hidden Door

AS if pushed by an unseen hand the steel door swiftly and soundlessly swung shut behind Farnsworth and Darwin. In complete darkness,

they stood in a small, musty stone chamber.

"What done that?" demanded Darwin sharply.

"Spring hinges," responded Farnsworth, pressing the button of his flash light.

"We're in a trap!" exclaimed Darwin. He drew his revolver.

He would have leaped at the door, but Farnsworth stopped him.

"There isn't any lock," said the inspector quietly.

Darwin pulled at the door. It opened readily. He released it and it closed quickly.

"Not a squeak," he observed. "Plenty of oil on them hinges."

Farnsworth turned his flash light here and there. Ahead, a small archway in the wall showed only more rough stones. To the right, a narrow flight of iron steps led upward and on that stairway, he centered his attention.

"Queer," he remarked after a brief inspection.

"This whole damn buildin's queer."

"Those steps are clean."

"They are clean," assented Darwin, interest in his voice. "They're clean and everythin' else in here's dusty."

Farnsworth turned and went through the archway, Darwin at his heels.

An abrupt right turn brought them into a narrow tunnel which led toward the rear of the building. They had gone but a short distance when Farnsworth whirled and sent the beam of his flash light traveling over the course they had followed.

Darwin, his revolver ready, also faced the rear.

"See anything?" asked Farnsworth in a whisper.

"No, but I—"

"I don't see anything either."

"I feel like we're being followed."

Farnsworth extinguished his light, and in thick darkness they both stood listening tensely.

"Come on," said Farnsworth, after a considerable interval.

"O. K."

With the flash sending a white pencil of light ahead, they proceeded until another steel barrier stopped them.

Farnsworth's light played on the knob.

"Wiped clean."

Farnsworth placed his hand on the knob and pulled. When he pushed, the door opened.

Darwin put his foot against the door and examined the outside.

"No knob," he said. "But there's a keyhole."

Swiftly, he tried the various keys on Starr's ring.

"No can do," he remarked.

Farnsworth produced another key.

"That's the right one!" Darwin exclaimed. "And ties up with Starr."

"With Starr?" asked Farnsworth without interest.

"Sure with Starr. That's the key I took outta the watch pocket in Starr's pants. It's the key to the special lock on the door to Thompson's office."

Farnsworth passed through the door into a small chamber, roofed over with heavy planking and began to climb an iron stairway, Darwin meanwhile holding the steel door open with his foot.

At the top Farnsworth pushed against the planks and a trap door opened, a rush of clean air following.

"Lock the door before you come up," he said the Darwin.

Darwin allowed the steel door to close, turned the key, and ascended.

Farnsworth was waiting for him in the court in the rear of the Tremont Building.

"If Starr'd got away with his

Brodie he'd been mashed to a pulp on this concrete," observed Darwin, looking from the pavement up to the windows in Thompson's office.

The planking that roofed the exit to the tunnel extended partially over an areaway. Down into the areaway went a flight of wide steps which ended at the basement door.

"Two entrances to that cellar 'steada one," said Darwin. "You're right, inspector. That body could 'a' been brought in without Starr seein' it."

"We'll go back now," replied Farnsworth.

Darwin preceded him into the stone chamber, unlocked the door and held it open while Farnsworth passed through.

"Plenty of oil on them hinges," he mused, allowing it to swing shut.

"Lock it," ordered Farnsworth, looking at his watch.

"What time is it?" asked Darwin.

"Four minutes after six."

"We'd better hurry. The day superintendent oughta be showin' up and we'd oughta get to him first dash outta the box."

Within a minute they were very near the archway.

Suddenly Darwin stopped with such abruptness that Farnsworth collided with him, the jar causing him to drop the flash light. The darkness was complete.

Instantly Farnsworth and Darwin flattened against the rough, damp wall, stood immobile.

After a few seconds of silent waiting, Farnsworth began to crouch. Inch by inch, he noiselessly sank toward the floor until at last he was able to touch the stone. Still without a sound he fumbled until his fingers closed over the light. Just as noiselessly, he straightened.

"I'm all set," Darwin breathed in his ear.

Holding the flash at arm's length Farnsworth pressed the button. It sent out a ray of light. It had not been broken by the fall.

"Not a damn thing," muttered Darwin, his voice unnatural. "I've been workin' too hard. My nerves've blowed up. Didn't know I had any nerves."

"What did you think you saw?" asked Farnsworth quietly.

"Somethin' just ahead of your light—a dim outline. It come up all of a sudden; startled me a little, and I stopped and you bumped into me."

"What was it?"

"I don't know. It wasn't real, just a kind of shape, a blob."

"Was it gray?"

"My God, you seen it, too!"

Quickly they walked to the door through which they had entered.

"No tracks on the stairs," observed Darwin.

Farnsworth did not even glance at the steps, he was inspecting the door.

"What next?" asked Darwin.

Farnsworth started up the narrow iron stairway.

At the first landing he stopped and his flash played on a metal door. It had neither knob nor lock. Darwin placed his powerful shoulder against the door and gave a mighty heave, but it did not budge.

"No use," said Farnsworth. "That door can be opened only from the other side."

"What's the big idea?"

"Don't you know what you're in?"

"It looks like some kinda secret passage."

"The Tremont Building once was a hotel."

"What's that gotta do with it?"

"This is a fire tower."

"I get you. Hadn't run into one before. It's nothin' but an inside fire escape."

"Right."

"Then all these doors is alike—open only from the other side."

They stopped at each landing, while Farnsworth made a careful inspection of each door. His flash light was growing dimmer and dimmer, the battery rapidly nearing the end of its usefulness. At the sixth floor, he turned the dull beam on the door. At first glance, it looked the same as the others, especially in the dim light, but closer inspection showed that a small knob had been affixed to it.

Farnsworth placed his hand on the knob.

"Let me try it," said Darwin.

He grasped the knob and jerked.

The door opened with such suddenness that he was flung back against the wall, the jar causing tin pails to rattle and various objects to fall.

"The storeroom!" he exclaimed, peering into the darkness. "Wait, I'll turn on the light and you can save your battery."

Stepping into the storeroom, he groped about until a snap was followed by the faint illumination of a dirty, old-fashioned carbon lamp.

"Damn funny I missed this door when I looked in here," declared Darwin.

"You could easily have overlooked it," said Farnsworth.

Darwin went closer to the door. It had no frame and the hinges were flush. The knob on the inside of the storeroom had been removed and the hole plugged skillfully. Gray paint had been applied so heavily the whole resembled solid wall.

"Good job o' camouflagin'," said Darwin.

"There are fire escapes on the outside of the building," replied Farnsworth. "This tower was evidently sealed up when they were installed."

"Then nobody knowed about this old fire tower."

Farnsworth played his light, which was all but out, on the door.

"Somebody must have," he remarked.

"Because the stairs is clean?"

"Something else, too. Look here."

Darwin stared at the lock.

A thin bit of copper that might have been a contact for a light switch held the spring catch on the door back.

"An inside job," declared Darwin. "That hooks up Starr with this murder."

"You think he brought that girl's body up through the fire tower?"

"No. That'd be a sucker trick. He coulda run it up on the elevator or carried it up the stairway. Either'd been easier. Wouldn't took so long neither. Nobody's goin' to waste any time when he's gettin' ridda a body."

"Then how does this unsecured fire tower door link Starr with the murder?"

"I told you before Starr had guilty knowledge. Bein' superintendent, he knew 'bout the fire tower. He fixed this door so some one else could bring up the body without him seein' it."

Farnsworth peered from inside the closet to the fire tower landing. He stepped out, stooped, and felt in a dark corner.

"I thought I saw something here when we came up," he remarked, and rose and backed into the storeroom.

"Whatta you got?" asked Darwin.

"If I'm not mistaken, it's Starr's book."

"Can't read in this light. We'd better go out into the hall."

"We'll go back to Thompson's office."

"Good idea. Headquarters might be tryin' to get us."

As they neared Thompson's office, they heard a telephone ringing.

"Bet that's headquarters right now," said Darwin, speeding his steps. "I got the key."

He unlocked the door and stepped inside.

"You answer," said Farnsworth.

Darwin lifted the receiver. Farnsworth, busy inspecting his find, gave no heed until Darwin hung up the receiver.

"Nothin' new except Molly Davis ain't at headquarters now," Darwin reported.

"Where is she?"

"She died in General Hospital at—"

He stopped abruptly, a strange expression on his face.

"Go on," ordered Farnsworth.

"It's a good thing I don't believe in ghosts."

"Don't be a damned fool. What time did she die?"

"It was four minutes after six when you looked at your watch down there in that tunnel. A minute later, we seen somethin'—"

"You thought you saw something."

"You seen it too—you musta seen it 'cause you asked me if it was gray. We seen that gray thing at five minutes after six and Molly Davis died at five minutes after six!"

"What was the cause of her death?"

"Molly Davis died at five minutes after—"

"What was the cause of her death?"

"The doctors won't know till after the post mortem. But they think it was bad booze. What difference does it make what she died from?"

Farnsworth closed the book slowly.

"According to Starr's records," he said. "The name of the night woman on the fifth floor is, or was, Molly Davis."

CHAPTER VII

The Day Superintendent

FARNSWORTH, a long conversation with headquarters concluded, hung up the receiver of the telephone in the dingy lobby of the Tremont Building and made several entries in his little black book.

Darwin, his stiff hat on his knees, his graying black hair tousled, his dusty brown suit badly out of press, slouched in Starr's chair near the elevator, his chin nearly touching his chest and his lips parted.

Farnsworth stepped over and touched Darwin on the shoulder. The detective's head came up with a jerk, and his eyes snapped wide open.

"Wasn't asleep," he asserted, the thickness of his voice belying his words. "Only waitin' for you to get through phonin'." He sprang to his feet and jammed his hat on his head.

Standing side by side, the contrast between the two was marked. Farnsworth was more than six feet, Darwin, several inches shorter and though not fat, much heavier; Farnsworth with long, narrow, nervous hands, the profile and brow of a student, concealing his dynamic nature as well as the enormous energy and persistence of his youth; Darwin with short, pudgy hands, on his heavy face, along with the imprint of years, the marks of many rough and tumble encounters, and his jaw thrust forward as though inviting physical combat.

"The day superintendent'd oughta be—"

"He's coming now."

A large, raw-boned, red-headed man in his middle thirties, puffed through the door with a newspaper clutched in a big red hand.

"Thought I'd find you here, Inspector Farnsworth," he panted. "I'm Pat Dow, superintendent of the Tremont Buildin'. I just read about this in the papers. I double-timed. Late, anyway. Didn't get to bed very early last night."

"What time did you get home?" asked Farnsworth casually.

"After 2 A.M.," replied Dow. "Heard plenty 'bout it, too. You get what I mean if you're a married man."

"I get you all right," announced Darwin.

"Never saw cards run like they done last night. Nothin'd stand up. Had fours beat three times. But gimme the low down on this murder. Couldn't read and run at the same time."

A short, dark youth entered, hesitated and would have gone on, but Dow signalled to him with a jerk of his head.

"Come here, Bennett," he said. "Inspector Farnsworth wants to talk to you. You can tell him all 'bout that dead girl up in Mr. Thompson's desk."

"Whatta you tryin' to do, gimme the razzberry?" demanded Bennett, staring at Dow with defiant brown eyes.

"You'll get plenty razzberries tryin' to explain to the inspector why you murdered that girl, Bennett," answered Dow, with a wink at Farnsworth.

"What dead girl—"

"Have you read the morning papers?" asked Farnsworth.

"Nah. Hadda hustle down here and get on the job."

"How old are you?"

"Who wants to know?"

"You damn little shrimp you'd better answer the inspector," advised Dow.

"Nineteen — I'm nineteen next month," replied Bennett, looking at Farnsworth with a sullen expression on his dark face.

"Take us up to the sixth floor," ordered Farnsworth.

"I ain't got my uniform on yet."

"You don't needa stop for that," declared Dow. "And you don't needa stop to shave either."

Bennett flushed and drew on gloves which he took from his coat pocket and stepped into the elevator without replying.

The car creaked its way to the top floor and stopped. Bennett had to make two attempts before he could open the door.

"Kinda weak this mornin', ain't you?" asked Dow, rubbing the boy's thick, wavy brown hair with his knuckles.

Bennett, as if angered too much for words, glared at him.

"Want Billy to wait for us, inspector?" asked Dow affably.

"It isn't necessary," replied Farnsworth.

"Good thing, inspector. Some of the old-timers get here early and kick if they have to wait for this rattle trap elevator longer'n usual. Get on down to the basement, kid, and change duds. Don't let the rats bite you!"

Bennett's fingers went to his nose. Dow reached for him, but the door of the elevator clanged shut too quickly and immediately the car began a creaking descent.

"How long has he been working here?" asked Farnsworth, starting down the corridor.

"'Bout two months."

"Does he ever run the car nights?"

"That punk? The rats'd make a bum outta him. He shivers whenever he sees one. Tries to act hard, but he's only a kid. Get that expression on his map when I accused him of murderin' that girl?"

"He's fresh," said Darwin. "Gimme a lotta lip the last time I was in here. Got a night boy, too?"

"No. Starr runs the elevator nights. S'pose you busted in the door to Thompson's office?"

"We used Starr's key," replied Darwin.

"That's damn funny!"

"What's funny?"

"Nobody's supposed to have a key to Thompson's office; there's a special lock on the door. If any of the help goes in there, they get fired."

"How about the cleaning women?"

"Outside for them, too, unless Thompson sends for 'em."

"Where is Thompson?"

"How should I know where Thompson is?"

"You're the superintendent of his building, aren't you?"

"Sure I'm superintendent and porter and electrician and repair man and a lotta other jobs, too. But that don't make Thompson and me buddies. He ain't never spoke to me yet. I ain't seen him for two months, mebbe three months."

Darwin unlocked and threw open the door of Thompson's office. Dow gazed about him with inquisitive eyes.

"Looks just like I thought it would," he declared.

"Haven't you ever been in here before?" asked Farnsworth.

"Nope. I been learned how to obey orders."

"Didn't you come up here when Thompson hired you?"

"Thompson didn't hire me. Cyrus

Conroy, his agent, put an ad in the paper and I went to his office to answer it. He hired me and give me my orders. I ain't broke 'em. I wanta keep my job. It ain't much of a job for money, but jobs is scarce and it feeds me and the old lady and keeps a roof over our head."

"You've been superintendent of the Tremont Building for some time, haven't you?"

"I'm here a little more'n a year. I took Terence Gallagan's place. He was here ever since the Tremont was turned into offices ten or 'leven years ago. Before that he was head porter of the hotel."

"Where is Terence Gallagan now?"

"That's 'nother question I can't answer. I don't know the kinda life Terence led."

"He's dead?"

"Dead, God rest his soul. That's why I'm superintendent of the Tremont. If he wasn't dead, he'd be hangin' onto his job. He hung onto everything else he ever had, so I'm told."

Dow raised the hand which, all the while he had been answering Farnsworth's questions, had been resting on the glass table top. Farnsworth glanced at Darwin and he changed his position only slightly. Dow was forced away from the table.

"Where is Conroy?" asked Farnsworth as if the question had just occurred to him.

"Mr. Conroy left town a week ago. He's on his vacation, and when he's on his vacation, even his office can't reach him. He goes way up in the Canada woods fishin' and stays a month. Goes there every year. Makes it tough for me. I gotta let everythin' slide. Still, it don't make so damn much difference—I gotta do that mosta the time. Thompson won't spend no

money on this buildin'. We've lost a lotta tenants; we'll lose a lot more on account of this murder."

At the mention of the murder, Farnsworth turned toward the desk and Dow's eyes followed his movement.

"Was her body found in there?" he asked, much interest in his voice.

"That's where we found it," answered Darwin.

Dow walked slowly toward the desk.

As he neared it, a small bird, with a great flutter of wings, alighted on the window ledge.

"My God!" exclaimed Dow. "Didn't get 'nough sleep last night," he added sheepishly. "When that damn sparrow lit, I thought the whole Tremont Buildin' was fallin' down."

"It's goin' to rain," remarked Darwin, looking out of the window at the overcast sky.

Dow glanced at the clouds and approached the desk hurriedly. He went very close to it, but did not touch it.

"How was she killed?" he asked.

"Shot in the forehead," replied Darwin.

"No other wounds?"

Darwin looked at Farnsworth, who was still standing near the table.

"Headquarters says there were no other marks on her body," Farnsworth responded.

Dow again eyed the desk.

"She was dead when she was put in there," he declared.

"How do you know?" asked Darwin.

"I can tell by the bloodstains."

"What do you know about bloodstains?" asked Farnsworth.

"I was in the A. E. F."

Farnsworth stepped forward.

"Let me see your gun," he ordered.

"I ain't got no gun."

"What's that in your pocket?"

"That ain't no gun."

Farnsworth made a quick move, held Dow's arm in a vise-like grip while Darwin took a short-barrelled thirty-two from him.

"What the hell you tryin' to do?" asked Dow, quite calmly.

"I'm not taking any chances," replied Farnsworth.

Dow laughed, not only with his lips, but with his blue eyes.

"You don't overlook no tricks, do you, inspector?" he asked as if pleased.

"But you got me wrong. I wouldn't try to pull nothin'—not with no one with your rep' anyway. I read every line of that Pope case. You done good work on that."

"Why did you try to lie?" demanded Darwin. "The inspector—"

"Say, don't you know the difference between kiddin' and lyin'? I don't call that damn peashooter a gun. I'm used to a forty-five. That's the baby that stops 'em. But I'm pretty good with that thirty-two. Whammed at an oak plank down cellar 'til I learned her tricks. But she ain't worth nothin' at more'n ten yards."

"An oak plank," repeated Farnsworth. "Where is that plank?"

"You've searched the basement?"

"We sure did," replied Darwin, brushing some dust from his trousers. "Searched it plenty. But we didn't find no oak plank with lead in it."

"Sure you didn't. I got tired of shootin' away my own money, so I sawed up the plank and put it in the furnace just before we pulled the fire last week."

"Did you buy this?" asked Farnsworth, taking the revolver from Darwin.

"Nope. Mr. Conroy issued it to me when he hired me."

"What was his object in arming you?"

"Holdups was pretty frequent then and he thought I might need it. Never did though."

Thick clouds entirely obscured the sun and in the distance, thunder growled.

"We are goin' to have a storm," declared Dow. "Hope you brought your overshoes along, inspector."

Farnsworth placed the revolver in his pocket.

"Gimme my gun!" snapped Dow, all traces of good humor gone. "I got a permit to carry it. Mr. Conroy attended to that." From his wallet he extracted a pink paper. "That's my license," he growled. "Gimme my gun or I'll—"

"You'll what?" demanded Darwin, his words clipped.

"The girl whose body we found in Thompson's desk was killed by a bullet from a short-barrelled, thirty-two caliber revolver," remarked Farnsworth very quietly.

"The hell—why—why—Starr's—"

His lips shut in a straight line.

"Go on," ordered Darwin, his jaw thrust further forward than usual.

Dow shook his head doggedly.

"I have Starr's weapon in my possession," said Farnsworth.

A look of relief came into Dow's face.

Again thunder growled in the distance.

CHAPTER VIII

Night Mists

"DOES Starr work under you?" continued Farnsworth.

"We both work under Mr. Conroy. Say, where is Starr? He's supposed to wait for me no matter if

I am late. I have to wait for him enough nights. Have you got him in the mill?"

"Did Starr act any differently than usual when he relieved you last night?"

"Not a bit different—grouchy as ever. He was half an hour late. I was fit to be tied. I wanted to get to supper on time, because if I didn't, the old lady wouldn't let me out. I made it by breakin' my neck. Say, I asked you if you had Starr locked up?"

"He's in General Hospital under observation," said Darwin. "He tried to throw himself outta that winda behind you."

"Tried to jump outta the winda?"

"Where does Starr live?" Farnsworth inquired.

Dow shook his head.

"Even Mr. Conroy don't know that," he averred.

"Who employs the women who clean up here nights?"

"Starr. He's their boss. I don't know any of 'em."

"Do you know a woman by the name of Molly Davis?"

"What does she look like?"

"Medium height, rather slender, dark blue eyes, brown hair—"

"Kinda good lookin' except for her eyes. Funny look, as if she's a dope?"

Farnsworth nodded.

"Sure I know her."

"You said you didn't know the night women in this building!"

Dow started, then grinned.

"Before I come here, I was a watchman in Black's department store. One day Pete Kennedy, the head store dick, caught this Molly Davis shoplifting. I was in the office when he brought her upstairs. She got six months. I remember the name now."

"Could Molly Davis work here and you not know it?"

"She couldn't. I take the pay rolls to Mr. Conroy's office and I check 'em so Starr can't put nothin' over."

"How often do the help here get paid?"

"Twice a month—the first and the fifteenth."

"Then if she was hired by Starr between pay days you wouldn't know anything about it until you saw the pay roll?"

"That's right, unless I happened to see her when she come on. Not much chance for that. I generally get away before the night women show up."

The storm was much nearer. Deep shadows lurked in the corners of Thompson's office and the thunder's growl had changed to occasional peals.

"Was Molly Davis the girl you found in the desk?" Dow asked.

"The girl in the desk has not been identified yet," replied Farnsworth.

"What'd she look like?"

Farnsworth rapidly described the fair young corpse.

"That ain't Molly Davis."

"Do you know who it is?"

"I don't know. Starr didn't know her, did he?"

"We haven't got anything definite from Starr yet."

"Didn't think you would. He's—"

"He's what?"

Dow's lips closed stubbornly.

"Say, fella—" began Darwin threateningly.

"It's gettin' late and I got a lotta work to do," Dow protested.

"We can hold you for twenty-four hours without a warrant," warned Farnsworth.

"That won't hurt me none."

"What'd your wife say 'bout you bein' in the can?" asked Darwin.

"Well, plenty. Whatta you wanta know, inspector?"

"Have you and Starr had trouble?"

Dow nodded sullenly.

"What kind of trouble?" asked Farnsworth.

"I jumped him because the halls was dirty. It didn't do no good. I jumped him a couple more times. He told me to mind my own business. I told him I'd turn him in to Mr. Conroy. He didn't say nothin', but he looked at me with them black eyes of his and I seen the whites begin to turn red. I know that sign. But the next mornin' I went to Mr. Conroy's office and turned Starr in. It didn't get me nothin', but I done my duty.

"That night when Starr came in, he went down to the basement and didn't come up again. I figgered he was waitin' for me to come down so we could have it out. I wanted it settled, too. So I went down. We tangled. I beat him up. Since then, we ain't spoke."

Dow stopped, and Farnsworth gazed into his eyes intently. Dow's foot moved slightly and the toe of his shoe scuffed the carpet.

So thickly did the clouds overcast the sky now that the shadows extended from the corners to the center of the room. The sparrow had deserted the window ledge. The rumble of the thunder could no longer be heard. The voice of the city had become muted. No sounds came through the wide open windows. The breathless silence seemed unreal.

"You haven't told us all," said Farnsworth, his voice, though there was no change in pitch or tone, sounding strange in that unnatural stillness.

Dow brushed a big hand across his eyes quickly.

"I skipped some," he admitted.

"Why?"

Dow raised his head.

"Were you in France, inspector?"

"I was over there with the Thirty-Second Division."

"I can talk to you. Funny things happened over there. Nights, when we was waitin' to go over the top, I seen the gray mists. You know, them gray night mists that hang over the battlefields, that change to human shapes and dance. I seen the dead layin' out in No Man's Land get up and dance with 'em. I seen other queer things, queer things that'd make a fella believe in ghosts—things nobody could explain."

"There are things none of us can explain."

"And in this buildin', in the old Tremont Buildin', right downstairs in the basement of the old Tremont Buildin', I seen somethin' I can't explain!"

A few drops of rain splashed gently on the window ledge. Dow drew back into the shadows, and Darwin, in response to a barely perceptible motion of Farnsworth's hand so changed his position that he stood between Dow and the window beside Thompson's desk.

"It was dark down there in the basement," Dow went on as if having once started he was eager to continue. "There wasn't no lights on. But the furnace was goin' and the dampers was up. From them dampers come two red streaks—runnin' across to the wall. I looked around tryin' to see Starr. It was so late all the tenants had went. I stood there strainin' my eyes and peerin'. I don't know what held me there.

"All of a sudden, somethin' broke them two red rods—somethin' went right through 'em. I couldn't hear nothin' and I couldn't see nothin' except that them two red rods was broke. I thought for a second it was imagination.

"Then I seen it!" In the semi-darkness Dow's face looked like bread

dough. "I seen it plain. But I couldn't make out what it was. It didn't have no shape. It was just a gray thing. It was like them gray night mists dancin' in the night breath from the battle-fields. I reached for my gun.

"Then somethin' got me—got me from behind! Two arms closed 'round me—two arms like a gorilla's. I didn't have a chance. When them arms closed 'round me, I was in France, in France lookin' at gray night mists. It was Starr that had me—Starr was gruntin' in my ear while his ape-arms was squeezin' me. My strength come back and I fought.

"Down there in the dark we went to it. I couldn't use my arms at all, but I could struggle. The harder I struggled, the harder he squeezed. Blue lights blinded my eyes. The harder Starr squeezed, the bigger and more blindin' them blue lights got.

"My breath was goin' fast. I felt like somethin' insida me had busted. I was sick. I got so weak I thought I was all through—that Starr'd kill me down there. I stopped strugglin' and collected what strength I had left. Then I kicked backward. I kicked hard. Starr's arms came loose.

"As he was keelin' over, I staggered away from him and fell down myself. But my eyes was open and the blue lights was gone. That gray thing come outta the black and walked right toward me. It wasn't night mists. I hadn't gone nuts. It was real. God knows how I got on my feet and pulled my gun. I was nearly all in. With my gun in my hand, I advanced. As I advanced, the thing backed up. It went into the shadows and—and—disappeared—completely."

Without any warning, a tremendous, unreal, bluish glare dispelled all the shadows in Thompson's office.

Instantly there was a roar as if a battery of heavy guns had fired a mighty salvo, such a mighty salvo that the ancient Tremont Building trembled as if it had been jarred loose from its old stone foundations.

Then a deluge of rain beat through the open windows.

CHAPTER IX

Timmons, the Attorney

THE storm had passed. The sun shining from the clear blue sky made the streets gleam and glisten. But in contrast with its modern, tall neighbors, the Tremont Building, even in the bright sunlight, looked like a stunted, ragamuffin orphan, and broodingly sinister.

From the Tremont, Farnsworth, a well-tailored, immaculate figure, started briskly, the expression on his face that of one driven by fleeting minutes.

The latest report he had received from headquarters was that the girl found in the desk of Horace G. Thompson was still unidentified.

Nor had the whereabouts of Thompson been ascertained, though diligent efforts had been made by a detail from the detective bureau. Apparently, he had vanished without leaving a trace.

His big house on Russell Road, with its extensive grounds and screen of unkempt hedge, was empty, the windows and doors boarded up and no caretaker in charge. In fact, Farnsworth had been informed, the residence seemed to have been closed for a very long period of time.

Interviews with neighbors had produced nothing. Most of them did not know Thompson; others had caught only occasional glimpses of him. There was nothing strange or mysterious

about that. Since the time when old Ezra Thompson, at the height of his success in the hotel business, had built the big red-brick residence, the character of the neighborhood had changed completely. Descendants of other old families had moved to new residential districts. Those who were living in Russell Road now made their livings with their hands. They regarded Horace Thompson merely as one who wished to be left alone.

Business associates of Thompson had proved hardly more helpful. The general opinion was that he was out of town. Within the last two years he had been away so much that his absences caused no curiosity, particularly as contacts with him were never more than casual. He had no close friends.

They had got nothing from Starr. Under the soothing influence of tepid baths and mild currents of electricity, he had quieted much, but was still disturbed. The last word received by Farnsworth had been that the attending physicians had put a stop to further questioning.

Not until Farnsworth reached the new Franklin Building, did he slow his rapid steps. There, after consulting the directory, he took an elevator to the twenty-fifth floor, and followed the marble corridor to a door marked, "Wallace Timmons, Attorney at Law."

Despite the modern structure in which it was housed, Timmons's office gave the impression of being a hold-over from another day. In one way it resembled Thompson's office; it consisted of but a single long room with no dividing partitions. But there, the resemblance ended.

Around three sides ran high bookshelves crowded with volumes bound—a big store of well-thumbed legal

lore. On the walls were steel engravings of jurists—faces that looked as if they had never known a smile.

Near one of the three wide windows stood a big square desk of highly polished golden oak, before it a capacious swivel chair.

At the door was a smaller golden oak desk, at which sat a dumpy little woman well past middle age, with short-sighted, watery blue eyes and gray bangs.

"Mr. Timmons has been delayed by the storm, but I expect him at any moment now," she told Farnsworth in a voice that had a peculiar bird-tone quality.

"I'll wait, if I may," responded the inspector.

"Certainly." She bounced to her feet, and before he could stop her, picked up one of the heavy oak chairs and placed it near the large desk.

"Sit right down here," she said. "Mr. Timmons has no appointments this morning so he can attend to you right away."

"Thank you, Miss—"

"Miss Harkness—Mr. Timmons's secretary. Excuse me if I seem a little distraught. I don't like electric storms. Electric storms make me very nervous. I know it's foolish, but it's the thunder that affects me. Thunder can't hurt one, but I want to hide somewhere. I don't get over the effects for hours."

She minced over to her desk, opened a drawer, and took out a newspaper.

"Here's the morning paper," she said, mincing back to Farnsworth. "Nothing in it except that horrible murder in the Tremont Building. The body of a young girl found in a desk! Terrible! But if the young girls of to-day would behave themselves as they should, they wouldn't get in scrapes and they wouldn't get murdered."

She stopped, her watery eyes on Farnsworth and her attitude that of one expecting complete accord with her views.

"Thank heavens, I had the right bringing up," she continued. "My life has been an open book. The paper says that girl was pretty. And her body was found in Mr. Horace G. Thompson's desk—of all places in Mr. Horace G. Thompson's desk!"

"You know Mr. Thompson?" asked Farnsworth casually.

"I know—I hear Mr. Timmons's footsteps!"

She sped back to her desk, dropped into her chair and began sorting blue-bound files.

Timmons entered unhurriedly.

"Good morning, Miss Theodora," he said in a full, round voice.

"Good morning, Mr. Timmons. This gentleman is waiting for you."

Timmons peered at Farnsworth. Then the light of recognition came into his eyes.

"I didn't know you, inspector," he said. "My eyes have lost their keenness. I read of the homicide in the Tremont Building, but I did not anticipate a visit from you."

Leaning back in his chair and thrusting forward his high, black shoes, he clasped long, white hands over a stomach that bulged his white vest. His gray hair, though neatly trimmed, was worn so long it curled over his coat collar; a heavy drooping gray mustache very nearly hid his mouth. His gray eyes were bright and there was animation, as well as a certain air of breeding in his strong face.

"I called because you are Horace G. Thompson's attorney," answered Farnsworth.

"You are entirely in error," declared Timmons quickly.

"I have been informed—"

"I was Ezra Thompson's counselor for many years. I served his son in like capacity several years. But I am no longer retained by him."

"Who does look after his interests?"

"Cyrus Conroy."

"I mean his legal interests."

"So far as I know, he is not represented by any member of the local bar."

"Are you able to give me any information about Thompson?"

"If you will excuse me, I would rather not discuss Horace Thompson."

"Mr. Timmons, I am engaged in the investigation of a murder."

"I am aware of that, inspector, and I have no information of any value whatsoever."

"I do not mind admitting to you, Mr. Timmons, that I have made very little definite progress."

"You have been unable to learn anything concerning Thompson?"

"Practically nothing. Cyrus Conroy is in Canada. I have talked with the superintendent of the Tremont—"

"Henry Starr?"

"Pat Dow."

"I do not know him."

"Then your visits to the Tremont were only at night?"

"Lately, yes. Starr took me up in the elevator. Why don't you question him? He has been in the Tremont Building a great many years."

"His mental condition at the moment is such that he cannot be questioned."

Timmons's hands came unclasped suddenly and gripped the arms of the chair.

"I do not believe I caught your answer," he declared, as if confused. "My hearing—"

"When we discovered that body in Thompson's desk, Starr gave indica-

tions of a complete mental collapse. He was taken to the psychopathic ward of General Hospital."

"And the body you found was that of a young girl, a beautiful young girl. Please describe it to me—describe it minutely."

Farnsworth repeated a detailed description.

When he had concluded, Timmons raised his eyes suddenly.

"What is it, Miss Theodora?" he asked sharply.

"I—I—I," stammered the secretary, "I'll wait till Inspector Farnsworth leaves. It really isn't important. It really isn't."

She minced back to her desk quickly, a flush on her sallow face, and immediately became very busily engaged with the pile of blue-bound files.

"You are wasting your time here, inspector," said Timmons. "I can give you absolutely no information regarding my former client. As a matter of fact, I have not seen him within the last two years. As for the reason I am no longer his counsel, that is a matter—a matter that rests between lawyer and client."

Farnsworth nodded.

"Furthermore, this is a very busy morning with me. I have some important appointments. I must ask you to excuse me."

Farnsworth arose and Timmons picked up his mail.

"Mr. Timmons," said Farnsworth.

The attorney did not lift his head, but slit an envelope deftly with the opener.

"Mr. Timmons," repeated the inspector. He didn't raise his voice, but Timmons looked up.

"Well?"

"Why did you stop at the morgue on your way to your office?"

Timmons's gray features went white.

"Why I—" Timmons hesitated. "How did you know I stopped at the morgue?"

"I talked with headquarters from the Tremont Building. You were in the morgue when I started for your office."

Timmons's smile increased the haggard appearance of his face.

"You and your men are remarkably efficient, sir," he said. "I did drop into the morgue along with many other visitors. I looked at the corpse. I have never seen that girl before. Of that I am certain. Are you satisfied?"

"Yes," said Farnsworth, and walked toward the door.

As he passed the dumpy Miss Harkness, she looked up and he nodded.

"Good morning, Inspector Farnsworth," she said primly.

CONTINUE THIS STORY NEXT WEEK



So Many Fakes!

*Herb Garth Considered Himself Smart
Enough to Know When Opportunity
Knocks—Even Opportunity for Murder*

By
Edward Parrish Ware

"GARTH,
you've
ruined me!

You have squeezed
me dry, you damned,
dirty blackmailer!"

Sam Brayden, his
lined, middle-aged face as
white as the unused blotter
upon which his clenched fist
rested, fairly spat the words
in a voice choked with hate,
despair and mental agony.

"Take a drink, Sam, and get
a grip on yourself," calmly advised
the man upon whom he had poured
his wrath and accusation. "Nobody
knows Herb Garth like Herb Garth, let
me remind you, so you can't hope to
tell me anything about myself that I
don't already know."

Herbert T. Garth, financier, largely
interested in bridge and dam construc-
tion in the Ozark Mountains, poured
himself a moderate drink from a bottle
on the desk, swallowed it neat, then
leaned back in the swivel chair and
calmly lit a cigar.

The situation was an odd one. Years
before, Brayden, then using his real
name of Dan Adams, had cheated a
big dam, then under his charge, of the

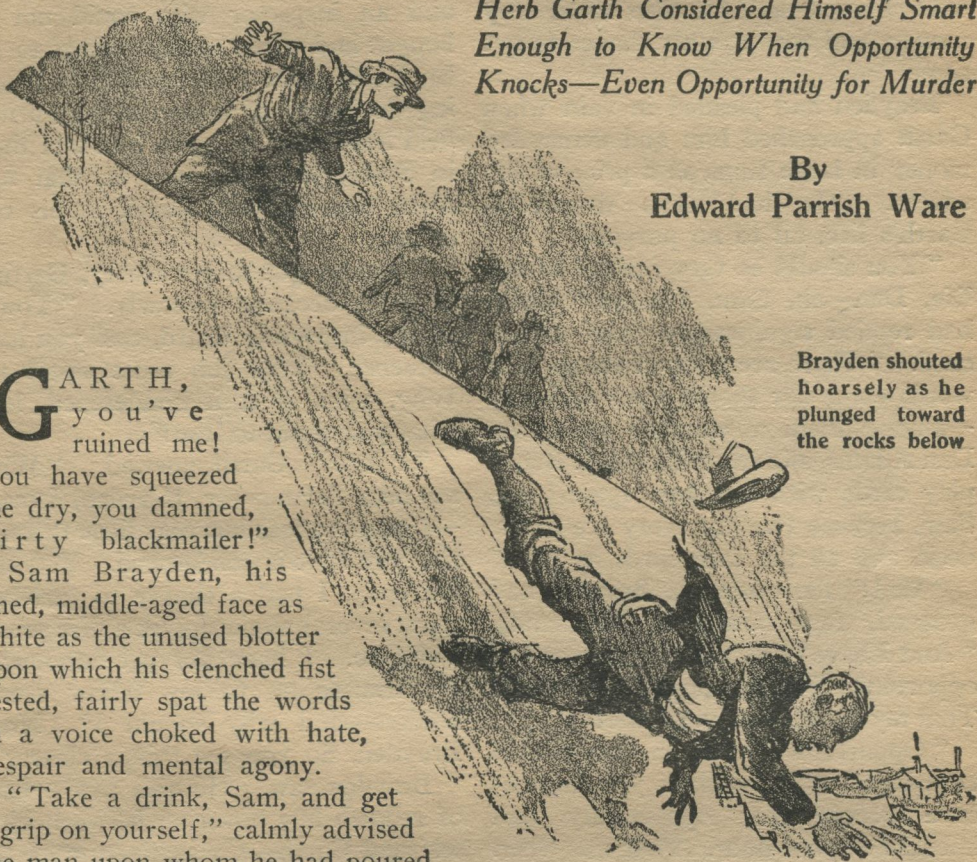
cement due it, pocketing the difference
in money. The trick had been uncover-
ed, and Adams had been kicked out
of the profession to which he had
proved a disgrace.

Later he had gained a footing in the
Missouri Ozarks, and, under the name
of Brayden, had prospered. He had
gone straight, and was well thought
of throughout the district. Then came
the biggest job of his career — the
White River dam at Big Rock.

The job had also proved his undoing.

Herbert Garth, interested in the dam
and a member of the board of inspec-

Brayden shouted
hoarsely as he
plunged toward
the rocks below



tors, had known the young Dan Adams—and he did not fail to recognize him in the now middle-aged Brayden. Garth, too, had a past. One he believed well covered up. He also loved easy money, and this was his chance to get some.

Brayden had pleaded in vain when Garth approached him and demanded money in large sums as a price of his silence. He had even threatened Garth's life, all to no purpose.

"You should be very careful of my life, Dan—ah, Sam, I mean," Garth had replied significantly when threatened. "There are a lot of things that would come out should I die suddenly—among them a complete report on Dan Adams, alias Sam Brayden. Better play cards with me than against me, Sam, because I've got every ace in the deck, and all the face cards as well."

"God!" the miserable Brayden had groaned, face buried in his hands. "And I have been thinking that at last opportunity had knocked at my door! That my big chance had come!"

"Opportunity?" Garth commented tauntingly. "Why, Sam, you thought once before that opportunity had knocked at your door. That was when you cheated the big dam out in Utah. Your opportunity to feather your nest, it was. But, my dear chap, Old Man Opportunity has many impersonators, and one never knows, when he answers a knock, whether it is the old gentleman in person or just one of the fakes. So many fakes, Dan—er, Sam, I mean. So damned many fakes!"

Sam Brayden had yielded. What else could he do? It was play the game with Garth, or stand exposed as the former liar and cheat, Dan Adams. That would be complete ruin for him.

So, for the second time in his career, he yielded up his honor—and cheated

a dam. Cheated in order to pay Garth's demands.

Then came more trouble. Certain parts of the dam didn't look so good, and an inspector who could not be bought had wired certain things to the St. Louis office that resulted in bringing the board of inspectors to Springfield hot-foot. Brayden had met them in Springfield, and was on that first night closeted with Garth in his city office.

"You've got to get me by, Garth!" Brayden declared hollowly. "You're on the inspecting board, and you have influence. This job must stand up. Why, man, if it is condemned, look what you stand to lose!"

"I lose?" Garth queried. "Why, my dear Adams—er, Brayden, I mean—I stand to lose but very little through the dam if it is condemned. You see, old chap, I had a chance to turn my stock several weeks ago at a nice profit. I did so. I have not yet announced the transaction to my fellow stockholders—and why should I? Now, Brayden, do you see things clearer?"

Brayden saw. He also saw a haze of reddish hue hovering between himself and Garth—a visualization of the blood lust that pulsed within him.

"If a mouse had the nerve and the ability to kill a cat," Garth, fully aware of what was in Brayden's mind, commented tauntingly, "it wouldn't be a mouse."

Brayden stared at him steadily for a long moment.

"All right, Herb," he said, his voice having steadied greatly, "if I'm shown up on the job when we inspect it tomorrow, then I'm confessing it all. I'm bringing you in'o it, damn your black heart—and I'm going to show you up for what you are! Taste that, Mr. Cat—and see if it's cream!"

That possibility was exactly what had been causing Garth uneasiness.

"I have not said, Sam, that I would not try and get you by," Garth told him, considering the glowing end of his cigar wisely. "I shall, in fact, try my best to cover up your dirty work. But if I can't—well, just what can you prove against me?"

Brayden considered the cold face of his tormentor for a moment, then did what no sane man would have done. He showed his ace-in-the-hole.

"I've done some digging into your past lately," he said with pardonable venom. "Had good luck from the start. Struck pay-dirt right off the reel—Mr. Horace K. Bootan!"

At the mention of that name Herb Garth started violently. By a mighty effort he regained control of himself, at least to a degree. Presently, looking across the desk at the man he had fully intended to ruin the very next day, he spoke in a voice he could not quite control.

II

"THE old Bootan Mining Corporation matter, eh?"

"Exactly."

"That would look a bit ugly—if you can prove anything. Suppose you can, huh? Not just bluffing?"

"I'm not bluffing. Either you get me across to-morrow, or I'll lay information before certain persons connected with the United States Commissioner's office in Springfield that will land you behind bars—slick though you think you are!"

Garth nodded his head slowly. "You could, of course, do just that—provided you've got proof of my former identity as Bootan. Using the mails to defraud—well, aside from the fact that I don't care for the climate either

at Leavenworth or Atlanta, I should be shown up rather completely and my usefulness in this mundane sphere utterly destroyed. I suppose, er, you have documentary evidence that would convict, eh, Sam?"

"You bet I have!"

Garth fixed his half-lidded gaze intently upon Brayden's face. Brayden never had been a very convincing liar. His glance wavered, dropped, and Garth breathed a bit easier.

"Liar," he was thinking. "He's got certain information that would perhaps result badly for me, if followed up. Yes, I should say, damned badly. But nothing of a documentary character. Guess here is where you help a victim out of a hole, Herb, old chap—else get down into the hole with him. That's hell, my boy—but the doctor says take it!"

He laughed, reached for the bottle and filled two glasses to the brim. Shoving one of the glasses toward Brayden, he exclaimed genially.

"Sam, old chap, you surely didn't think I'd let you down on that inspection to-morrow! Surely not! Just leave it to me, and everything will go through exactly as we desire it to. Er, by the way," he went on as an afterthought, raising his glass from the table, "you haven't been fool enough to keep any records, or notes, on our transactions, have you?"

"And if I have?" Brayden queried, bucked up a bit by the change of attitude Garth exhibited, and the rich liquor he had swallowed.

"Well, in case things are too bad and I can't cover for you," Garth told him, "there might be a seizure of your books and records at once. Now, Sam, if you should have to stand a trial—it would be heavily expensive, you know—on a criminal charge, wouldn't it be

better to have me free to work in your behalf? I could aid you as Herbert T. Garth, respected financier, but couldn't be anything but a curse to you as Bootan, the—well, the mining-syndicate swindler. Think that over, old timer."

"I have thought it over," Brayden assured him, his voice now calm. "And, take it as final, Garth, if I go down to-morrow you go with me. That's all there is to that!"

Garth arose, his manner betraying nothing of the uneasiness he felt. It would never do to let Brayden suspect that he had him on the run, so to speak. It was not on record, that Garth knew of, that a mouse had ever bitten a cat—but this particular mouse had at least gone to the length of showing its teeth. No, Brayden must be dealt with in other ways than Garth had employed with any former victim, although the methods he must use were not at all clear just then. They would be, no doubt, by morning.

"Think things over, Sam," he advised coolly, taking up hat and stick. "I'll see you in the morning. Good night."

"Go to hell!" snapped Brayden, reaching for the bottle.

Garth smiled his cold smile, and closed the door gently. "At that," he reflected, sitting in his expensive hotel bedroom a bit later, "Sam would only have to tip off the Feds that I am Bootan—and all the fat would be in the fire. They'd uncover my trail clear back to the old days in Utah, careful though I have been to hide it. Yeah, I'm washed up if I'm fool enough to let Sam do it."

As for the dam, Garth knew very well that those eagle-eyed men who were with him on the board would spot its defects, detect the paucity of ce-

ment in the structure, now that they had been pointed in that direction. There was no hope of covering up Sam Brayden's crookedness—and if Sam's crookedness came to light, Sam would talk.

When Garth eventually fell asleep, there was a troubled expression on his face, and he groaned at intervals throughout a restless night.

At breakfast next morning with the four other members of the board, Garth's haggard face caused comment.

"They must have given you a cornshuck mattress last night, Herb," one member joked. "Or maybe the witches rode you?"

"A tooth that's got to come out," Garth explained, smiling, bringing his will to bear upon his overwrought nerves. "You know how it is. A chap will put off a trip to his dentist just as long as he can."

The trouble with Garth was that the morning had brought him no nearer a solution of his difficulty than he had been the night before. Something had to be done to prevent Brayden from talking, as there was not the least hope that the inspection would fail to reveal the real condition of the dam. Brayden would be ruined before the day was at its close, and he'd ruin Garth as well.

"If there was just some way I could get him off in a quiet spot and fill his hide with lead," Garth gritted to himself as the party took the road to Big Rock, forty miles distant, in two fast touring cars. "But there's no chance for that, damn the luck!"

III

ARRIVED at the village of Big Rock, the two cars pulled up on the north bank of the river where the construction company's offices

stood. It was a Sunday, the inspection trip being purposely set for that day, when no work would be going on at the dam. Sam Brayden, attired in his service-worn corduroys, stood in the door of his office, absent-mindedly polishing a nicked badge with his handkerchief.

Greetings over, Brayden ceased polishing the badge and pinned it to his jacket. It shone like a new mirror when the sun's rays struck it. On a big job, such as the dam, heads of the various departments wore badges which indicated their particular office. Brayden's was lettered:

CHIEF OF CONST.

Months before, he had been proud of that badge and what it stood for. Now—well, it was just another fake. When first he had pinned it to his coat it had been a badge of honor, honestly won. Now it was just a glittering lie. It should have read: Chief of Destruction—for that was precisely his status on the job. He had cheated the dam, knowing well that it might, when the waters came to flood tide in the river and great pressure was brought against it, spread ruin over the country below it.

Garth, uneasy though he was, smiled cheerfully when he and Brayden shook hands.

"Well, Brayden," he said jovially, "you won't have us pests bothering you for long. Just a matter of routine, you know, and we will run it off in time to return to Springfield to-night. When you are ready, we will proceed."

Brayden was, Garth thought—and was puzzled thereat—strangely calm and dignified. The crisp, active, efficient engineer in his every word and movement. His brow was serene, man-

ner composed. What the deuce could that mean?

"Resigned to the inevitable," he concluded, eying the engineer narrowly. "Relieved, perhaps, that the show-down is at hand. Glad, too, that he will be able to strike at me. Yes, that's what's in his mind. Well, maybe—and, again, maybe not!"

They moved in a body to the north end of the dam. That end, as well as the south wing, had been completed, leaving only the central portion to finish.

The central portion stood at about half the required height, just a mass of rough concrete encompassed by wooden forms. The flow of the White, now rather low, had been carried through the race at the power house on the dam's south end.

With Berry, the local inspector who had brought about the present activity, in the lead, they moved out on the broad top of the concrete structure in single file, Garth and Brayden bringing up the rear. When they had progressed halfway across the north wing, stopping frequently to observe certain aspects of the work which the young local man pointed out, it had become plain to Garth that his fellow inspectors were looking grave—ugly, even. He turned to Brayden and nodded for him to lag behind. Presently the two stood alone at quite a distance from the others, Garth pointing down toward something at the base of the dam, which, at that point, rose two hundred feet above the ground.

"You're in for it," he said to Brayden in undertones. "No hope, Sam. What you going to do?"

"Take it on the button—damn you!" Brayden snapped. "I've got it coming, and I'm going to take it. In fact, the mouse feels better this morn-

ing than it has since you crossed its path nearly a year ago—Mr. Cat.”

“That’s interesting,” Garth sneered.

“Very satisfactory to me,” Brayden said with a grim smile. “Do you know, I somehow feel like the mouse is going to manage to cheat the cat today, Bootan—er, Garth, I mean. Don’t know just how—but I have that feeling.”

“You damned nut!” Garth snarled. “Listen to reason! Take the fall alone, and I’ll swear to leave no stone unturned to get you safely off. There’s a cool hundred grand in it for you besides. You may get a short term in prison for falsifying your reports, cheating the dam, but you’ll be well heeled when you come out!”

“Still trying to skim off the cream for yourself, eh, Mr. Cat?” Brayden laughed, and there was actually merriment in his voice. “Well, if you manage to get it skimmed off into your little bowl, you’ll do it without my aid, Bootan. Pardon me,” he grinned ironically, “I mean Garth.”

“You — you contemptible rat!” Garth raged, his face congested, eyes glassy with fear and hatred.

“No, no, my dear Bootan!” Brayden corrected. “Mouse! Just a mouse that has found a way to torture the cat—even if it can’t whip it. Now, on with the show, Bootan—the others will miss us.”

Garth turned about, but flung back over a shoulder:

“Two hundred grand, Sam—and my word to get you off light!”

Brayden laughed. “Your word isn’t worth a damn to me, Bootan!” he said. “And that’s final.”

The rest of the party had begun to descend the ladder from the completed wing onto the central portion, a matter of seventy-five feet below the fin-

ished top. Garth followed them down, and was in turn followed by Brayden. Then, walking over the rough surface of the lately poured concrete, the forms reaching them about knee high, the party proceeded toward the southern wing.

The finish was not far off, both Brayden and Garth now knew. The grim, hard faces of the inspectors, who were likewise stockholders, left them in no doubt about that. The cheating had been laid bare.

It was nearing the noon hour when the leaders of the group finished their inspection of the uncompleted part of the work and began climbing to the top of the south wing. Garth and Brayden still lagged somewhat in the rear.

“Three hundred grand!” Garth hissed at Brayden, his eyes indeed resembling those of a cat as he paused with one foot on the lower rung of the ladder.

“Who is the cat now?” Brayden queried, a lilt in his voice. “And how does it feel to be a mouse?”

Garth, without another word, started climbing up the ladder, Brayden following. When Garth reached the top of the finished work he found the others grouped with their heads together, backs to him. He paused there, thinking intently. Presently Brayden finished the climb and stood upon the wing. Garth flashed a glance toward the others who were still grouped with their backs toward him. Nowhere within range of his vision was there another person to be seen—and Garth, seeing his opportunity, grasped it and acted.

“Listen, Sam,” he said, a pleading note in his voice, stepping toward the engineer. “Let’s get together on this—”

With a sudden thrust of his left hand Garth, at that instant, gave Sam Brayden a slight push—just enough to send him over the edge of the dam.

IV

A HOARSE cry broke from Brayden's lips as his body, sprawled in the air, hands clawing wildly, shot down toward the rocks two hundred feet below. Garth by then had moved almost up to the rest of the group, and all turned together and rushed to the dam's edge just as Brayden's body struck.

"God!" Garth cried, his face ashen. "How did it happen? Did anybody see him fall?"

The white-faced group of men, limp and dizzy in the presence of such tragedy, denied, one and all, having seen Brayden until after they heard him cry out.

Then he was halfway down the side of the dam.

"He must have been overcome with dizziness—" one began, only to be cut short by another member.

"In view of what he was up against—what this board has found wrong with the dam—I can think of another plausible reason for his plunge. The easiest way out, gentlemen. Suicide."

Several others nodded agreement.

Garth, trembling in every fiber of his body, dizzy with the thought of the desperate chance he had taken, was peering down at the sprawled body of Brayden on the rocks. Light glinted on a bit of polished metal on the dead man's coat—the shield of which he had once been proud. A ray of sunlight, reflected as though from a highly polished mirror, flashed upward squarely into Garth's eyes. He clamped a hand over them, and staggered back from the edge of the dam.

"God!" he cried, his voice hoarse and strained. "Poor Brayden—what a terrible end!"

What Garth had in mind was something different. He was not superstitious, but the light flashing up from the polished surface of the shield squarely into the eyes of the wearer's murderer—

Was it an omen?

"Hell!" Garth snarled, getting a grip on his nerves. "I don't believe in omens! My opportunity came, and I took advantage of it. Sam Brayden, in like circumstances, would have done the same!"

By the time the sheriff and coroner reached the scene and the body had been removed to the village, Herb Garth had fully recovered his nerve. Was, in fact, almost in an exultant mood. Had he not saved the day for himself, and put the one man he had feared, of all those with whom he had had nefarious contact, beyond the power of speech?

Furthermore, he had convinced himself, by artful questioning, that not one of the others on the dam had the least idea that he had been anywhere near Brayden when he went down to his death.

The other members of the party confessed to a state of confusion. The thing had been so sudden, so startling and tragic, that nobody could say for certain where he or any of the others were exactly when the body of the engineer went over the edge.

The sheriff asked many questions, and then the coroner had his innings. A hastily summoned jury was asked to consider the evidence, and it was a foregone conclusion that the verdict would be that Brayden had met an accidental death or else had committed suicide.

Then a tall, bronzed young man in khaki and boots, a sub-engineer on the dam, walked into the room where the inquiry was being held, and desired himself sworn as a witness. He was duly sworn.

"My name is John Talbot, employed on the Big Rock dam construction," he stated in a quiet voice. "To-day being Sunday, I went down the river on a fishing trip. Some time near noon I saw, in looking up the stream toward the dam, a party of men, some seven or eight, walking across the work. I knew, of course, that they were the inspectors slated to arrive to-day. They were so far away they looked like children from my point of vantage.

"The party crossed the central portion of the dam, and when I looked again all were on top of the south wing. At that distance it was not possible for me to identify any one of them, but something occurred that indicated the identity of the last man of the group, one who lagged behind, with another man somewhat ahead of him. It was a gleam of light which flashed from the breast of the lagging man—and I knew the gleam came from Mr. Brayden's badge. Who the man next above him was I could not tell, even if I might have known him intimately by sight.

"Then, gentlemen," the engineer went on, his voice grave, "I saw something which makes it impossible for anybody to entertain the theory that Sam Brayden either fell from the dam accidentally or leaped with suicidal intent. While I was idly observing the men on the south wing a man appeared to detach himself from the group and walk toward Brayden. Then, as I stared horrified, the man's arm flashed out—and Sam Brayden was thrust over the edge of the dam. I saw that

happen, and make my oath to it here and now."

The crowded room was as silent as though it had been empty when the engineer made his amazing disclosure. Then voices buzzed, and the coroner rapped for silence. He looked toward the sheriff, and the sheriff gave him a dazed look in return.

"You ask what questions you sees fit to, Brooks," the sheriff said, evading the issue himself. "It's up to you."

But no amount of questioning could shed any light upon who the man might have been that detached himself from the main group and shoved Brayden over the edge.

Herbert T. Garth scouted the engineer's testimony. It was all a fancy of his own creation. He and all the other members of the board had been conferring in a bunch when Sam fell or leaped over, and he could and would swear that not a member of the party was anywhere near Brayden. At least, near enough to have touched him.

All the others of the party were of like opinion. None would admit being near Brayden, and it was the belief of all that he had lingered behind, respecting the evident desire of the inspectors to confer in private.

"Wuz all of you inspectin' gents together when you heered Sam yell out?" the sheriff asked.

"All of us," Berry declared. "I am very certain we were all in a group, and Brayden was alone about fifteen feet away. Perhaps twenty feet away."

That was a good break for which Garth silently thanked the engineer. Unquestionably, his lagging behind with Brayden had not been noticed by any other member of the party. He was safe—let the damned sub-engineer testify himself black in the face, if he

would, that somebody had pushed his chief over. He, Herb Garth, was safe!

V

"WELL adjourn this here inquiry," the coroner stated finally, "an' re-convene in Springfield day after to-morrer. Thar's got to be some investigatin' done, an' that'll take time. All of us knows John Talbot, him bein' raised hereabouts, an' we knows he's reliable. In th' meantime, all of you gents bein' well knowed to me, I'll release you on your own words to hold yoreselves ready in Springfield for th' investigation. This here session stands adjourned."

On the day the coroner's inquiry was slated to be held, the Springfield newspapers greatly pleased Herb Garth by coming out in a full exposé of the cheating at the dam, and of the financial bankruptcy of Sam Brayden, who had done the cheating.

Suicide. Everybody agreed that Brayden, to escape the consequences of his crookedness, had leaped to his death on purpose.

"Things couldn't have worked out better!" Garth exulted. "Nothing like being wise enough and quick enough to grab your opportunity when it presents itself, Herb, my lad! Sam, the poor rat, was always getting fooled by one of the impersonators—but not me! I know Old Man Opportunity by sight. No fake could impose on me!"

Garth was feeling very proud of himself, very safe and happy, when into the offices of the Big Rock Dam Company, in the late afternoon of the day for the coroner's jury to decide its case, walked a small, unimportant looking man in middle life. He introduced himself to the assembled members of the inspection board, who at the time were whiling away the time play-

ing poker, wondering why they had not yet been called to attend the coroner's investigation.

"Inspector Radway, attached to the United States Commissioner's office, Springfield," he told them shortly. "I have with me a finger-print expert and I wish to take the prints of all of you gentlemen. Please get ready."

"Say, what is all this?" Garth demanded arrogantly. "Are we thugs and murderers, to be subjected to humiliation like this—"

"That will be all from you, please," Inspector Radway broke in, and he seemed to somehow have lost his look of insignificance. His eyes held a hard glare, and his voice was brittle. "Those of you who do not comply of your own volition will be arrested and forced to do so. Choose."

Needless to say the finger-print man had no further trouble. After he had gone into an adjoining room with his sets of prints, Inspector Radway seated himself at a window, lit a cigar, and paid no further attention to the others in the room. Half an hour passed thus, and the inspector was called into the room with the finger-print man. When he returned he was briskly ready for business.

"On last Sunday night, at about the hour of midnight, Miss Gayle Crawford, secretary to Sam Brayden, came to my house and placed two letters in my hands. One was sealed, addressed to me. The other was unsealed, addressed to Miss Crawford. I shall read the latter letter first, as it is very explanatory."

He took the letter from his pocket and read it aloud.

It ran:

DEAR MISS CRAWFORD:

If you have not received a message from me, either by phone or telegraph,

before twelve o'clock Sunday night, please go at once and place the sealed letter accompanying this to you into the hands of the addressee.

(Signed)

SAM BRAYDEN.

The inspector paused briefly, then returned to the subject.

"Miss Crawford did not hear from Sam Brayden directly, but she had the news of his death late that night. She came and gave me the letter addressed to me. I shall read it."

He took a second letter from his pocket, reading it aloud also.

DEAR RADWAY:

You will find, in the lower right-hand drawer of my desk at the office, a partly emptied bottle of whisky and a whisky glass, both wrapped in tissue paper. Please have your expert go over both glass and bottle for finger-prints. You will find two sets on the bottle—mine and those of another. But one set will appear on the glass, and they will be those of the second man who handled the bottle. Then check those prints with the ones you have on record of Horace K. Bootan, the arch-swindler you Feds have been wanting so long.

The second set of prints are those of the man calling himself Herbert T. Garth.

(Signed)

SAM BRAYDEN.

Garth, rigid as sculptured stone, stared straight before him, across the desk and into the pale eyes of the inspector. He felt that the eyes of every other person in the room were upon him. Presently he relaxed, smiled, and took out a cigar.

"And, Mr. Inspector, were you foolish enough to swallow all that?" he asked lightly.

"Quit stalling, Bootan!" Radway snapped. "Your finger-prints, just taken, check with those on the bottle and glass, and they, in their turn, check

with those of Horace K. Bootan—probably the rottenest swindler of recent times. You're Bootan—and you can't get away from it!"

Garth smiled. "Well, if the finger-prints say so, far be it from my intention to dispute with science," he said, lighting a cigar. "What of it? A couple of years at Atlanta—then the free air again. Not so bad, eh, inspector?"

He was thinking of the million and more he had salted away, and of what life could still give him after his term should end. Well, they had him dead to rights as Bootan—but, and here he chuckled inwardly, he had them dead to rights in the murder of Sam Brayden. Let them pin that on him if they could!

"I am thinking, Bootan," Radway said icily, "that the Federal prison at Atlanta will not be contaminated by having you as a guest this trip—or any other. The commissioner has decided to let you go to the State."

The door of an adjoining office opened, and Sheriff Joe Storey, of Taney County, walked in. He said nothing, but placed a tissue-wrapped article on the desk in front of Radway. Then he seated himself beside the door into the corridor, his hard eyes fixed unwaveringly upon Garth's puzzled face.

Radway unwrapped the article and exposed a nicked badge to the eager eyes of those around the desk. The lettering on the badge read:

CHIEF OF CONST.

"This is the badge that Sam Brayden wore when he plunged to his death off the top of the dam last Sunday," Radway's cold voice announced. "When I got that letter of Sam's I set my men to work at this end, and then

hustled down to Big Rock and viewed the body, taking our finger-print man with me to see what we could find."

He paused, glanced sharply at Garth's now pasty, puzzled face, then went on.

"Cook, our expert, noticed some smudges on the shining surface of Brayden's badge," he explained. "He got a good set of prints from it at once. The sheriff had already informed us that Sam had busily polished the badge just before starting on the trip which was to prove fatal to him. Sam, it seems, had a habit of absent-mindedly polishing the badge."

He paused, leaned across the desk, and said in slow, even tones, a stiffly pointing finger just beneath Garth's nose:

"The prints on the badge checked with yours, Bootan. The first, second

and third fingers are shown. How did they get there?"

Garth came slowly to his feet, his mouth sagging open, staring eyes fixed upon the shiny surface of the badge. He essayed to speak, but succeeded in bringing forth only a croak.

"I'll tell you how they got there!" Inspector Radway suddenly thundered. "They got there when you thrust Sam Brayden over the edge of the dam—to his death! John Talbot saw the act—and those finger-prints prove who the actor was! The first three fingers of your left hand came in contact with the badge when you sent Brayden to his end. Take him, Sheriff Storey—before he faints!"

Six months later they hanged Herb Garth—the man who had boasted to himself that he could pick out Old Man Opportunity in a world filled with so many fakes!



Wholesale Murder

THIS is an age of record breaking—record breaking airplane flights, automobile races, tree-sitting contests, track meets. But the grimmest effort at breaking a record has been stopped, though not in time to save some of the victims.

Peter Huerten, recently put on trial in Düsseldorf, Germany, for nine murders, calmly confessed in court that his ambition was to be known as "the biggest criminal in the world." In his effort to accomplish this by killing more people than any other individual, he slew nine persons, and then, he says, decided to give up individual slayings for wholesale homicides by blowing up railroads and buildings.

He made a violent start, but luckily will never be able to go on with his diabolical plans.

Marked Men

A Novelette

*Only One Man Saw Him Kill,
and That Man the Killer
Was Determined to Silence*

By Ralph R. Perry

Doyle dived into the dark water after
the killer

CHAPTER I

The Eyewitness

SLATS DOYLE entered the station house of the Eighteenth Seattle Precinct wet to the skin, and blue as only an Irishman can be.

Outside the rain was falling heavily, even for Seattle in November. The night was black as a pocket and wet as Niagara, and the sight of Lieutenant Wollson at the desk, who would be certain to order Doyle out into the storm again, was the final bitter drop in the new detective's cup. He flung himself into a chair and stared at his sodden trouser legs—a lean-waisted, handsome hundred and ninety pounder

with curly black hair and eyes of light Irish blue. Wollson grinned down at him maliciously.

"Any flatfoot can bust down a door and take a gat away from a crazy hop-head. That's all you done, Doyle—and

the commissioner put you in plain clothes for doing it," the lieutenant taunted. "Nervy and two fisted are you, huh? Well, that don't make you a detective—not in this precinct. What have you done about your case?"

"Nothing."

"Nothing?" Wollson repeated in mock surprise. "Three weeks you've been on it. If you don't get results you'll be back on a beat."

"You'll hate that, won't you?" snapped Doyle. "Okay, gimme back my club. I've found out all that's going to be found out. There was no reason for that killing. No motive at all. So there's nothing to follow up."

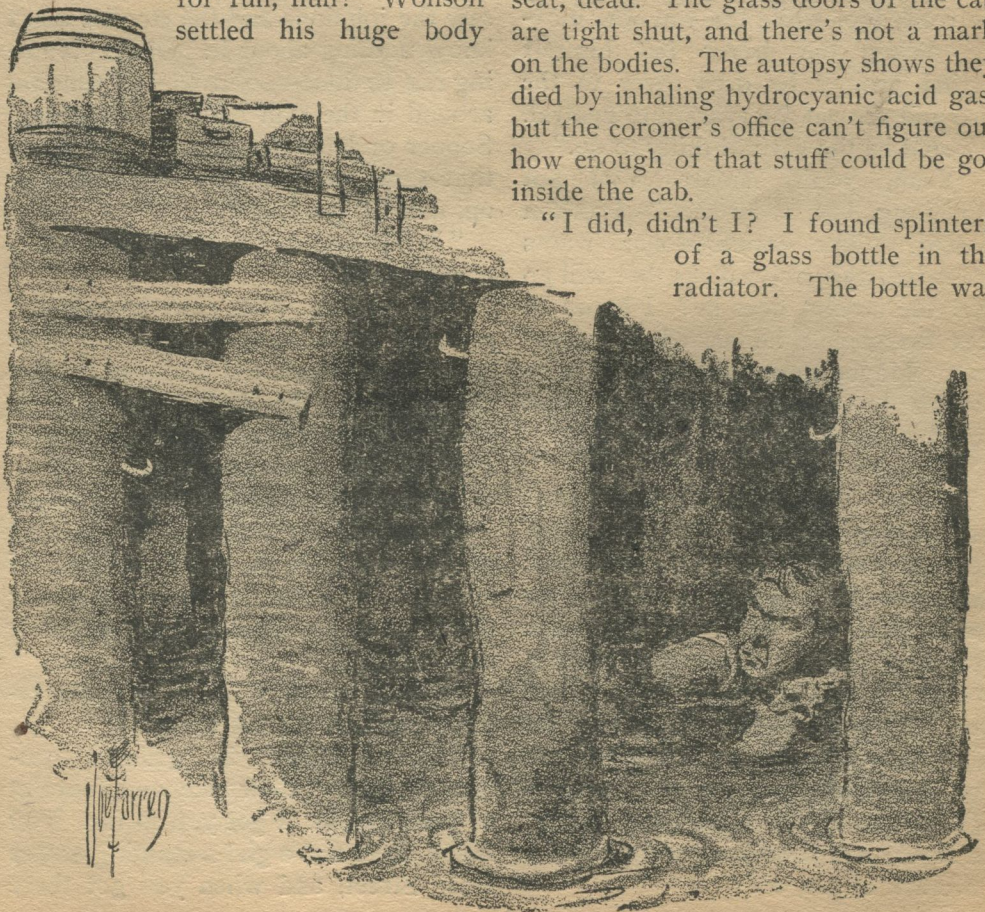
"Maybe three guys was bumped off for fun, huh?" Wollson settled his huge body

more comfortably in his swivel chair. He was fat-bellied, thick-necked, and slow-witted, a man who had reached his present position by invariably doing the obvious. When his subordinates succeeded he took the credit. If they failed, the blunder was theirs, not his, and they bore the blame. The little eyes that were like slits in his fat cheeks gleamed with enjoyment at Doyle's dejection.

"You ain't kidding me!" said the detective aggressively. "You assigned me to this case because you figured I'd make a flop. I have—because so far I haven't got a break.

"A moving van is found parked at the curb with three guys in the front seat, dead. The glass doors of the cab are tight shut, and there's not a mark on the bodies. The autopsy shows they died by inhaling hydrocyanic acid gas, but the coroner's office can't figure out how enough of that stuff could be got inside the cab.

"I did, didn't I? I found splinters of a glass bottle in the radiator. The bottle was



busted against the radiator, and the fan sucked the fumes back into the cab. That gas will kill in half a minute. That's how they were bumped off."

"Yeah," Wollson grunted with heavy scorn. "That's *how*. Who the hell cares how? What the prosecutor wants to know is who done it, and why."

Slats Doyle clenched his fists. "The driver and his helpers didn't have an enemy in the world," he explained bitterly. "There was nothing in the van but furniture. Cheap furniture. It wasn't a gang killing. It wasn't done for revenge, and it ain't a case of hijacking where a mistake was made about the truck. Some guy bumped off three perfect strangers. He did it on the road, too, while the van was moving. When the driver felt himself getting groggy he drew over to the curb and shoved the gears into neutral. It would be the natural thing to do."

"Yeah, you're smart. You got everything but a suspect," Wollson snorted. "The commissioner wants two-fisted, aggressive dicks that will go after the crooks, does he? I hopes he likes the sample he picked—over my head. Maybe next time he'll let promotions be made by the men that should make them."

"Meaning you?"

"Right," Wollson nodded. "I ain't got nothing against you personally, Slats. You're a good cop. You knew that hophead was going to shoot when you touched that door, and you went after him like a college guy after a football. I saw the bullet holes in the door. Why he didn't bump you off only the saints know. I'll give you your beat back, and I'll get you into plain clothes again. Sometime. Later. But right now, your being what you are is a crack at me, see?"

"The commissioner is an efficiency hound, and a business man." Wollson's grin took a scornful twist. "He wants results, and he don't see that results can be got by a guy that sits still. His kind has got to get out of the department, or my kind, see? You're the commissioner's choice, and this moving van case was played up so big in the papers that it's a test case, see?"

"Where me and the commissioner are licked before we start!"

"No," Wollson growled. "The trouble with both of you is that you ain't learned to wait. Look at me. I've been thirty years on the force and nobody ever saw me excited, or in a hurry. Three bozos get bumped off for no reason. No witness saw the job done and the stoolies don't know nothing about it. Okay. Nothing *can* be done—so instead of running around in the rain I don't *do* nothing. Sooner or later that murderer will try that same thing again. He will slip up, and I'll get him."

"While you wait he'll bump off a couple more."

"Of course. That can't be helped," growled Wollson, half angrily. "The crook always gets the first shot." The telephone on the desk rang, and he drew the instrument toward him with a sweep of a huge fat arm.

"Eighteenth Precinct," he growled.

At once over the slosh of the rain on the street outside the shrill squealing of an excited voice in the transmitter filled the station house, word tumbling over word.

With a scowl Wollson put the receiver against his fat cheek.

"Okay, Mike," he grunted contemptuously. "Now take your foot out of your mouth. I got you so far. You heard shots and a girl screaming at 242 Rose Street, and when you got there

you found a man had been shot, through the window of his own living room. Okay. That's old stuff, Mike. What's there about it to make you start talking in bunches? . . . Huh? . . . *What! . . . What!"*

Despite Wollson's boast that he never became excited, his face had turned red and white in patches, and his gruff voice shook. Slats Doyle was on his feet like a sprinter waiting the word to go. Mike Slatterly was a patrolman and a good, level-headed guy.

"Mike says the man was wounded too bad to speak," Wollson explained heavily. "The girl claims her father was looking out of the window. *Powie!* some one outside unloads a whole clip. The girl screams and starts to bandage her old man. He's hit in three places. Mike rings up an ambulance and goes outside. And—and—there's a registered mail truck parked at the curb with the engine running—"

"And a couple of men dead in the front seat, though the doors are intact!" Doyle finished, his eyes blazing. "The cold-blooded, murdering weasels! They knocked off the three boys in the moving van just as practice for this job! To see if the poison gas would work!"

"Hell, who cares!" Wollson roared. "The mail truck's empty! Sacks of registered mail! Thousands—millions gone, and some reporter is sure as hell to follow the ambulance!"

Doyle, however, had leaped to the station house door. The police car parked outside roared into life as he headed for Rose Street. The case was his, for the moment, though it was of such magnitude that the entire force and the Federal men would be called into it later. His was the first chance to arrest a cold-blooded killer before

other defenseless men fell victims to a deadly gas, and this time the police had an eyewitness who was not dead—yet.

CHAPTER II

The Twisted Man

ROSE STREET was lined on both sides by bungalows, each surrounded by its garden. The rifled mail truck stood in the center of the block, directly beneath a street light, and despite the drenching rain a few curiosity seekers were gathered near by, kept away by the patrolman, Mike Slatterly.

Beyond a glance to satisfy himself that all the bags of registered mail had been carried away, Doyle wasted no time on the truck. He knew only too well what he would find—a pair of dead men and a faint odor of peaches in the interior of the cab.

"Shut off the engine, Mike!" he called and leaped up the bungalow steps to the front door. A broken window pane indicated where the shots had been fired. Already the rain would have blurred any footprints that might have existed, but Doyle could find out the point from which the shots had been fired by the position of the ejected cartridge.

As an afterthought he called to Mike to locate these before souvenir hunters gathered them up, then he turned to confront an open door and the most striking blonde he had encountered in all his twenty-five years.

"I'm Doyle—Terry Doyle, the detective on the case," he stammered.

She had hair of pure gold, a vivid, buttercup yellow without a trace of red or brown, and eyes as dark as his own. A tall girl, slender, about twenty, with long fingers that gripped the door firmly. Pale, with a fleck of her

father's blood on her cheek, but with her emotions well in hand. A girl with a firm chin and a straight, level glance.

"I'm Myra Freeman," she said. "Father is still unconscious, but the doctor says he will live. It all happened so unexpectedly that I can't tell you much, I'm afraid. We were—"

Farther back in the hall Doyle had seen a man who was no stranger. He motioned Myra to be silent. How Billy Peck of the *Herald* had managed to get to the scene of the crime so promptly was too much for Doyle, but there the reporter was, listening avidly.

Peck was a regular guy. Doyle liked him, and the *Herald* was fair to the cops, giving praise or blame to the individuals who deserved them, and never holding the department in general responsible for the fact that criminals were becoming more daring and more successful, as other newspapers did from time to time.

The reporter was as welcome as any one of his profession could have been, though Doyle's thought was that publicity is likely to aid the criminal rather than the police.

"Wipe off the grouchy stare," Peck grinned. "I've got to get the news. That's what I'm paid for, but anything that the *Herald* or I can do to help you will be done pronto. I'm here to play ball with you, Slat. I've got the story already, but there's still plenty of time before the deadline and I'm hanging around to get your theory, provided you're willing to have it printed." The grin broadened. "I can always say that an immediate arrest is expected, of course . . .

"Mr. Freeman is an accountant and a widower, Slat. He bought this house four years ago, and since his wife died Miss Freeman has been keeping house for him. Mr. Freeman is

a great reader. They were both sitting in the living room reading when they heard a car put on its brakes hard—"

"Say, will you let her tell it, Bill?" Doyle interrupted.

"Mr. Peck is repeating exactly the words I used," Myra answered quietly. "We heard brakes, and though there was no crash or a collision, both father and I thought there had been an accident and went to the window. He had to raise the shade, of course. He looked out, stared, and then seized me by the waist and threw me aside. He seemed to fall straight back upon me. The window pane shattered and there was blood on his chest. A pistol was firing. I screamed—I'd heard that was the thing to do—"

"I'll say it is!" Doyle grunted.

"And tried to stop the bleeding. The next thing I knew a car started, and I heard the policeman running down the street."

"You saw nothing yourself?"

"Only a Ford touring car and a truck with a little man opening it," Myra apologized. "I had only time for a glimpse. They fired at father instantly." The dark eyes flashed, and the firm chin set. "They weren't his enemies! They shot him in cold blood—"

"They?" Doyle inquired.

"Or he. I've no idea who or how many!" the girl exclaimed.

"They—or he—are like that, Miss Freeman," said Doyle. "Your father is lucky to be living. Three men were bumped off practicing for this. The moving van case," he added for the reporter's benefit.

"Say—that's news!" exclaimed the latter. "I'm glad I hung around. Got any idea who did it, Slat? It must be some hot shot—"

Doyle looked at the reporter hard.

"Not an idea in the world," he confessed. "The hot shots all had airtight alibis in the other case. How long after the shots before the car started again, Miss Freeman?"

"I've no idea. Maybe a minute. Maybe as much as five."

"The truck carried ten mail sacks. I've checked *that*," interposed Peck officiously. "They've no idea of the value at the post office until they check up the lists, but the sum must be way up in the hundreds of thousands. Even one man could snake ten sacks out of the truck in less than a minute."

Doyle shrugged. The time element was not important, and the girl's testimony as a whole worthless.

"I'd like to see your father," he said.

"How about me?" pleaded Peck.

"Sure. Come along. You're playing ball with me," the detective conceded.

The living room of the bungalow extended entirely across the front of the house. From the center of the rear wall a straight, narrow hall led directly to the back door, with the kitchen and dining room on the left, and on the right two bedrooms with a bath between. Mr. Freeman was in the rear bedroom—a small room with two windows, one on each corner of the house. The back window was open about a foot at the top. Against the side window the rain beat heavily.

An ambulance surgeon had just finished bandaging the wounded man, and sat watching him closely. Freeman's eyes were open—clouded with pain to be sure, but with no signs yet of fever or delirium. He was a tall, wide shouldered, dark-haired man of forty-five, his hair only slightly grizzled at the temples. His head turned as he caught sight of Doyle, and he tried to speak.

"Will you get out of here and stop disturbing my patient?" snapped the ambulance surgeon without looking around. "One of these bullets touched the lung. I don't want him to talk for a day at least."

"Meanwhile a murderer is getting away," Doyle objected.

"Could you find him—even if my patient risked a hemorrhage?" snapped the ambulance surgeon sarcastically. His answer, however, displeased Freeman, for the dark head moved irritably on the pillow. Myra stepped forward and placed her ear against her father's lips.

"He says to bring him a pencil and paper, then," she interpreted. "Father is very determined," she went on with a slight smile. "I think it would be better for him to have his way, even if he has to exert himself somewhat."

The ambulance surgeon rose with what he meant to be freezing politeness. "My patient is properly bandaged and all he needs is absolute rest. If you disregard my orders I can only withdraw from the case," he said. "I expect other calls, but if I were a physician regularly called in I—"

"Thank you," said Myra. She was quiet and polite, but the two words were a dismissal. They revealed to Doyle that she was no mere golden-haired, dark-eyed doll. No general in command of an army in battle could have accepted responsibility more instantly, or with more finality. The ambulance surgeon snapped his bag of instruments shut, bowed, and walked from the room without a word. Myra followed him out and returned with pencil and paper, and on the bed Freeman gave a grim little nod of approval when he saw her.

"How many men?" said Doyle. "One? Two?"

A nod stopped him. Myra sat on the bed and put a pencil in her father's fingers, holding the paper where he could reach it without lifting his arm.

"If daddy thinks he can do anything, he can. He's like that," she said proudly. "Still, we mustn't ask too many questions."

"Two men both very unusual in appearance," wrote Freeman's pencil. "Saw one directly under street light taking out sacks. Short and misshapen like a monkey or a spider. Head twisted to left and held on one side as though by injury. He fired."

"Lefty the Monk!" whispered Doyle. "That twisted neck identifies him like a finger-print! But who'd figure that Lefty—"

"Would be in anything big?" snapped the reporter. "He's half-witted. Killing a girl for her rings, like he did in that boarding house case a year ago, was about his speed. He's too peculiar looking to be a member of a regular gang."

"Other driving Ford touring car with side curtains out," wrote Freeman. "Never left seat, but leaned out to point to me. Face covered with black beard. Was very tall. Head even with car top. I am not mistaken." The pencil went back and underlined these words twice. "He jerked back head as little man shot. I will swear he bumped himself on car top and that he must be over six feet six."

"Six feet six and bearded?" Peck echoed. "I pass up that guy! Don't know any crooks that can pinch hit for telegraph poles. See here, Doyle, this testimony don't make sense! Lefty the Monk never figured out a job like this. What's more, some bystanders are witnesses to every stick up. Why'd any sensible crook pick a rod like Lefty, who'd be identified at a glance?"

"The moving van murder didn't make sense either. Until later," said Doyle grimly. "A guy that would have a dress rehearsal for a new kind of poison bomb wouldn't leave anything to chance. If he picked a marked man like Lefty the Monk I'll bet he had a reason."

The detective turned to Freeman. "Are you sure about the other man's height?" he asked slowly. "Could you identify him in court?"

Freeman nodded. "Yes. Yes. Positively—by shape of head and set of shoulders," he wrote.

"Then we'll get him," said Doyle with satisfaction. "A crook as tall as that is a marked man, and he must know it. There can't be a dozen of them in all Seattle, and they'll have a hard time slipping out of town as soon as we put in a general alarm. Which is what Lieutenant Wollson would call waiting," the detective went on exultantly. "Meantime I'll grill Lefty and find out who he's been running around with." The detective's blue eyes widened as a new thought struck him. He turned to the reporter.

"About that boarding house case that Lefty was acquitted of!" he exclaimed. "Everybody knew that Lefty was guilty, but the district attorney couldn't shake his alibi because he had a witness who wasn't a gangster or a crook. Wasn't that witness a mighty tall man?"

"Seems to me like he was," grunted the reporter. "He was clean-shaven, though. A mining engineer down on his luck and living in a tenement till he picked up a job. I don't remember his name, but I can find it out in ten minutes from the files as soon as I can get back to the office. He wasn't a crook, though, Slats."

"Beards can grow and every crook

makes a start some time," said the detective sententiously. "I'm rounding up all the tall men, but he'll do to start with. It's like you said—an eye-witness can be expected at every hold-up, even though a crook plans the job for a rainy night. Here's a guy so tall that he don't dare step out of the car himself. He's got to get another crook to help him. If he's a gangster, that's easy. But assume he isn't. Only an educated chemist could fix those poison bombs.

"How could he do better than to take a little half-witted gunman he can convict of murder by a word, and who don't dare to double cross him? How many witnesses would notice the driver of the car with a monkey like Lefty right out in the street handling the sacks and doing the shooting? It's Lefty that risks the rap."

"Big boy, I'll bet you've doped it right!" Peck exclaimed. "Go make your pinch while I write my story and search the files! Biggest crime of the year solved in ten minutes by a camera eyewitness and a lucky Irish cop—thanks to the assistance of the *Herald*. The commissioner will make you a sergeant for this, Slats."

There was a feeling of triumph in the little corner bedroom which even the wounded witness shared. A criminal who had not hesitated at murder to perfect his plans had been balked by the incalculable trifle that has wrecked so many perfect crimes. The girl and the three men had each been instrumental in solving a mystery. They were pleased with themselves—so much so that the counterstroke came like the flash of lightning out of a clear sky.

A bullet crashed through the window shade. The electric light over Freeman's bed exploded. Doyle reached for his own revolver, but in the sudden

darkness which left him blind he heard a hissing, boiling sound. A powerful odor of fresh peaches rose to his nostrils.

"Poison gas! Hold your breath and get the girl out!" he shouted to Peck.

Ten words only, uttered in an instant, and yet as he caught his breath a giant and invisible hand seemed to grip his throat and paralyze his chest. He could not breathe. His heart pounded slower and slower in his ears. Behind him the lighted oblong of the door opened as Peck dragged Myra away, but Doyle was lurching toward the bed. With senses slipping he flung the bed clothes over Freeman's face and gathered the wounded man into his arms. The effort took the last of his strength. He lurched into the hall, collided with the opposite wall, and tottered backward. Somehow he closed the door of the bedroom, then he pitched unconscious upon the witness he had rescued.

CHAPTER III

The Bait

FAINTLY Doyle heard voices. The fumes of ammonia bit at his nostrils. He opened his eyes, and found the fat, scowling face of Lieutenant Wollson bending over him.

"Murder—yard," Doyle gasped.

"Gone, kid," growled the lieutenant, not unkindly. "Lie down, now. You've been out for an hour. The surgeon damn near gave you up."

"Freeman—the witness?"

"Still out," Wollson grunted. "You've done all you could. Leave this to me. The reporter slipped me the dope."

Despite this reassurance Doyle raised his head. He lay on the floor of the Freeman living room. Every win-

dow was open, and wind and rain drove in in gusts that sent the sodden curtains flying like wet flags. Bent over the couch he saw Myra's golden head and the back of a police doctor. Freeman had not been removed, then.

The room was full of policemen who stood around with gloomy expressions that Doyle could not understand, under the circumstances. They should be out rounding up Lefty the Monk and tracing down the tall man who had been a witness at Lefty's trial. Peck was not present. If an hour had elapsed the reporter would be busy at the newspaper office.

"For once I gotta admit a reporter has been of some use," growled Wollson. "It was him that thought of opening the windows. Otherwise the doctor says enough of the gas would have seeped in through the crack in the door to do for you. You're lucky, Slats. Ain't many that have got a lungful of cyanide and lived to tell about it. Mike wasted time running in here instead of circling the house. When he got out again the killer was gone. Damn the nerve of the guy! He was after our witnesses! He's thorough, damn him. Damn thorough!"

"Our one witness. The girl didn't see anything."

"He don't know that," Wollson growled. "He tried to put her on the spot, with you and Peck for good measure. We've got to protect that dame as carefully as her father."

Doyle sat up. That the lives of the Freemans were still in danger was a startling idea, yet an instant of reflection revealed that Wollson was right. The killer had not rushed to get away after the loot was secured. He had dared to come back, to take the offensive against the law.

He had brains. Two lives stood be-

tween him and the enjoyment of the money he had stolen. A case of mail robbery is never marked closed. The government would spend years tracing down clues, though these led to the remotest corners of the world. A man noteworthy because of his height would not dare face the eyewitness of his crime.

"Freeman must be right. The killer is tall," Doyle muttered. "Did Peck tell you about the tall man that testified at Lefty's trial?"

"Yeah, he told me," growled the lieutenant sarcastically. He passed Doyle a newspaper photograph which showed a man about forty, clean-shaven, with eyebrows that met about the bridge of the nose and a straight, thin mouth. "That's the witness at Lefty the Monk's trial. His name is Irving Traub. He's a mining engineer and assayer that came to Seattle two years ago. Lives in his laboratory, don't do much business and ain't got no record.

"His height, according to clippings in the *Herald* office, is six feet seven or eight. Yeah. That reporter sure slipped us the dope. He damn near cried when I wouldn't let him print anything. He allowed this case was a brilliant exploit by the police—meaning you—and a heroic rescue. He swore your theory of it was correct."

"Well?" said Doyle sharply.

"So did I, an hour ago. We checked up and found that Traub left for Alaska three days ago. On a sailing ship that carries supplies to the salmon packers. We've tried to get her on the wireless, but she don't carry any. Won't dock for two days, either. Suppose this Traub did leave her, which is possible, what then?"

"Lefty knows him."

"Lefty," growled Wollson angrily,

"was picked up four blocks away from here with a bullet hole between his eyes. The killer must have plugged him as soon as the mail bags was in the car. Didn't I say he was thorough? I'm going to send the Freemans off to jail before he collects them, too. Then I can wait."

Doyle was silent. The thought of Myra and her father in jail, even as guests, was not pleasant to contemplate. They were too independent, too strong willed and too fearless to endure that long, and they could not be held against their will. Once they went home again, police protection would be a mockery.

"Wait how long?" he asked guardedly.

"Why, about a week," Wollson answered. "If the killer makes a get-away, this becomes a Federal case, don't it? If he tries to hide out here and fight, he's got to go to some of the gangsters to keep away from us. I'm figuring he'll do that, and when he does, one of these birds will bump him for the jack. The newspapers will be out pretty soon with the news that he's got two million bucks in cash and negotiable stuff, Slat. How long will he last with that?"

Again Slat was silent. Wollson was attempting to pass the buck. Even if he were right, and the dead body of a tall, bearded man were picked up some time in the next week, the money would remain lost. Worse still, Wollson was assuming that the killer was a fool—and every move the criminal had made argued quite the contrary.

"Freeman is about my size and build," Doyle thought aloud. "Suppose I changed clothes with him, chief? Suppose you sent him to the police infirmary in my name? He's as safe there as in jail. The girl could be sent there,

too, to be treated for shock. I could stay here—in bed—under the name of Freeman. The police surgeon would keep his mouth shut, and we could get the *Herald* to print a story that Freeman was too badly injured to be moved. Bill Peck is friendly enough with us to fix it. Don't guard the house at all—or only with one patrolman that has orders to keep both eyes shut if he sees any one trying to get close. If the killer thought we cops were dumb he might take another crack at his wit-ness."

The fat face furrowed with thought. The narrow eyes glanced at Doyle, and away again.

"It can't do no harm. It would look to the commissioner as though you were backing his ideas," Doyle argued cunningly. "Gimme a break, chief. You put the idea up to the commissioner and the *Herald*. If we get this killer before the Federals do, neither of them will forget who did it."

"Yeah," Wollson growled weakly. "You're volunteering for his duty, Doyle? I don't want no mistake about that! I don't want it said I ordered any of my men to stay here and pass himself off as a guy that a damn thorough killer would give about a million bucks to see dead."

"Sure, I volunteer," Doyle grinned.

Out of the corner of his eye he could see a golden head bent over a figure that barely breathed. If he succeeded, a girl would be safe. If he failed—there would be no harm done. No harm at all.

"We gotta guess at his name, and he's got two million bucks," Wollson was growling. "Hell, the cops never get a break! He could hire more men than there are on the force if he knew how to use his jack."

"If? Yes—if!" Doyle agreed.

This killer had brains and nerve. He would know.

CHAPTER IV

Murderer's Money

THE Hongkong Café had been a sailors' boarding house in the days when seamen were shanghaied for their advance money. As the fashions in rackets changed it had become successively a gambling house, a saloon, and last, a dance hall, but the essential nature of the place had never changed.

The huge, rambling wooden structure, built on piles that extended far out over the harbor, was a plague spot, designed for smuggling men, drugs, or liquor; a maze of passages that led to secret or private rooms. It was pierced with trap doors, provided with a dozen exits by land and water, and, under the management of Gus Voticelli, was the stronghold of the underworld. Beer and alky runners, gamblers and all their ilk were glad to split with the fat Italian for legal or physical protection in times of difficulty, and the right to operate without competition in the territory he assigned to them.

At midnight a tall man whose face shone from a recent application of the razor, entered the Hongkong and asked the bartender for Gus. Though he was a stranger, he was ushered to the private room of the boss racketeer with the briefest delay. The eyebrows that crossed his face in an unbroken bar of black, the thin, straight lips, the eyes were those of a man who would tolerate no refusal.

Even Voticelli, accustomed to rule and used to uneasiness on the part of those who sought him out, felt the difference. Almost deferentially he called for two glasses and a bottle of wine.

"Only suckers drink," the stranger refused curtly. He took a *Herald* extra from his pocket and spread it on the table so that Voticelli could see the headlines announcing the mail truck robbery.

"Two million dollars gone. There's the statement of the post office," he announced calmly. "I got it. Do you want half?"

From an inner pocket he took a sheaf of checks, bank notes and securities and tossed them down before the gangster. "That's just a sample to prove I've got the rest."

The gangster stared at the money. His hand moved toward it, and recoiled.

"You expect to be pinched," he accused.

"No," said Traub contemptuously. "I've had a bad break, that's all, and I can't work alone any more. I could go to any gang of crooks in town, but I've picked you because you're not as yellow as the rest. Not quite."

"You bumped Lefty the Monk?"

"Certainly," said the stranger with the utmost coolness. "There's a gun and a couple of those poison bombs in my pocket right now. Think that over before you decide to pick up any easy money by holding me for the cops and claiming the reward that will be offered by to-morrow."

Voticelli started. The tall man smiled at the confession that he had read in the mind of the other.

"I expect you to double cross me if you can," he challenged. "I'll do as much for you. Let's get that straight. It's money we want, both of us. If we work together we'll divide two million. If we don't you can pick up five or ten grand as a reward but where will the big money be? Where I hid it. And that's a place that no man can find and live."

The gangster moved uneasily. He was no weakling, but this man was the stronger. Though the Italian would not admit the fact, he was afraid. The ruthless face and the expressionless eyes across the table belonged to a monomaniac; intelligent, determined, but without the human weaknesses of the normal individual.

"If you're thinking I can be made to talk, by torture, I can't," declared Traub, and smiled again when Voticelli shook his head. "All right. Play with me, and you'll get a million without any risk to yourself. All you have to do is to send out a couple of fall guys to carry out my orders. I've doped the job out—thanks to the kindness of the press in informing me exactly what moves the police have made."

Voticelli reached out and pocketed the money. "If I don't have to do anything that will spoil my own racket—why, okay," he grumbled. "You talk big. It's all here in the headlines. You are spotted, and the cops have got a witness. By to-morrow you won't be able to step out on the street even."

"Exactly," said Traub with perfect composure. "Between me and a million are a man and a girl. I'll pay you the balance of what I've got to get rid of them, and I'll plan the thing for you as neat as I planned the holdup. I don't care if the job takes you a year. There's enough money on the table there to pay you for hiding me out, but if I get pinched, or die before you put this across, those are the last dollars of mine you'll pocket."

"Says you!" Voticelli grumbled. "Those witnesses ain't rodmen that nobody cares about. The whole force will ride me."

"Bump a rodman that nobody cares about and his friends lay for you, personally, with a machine gun,"

snorted the killer contemptuously. "All the cops can do is arrest the fellow you send after the witness. Is he going to squeal on you?"

"If you're yellow you can wait till the excitement dies down — though right now the cops don't know what they are up against. They'll figure I'm trying for a get-away. The witness I want most is at home, damn near dead. The girl's in a hospital, though she's well enough to walk around, as I know. You don't have to shoot anybody! Rough handling and exposure will kill the man as sure as a bullet. The girl can be got out of the way. I had a chance to size her up, and she's got too much nerve for her own good. Get rid of them, and I'll bring you half a carload of registered mail. If you can trail me to the place where I have it the whole lot is yours."

The killer's eyes gleamed contemptuously. "If you fail to-night, why, beginning to-morrow, I'll offer five hundred thousand for the man, three hundred for the girl, and a hundred for the detective on the case and the reporter that covered it. Payable as you get rid of them, and each time a chance at the whole pile. It's hidden not so far from here."

"Hate yourself, don't you?" the gangster grumbled, though his face was alight with calculating greed. "Suppose I put them on the spot? How do I know you make good?"

"You can always switch," said the killer contemptuously. "I've got to make good. I'd rather spend one million where and how I please than make a get-away to some hole with two million that I could never spend. I've planned this stick-up for more than a year. Ever since I found out how to liquify hydrocyanic acid gas and confine it in a fragile container.

"I'm not a man that can hide in a crowd, so I figured on taking along a fall guy to give any witness an eyeful, and then bumping him. I just didn't get the breaks, that was all. Lefty didn't see a shade go up, and I had to lean out of the car to call to him. The truck had to stop right under a light."

The killer shrugged. "The cops will know soon enough that Irving Traub left on a sailing ship, but that he fell overboard before she was far from shore. My alibi won't last more than a day or so. I need an organization, and I'm willing to pay for it."

Voticelli reached for the bottle and poured himself a drink.

"I got some fall guys, too. I guess I'll use them," he said at last. He walked to the door. "Say, get hold of Beany and a couple more of those would-be hard guys," he called to the bartender. "Tell 'em I'll give them a job as a try-out." He turned back to Traub, and poured himself another drink. "Now, what do you want done?" he demanded.

On the roof of the Hongkong Café the rain drummed noisily. Traub lowered his voice to a whisper and leaned across the table.

CHAPTER V

The Night Attack

THE rain, an hour later, was making Doyle curse steadily under his breath. It made the garden behind the Freeman house dark as a pit. The gusts of wind gave the shrubbery which grew there a life of its own. With face pressed against the lower pane of the rear bedroom window, the detective was trying to distinguish the imaginary from the real.

There was a man in the garden. He

was sure of it, though he had seen nothing more than a shadow darker than the rest, a movement more purposeful than the tossing of the branches which instantly merged in darkness and movement.

The Freeman house was unlighted. Behind Doyle a blanket had been caught between the upper and lower sashes to make sure that his head would be invisible and to protect him from the rain that beat through the bullet-shattered upper pane. He hesitated to leave his post and whisper to the surgeon who kept watch in the front part of the house. Mike Slatterly had been ordered to patrol the sidewalk until he heard a shot, and thus compelled to play a waiting game. Doyle was on fire with impatience.

His eyes might have deceived him. Minutes had passed since he had observed the movement, and yet the man in the garden kept at a distance. Stealthily Doyle tried the lower window sash to make sure he could fling the window open with a single movement, and measured the distance to the ground. If the man approached he would leap out.

Far away a police whistle shrilled, but Doyle was too intent to be distracted. Subconsciously he heard an automobile coming down Rose Street, and strained his eyes for the glimmer of light that would be reflected into the garden in the rear. It came—and with it a shock that rocked the bungalow to its foundations. A thudding roar of high explosive, a crash of wood and the tinkling of glass, a lurch of the floor under Doyle's heels. The bomb must have blown in the whole front of the house.

The surgeon was shouting Doyle's name. Outside Slatterly's whistle was going, answered by a dozen more from

right and left—and again, this time positively, Doyle saw a movement in the garden. The man was on the right hand side, twenty feet away, flattened against the hedge.

With a bound Doyle went through the window. He expected a shot. There was none. As he struck the ground the man turned and ran like a rabbit. The hedge at the rear of the garden checked him. Doyle made a flying tackle. One hand caught a coat tail, and held it. The two rolled through the hedge and into the garden beyond.

Once Doyle was hit on the head with a blackjack, he thought, for he saw a million stars. Then he had the man in his arms — a feeble, squirming, scratching armful of skin and bone, and not the tall giant he sought! Savage with disappointment Doyle twisted two thin wrists together and snapped on handcuffs, then snapped his flash light into the prisoner's face.

He had caught a boy about eighteen. A rat. The pallid skin and the pupils of the eyes, tiny as pin points, told their own story.

"Who are you?" Doyle growled.

"Beany Gra— Aw, what's it to you?"

"Come through!"

No answer. Doyle jerked his prisoner upright and felt the bump on his head. His scalp was bleeding slightly. He swung his flash in a circle to discover the weapon. A thirty-two caliber automatic lay at the foot of the hedge which had stopped its flight when the kid flung it away.

"Come clean— Who were you told to plug?" demanded the detective.

No answer.

Heavy feet pounded across the grass. Doyle lifted his flash light onto the figure of a patrolman who came charging forward with ready club.

"Nobody passed me!" the latter sung out. "Oh—hello, Slats! Where did you get that?"

"What are you doing with this precinct, Bill?" retorted the detective.

"Oh, two platoons are out. Wollson posted us around two blocks with orders to close in if anything broke. How'd *he* get through?"

"Oh, while some of you turned your backs to keep the rain out of your eyes," snapped the detective. "Know him?"

"Yeah. Belongs down by the water front."

"Gunman?"

"Naw. Nothin' but a sneak thief. Hangs around with some of Voticelli's bunch, when they'll let him. Is Wollson here yet?"

"How'd I know?" Doyle growled.

He was sore. To surround the block with cops was just what might have been expected of the lieutenant. Had the killer come himself he would have noticed the uniformed men and retreated. The detective shoved the captured pistol into his pocket. He was sorry for the kid, and wanted to break his neck at the same time.

"Thought you'd show 'em you was a real rod, huh?" he grunted, and led the way into the house.

Lights were flashing up as the police gathered after a futile chase of the car from which the bomb had been tossed. Already Wollson was busy passing the buck. His heavy voice reached Doyle, bawling out the men for being blind, for being slow, for letting the tall killer slip through their fingers. The front room was a wreck when Doyle entered it. At the sight of the prisoner the lieutenant's complaints ceased.

"You'll talk, rat," he growled. "Doyle, you did good work. Lucky I

thought of moving Freeman out of here, huh?" Proudly he surveyed the shattered walls. "If the bomb had exploded on the porch instead of on the ground outside, nobody'd be left," Wollson expanded.

"We might send for an ambulance," Doyle suggested, more amused than otherwise at being robbed of the credit for his scheme, but anxious that the secrecy of Freeman's whereabouts be preserved. Wollson went to the telephone. He ordered the ambulance, but instead of hanging up, remained at the phone. The bulky shoulders were tensed.

"What do you mean?" he snarled over the wire in a tone that made Doyle's heart sink. "Freeman ain't even here! Of course he ain't hurt! Yeah? No. No, I'll take care of it."

He turned, and though his face was purple on this occasion his boast that he never became excited was made good. Angrily he glared at Doyle.

"The hospital got word just now that this house had been bombed and Freeman was dying and calling for his daughter," he accused. "She left to come here. Is this more of your smart Alec stunts? Sending Freeman to the infirmary in your name was your idea!"

"But she knew her father wasn't here. That I—" Doyle stammered, aghast.

"She did, and she came out just the same!" shouted Wollson. "Thought you was dying, likely. Who the hell would care if you had! It's a plant! She's gone! My witness! My witness is gone!"

"The kid I caught hung around Voticelli's," snapped Doyle, his mind racing. Myra had been grateful to him. Because she thought he was dying she had hurried to come. He was

responsible if anything happened. Gone. A phone call. A taxi waiting for a girl to leave the hospital in the rain. All so simple, and so diabolically, coldly clever. The bombing of the house had been a play for two victims. Because Doyle had had the effrontery to match wits with the killer it had succeeded in part.

"The kid you caught! The hell with him!" snarled Wollson. "I got to get out every man to watch the streets. Fat chance of doing anything, at that! As for you—g'wan home and go to bed! You've done everything for us in this case that you can. G'wan! Get out of my sight!"

Led by Wollson, the policemen raced for their cars. Numb with despair, Doyle followed them as far as the sidewalk. As the tail lights sped away he stood alone, shivering in the rain.

The kid came from Voticelli's! A miserable crew, but all he had.

CHAPTER VI

The Phony Extra

THE impulse to race to the Hong-kong Café and extract a confession from Voticelli at the point of a gun was all but overpowering. Not the certainty that such an attempt would be futile, that it would begin with a sneering denial, and end by his shooting the gangster, or being shot by him, restrained Doyle. He was seeing red.

What held him in his tracks, what made him turn at last and walk to the telephone, was the fact that whatever the gangsters or the killers desired to do with Myra Freeman had already been done. If the killer had her, she was already dead, but if it were an accomplice there was a chance—a faint chance—that she had merely been kid-

naped. If she were still living, haste and violence on the part of the police would only serve as her death warrant. Her abductor would be forced to slay her to protect himself.

To attempt to trace her, with all the city to search, was a futile task. Wollson would have a policeman on every corner, would not neglect to keep Voticelli's headquarters under close surveillance. Search it he would dare not, for the same reasons that restrained Doyle. To save the girl the forces of the underworld must be taken in flank, their alliance with the killer broken up.

How long Doyle stayed in the rain he never knew. Perhaps not longer than five minutes, but into them he crammed the mental effort of a year. He was limp, exhausted, when he called the *Herald* office and got Bill Peck.

Bleakly Doyle related the latest sensation in the case. The excitement of the reporter who cried that the news deserver another extra, and who yelled for the night editor to listen in, left the detective cold. He was willing to give the news that would sell a lot of papers, but he was doing it so that the *Herald* might be more willing to do a favor for him.

When Peck began to babble thanks Doyle made his request. He could hear the gasp with which it was received.

"That's impossible! I mean, it can be done all right, but we can't—oh, hell, I'll put the managing editor on the phone. He's still here."

Doyle waited, staring at the telephone. Though he did not have much hope, he talked to the managing editor well. When the *Herald* got out its extra, he said, he wished they would print one very special edition for him—an edition of only three or four copies.

He wanted to walk into every important gangster headquarters, beginning with Voticelli at the Hongkong, with a paper which had an eight-column headline in the *Herald's* largest type:

MAIL BANDIT'S LOOT FOUND

Yes, Doyle admitted, that wasn't true. Yet the life of a girl was at stake. There wasn't time to use ordinary police methods. His theory was the killer was a marked and hunted man. No gang would give him shelter or assistance except in the hope of getting his money. Furthermore, the killer wouldn't dare reveal where the loot was. He'd be bumped right away.

By spreading a false report Doyle would start a quarrel among thieves. By watching the face of the gang chiefs as they read the headline he might learn positively which of them was allied with the murderer.

"I'll have to get the okay of the police commissioner," said the managing editor. Doyle's heart leaped. He had convinced the *Herald*; he had no doubt that the commissioner, with his love of direct and aggressive action, would approve.

"When can you have my papers ready?" he asked eagerly.

"Three-quarters of an hour," the managing editor promised.

Doyle hung up the phone and took a taxi.

Despite the utmost speed of a newspaper at the copy desk and in the composing room, however, it was two o'clock when Doyle entered the Hongkong Café with the specially printed copy he had requested in his coat pocket. On the other hand, that copy was a work of art, and half a dozen plain-clothes men under the command of a sergeant had been put at Doyle's

orders. He posted them around the café, ready to dash in if anything broke.

Inside the rambling building Doyle sensed an equal readiness for emergencies. Though the dance floor was empty and no customers were in the bar, a bartender and two assistants were on duty. The bartender smiled sourly when Doyle appeared, as though he expected such a visit, and when the detective asked for Voticelli the gangster appeared almost immediately, fully dressed and cold sober, which was not his habit at that hour. He ushered Doyle into the private room, and faced him across the table with an alertness so intense that the detective's hunch became doubly strong.

Before Voticelli could say a word Doyle tossed the specially written copy of the *Herald* across the table.

"Thought that might interest you," he declared, pointing to the screaming headline.

For a second the gangster sat rigid. A poker blankness spread across his fleshy countenance. The eyes flickered to the detective, hot with disappointment and hate, and then away.

"Yeah? And why?" the gangster parried.

To prolong the uneasiness of the other Doyle delayed the answer. He fished out a cigarette, rejected it because it had been crumpled in the package, selected another, struck a match, and blew a long puff of smoke at the ceiling.

"I'm too wise to mix up in that stuff," snapped Voticelli.

"Sure. So I told the lieutenant," Doyle remarked with obvious sarcasm. "Lots of cars outside, ain't there? Might be bad for business, huh?" Like a flash Doyle flung himself half across the table.

"I'm trying to be right with you, you dumb-bell!" he snapped. "A witness of ours was abducted last night, and we picked up one of your rats! It ain't your regular racket, so I figured you'd like to know about this!" Doyle's forefinger stabbed at the headline. "It would be hell, wouldn't it, to do an expensive job—for a dead beat?"

"What do you mean? I don't get you," Voticelli growled sullenly. Despite the gangster's efforts to control his features Doyle observed an expression of uneasiness and of calculation for which he was at a loss to account.

"A million is a lot of money," the gangster growled. "A tenth of that would look good to me." He stopped. Again he glanced fleetingly at Doyle. "You bulls blame me for everything," he grumbled. "I'm getting sick of it."

"Nothing like coming clean," Doyle suggested. "You ain't done anything as far as the department knows—yet." He was looking hard at the gangster. Doyle's heart was in his mouth. The best actor cannot control his features absolutely. Voticelli would reveal something at this secretly veiled hint at the fate of Myra Freeman. But beyond the fact that he was concealing strong emotion of some sort, there was no visible reaction.

"Don't know nothing about this," growled Voticelli at last. "Get that—nothing. But I'm willing to be right. Kidnaping a dame is bound to raise trouble. I got friends, the same as the department has, and one of them may have heard something. Give me four or five hours, and I might be able to find out who done it. I'll give the guy a tip to turn her loose. Are you willing to wait?" The gangster rose as he spoke and backed toward the door. Both hands were in his coat pockets.

"Sure I'll wait!" snapped Doyle. He was sure at last that he was on the right trail, though whether Voticelli wanted the time for which he had asked to check up the story of the discovery of the mail sacks or to move Myra to a safer place of concealment, he could only guess. Only great danger or an enormous stake could induce the gangster to threaten him with a concealed gun.

As the door closed behind Voticelli Doyle rose and tiptoed toward it. He meant to follow the gangster through the café.

"Hi! Bring Mr. Doyle a drink!" Voticelli shouted in the passageway. The detective stopped. During the wait he was to be under guard, then? The private room was windowless, escape impossible. There was a telephone in the room, but no time to use it. Instead Doyle whipped out his revolver and stepped to the door. If he could overpower the bartender quickly and silently, he might follow still.

The door opened in his face. The bartender, carrying a bottle on a tray, stopped short to avoid colliding with him. Doyle's left hand caught the toppling bottle. With the right he jabbed the bartender in the stomach with the gun.

"Come in!" he whispered fiercely. Wide-eyed, the bartender made one forward step. Doyle swung the door shut with his foot. He had not seen Voticelli.

"Keep your trap shut!" he threatened. He confiscated a gun from the bartender's hip pocket, whirled him around, and snapped on handcuffs. Swiftly he gagged the man with two handkerchiefs, forced him to sit down in the corner of the room, and tied his legs together with his suspenders.

It was all quickly done, yet when

Doyle tiptoed to the door again the sound of Voticelli's footsteps had died away. With a curse at his luck, Doyle unlaced his shoes. With a sudden inspiration he whipped off his coat and vest, snatched the apron from the bartender and tied it around his own waist, picked up the bottle and the tray. Since he had to wander through a maze of passages at random, he might as well have an excuse. No one would mistake him for the bartender, who was a foot shorter, and bald, but the Hongkong must have many waiters. Doyle thrust his gun under his apron, remembered his service holster, and removed that. A waiter in stocking feet? Well, anybody who looked at him closely enough to observe that would see through the clumsy disguise anyhow.

CHAPTER VII

Doyle Meets the Killer

THE corridor outside the private office extended straight through the building. Through an unshaded window at the far end Doyle caught a glimpse of the lights of a steamship moving out to sea, which located the water side of the building and enabled him to get his bearings.

That Voticelli had gone toward the bar seemed unlikely, so Doyle walked toward the rear. There were half a dozen doors in the corridor, and he paused to listen at each. There was, however, no sound of voices.

At the extreme rear the corridor turned to the right. On the left, a steep, narrow flight of stairs mounted to the second floor. Doyle thought swiftly. The kitchen and private dining room were at the right. To the left was the dance hall. Any private rooms in which a girl might be hidden or a criminal concealed, would logi-

cally be found on the floor above the dance hall. Therefore he went up the stairs, and stepped at the top into a corridor such as he had left.

On a stool twenty feet away a slatternly old woman in black was perched like a dried up crow. Despite the hour, she was wide awake.

"Bringin' me a drink, deary?" she cackled.

Doyle's crude disguise had won him an instant's respite. The old woman was peering at him, chin forward and eyes puckered as though her sight were dim. Doyle hoped she was half blind.

"The boss ordered this bottle, but he ain't in his office. Did he come up here?" he questioned, stepping forward.

"No, he—hey, who the hell are you?" Like a flash the old woman was on her feet, her back against the door before which she had been posted.

"The new waiter—"

"Like hell!" she shrilled, and opened her mouth to scream.

Doyle leaped to silence her, but with an agility he had not suspected she ducked under his arm. The tray he carried fell with an echoing clang, and hard upon that the old woman's screams cut the silence. Racing down the corridor, she yelled for help, for the boss, for a gat—quick!

On the floor below a door opened with an echoing slam. Heavy feet started on the run for the stairway. Doyle's escape was cut off. To follow the old woman was to be guided into the midst of the gangsters. In the hope of breaking through to a window he hurled himself against the door which the woman had been guarding, only to recoil as though his shoulder had struck a solid partition.

No flimsy bedroom door, this! It was secured with a cylinder lock—and

why should it be watched at two in the morning? He heard the heavy feet that were running toward him strike the stairs, but he caught up the stool and swung it with all his force against that massive door. At the third blow one of the upper panels cracked. That was all. The framework was still solid. To smash the door would take an ax.

Swiftly he put his eye to the crack. Though it was narrow as a knife slit, he could see an unshaded electric light, a part of a window, barred with heavy wire netting, and one side of a narrow iron bed. Only one side, but the blankets were pulled awry as though the bed were occupied.

The screaming and the hammering on the door had been enough to wake the soundest sleeper. Only a person drugged or insensible could lie quiet in such a racket. Drugged—or dead!

With a wild Irish yell Doyle snatched his revolver and sprang for the head of the stairs. Discover who lay in that bed he must. He would drive the gangsters back, then shoot a hole through that door if necessary. The police outside would hear the shots. There would be help for him in a minute if he could only hold his ground!

He was at the stairway just as Voticelli reached the top. They fired simultaneously.

A red hot whip flicked Doyle's cheek. His own bullet missed completely, but with his left hand he managed to knock the gangster's gun aside as Voticelli fired again. They were chest to chest, and with a fighter's instinct Doyle clinched, holding the gangster's gun away from his body. There was an instant when Doyle might have shot, but it would have been murder. Instead he swung his revolver at the head of the other man.

Though the blow landed, Voticelli half parried it with his left elbow. He was dazed and his pistol slipped from his fingers, but he managed to throw both arms around Doyle and cling like a leech. He was a foot shorter than Doyle, and though the detective struck again and again at the head pressed against his chest, he could not knock the gangster out or wrestle out of his grip.

A pistol barked, and a bullet zipped within an inch of Doyle's ear. The shot came from the bottom of the stairs. He swung Voticelli between himself and the new enemy and looked down into cold eyes that glared from beneath eyebrows that were an unbroken bar of black, and into the muzzle of a levelled pistol that coolly followed every movement of Doyle's head.

Even with the beard gone, and before he noticed Traub's height, Doyle recognized him by the eyebrows. The killer was in no hurry to shoot. He was sighting carefully, making sure of his arm. In that tense second Doyle noticed that Traub was stripped to his undershirt, that he had a flash light wrapped with tire tape in his left hand. Then the detective dropped to his knees, dragging Voticelli down with him.

Traub swore aloud, for as his target vanished behind the gangster's broad back a police whistle shrilled inside the café. There were shouts from the front of the building, the crash of a door burst from its hinges by a concerted rush, and then the loud pound of feet down the corridor. The police were coming at last.

Doyle strained to jerk his gun arm from Voticelli's clutch. Traub coolly turned to the window, threw both legs over the sill, and then leaned back

for a last shot at the men above. Doyle winced at the flash, but the bullet was not aimed at him. Voticelli suddenly went limp, shot through the shoulder blade to the heart.

Traub leaped into the harbor. The bullet Doyle sent after him only shattered the glass.

When the sergeant of the plain-clothes squad reached the end of the corridor Doyle had come down the stairs and was climbing through the window. His face was a mask of blood, and the sergeant, seeing what looked to be a waiter on the point of escape, leaped for him.

"Not me—I'm Doyle," said the detective through clenched teeth. "There's a broken door upstairs, and Myra Freeman's there, I think. Look after her, sarge! She's here somewhere, if you have to take this damn place apart to find her!"

"Okay, but—"

"But, hell! The killer's in the harbor! Tell Wollson it *is* Traub, and send a police launch to hunt under the piers. I'm going now!"

Doyle twisted and dived into the dark water, revolver in hand.

CHAPTER VIII

Under the Piers

WHEN he rose he could see little. He trod water, and peered left and right. Beneath the café the darkness was absolute. Among the piling was a hiding place that Traub could have reached in three strokes, and where he might lurk for hours, slipping from behind one pile to the next unseen, even though half a dozen men with flash lights invaded his refuge. There was no sound but the slup slup of the tide against the piling, and no sign of the police launch whatever.

Yet if Traub had sought the nearest shelter, he would be caught when morning came at the latest. A swimmer could not move fast or far through the piling. Doyle's eyes were becoming accustomed to the darkness. The faint glimmer of the lights on the shipping anchored near by cast a sheen on the water. He began to pick out logs floating in the tide, a bit of box, square and black against the surface glimmer, and, suddenly, strikingly noticeable because, of all the small dark objects on the surface, it alone did *not* drift with the tide, a round blot perhaps fifty yards away that could only be the head of a man—a man swimming parallel to the piers, and within a dozen feet of their shadow.

"Sergeant!" Doyle shouted.

There was no answer. That satisfied him perfectly. It was his duty to call for help, but he wanted none. He was a superb swimmer, and even if Traub struck out across the harbor to escape the police dragnet—which was possible for him to do even now—Doyle had the ability to follow. He set out with long strokes, making as little splash as he could, gaining upon the black dot that moved steadily ahead of him, but not so fast as to drive Traub into the refuge of the piers. Doyle figured that the killer was on his way to the hiding place that he had prepared for himself in the event that the crime had no eye-witnesses. If he could be taken there the loot would also be recovered.

Traub had seen Doyle dive. He was aware that he was being pursued, of course; yet, though he swam rapidly, nothing about his progress indicated flight. He was not splashing like a swimmer moving at top speed. Indeed, he seemed to permit Doyle to close the gap between them to about twenty-five yards, for after that

distance was attained the detective discovered that he could no longer gain.

They were in easy pistol shot, but neither could see the sights, and Doyle, with only four cartridges left, did not want to fire until there was some one on the piers who could head Traub out into the open water. So late at night, however, all the watchmen seemed to be inside, and the water front in that section consisted of rickety buildings, poorly lighted and policed—the older part of the city, more or less abandoned in favor of the more modern wharves.

For fully ten minutes, during which Doyle estimated that he must have swum a quarter of a mile, the chase paralleled the docks. Then Traub began to angle in, and suddenly his head disappeared under the piling of a cluster of sheds which were without a single light, and beneath which the darkness was thick as soot.

Doyle's head would still be outlined by the surface glimmer. It would be a superb target. He realized it, but nevertheless, he pressed on. Cartridges that have been immersed in water are not too reliable. He could fire at Traub's flash if the killer missed. The break would be more nearly even than anything he had had yet.

Nevertheless, he gasped with relief when he passed from the open into a darkness that seemed to press on his eyeballs, only to curse under his breath a second afterward.

Traub was—where? The tide went slup slup against the piles, covering all sounds of the movements of a swimmer. Bullets were not the only weapons the murderer possessed. If he had a gas mask that would protect him against his own poison bombs—well, if he had, reflected Doyle grimly, it was always possible to swim away

under water at the first whiff of the peach odor. Since he couldn't possibly find Traub in this game of blind man's buff the thing to be done was to summon help. Doyle shook the water out of his revolver and pulled the trigger. The cartridge exploded. So far, so good. Some one would hear that.

"Help! Police!" he shouted, grinning to himself at the noise he made. He was bawling like a citizen after a holdup. Calling for help might be sensible, but from sheer embarrassment Doyle could not keep it up. Any one within hearing would have heard him, anyhow.

There was no answering shout. The tide went slup slup against the piling.

Nevertheless Doyle's efforts had a result, though one he had not anticipated. Not twenty feet away the beam of a flash light stabbed down through an open trap door. Doyle caught sight of a slimy ladder rising from the water for a distance of above five feet to the floor of the sheds overhead before the flash light beam found him.

He dodged behind a pile just as a pistol exploded and a bullet splashed water where his head had been. Before he could return the shot, the flash light was snapped off.

"Going to fight, huh?" Doyle whispered delightedly. Dark or not he could find that ladder now. No use to waste precious ammunition in the hope of summoning help that might not come. Instead, he worked his way toward the ladder. He was close to it when he stopped, appalled at his folly. No sucker had ever sucked down bait so eagerly. Of course Traub had revealed himself—to shut Doyle up! He was waiting up there unhampered by the water, to make the shutting up permanent.

For perhaps a minute the detective

remained motionless. Traub had lured him to this spot deliberately, and yet, being here, if he retreated the killer would escape—might be escaping even now by some way of his own through that jumble of unlighted sheds overhead. Doyle shrugged and swam ahead, though now that he was aware of the danger he moved far more cautiously. If he made any noise that could not be mistaken for that of the tide once he was under the ladder, there would be a blinding flash of light into his eyes, the crash of a pistol, and curtains for Mr. Terence Doyle, late of the Eighteenth Seattle Precinct.

There had been three piles between him and the ladder. Already he had passed two. He held his breath and floated rather than swam on his back, his revolver ready, his feet dragging, propelling himself by paddling with one hand held at his hip. Very gently his head touched a bar of wood parallel with the water. The ladder.

Once his hand was on the lowest rung, however, it took all his courage to lift himself out of the water. The snap had not been shut. He could shoot at the flash of the light. In a sense he would have an even break, except for the difficulty of climbing with a revolver ready to shoot instantly. Yet to his overstrained senses each drop of water that fell from his body made distinct splash. He held his breath. Not a sound. *No!* That was a breath—and the faint hiss of it was almost in his ear!

Doyle froze on the ladder. His adversary was within arm's length, waiting to locate him by the sounds of his advance!

For a long time Doyle clung to the slippery ladder, gun levelled, holding on with one hand. His muscles began to ache. To hang there longer was

impossible. Retreat was as likely to betray his position as an advance. He held his breath, straightened his body, and slowly reached upward into the darkness, waving his gun in wider and wider circles.

There was a click of steel against steel. His revolver had touched a pistol that also groped in the dark for contact with his body.

Flame streaked the darkness. Involuntarily Doyle also pulled trigger. He dropped his weapon and lunged upward, snatching at the pistol flash. He caught a wrist, hurled it sidewise. The flash of the second pistol shot burned his face as he let himself fall from the ladder. Gripping his enemy's wrist as he was, Doyle's weight jerked the killer through the trap. As they struck the water the detective's left hand found the throat.

They sank deep, yet though Doyle's lungs were bursting his only emotion was a fierce joy that the other would drown too. Nothing would have broken his grip. He was kicked, till he caught his enemy's legs with his own. Then he held tight.

A fist beat at his face, but the water robbed the blows of their sting. Grimly Doyle clung, saving his breath. The pair rose, but very slowly. Doyle caught a mouthful of air and shoved himself under the water again. When air in his lungs brought him to the surface the second time his prisoner struggled no longer.

CHAPTER IX

Doyle Thinks

DOYLE got his shoulder beneath the unconscious prisoner. With the last of his strength he managed to climb the ladder and dump his burden on the floor of the shed. He

found the flash light in Traub's hip pocket, and with this located an electric light, which he turned on. One bag of registered mail lay beside the open trap. Otherwise the shed was empty, but the trail of Traub's wet feet was printed clear on the dusty floor. The tracks led out through a door in the front of the shed, and back again. Beside the door was a wet patch, as though the killer had stood waiting at the point for some time.

There was only a moment to notice these details, for Traub had begun to gasp for breath, and the detective had scarcely time to bind arms and ankles with strips of his shirt before the eyes opened. Traub tried to get up, found he was bound, and lay back, shaking his head to clear away the mists of unconsciousness.

"You damn, lucky flatfoot," he whispered. "Got me, have you?" The thin lips twisted in a bitter grin.

"You'd never have done it if Voticelli hadn't been a rat. He was scared to let me at the girl until the jack was in his hand, and went into a blue funk when you came in!"

"Shut up!" snapped Doyle. The memory of the shot in the back which had killed the gangster was too vivid.

"He'd have squealed," Traub persisted. "If crooks like him only had nerve they could run the country if they wanted to. There's more of them than there are police, and their organization is as good."

"Yeah," Doyle grunted.

The cold eyes stared at him with an expression that made him uneasy.

"I had you licked twice," Traub whispered. "Once when I waited outside the window with the bomb in my hand to find out how much you guessed. Once again when I lay in the dark here with my gun pointed down

the ladder, waiting for you to climb up and touch it. You were dumb, flatfoot—too damn dumb to be scared. Nerve and persistence. That's all your kind have!"

"Yeah," Doyle grunted. For a moment he had forgotten the poison bombs. Traub wore nothing but a pair of trousers. The detective cautiously felt the pockets, but found nothing. At his shrug a contemptuous smile crossed the killer's face.

"Dumb—and lucky," he repeated. "And what'll it get you? Nothing!"

"Say, are you trying to bribe me?" Doyle snapped.

"No. I can size up men," retorted Traub almost as sharply. "I'll be pinched and convicted. You've got me—and it's going to do *you* no good. But if you'd been yellow I could have been the biggest crook this country ever saw. I could have ruled it, flatfoot! I had the nerve and the science. I had the money."

The thin lips drew together, and Traub shrugged. "To hell with that. I failed," he remarked conversationally. "I don't mind dying, but I hate to be laughed at. Photographed and jawed at by stupid fools. Interviewed by sob sisters, used by a lawyer to make himself Governor, and psychoanalyzed by college professors hunting publicity. I'm not licked yet, flatfoot. Give me a break and I'll do you a favor. I want to die, understand? Here and now. Let me roll through that trap and drown. Before I go I'll tell you where the rest of the mail is. The truth."

"Nix," said Doyle. "Your tracks are plain enough in the dust."

"Suit yourself. I had nothing against you," Traub whispered. "You'd have been a great detective, too. You're just smart enough, and dumb enough. But suit yourself."

The killer's jaw set. He closed his eyes and threw himself back on the dusty floor. He did not mean to speak again.

A shiver went down Doyle's back. He dragged Traub away from the trap-door and stood staring around the shed. This murderer was cold as a king cobra. Hate was as foreign to him as mercy. He was a machine for getting what he wanted—and he was threatening.

Traub was not bluffing. Thus far Doyle had won. Whether by nerve or luck he cared little, but he sensed that the end was not yet. He was tired, and the salt water made the wound on his face smart intolerably. Even his senses were dull. He couldn't seem to use his head at all. A child could follow those footprints.

Doyle whipped his brain into action. The trail on the floor was too obvious, but what of the footprints by the door? The killer had had no time to waste. He had been forced to move around in the dark, and yet he had paused too far from the trap to listen for Doyle, and had even brought back one sack of mail. For Voticelli? No. For a lure? That was more probable, but as a temptation to do what?

Seeing one bag, the natural impulse of a detective would be to rush ahead to locate the rest. Doyle decided he was not going to hurry, anyhow. On the contrary, he stepped onto the wet patch and examined the door inch by inch. Nothing was unusual, except that near the door jamb and as high up as he could reach, there was a bit of string projecting through a crack into the room beyond. Doyle glanced at Traub. The latter's eyes were tight shut. The detective took the string in his fingers and pulled.

Nothing happened. The string was

attached to a weight in the other room which moved about a foot. About a foot from the hole where the string disappeared through the partition was a rusty nail. Doyle twisted the string around this.

Maybe he'd found Traub's secret. Maybe not. Doyle drew a deep breath and thrust the door open.

On the floor before his eyes lay the balance of the stolen mail sacks. He hardly saw them. The room into which he looked was like that in which he stood, and directly opposite was a door that led to the street. From the lintel of this door hung a brick, and behind it, pinned to the door itself, was something white.

Doyle stepped behind the door he had just pushed open. Here was another brick, but by pulling the string he had lifted this clear of the swing of the door. In a handkerchief pinned to the door panel was a bulge half the size of his fist. Carefully he felt behind the cloth and took out a thin glass sphere filled with a yellowish liquid.

Had he opened the door carelessly he would have broken the poison bomb.

"Found it, have you?" snarled Traub unexpectedly. "Damn you, flatfoot, you *think*! All right, send for the wagon. You'll go far, flatfoot, and mind this: Most men are dumb! Treat them so, and use them, because the fools can't help it!"

"Yeah?" Doyle answered.

He removed the poison bomb that guarded the outer door, caught up a stick, and beat a tattoo on the sidewalk to summon the nearest patrolman. A police whistle replied, not far away, and with a sigh of content Doyle leaned back against the shed wall. In a few minutes now the wagon would arrive, in a few more he would be at

the Hongkong. The doctors might have brought Myra around by this time . . . Wollson would probably be there, too.

All Doyle's desire to humiliate the lieutenant had vanished. He was in a position to crow. Wollson would have crowed if the circumstances had been reversed, yet in the reaction from the excitement and strain of the last six hours Doyle realized that he would accomplish nothing by indulging in a cheap, personal triumph. For some time yet Wollson would continue to be a lieutenant. On the next case he would do the obvious thing again. In the interim he would continue to use his authority to chase Doyle out into the rain on useless errands.

Therefore it happened that when the patrol wagon arrived Doyle was silent during the ride to the Hongkong. The vision of a girl with hair of bright gold rode with him, and when the wagon stopped before the café he leaped out, forgetful of his bleeding face in his eagerness.

Wollson caught him by the arm.

"Is Myra all right?" Doyle snapped. "I—I mean, Miss Freeman?"

"Sure. She's sitting up asking about *you*," growled the lieutenant. "Forget the dame, Slats. She ain't important. She saw nothin'. How'd you get this Traub guy?"

Gently Doyle slipped out of the lieutenant's grip. He answered in such a low tone that only Wollson heard.

"By going ahead—and by using my bean," he whispered. "You might try that last the next time you wait. This case is up to the district attorney now, so get out of my way. Myra Freeman is mighty important to *me*."

Humming under his breath, Doyle hurried into the café where Myra waited.

Behind the Green Lights

A True Story



The pool room proprietor was edging toward me

Razors and Stiletos in Minetta Street; the Dog Who Loved His Beer; a New Sergeant in the Gas House District . . .

By Captain Cornelius W. Willemse

FORMER COMMANDER OF THE FIRST DETECTIVE DIVISION OF NEW YORK CITY

DON'T MISS THIS STORY—BEGIN HERE!

A RUNAWAY boy from a well-to-do Dutch family jumped the ship he had come over in at Hoboken and found his way across the river to New York City and the Bowery. There he lived for a while off the free lunch counters, starved a good deal, put his brawn to work as a "bouncer," and finally won a long cherished appointment to New York City's police force. His adventures with crime began without preface. The boy was

Cornelius W. Willemse. And now he tells the vivid story of an unforgettable past. Begin it here.

CHAPTER XXVI

The Minetta District War

IN the spring of 1906, I was transferred from the Tenderloin to the Mercer Street station. Some of my superiors had taken a dislike to me; hence the shift. I was assigned to

This story began in DETECTIVE FICTION WEEKLY for June 13

patrol duty on Minetta Lane, Minetta Street and Minetta Place, a post that called for every bit of police experience and nerve that I possessed.

In those days the Minettas had a mixed population — Italians and Negroes. The Negroes had been there first, but the Italians had started a residential invasion. The stiletto was matched against the razor. The stiletto, in a practiced hand, is more effective than a razor. As a result, the Negroes were moving out, slowly and grudgingly, as the Italians moved in. Of itself, a plentiful source of trouble. But that wasn't all.

Thieves and street girls had made a haven of the section. On Third Street, Carmine Street and Minetta Street, all part of the Mercer Street District, were several Negro places running full blast. They were cheap creep and panel joints, men being robbed in them every night. There was none of the glamour and bright lights that helped to gloss over the wide-open doings of the Tenderloin. Dark, squalid houses stood side by side. Men could shoot from doorways, or spring out with a stiletto, razor, or sandbag before a passer-by knew what was up. The saloons were dark, evil-looking places, the rendezvous for thieves and the lowest type of thugs.

There were good, hard-working folk among the Negroes. They were being driven from homes they had occupied for years, and I felt sorry for them. Among the Italian newcomers, too, were many splendid families, but the riff-raff ruled the district and the police were locked in a bitter war.

I was warned the night I appeared for duty. Sergeant Gilhooley had just been shot and murdered. Two patrolmen on the same post had been shot down when they rushed into a saloon

to stop fights between Italians and Negroes. The same Negro, Jeff Sanders, had fired all three shots. He'd been discharged in court because the police lacked conclusive evidence. But he'd learned how the police treat tough guys in the station houses.

"Sanders is behaving himself now, but every bad man, white and Negro, thinks he's a hero, and is out to knock off a cop," the sergeant told me. "Keep your night stick and your gun handy every minute you're on post. Have your eyes peeled and don't pass any doorway without looking to see what's there. We don't want to lose any more men. Don't be afraid to use your club. They don't know what talking means down there."

My first trip over the post convinced me that the advice was sound. If ever a spot looked ripe for trouble, it was Minetta Lane. As you walked along in the dark you could hear voices, Italian and Negro, but you couldn't see the speakers or place the exact houses in which they were. It was the kind of a place where a cop finds every muscle in his body tense without knowing just why, and where his hand clutches his night stick grimly.

Paddy Gunn was my relief on post. A man feared for his courage, but more feared for his powerful work with the night stick. Paddy knew the district well and had been the victor in a dozen brawls. I talked things over with him and walked back to the station house, itching to run into some of those bad guys. Remember, I was young and strong and could swing the night stick myself.

Trouble wasn't long in coming. Reporting at the station house at night soon afterward, I found the sergeant waiting for me. He was excited.

"Hurry over to the Lane! Gunn's

been having trouble and may need help."

I ran to the Lane, arriving just in time to see Gunn charging into a house. In that district there was just one thing to do. I took the next house and raced up the four flights of stairs. Then I stepped softly to the roof, prepared to give chase if Paddy's man tried a get-away. Paddy, I knew, would stop to search each floor on the way up.

There was a faint light and I stole over to the adjoining roof. Then I spotted a man, a strapping Negro. He was trying no get-away. Instead, he was crouching in wait at the door through which Paddy would have to step to reach the roof. In his hands, lifted in readiness to strike, was a big ax.

It was a perfect spot for the murderous ambush the Negro had planned. I got to him just as my partner reached the door. The Negro's ax flew out of his hands harmlessly as my night stick crushed down on his skull. Paddy took one look at the ax and the prisoner, a well-known Negro thief Paddy had been pursuing for a robbery.

"It's lucky for me you came," he growled. Then he turned his attention to the prisoner.

I know good work when I see it, and Paddy's was good. If that Negro didn't go straight ever afterward I miss my bet. Paddy knew where to hit to make it count the most.

To-day, Paddy is a lieutenant of police, but he's never forgotten that particular close call. It put us both even more on our toes. It was another evidence of the risks every cop in the district had been running since the shootings.

My turn came next, on the night of July 4, at a time when I was least expecting trouble.

There were four old-fashioned houses on Minetta Place occupied by Italian mosaic workers and their families. All were hard workers and were happy in their new surroundings. The men had good jobs and on the summer nights the families would gather together on the stoops, drinking a little wine, and chatting to the music of guitars and mandolins. They asked nothing more.

I had become friendly with these four families. A good spaghetti dinner was waiting for me any time I was hungry, and a glass of Barbary wine if my throat was dry. I had a particular favorite, too; a little Italian girl about four years old—a black-eyed child who ran up to me every time I swung along the sidewalk, took my hand, and marched proudly by my side.

There was even more gayety than usual on the night of the holiday. Guitars and mandolins were strumming and women were singing on the stoops. I stopped in the shadow directly across the street from the houses and leaned back against a fence to listen to the music, something I had done before on nights of quiet in the district.

The bullet whipped through the fence alongside my head before I heard the report of the revolver from behind me. There was a scream from across the street as I turned to the fence. By the time I had climbed over, the gunman had disappeared in the darkness of the yard. I hurried back to find out who had screamed.

The bullet had struck the little girl, my favorite. The wound was in the thigh and she was bleeding and sobbing. Nothing fatal, I knew, but I was wild when I called the ambulance, and cried with rage when I lifted my little friend inside. If I could have found on that night the man who fired the

shot, I'm afraid there would have been no need for a trial. My report about him probably would have read: "Killed resisting arrest."

I never got the man who fired at me—another Negro who sought to become a hero by getting a cop. An informant gave me a name, but I knew he had a grudge against the man and I couldn't trust the information.

Thus it went for months in the district while the war continued. Other policemen were attacked when they attempted to make arrests but fortunately no more were killed. In police parlance, each cop became the "boss on the job" and ruled his beat with an iron hand. We kept the bad men on the run. If we hadn't, there would have been more shootings and deaths. Eventually, the night stick won, as it usually does when the cops who use it mean business.

To-day, Minetta Lane, Minetta Street, Minetta Place and Carmine Street are within the borders of Greenwich Village. The Negroes have gone and so have the dives. The Italians have remained, many of them still living in the old houses I knew. But the restaurants and speakeasies, the little stores which sell that mixture of hot water and rum known as "punchino," now cater to the so-called Village crowd, to "uptowners" and tourists. A cop is reasonably safe on his beat. I know it wouldn't feel the same, any more.

CHAPTER XXVII

Detective Work

THE transfer of Captain Miles O'Reilly from the Tenderloin to take command of the Mercer Street, then the Sixteenth Precinct, brought another change for me. He was pleased to find me in his command. I had worked for him in plain-clothes

in the Tenderloin and he asked me at once if I wouldn't like to act as a detective in his precinct. I gave the answer any foot cop would give, so he assigned me to work with Camille Pierne. The latter is now an inspector and a competent one. He was a competent policeman and detective when I first knew him, but he looked like an innocent boy of eighteen or nineteen and could get into places where no other detective could hope to go.

Camille, of course, spoke French, and our common familiarity with languages, together with his ability to squirm into situations and my big fist to pull us out, made us a good combination.

Aside from attacks on policemen, loft burglaries were the major crimes of the district. The thieves were clever and business men far more careless than at present. Few places were protected by the elaborate systems of burglar alarms in effect to-day.

Captain O'Reilly was anxious to make a showing, and the continued loft raids looked bad. One Monday morning I showed up to find him annoyed and anxious.

"Get right over to Houston Street," he ordered. "Your friend Pierne is there investigating a loft burglary. It's a big one and we've got to clear it up. The owner is raising the devil with me for having sent a boy over to handle the case."

The particular business man, I found, was unwilling to talk to Pierne. What detectives he knew were big fellows who looked the part. I seemed to fill the bill and he told me what he knew. It wasn't much. The burglary had been a Sabbath job, as it was known among the detectives. The owner of the building was Jewish and his holy day was Saturday, which had been the

day of the robbery. Silks, woollens and other valuable merchandise had been carted off in the daytime when the loft was closed. That was all the owner knew, but he let me see that the police were expected to recover his goods, pronto.

There was another large loft building across the street. I went over and found a boy who was employed to check merchandise as it came in and went out. Yes, he had been on duty Saturday afternoon, sitting out in front of the building reading a dime novel. Would he help the police? What boy who read the old dime novels wouldn't?

"Yes, sir, I saw a large green van over at that building Saturday afternoon. It had a monkey-faced driver, the funniest looking man you ever saw. I thought it funny, sir, that they'd be shipping on a Saturday afternoon. Four men came out carrying bundles while a lame man stood in the doorway watching them. But I didn't pay much attention. I'm sorry now, sir."

"Would you know the monkey-faced fellow and the van if you saw them again, sonny?"

"Oh, yes, sir. I want to be a detective and I'll do anything I can."

"Well, if you make good on this matter with me, I'll employ you to help me out from time to time and let you learn the ropes."

He was tickled. So I arranged with his employer to get him time off and we began a round of all the stations, stands and establishments where vans were for hire. We had many disappointments, but finally reached Union Market on the lower East Side, where several vans were parked. One of them was green.

"That's the one!" cried the boy, tugging at my coat sleeve. "Look at the driver. Just like a monkey."

A side view of the driver's face was convincing. He had a receding forehead, dirty red hair, and looked ready for anything.

"All right, son; now you beat it. I don't want that fellow to get a slant at you and know you squealed. He may come looking for you some time later on. You've done a good job."

The boy away, I leaped, without warning, into the back of the van, hauled the driver out of the seat by the scruff of the neck and pulled him inside the van with me.

"Come clean!" I ordered.

He was all injured innocence. I cracked him on the jaw and he saw that worse was to come unless he squawked. Then he admitted the job and told me where he'd delivered the stuff. He begged to be allowed to see his mother, so we drove to a tenement on the East Side.

I felt sorry for the mother as I told her the story. I've had to do the same thing with a lot of poor hard-working women and it's never been pleasant. She pleaded with her son to tell me the truth and keep out of trouble, and he promised to do all he could to make amends.

With Pierne, I rode in the van to the house at East One Hundred and Twelfth Street, the address the driver gave. There were two flats on the second floor, both occupied by a Mr. Siegel. We found Mr. Siegel with his wife. Mr. Siegel was lame. He also was indignant. But a minute's search revealed some of the missing merchandise and a full kit of burglar's tools. A little more search proved that Mr. Siegel was using one flat for concealment of a fine assortment of swag.

It was enough. I phoned to the East One Hundred and Fourth Street station for more detectives. Things

looked black for Mr. Siegel, and he knew it.

"Do you speak Jewish?" he asked, with the air of a man who hoped I'd be able to understand him more fully in his own tongue.

"No," I answered.

He became excited. He wrung his hands. A sudden fit of remorse, excitement and fright seized him. His eyes rolled toward the ceiling wildly. He grabbed my coat and begged me to guard his wife.

"Oy, oy!" he wailed. Then a quick jabber of words in Yiddish.

"Oy, oy!" he wailed a second time. Again the quick jabber as he wrung his hands.

"Oy, oy!" once again. Another jumble of words.

Mr. Siegel had tears in his eyes. In English he said: "My poor wife! Terrible! Terrible!"

A dramatic man, Mr. Siegel. He might have convinced me if I hadn't understood Yiddish. What he'd actually been telling his wife was this:

"The game's up. After I'm taken to the station house, hurry down town and see the gang. Tell them what's happened. Have them arrange bail for me at once."

We loaded a patrol wagon with the merchandise and left with Siegel as a prisoner. But once outside I slipped off the wagon and rejoined the van driver while Pierne continued on with the loot.

Mrs. Siegel was prompt, unsuspicious, and in a hurry. We trailed her easily all the way down town to Eldredge and Stanton Streets. Here she turned into a basement pool room as if she knew the place well. I sent the driver up to have a peek and he came back on the run.

"The other four are in there talking

to Mrs. Siegel. Think they're getting ready to come out."

"Run to the Eldredge Street station and get help," I ordered. Then I rushed to the stairs and stepped down to the doorway from where I could command the room. Mrs. Siegel screamed, but my revolver covered the four men sitting with her.

"The man who moves gets plugged!"

The four men slipped back into their seats, their hands in the air. Out of the corner of my eye I caught a movement. The pool room proprietor, a big tough, was edging over toward me, the butt of a billiard cue in his hand. I swung my revolver toward him and he stopped, cursing.

Those few minutes of waiting seemed a long time to me as I stood in the door with six pairs of eyes fixed on me and my gun. All those men wanted was a second of distraction. Of them all, I felt I had to watch the pool room keeper most. He was ready for anything, if he could escape a bullet in the stomach. It was a ticklish spot.

The detectives arrived on the run and the danger was over. I pocketed my gun and set myself.

"Wait a minute, boys," I shouted. "Before you do anything, let me do something."

I did it. I socked that tough proprietor so hard that he rolled under a pool table. He had it coming to him, and he got it, right on the button. Then the business of the arrests went forward. There wasn't a peep out of the prisoners or Mrs. Siegel.

I telephoned to Captain O'Reilly and to Pierne. The latter bundled Siegel and the swag into a patrol wagon and rode down to Eldredge Street. Captain O'Reilly came with his own patrol wagon to take over the prisoners and the loot.

The five were held in five thousand dollars bail each and convicted before Judge Rosalsky, being sent to Sing Sing for long terms. The driver and Mrs. Siegel were spared.

CHAPTER XXVIII

Queen of the Forgers

THAT was a good week for Pierne and me. After working all night on the robbery details we went to a restaurant on Bleecker Street and, coming back to the station house, spotted three men in the act of robbing a cigar store. We collared them, and carted them along to the cells. We made arrests in two other felony cases besides, nabbing in all eleven persons. Convictions were obtained in each case, and it began to look as if things were breaking my way.

It looked even more that way when I took into custody the matronly Mrs. Catherine J. Bolch, of Philadelphia and the world at large. The newspaper headlines of the day referred to her as the "Queen of the Forgers." She was as clever, smooth and daring as a male crook, and could do tricks with a pen that few men could equal.

Catherine had the manner that makes department store managers bow on sight. Hard-boiled store detectives would give her a glance of respect whenever she appeared. She looked to be the wife of a rich and distinguished citizen. She was about fifty years of age, with a stoutness which only added to her dignity. Her expensive clothing, her cultured voice, her treatment of department store staffs were just what might be expected from a matron of the "400." Only, Catherine was never the wife of the same prominent citizen from one store to the next, and all the checks she left

behind her bounced right back marked: "Forgery."

In the period with which I was concerned with Catherine's activities she had dropped into New York via Washington. She left the capital not willingly, but at the command of Major Sylvester, chief of Washington police, who gave her six hours to go.

A few days before Major Sylvester got busy a beautiful young woman had presented a check for fifty dollars, signed by "Chauncey M. Depew" to Abraham C. Mayer, a jeweler. Mr. Mayer knew of Mr. Depew. The young woman acted just as a relative of the famous United States Senator Depew would act, and Mr. Mayer gave her a forty-two dollar gold watch and eight dollars in cash for the check, hoping for more of the same exclusive trade.

But the check was a forgery and the beautiful Elizabeth Ray who had passed it was found to be the supposed daughter of Mrs. Bolch. The chain of evidence was obvious, for everywhere that Mrs. Bolch had gone, from the Atlantic coast west to Chicago, there was the same trail of worthless checks. Senator Depew did not care to prosecute a woman, but her exile was demanded.

I would have had a lot of respect for Catherine on the score of her nerve, but no detective has any use for the crook who strikes at a hard-working, defenseless person. Catherine's most brazen stunt made me her enemy for life. The doors of Sing Sing didn't close on her any too soon to suit me.

Catherine appeared at the house of Mrs. Ryan on West Twelfth Street and took a room. Mrs. Ryan, a widow supporting herself and her children as a boarding-house keeper, was impressed by the clothing and manner of her new lodger. Her sympathies were won

completely when she saw that Mrs. Bolch's right hand was bandaged.

"Oh, you mustn't bother about me, Mrs. Ryan. I've had an operation on my hand, but I'm sure that everything will be all right. Please don't concern yourself."

But the generous Mrs. Ryan did concern herself. She couldn't do enough for her new guest. She found pleasure in talking to this woman, who seemed to have been everywhere. Entirely unaware that she was being cross-examined, she told her life story, gave the names of her parents, her place of birth in Ireland, the name of the ship on which she had sailed to America, her age, the date of her marriage, the dates of her own children's births, the name of her husband and other intimate details of her family life. Mrs. Bolch seemed so sympathetic.

Mrs. Ryan was only too glad to help when requested to write a letter to Mrs. Bolch's daughter in Newark.

"Sign it with your own name, my dear, and tell daughter that I'm feeling better and will soon be able to write myself."

Mrs. Ryan mailed the letter to a post office box in Newark as requested, and forgot the incident. But Mrs. Bolch's right hand seemed to get better quite rapidly after that. A few days afterward Mrs. Bolch called Mrs. Ryan to her room.

"You have been very kind to me, my dear, and you deserve a holiday." Mrs. Bolch was smiling at her, and that was good. "Now I want you and your daughter to take this ten dollars and go right down to Coney Island. Have a good time. Spend the whole day and all of the money. Forget all about the house. Leave everything right as it is. My hand is so much better, you know."

Holidays were rare to Mrs. Ryan. She needed little urging on this bright summer morning, particularly with her house left in such good hands. She was gone with her daughter in half an hour, and then Mrs. Bolch set to work. First she broke open a desk and removed Mrs. Ryan's bank book. With the letter which had gone to Newark and back, secretly, as her guide, she forged the landlady's name to a withdrawal slip.

At the bank she passed herself off as Mrs. Ryan. She babbled so many details of Mrs. Ryan's life and family and the signature was so exact that the bank clerk handed over Mrs. Ryan's full deposit, fifteen hundred dollars.

Not content with this haul, Mrs. Bolch returned boldly to the house, bringing a secondhand furniture dealer with her. To him she sold every stick of furniture in the place. She set a shrewd price and insisted on payment at once in cash.

Mrs. Ryan, enjoying the outing and the luxury of a restaurant dinner down at Coney Island, was telling her daughter:

"We must repay Mrs. Bolch some way for her kindness. She's the loveliest lady I've ever met. Think of her, offering to stay home herself on this hot day and watch things for me."

At that very moment the "kind, sweet" Mrs. Bolch was ransacking the rooms of the lodgers for money, jewelry and marketable articles. She didn't miss a thing. Hours before the happy Ryans returned, their guest was gone with cash and loot valued at from six thousand to seven thousand dollars. Mrs. Ryan was left penniless.

She had used a fictitious name, and we had no photographs at police headquarters to aid in identification. Catharine would probably have got clean

away if she hadn't become careless. In Wanamaker's store, several weeks afterward, she attempted to pass a ten-dollar check signed by William A. Jones, a well-known New York lawyer who had defended her in a case some years before. Her haste to leave with a pair of corsets she had purchased and the balance of the check in cash attracted the attention of a woman store detective. The police were called and I made the arrest.

Then the complaints. Catherine's photograph and description appeared in the newspapers and the cat was out of the bag. Siegel & Cooper, Abraham & Straus, Macy's, O'Neill's and a dozen more big department stores and hotels turned up with bogus paper.

Judge Cornell and veteran court attendants, accustomed to the queer hodge-podge of characters a police court can produce, were amazed when they saw a well-dressed, composed woman who stood in the dock accused of as many crimes as an expert confidence man. It was hard to believe that she had spent five years in a Massachusetts prison, but she had. The records didn't lie.

The detectives of my station were able to perform another service for the department stores about this time.

Mashers hung out in every large department store and women were making complaints in great numbers. Siegel & Cooper, busy all day with throngs of women shoppers, was a particular field for those annoyers. They were bold and free, jostling and handling women who passed them in the crush of the store.

The management appealed to the police, and I went up there with another detective. I don't like mashers, and never have, and I enjoyed the work we had to do. We provided our-

selves with long hat pins with the sharpest possible points, and circulated in the crowds. Every time a man reached out his hand toward a woman, he got his. We'd slip up behind him and jab the hat pins into the tenderest part of his body. As the fellow set up a howl, we'd grab him and rush him out the door. At the station he'd get plenty more. A little of that treatment was enough. Mashers began to behave themselves in the stores.

Yes, things were looking up. Then some one threw a monkey-wrench into the works! My good luck turned to bad. Fourteen detectives, including myself, were transferred by Commissioner Bingham and scattered all over Greater New York. We were accused of taking money from gamblers and poolroom keepers. The Allen, a poolroom and gambling-house keeper, was supposed to be the go-between. Eddie Riordan, a county detective, had supplied the information to the district attorney and police commissioner. We were all marked down for pernicious activity—and were in bad.

They transferred me from the Sixteenth to the Eighth Precinct. Out on patrol, pounding the pavement again! It was harsh. I didn't even finish my full tour of duty in the Eighth Precinct before I was called back to the station and told that I had been transferred again to the Seventh Precinct, a real "punishment" precinct.

CHAPTER XXIX

Real Police Dogs

THAT short stay in the Eighth brought an incident that seems mighty funny now, but then was bitterness piled on bitterness. Shortly after I started out on the tour, a cigar manufacturer on Church Street re-

ported a burglary to me. I got busy, called up the station house and asked for detectives.

Just as I finished my report, made from the cigar man's office, I was told to come into the station. I turned from the phone to be thanked by the owner of the factory for the interest I had taken in his case. He thrust a big box of cigars, hand-made smokers, into my hands. I carried the bundle back with me to the station house. The lieutenant handed me my order to report to the Seventh Precinct station house at Madison Street, and, as I turned to go, he spotted the box.

"What have you got in that bundle?" he demanded.

"Cigars given me by the man that was robbed."

The lieutenant leaped up from his seat, his face red with sudden fury.

"Get out of here!" he yelled. "No wonder they have the skids under you. Two hours in the precinct and you come in with a load of cigars from a complainant. Good riddance to bad rubbish. You'll land in jail yet. Get out!"

I marched into the Seventh Precinct station perhaps the most downhearted and miserable cop in all New York. I knew I was innocent of the complaints against me, but just then it seemed as if no one ever would believe me. Behind the desk I saw Lieutenant William Boettler, who had been my superior in the old Tenderloin. Here was a friend, and I unloaded all my troubles.

The lieutenant listened. When I had finished, he lay back in his chair and laughed.

"Say," he declared, "do you think I'm down here myself for my health? Take your medicine. It'll all straighten out in time."

He sent me out on patrol in Seward Park, a center of the old East Side, for my first tour. What a difference! From Broadway, Fifth Avenue, Sixth Avenue, down to the lower East Side!

Even to a man who knew the life of the Bowery district, Seward Park seemed, at first sight, like another world. But by the end of my first tour I found it wasn't so bad after all. I made acquaintances fast along the sidewalks, for I spoke the tongue of most of its people. I suppose many of them took me for a Jew.

I was assigned to a steady post on Market Street, from Division to South Streets, and it wasn't long before I was laughing again. One night I was instructed to take a probationary policeman out on post with me. He was acquiring his actual police experience just as I had done, and I gave him what advice I could.

On Monroe Street, between Market and Catharine Streets, revolvers suddenly began to pop. Before we knew it we were in the midst of a battle between the Cherry Hill and Monroe Street mobs, two wicked bands of thugs. I charged forward with the night stick and in a minute there was too much for me to do to keep watch on anything else. The whole district was in a bedlam. I was fighting men of both mobs by the time the reserves arrived. The ambulance carted off several toughs and we made a score of arrests. A wild party all around and it was an hour before I remembered the probationary man. He was nowhere to be found.

It didn't look good for the youngster, but I kept my mouth shut. When I answered the return roll call at the station later that night, I reported him as being present. On the following day when I returned for duty, Captain

Ferris asked me what had happened to my man.

"Oh, nothing," I answered. "He was with me all night and assisted me very well, indeed."

"Is that so?" the captain cut in. "Well, it's no use lying about it. When the shooting party started, your man ran all the way home. His mother was here in the station house this morning telling me that the police job was no work for her boy. She said there were easier ways of making a living. What've you got to say about that?"

Nabbed again! I explained that between the fighting, excitement and the arrests I'd been too busy to know where the boy had gone. Captain Ferris smiled.

"Well, you took good care of your case. I've got no kick coming, and I think the department will be better off without him."

The fight and the captain's words, and the laugh I had after I left him, were good medicine for me. I began to feel something like my old self.

But soon afterward I was in trouble again. This time I had company—two men and a dog. The men hadn't broken any rules, but the dog had.

"Bum," the station house mascot, was out of place in the lower East Side. Up in the Tenderloin, or on Fifth Avenue, Bum would have been a well-behaved fellow, but he didn't like men with whiskers. When Bum didn't like you, he showed it.

His best friends were Pete Lehr, Eddie Sullivan and myself. Whenever any one of us was going on patrol duty, he came along. Bum would start out in good-humored curiosity, frisking around the pushcarts and losing himself in the sidewalk crowd. Then a high-pitched yelp, a

wail or a curse in Yiddish. Another whiskered man bitten.

There was nothing to be done about it, and complaints poured in at the station house. Pete, Eddie and myself soothed most of the victims, but one of them went to court. Pete was summoned to appear before Judge House and was ordered to produce the dog. Bum was hauled before the bar, his sins were recounted, and he was formally condemned to death.

The complainant intended to see that the court order was obeyed. There wasn't much time, but we found an old stray dog that looked enough like Bum to fool the complainant, and we shot him as the court had ordered. Then Bum's ghost turned up in the precinct, snapping at men with long beards, and there was more trouble. Bum finally was transferred for the good of the service.

Don't ever tell policemen that Rin Tin Tin or shepherd dogs of his breed are "police dogs." So far as the policeman is concerned—and I mean myself—the only dogs that have the right to the title are the mongrel mutts that hang around the police station, learn their tricks from the policemen on the beat and wear the collar and buttons of a police station mascot. They may not look dignified or aristocratic, and they haven't any pedigree, but they know their stuff.

Bum was a water rat. He was born in a stable at the Brooklyn Bridge river front. He was supposed to be pure Irish terrier, but I guess his mother must have done a little wandering from home. He was half Irish, and the rest was in doubt.

The men in the stable threw Bum out to fend for himself. They didn't like his ears, one sticking up and the other down. Bum had a grand memo-

ry, and when he became a full-fledged police mascot he never would go near the stable or have anything to do with the men who hung out there. He never forgave bad treatment.

A rat-killer second to none, Bum was just as good against a two-footed wrongdoer. Many a thief, fleeing from a policeman, was pulled down when Bum joined the chase. On a fire line or a police line, Bum was better than a squad of men. He would run up and down inside the line, barking constantly. If a man got over the line, Bum would jump for him, landing with his forepaws on the man's stomach. Then Bum would jump back and growl a warning, but never bite.

He liked children, and would escort them over crossings near the school-houses. A real police dog, all the way through.

The finest dog of this type I ever knew, though, was "Browney," a mongrel I met later on at the Twenty-First Precinct, East Twenty-Second Street. Browney would help you in a fight and chase and grab any man you pointed out to him. If Bum was intelligent, Browney was wise. He knew just where to get the good things of life. I guess he figured his police collar made him a privileged character. He made regular calls at the leading restaurants and enjoyed steaks, chops and such fare.

Browney liked his beer, and could carry his load like a gentleman. He knew every saloon in which a pail was used to catch the drip from the beer taps. Whenever he wanted a drink, Browney would walk under the swinging doors of the saloons and lap up everything in the drip pail.

He always protected the men. If Browney was with a policeman who stepped into a restaurant or a saloon

for a rest, a bite or a drink, he'd never stick around outside the door so as to give the man away to a passing sergeant. Instead, he'd beat it for the station stable and go to sleep with one of his friends among the horses.

Browney had a rival in the station house, a big female St. Bernard, who answered to the name of "Bess." She went out on patrol for years with the men, but when she got old, found a job for herself caring for the lost children in the back room. Many a tearful child went peacefully to sleep after Bess put a big paw over him.

An automobile did for Browney, and his funeral was something to remember. Browney was buried in Gramercy Park, the most exclusive bit of ground in all New York. The children of some of the city's richest families were chief mourners with the policemen, for Browney had been a playmate of the rich when he wasn't on duty. The world is shut out from Gramercy Park, only the families of its property holders being permitted to enter there, but this never stopped Browney. He made free use of the park whenever he chose, and when he died the children insisted that he be buried there. Flowers were placed on his grave daily for a long time afterward. The grave is there still.

CHAPTER XXX

"Happy" Houlihan

I HAD no dull nights in the Seventh Precinct. The water front always has a big quota of thugs. Sailors, immigrants and drunks were prey for the tough bands of the district, and the man on the beat had to be alert. If everything else failed, I could always make excitement for myself at the old Catharine Street Market.

Not many New Yorkers know—or want to know—that market. It's the trading place of the East Side's poorest. Every Sunday morning peddlers turn up with vegetables and produce that they couldn't sell Saturday night and which will spoil if they keep it.

When it gets late on any day at the market, the peddlers give away whatever they have left in the way of fish, vegetables and other perishable foods. It is pitiful to see women scrambling around the carts, looking for bargains or hoping for any kind of a hand-out. Many of them with babies at home, too.

The district consisted mostly of old, dirty warehouses and at night it swarmed with rats. I offered to help reduce the rodent population, and persuaded one of the market owners to buy me a twenty-two caliber Winchester rifle. Every late tour was a big game hunt. I would hang a piece of ham skin on a string under a drop light and then start shooting from the darkness when the rats came for the bait. I killed thousands, lots of them big fellows of the kind that attack children and even adults in the cheaper tenement houses.

You never could tell what would happen on Catharine Street, particularly in the late night hours. It was the dividing line between Madison Street and the Oak Street precincts. The south side was patrolled by the Fifth Precinct officers and the north side by our men. I was on my own side of the street at two o'clock one morning when I heard shooting. I saw a man sprinting along the sidewalk toward me with a cop chasing him. It was a running gun fight. Both were jumping into doorways and out again, firing with each jump and running

about fifty feet after each shot. The fleeing man was on my side of the street, but the cop was on the south side and I stood directly in his line of fire.

It was my move and I took it on the hop. I waited for my chance in a dark doorway and sprang out just as the man got up to me. I hit him on his head with my night stick and knocked him into the gutter, following this by jumping on him with both feet.

The other officer rushed up and I learned that the man was an Italian who had shot a woman. I surrendered the prisoner and left. The man seemed unconscious. The next day I met the same officer in a restaurant and he spoke.

"You know how to hit them," he remarked. "That man's out yet."

I don't know whether the capture had any effect, but a break came for me not long after this. Commissioner Bingham had been going over the facts against the men transferred out of the Sixteenth Precinct, on the graft-taking charges, and had concluded that an injustice had been done. I was asked if I wanted to return to the Sixteenth, but was told I could be sent anywhere I wanted to go. I requested an assignment to the Bronx, near my home, and was transferred to the Thirty-Fifth Precinct.

For some time before this, even despite my worries and troubles, I had been studying for the sergeant's examinations. At the new station I met Captain James Post who had organized a school among his men, and right there my ambition took a spurt. It was the turning point in my police life.

I can never repay Captain Post for the encouragement he gave me. The captain was the new type of superior officer; intelligent, strict in discipline,

but square. He worked on the theory that the policeman needed to be as handy with his head as with the night stick. The captain sought to make his men ambitious, and spurred on those who were.

Most of us became so enthusiastic that we carted our books around on post. I studied law, city ordinances, and rules and regulations of the police department while squatting on lumber piles along the Harlem River at the Willis and Third Avenue bridge. A funny sight that would have been to some of the cops I had known while a youngster on the Bowery.

It was at this period that I met "Happy" Houlihan, a patrolman of the Thirty-Fifth Precinct. The popular comic strip of the day, "Happy Hooligan," accounted for the nickname. Every man in the station house was his friend. He had a fine wife and several children and his intentions were the best.

But Happy couldn't leave liquor alone and was drunk when he shouldn't have been. Several complaints for intoxication had been made against him and it looked like the end.

I've pulled many tricks in my life, but I don't think anything quite equaled the stunt that saved Happy. He was my side partner on post and cops can't let down their pals. Jim Skehan, a patrolman with whom I did a good deal of studying for the sergeantcy, was in on things with me from the start.

We had a council of war at Happy's home with Happy and his wife. It was a glum meeting, for Happy's trial was due. If he pleaded guilty he was gone. If he denied the charges, they had the evidence. Happy was sure he would be busted and was heartbroken over what would happen to his family. He

couldn't see hope anywhere, even after we'd talked things over for hours.

I don't know how we came to think of aphasia, but we did. Then we were off.

"Go over to Newark. Remove all the identification marks from your clothing and get lost over there. Stay in a hospital for a while, remembering nothing about who you are, where you live, or what you do. Then come to yourself again. It's the only chance."

That's what we advised Happy, and that's what he did. The next day things started to pop. His wife came sobbing to the station house, with the word that Happy had been gone all night. The alarm was sent to all station houses. Every hospital in the city was searched—even the morgue. But no Happy.

Ten days went by without a trace, with the whole department mystified. Then a hospital in New Jersey called up police headquarters and reported that a patient had just been cured of aphasia and that he was a patrolman.

Police surgeons were rushed to the hospital—and Happy stalled beautifully. He was brought back to the city and suspended for trial, with enough complaints against him to paper the walls of his home.

Happy had a good lawyer and the trial was a scream. They read complaint after complaint to Happy and asked him to plead.

"I don't remember getting it—how can I plead?" Happy wanted to know.

Deputy Commissioner Hanson, presiding officer, was at a loss. Such a sad state of affairs had never existed before under the laws as he knew them. So he sent out a hurry call for the Corporation counsel to advise him on proceedings. The Corporation counsel showed up.

A psychiatrist came into our fold. He took the stand and so did other doctors. It wasn't long before the court room began to think that Happy was a much abused man, the innocent victim of mental impulses which he didn't even know he possessed. Happy almost began to think so himself.

Medical history was raked over by Happy's lawyer. It developed that other cases such as Happy's had existed in the past. The New Jersey witnesses told of his dazed, helpless condition when found.

I've never seen a farce like it on any stage. We didn't dare to share the joke with anybody. By the time the medical men and the lawyer were finished, even Mr. Hanson seemed convinced that Happy had been *non compos mentis* every time he'd taken a drink. So they had to dismiss the complaints and restore the shield to Happy.

Superiors are suspicious people and there were those who figured the department was being buncoed. So Happy was transferred to another station whose captain was noted for his toughness. The game, of course, was to "break" our friend at the first false step. But Happy fooled them all. From the day of his trial he became a teetotaler. He remained in the department until he retired honorably on his pension. His family was protected—and that's what concerned Jim Skehan and me.

CHAPTER XXXI

Sergeant's Stripes

THE Thirty-Fifth Precinct had another unusual character, the type of man it's hard to find in any modern police department. He was James Farley, a patrolman with more than fifty years of service to his credit.

Jim was in my platoon and slept alongside me in the station when we were on the reserve. He was a grand fellow, and every other man in the station felt just as I did about him. Every inch of him was policeman despite his seventy odd years. With his Vandyke beard and erect figure, he was an imposing man. He had plenty of money, but that made no difference to Jim. His life began and ended at the station house, and he dreaded even the mention of the word retirement.

Jim liked his little nip and he smoked regularly. He was a leader in the pranks of the station house and he always kept a bottle of good liquor in his locker. At morning or night when we were getting ready to return to post after a reserve trick at the station, we'd always gather around Jim's locker and complain about the cramps, or a cold or a sore toe. It was a regular ceremony and the talk sounded like a hospital clinic, but it made Jim mighty happy.

"Cramps, damn ye! If I didn't have liquor you wouldn't be hanging around here. You'll get none from me. The idea, policemen!"

But the bottle always turned up. All would have a little drink and Jim was happy.

Jim Farley's greatest day came in his fifty-fourth year in the department. He was then the oldest policeman in point of service in the city and his record was spotless. On parade day, when the police force marched up Fifth Avenue, Jim was given the place of honor in the reviewing stand at the orders of Commissioner Bingham.

The department finally ordered Jim retired and I don't think there was a dry eye in the station that day, because we all knew what it meant. It was even more pathetic than we thought, too, for Jim couldn't stay away or keep

out of uniform. On every late tour he reported at his post in blue uniform, but without his precious shield and then would patrol the beat with the man who had the right to wear the shield—on duty. I couldn't talk much whenever he walked with me. The old man wasted away and didn't live many years after the blow fell.

Meanwhile, all of us younger men in the station were anxiously waiting for news. The examinations were over and the announcement of the sergeant list was due. One day at home I got a forthwith from Captain Post to report at the precinct. I found the list waiting.

"Hey, Dutch," he greeted me, "you did great. You are thirty-seventh on the list. You got 92.50 in the mental."

I felt good. Michael Walsh, one of our own crowd, stood at the head of the list, which covered the patrolmen for the whole city. I had very little seniority, so I had to make up for it by my mark in the mental tests.

On February 1, 1909, the first fifty on the list were ordered to report at headquarters. Commissioner Bingham called me into his office, went over my whole record and troubles and said he was convinced I had been wronged. General Bingham was a square shooter.

"Remember you are a Bingham sergeant. Live up to that. I hope to see you promoted higher in the department, and am sure you will be."

It all meant the chevrons! Policemen saluting me! A boss in the department! I wouldn't have swapped positions that day with the mayor of New York City. I imagined that every lady I passed was looking at my gold colored shield and my chevrons. I thought of all the hard-boiled superiors who had bawled me out. Now I was one of them myself.

I was transferred to the Sixty-Ninth Precinct, Westchester, and reported there for my first tour. Black Jack McCauley, an old friend I had known when he was a detective sergeant, was captain of the station. He told me it was a hard precinct to cover unless a man was a "native," as the old-timers were called.

Westchester of those days was a wilderness and the precinct covered an enormous district, all of which, of course, a sergeant had to oversee. The captain cheerfully added that the posts were from two to four miles long and just as wide, with all kinds of lanes and woods to get lost in.

"No cars running to Classon Point, Throgs Neck, Pennyfield and Pelham Park," he went on. And I was a foot sergeant, and the mercury was at zero. I didn't get far on that first tour. In fact, I went out into the stables to see that the horses were all right, and I stayed there until the tour was over.

It didn't take long to get acquainted, though. There was little to do in the way of police work, and everybody was happy. We were like a bunch of retired business men, drawing full pay while we loafed. I made it as easy for the boys as I could.

"I've spoken before of the old system of judging a sergeant's efficiency by the number of complaints he turned in against his men. For the first time, I began to find out what a tough job that means for the sergeant. The inspector wanted complaints and I was expected to provide them. No complaints, no discipline, was the way the inspector figured.

Well, I hadn't forgotten my own troubles. Up in that desert, I saw no reason why the men couldn't take time off, now and then, for a bit to eat, a smoke or "to take it in"—the police

expression for a shin roast. I used to do all those things myself on post, and why expect others to do more than I'd done myself. I knew what I'd be doing and saying if I had to spend eight hours in zero weather wandering around the edges of Long Island Sound and Pelham Bay. No man can do a trick like that without getting frost-bitten. Besides, there were the horses to think about!

So, as long as the boys kept close to the posts to hear any possible cries for help, and made quick laps at intervals over the beats to guard against fires, I was satisfied, no matter where they were. They always hung out in some place where there was a phone and I always knew—unofficially, of course—just where that place was. A hurry call in case of trouble would bring a gang of men in no time.

As days and weeks went by without "didos" against my men, the inspector lost his patience. He sent for me and came straight to the point:

"Get me complaints, or I'll put you back on patrol!"

I told him my men were on the job and that I had no cause for complaints against any of them.

"I won't bring men in here unless they've done something wrong," I wound up, with more boldness than discretion. The inspector glared a little, but I stuck to my guns. For the whole year I was under his command. I complained against only one man in the entire year. That particular patrolman had mislaid his shield. It was a simple case and no one got hurt.

Of course, I could have made plenty of trouble for the boys. Any sergeant can if he wants to be a strict disciplinarian. Four of the men were particular offenders. They figured they were putting something over on me, and that's

a bad feeling for men under you to possess. So I thought of a scheme to teach them a lesson without hurting them.

The four were mounted men. It's always difficult for a foot sergeant to control such a force, for the simple reason that he can't move as fast as they can. The territory I had to cover couldn't have been inspected in four full tours of duty, let alone one—of which fact the boys were aware.

I learned that the Deaf and Dumb Asylum on Throgs Neck was a coop for the mounted men. My evidence was the best. I had taken out a horse belonging to a policeman who was on sick leave. The animal tried to turn in at the asylum driveway and I had all I could do to get him past the gates. The asylum was it, but I knew my men would be tipped off by telephone any time I showed up publicly in Throgs Neck.

I said nothing and waited my chance. On one late tour I slipped over to Eastern Boulevard on foot, sneaked through St. Raymond's Cemetery and got inside the asylum gates. I saw the watchman coming and leaned up against a tree so my chevrons were hidden. I took off my cap and held it so it would conceal the bright, tell-tale shield.

"Hello," he exclaimed, "since when have footmen been coming over here?"

"I'm not on post," I answered. "I just slipped in from Union Port to tip off the boys that two 'shoo flies' (the sergeants in civilian clothes) are on the way over here. Tell the boys to get out P. D. Q."

As the watchman hurried off to the barn to give the alarm, I closed the gates and waited. It wasn't long before the four men came riding for the gates at a gallop, like cavalymen charging

the enemy. They caught sight of the closed gates just in time. The horses reared up. Only expert horsemanship saved an accident.

"Whoa! Whoa! What the hell!"

Then I slipped from behind a tree right into their midst.

"Well! Well! Good morning, boys. Why in such a hurry? Dismount!"

The most sheepish looking men I ever saw climbed out of those four saddles, and faced me.

"Where are you on post—and you—and you?" I shouted. "You better think quick and give me a damn good excuse. You'll need it when I take you down town!"

All four were married men. In one minute I found out how many kids they had and how many national, patriotic and fraternal reasons there were why they should be given another chance. They expected to be busted, for while I didn't intend to report them, I wasn't showing my hand. These boys needed a scare.

"I'm too old a cat to be fooled by kittens," I snapped. "Get to hell out on post!" It did kind of nettle me to think that these young patrolmen had expected to get away with something on me after all the tricks of the game that I knew—and had practiced.

The four boys nearly spoiled my good intentions. When I got to the village the next morning, I was approached by brother Masons, politicians, and clergymen, even by Mr. Falk, the baker, where I got my coffee and rolls, and Lieutenant Billy Ferdon, a fine old policeman. With all this hullabaloo I was afraid the news of the affair would reach the inspector's ears and then I'd have been in hot water up to my neck. I pleaded ignorance, telling the policemen's friends that some one had been kidding them. I

didn't want to lie to an old clergyman, and I told him the story. I guess he passed it along the line under a pledge of secrecy, for the excitement stopped. But whenever I visited a mounted post after that, I found my man on the job.

CHAPTER XXXII

The Gas House Again

DEAD as the precinct was in the winter, the summer was another story. Picnic grounds were plentiful throughout our station territory and every Sunday were occupied by dollar beer "rackets" from distant parts of the city. A "racket" then meaning a gathering, not a type of criminal activity. A big gang of toughs, known as the Bergens, showed up every Sunday and attempted to break up these parties. Battles were many and gory.

About this time, Classon Point was opened up with a new car line, and the Bergens found a new place to play. On the first Sunday night they swooped down. They wrecked stands and booths and terrorized the crowds, insulting women and beating men who offered resistance. It was up to us to wipe out the Bergens.

We laid for them on the following week-end. I hid in a barn with a dozen mounted men, all armed with night sticks—and under instructions to use them. Footmen were in readiness to cover the Classon Point road and I had arranged with Harry Kerrigan, the superintendent of the trolley line, to have a car on a siding, waiting for prisoners. We intended to fill that car.

The Bergens swarmed in on Sunday night, aching for trouble. They started a fight in Fairyland, and then we went at them, the mounted men charging forward on their horses and swinging

their clubs from the saddles. The attack was a complete surprise, and there was no escape for the Bergens. They got the beatings of their lives.

Some of them fled into a pig farm and we had to rescue them. The battle spread into near-by swamps.

When the fight was over, the trolley car was packed with prisoners. A lot of them needed attention from the doctors of Fordham Hospital.

I was taking no chances, either. On the following morning I requested the magistrate to visit Classon Point and Fairyland and inspect the damage the thugs had caused. When we got back to court he would listen to no excuses. To a man, the Bergens were sent to the workhouse, and that was the last of them.

We had taught the Bergens a lesson that was passed all along the line. The Sunday picnics were undisturbed and the station slipped back into its old peaceful ways again. In place of the usual stiff police routine, I was able to go ambling around the countryside admiring nature and enjoying myself.

That precinct was a vacation, but it was too good to last. Early that winter I got orders transferring me to the Twenty-First Precinct, at East Twenty-Second Street, in the heart of the old Gas House district.

I had many friends in the Gas House district, mostly business men I had met when working there as a boy, and was proud to return to them a sergeant of police.

I renewed my friendship with Bruno Wolfram, the owner of the New York Dog Exchange at 204 East Nineteenth Street. A prosperous business man now, he was still the same Bruno I'd known and worked with when we were both singing waiters at Coney Island. I formed the habit of dropping in on

Bruno's shop in off hours to help him out. I got in on some funny stunts in the dog-trading game, but none of them were quite so rich as the one that concerned myself.

Bruno went off to Europe and asked me to take charge of his business while he was away. Charles Roe was his manager, but it was arranged that I'd spend all my spare time at the shop, and drop in now and then when on post. Bruno agreed to give me twenty-five per cent of the net profits as my reward.

I love dogs and animals and it was pleasant work. I'd made a few good bargains, but nothing of particular profit. Then, one afternoon, a woman came into the shop. She was one of the handsomest I'd ever seen and her clothing and manner somehow made Bruno's store look very shabby. With her was a well-dressed man of foreign appearance, plainly an admirer.

Charlie went out to wait on her and in a minute he hurried up to me. The woman, he said, spoke French and he couldn't understand her. I addressed her in French, and she smiled delightfully.

"I'm Gaby Deslys, the actress," she announced. "I want to buy an English bulldog."

Mlle. Gaby Deslys, the famous French dancer!—the most featured stage celebrity of the day. I turned on my best French and said I had just the dog she wanted.

He was a fine specimen, that dog. His massive, undershot jaw and tusks gave him a ferocious expression. But he was also rather old, although you had to know dogs to discover it.

"*Magnifique!*" cried Mlle. Deslys, entirely missing the gray hairs. "What's his name?"

He didn't have one, but any animal

avored with such appreciation deserved none but the best.

"The Duke of Montgomery," I answered.

Such a name! Such a dog! Mlle. Deslys would have him and the cost was not to be considered.

Then I remembered Little Willie, a skye terrier. If the "Duke" was big, Little Willie was the last word in tininess. We brought him up to Mlle. Deslys, squatting in a big basket lined with black velvet. It was an effective arrangement. Willie didn't seem pint-size and very easily could be taken to be one of the smallest dogs in the world, the which I implied he was.

For the Duke of Montgomery Mlle. Deslys paid five hundred dollars, and for Little Willie three hundred dollars. She left orders that the dogs were to be prepared for a visit by the "man from Tiffany's." We prepared them, carefully. All the gray hairs were painted, just as dog sellers everywhere always do at need. The man from Tiffany's solemnly measured the Duke and Little Willie for collars, harness and leaders of gold and precious stones.

Lucky dogs, they were old enough to appreciate fine treatment. A week later, all the newspapers had pictures of Gaby Deslys as she sailed for a vacation in France. By her side stood the Duke of Montgomery, in her arms was Little Willie, outward bound to see the world. Overnight they became famous and the New York Dog Exchange didn't suffer any from the advertising.

But it wasn't all fun and play in the Twenty-First Precinct. Policemen have to be more careful there with traffic than in almost any other section of the city. No other district in the Greater City has so many hospitals, and cripples come to them by the hundreds. That means careful watching

at the crossings, and it's up to the sergeants to see that the watch is maintained.

It was here, too, that I developed the hatred I've always felt for the flat burglar. In my estimation there's no meaner criminal than the thief who robs the tenements of the poor. They leave more misery behind them than any bandit can cause, short of life-taking itself. The clothing and money they steal can't be replaced.

The Gas House district had a large number of flat burglars and I instructed my men to go after them as hard as they could. My orders were to bring such thieves in "right." We caught several of them on the streets with bundles of clothing, or going into pawnshops to raise what they could on the belongings of some poverty-stricken family. I made it my personal business to see that each one of those thieves got his.

The rough treatment helped and I kept passing around the word that the man caught robbing a flat would get a beating he'd never forget. Such burglaries became much fewer.

Here's just a case in point. One of the cops caught a fellow with a suitcase containing a man's suit, a girl's dress and coat, some shoes and other articles of clothing. We found the owner, an old widowed mother with a son and daughter who were supporting her. The thief had taken the Sunday clothes of her kids, the only decent clothing they possessed. The mother begged me not to let the children know the flat had been robbed.

"They'll accuse me of being old and careless," she pleaded.

I couldn't give the clothing back to her then for we needed evidence in court. But I found a way to help her. I kept the suitcase in my locker.

Every Friday afternoon she would call and take the clothing home. On Monday she would return the goods to me. I pushed the case as fast as I could, but it was several weeks before I got the thief sent up for a long stretch. The children never even suspected.

uniform, and I've always looked back on it with pleasure.

Shortly afterward another big change came with my being ordered into the detective service. A whole new life opened before me. The hope of every uniformed man had been finally gratified for me.

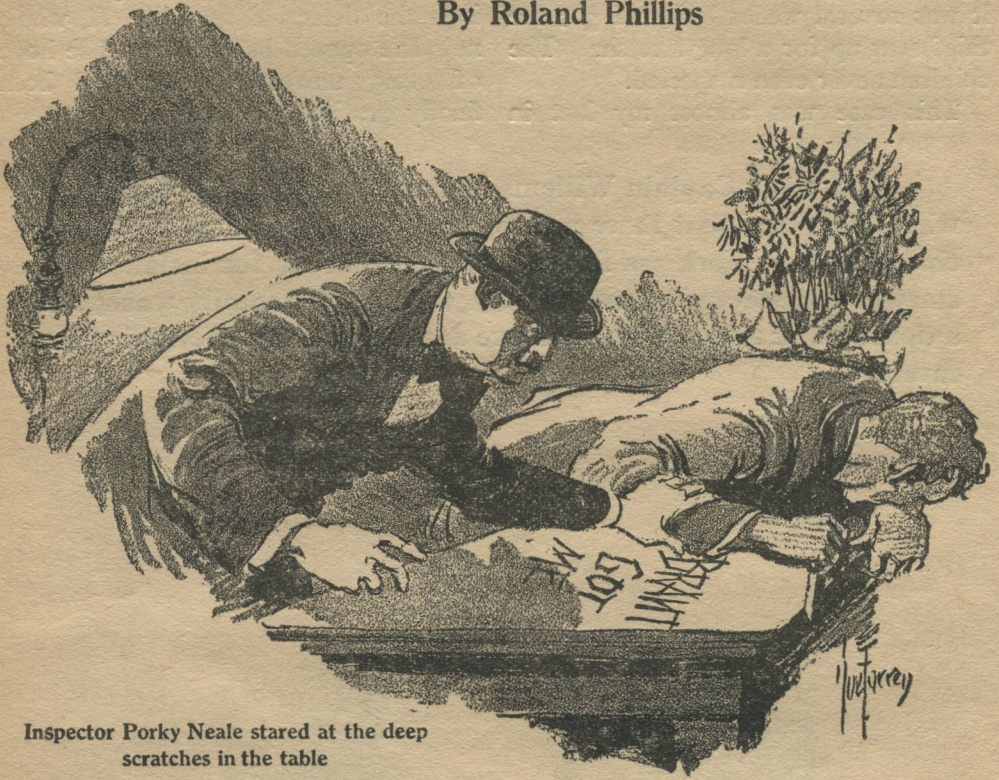
Next week Captain Willemse tells the story of the "lamister" who discovered that there are worse things than facing a murder charge in New York—a fireless cell in Montreal, for instance; the story of the one-armed murderer betrayed by a family wash; and a dozen other amusing and bizarre anecdotes of his eventful police career.



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The Point in Evidence

By Roland Phillips



Inspector Porky Neale stared at the deep scratches in the table

Eddie Corbin Was Too Good a Dick Not to Leave a Tip for Porky Neale When He Was Caught Unarmed

CATCHING the faint sound from the window overlooking the fire escape, Detective Eddie Corbin turned his head to stare incredulously at the slim young man who had one leg hooked over the sill. The late afternoon sunlight streamed upon the floor, upon the checkered cap the intruder was wearing, upon the gun held rigidly before him.

"Keep your seat, dummy!" the man snarled. "I got something to say to you. It won't take long."

Corbin drew in a quick breath that set his pulse racing, that sent a cold

prickle of dread scurrying along his spine. Five minutes before he had come into his room, had shed his coat and shoulder holster. Both lay upon the bed, six feet away. His eyes jumped from the trespasser's pale face to the bed.

"Forget it!" the man snapped. He squirmed through the window as he spoke and stood erect. Then he moved toward the detective who, in shirt sleeves, sat at the table.

Corbin saw now that the gun leveled upon him was equipped with a silencer, and realized the grim significance of

that. He kept his hands flat on the table. They were damp, tingling.

"It's too bad you had to climb out of a uniform and get yourself promoted to a dick," the man began slowly. "Too bad you stopped swinging a night stick and pounding a beat, flatty. Too bad you had to get so curious about things that didn't concern you. You ought to know it would be the death of you."

"Lay off the chatter," Corbin flung back. "What's this cheap show of yours about?"

"It's about finished, for you," the other returned. "You're all washed up."

"Put that gun away!" Corbin ordered.

"In a minute. I'll take it apart and put it away when it's spoke its little piece." The man's lips twitched derisively. "It won't speak so loud. I'm always careful about that."

Corbin contrived a smile, although his lips were like cardboard and a thin stream of perspiration was trickling down the back of his neck. He had been in jams before, and squeezed out of them, but somehow he felt this was not the same.

Being out of uniform, meeting punks on a new level, changed the perspective of things.

He knew the man who confronted him; knew his name, his unsavory contacts and reputation. They had met once—twelve hours ago. He saw now that he should have made his pinch then.

"Soon's I finish my business here," the man continued, "I'm calling the inspector, telling him how one of his boy scouts done too good a deed and gets a lead medal for it—hot lead."

From somewhere below a hurdy-gurdy ground out a jerky tune. The

shrill voices of children piped above it . . . dancing children.

"Listen," the man was saying. "When you get to glory, or wherever all good dicks go, just keep on twanging your harp and minding your own business. It's always safer."

Corbin made no response. His eyes drifted to the pot of yellow flowers that stood on the edge of the table; a big pot dressed in bright, crinkly paper, and tied with a bow of silver ribbon. The flowers were as golden as the April sunlight. He had bought them this morning, and would be carrying them to Nora after dinner.

The man watching him, laughed. "You're taking it pretty cool," he said. "Some of 'em don't. Well—"

Corbin's eyes were still on the flowers, but his mind was spinning. It might be possible to upend the table, drop behind it before the prospective killer could squeeze the trigger. No other plan suggested itself. Without looking up, he began to slide his hand warily toward the edge of the table. . .

He heard the click and saw the puff of smoke. Something smacked tremendously against his chest, drove the breath from him, but he felt no pain. He sat gripped in a queer paralysis of mind and body until his head tilted and he sagged against the table. He closed his eyes and opened them again.

The room was empty, crowded with shadows. He was hit all right. Pain stabbed him, and with it a fierce, bitter resentment. To have had a chance, to go down fighting, wouldn't have been so bad. He wouldn't have complained. But to pass out like this—alone—with so much to tell . . .

He groped despairingly for the pencil he had sharpened a few minutes before. His fingers touched the knife he had used. It was open. The room was

darker than ever now, the flowers blurred. Too late now to tell all that should be told, all that Inspector Neale hoped to hear. But time enough for one thing. The killer was not to escape.

The top of the table was soft, the blade sharp. He dug the blade into the wood, smiled grimly at thought of the damning evidence he was to leave behind.

II

INSPECTOR "PORKY" NEALE was cocked back in his chair, his feet hoisted upon his battered desk, enjoying one of Sergeant Wallace's birthday cigars and passing comment with the donor.

"The kid's been right on the job from the start," he declared. "I knew he'd be. That's why I've done all I could to get him out of harness and under your wing. Wasn't Bob Corbin a go-getter in his day? Eddie's a chip off the old block. Blew in here an hour ago, all steamed up. Been working a week on the Kelsey case and says he's going to bust it wide open."

"Didn't spill anything?" Wallace asked.

"Might have, but I was busy at the time. Told him to see me first thing in the morning. I tell you, sergeant, it puts a little pep into one, having a few hustling youngsters around."

"Yeah, I suppose so," Wallace conceded. "They'll be shoving the both of us off the shelf before long. Last time I talked with Eddie he was in a furniture store with a girl. Getting married, he told me."

"Next week." Neale chuckled and expelled a great cloud of smoke. "And that reminds me. Don't forget to kick in with a five-spot. The boys are buying 'em a present."

"Eddie won't be worth a hoot for the next month," Wallace remarked. "You can't honeymoon and—"

The ringing of the phone cut him short. Neale reached for the instrument without taking his feet off the desk.

"Yep, inspector speaking . . . What's that?" He listened to the low, obviously disguised voice that purred in his ear. "He's what? . . . You mean Eddie Corbin? . . . Say, who—"

He glared into the mouthpiece as the receiver at the other end of the line banged. His feet thudded to the floor.

"What's the trouble?" Wallace demanded.

"Eddie's been smoked!"

The sergeant reared from his chair. "Who says so?"

"The bird who just phoned tells me!" Neale growled. "In his room. Even gives me the address." He reached for his hat. "Maybe a false alarm, but we're finding out. Coming along?"

The two sped from the office, clattered down the stairs to the street, piled into a waiting police car that roared off when Neale barked an address to the alert driver.

"If it isn't a false alarm," Wallace said, "then Eddie's found out too much."

Neale said nothing. The sergeant promptly followed his example. The car whirled them through the crowded streets to their destination. The men jumped out. Neale, who had visited the apartment house before, bounded up the stairs to the second floor, flung open the door at the rear of the hall.

"It's the kid, all right," he groaned. Detective Edward Corbin lay face down across a table, his head pillowed

in his arm. He was dead. His shirt was red, soggy red. Neale made a swift examination.

"Hasn't been fifteen minutes ago," he announced. His voice was husky, his eyes suddenly damp. "Get some men up here—post 'em."

The sergeant departed. Neale locked the door behind him. After that he inspected the room and its furniture, but touched nothing. He covered the whole of the floor, probed the corners, stopped for some time at the open window and looked out upon the fire escape. He turned away presently and stared at the potted plant with its gay, yellow blooms.

At length he was beside the dead man again and saw the knife that was clutched in his fingers; saw, when he had pushed the stiff arm to one side, the deep scratches in the top of the table. He was studying the crude, shaky letters—printed letters—when the door rattled and Wallace's voice was heard. Neale unlocked the door to admit the sergeant.

"Look at this," he said, and led Wallace to the table.

The sergeant peered at the scratches, spelled out the three words and swore deep in his throat. The three words were plain. *Brant got me.*

Only the crude "N" was scratched as the illiterate often write it, with the cross bar reversed.

"Brant!" he exploded. "What do you know about that?"

"Good boy, Eddie," Neale murmured. "Knew he was done for—left this behind."

"I'll have that skunk in an hour," Wallace asserted grimly.

The inspector nodded. "If you don't, I will."

"It'll be easy. He won't stay under cover—never suspect what we've got

on him. Think it was Brant who phoned you?"

"I wouldn't be surprised."

A patrolman came along the hall and stopped in the doorway.

"The sergeant just told me what's happened," he said. "I was talking with Eddie down at the corner about half an hour ago."

"Where were you after that?" Neale asked.

"Haven't been more'n a block away from here since then."

"See any familiar faces in the neighborhood?"

"Only Brant."

"Huh," Neale said. "Coming from this direction?"

"I couldn't swear to that. Think it was him?"

"Might have been. Where's he hang out?"

"Down at Moony's—corner of Third. Him and the rest of his crowd. I hope you put a bomb under the lot of 'em, inspector," the officer ran on fervently. "Of all the rotten, loafing gorillas—"

"Who're the others besides Brant?"

"Well, there's Halsey and Dillon and Evans."

"I know 'em all but Evans," Neale said. He looked across at the sergeant. "That's the bunch Eddie's been after."

He ordered the patrolman to close the door, post himself at the head of the stairs. For some time after that he stood looking down at the evidence scratched upon the table. He bent over, finally, and ran an exploring finger along the scratches that formed the three words.

Wallace watched him speculatively. "What now?" he asked. "Find something?"

"Two somethings," Neale admitted. "Look here. Maybe you've noticed

that these words are printed, not written, and that all the letters are capitals."

"I'm not blind," the sergeant answered.

"And you noticed the 'N' in Brant's name is reversed?" the inspector asked.

"I do now, since you've called my attention to it," Wallace replied. "The letter was started with a down stroke instead of an up one. See it often in home-made signs."

"Correct," said Neale. "You can be observing at times. Now look at the card on that pot of flowers. Eddie must have printed it. It says: 'To Nora From Eddie.' All caps, too. But the 'N' isn't reversed."

"Which means what?" Wallace returned. "Say, he wasn't worrying about the correctness of his lettering when he cut that message. You wouldn't either, with a hole—"

"Eddie didn't carve the message," Neale broke in. "He was used to printing. Most of his reports were that way. First of all, no matter how much of a hurry he was in, he never would have made that blunder; and second—Just run your finger over the scratches."

The sergeant did so. When he reached the last word of the message he scowled, lifted his finger and bent lower. "There's something here. I felt it . . . I can see it."

III

"YOU can do both," agreed Neale. He took a knife from his pocket, opened the smaller blade and with it carefully pried an object from the deep scratch. Together the men scrutinized the shiny, pointed bit of steel, perhaps an eighth of an inch long, that had been dug

from the down stroke of the letter "E."

"It's the point of a knife blade!" Wallace cried.

"Nothing else. Now take a squint at the blade Eddie was presumed to have used."

"It's whole!"

"Sure it is. Tells you something, doesn't it? Eddie never left this message. It's a plant—a piece of bait. He probably did get hold of the knife, intending to carve something for us to find—passed out before he succeeded. The bird that croaked him must have come back to make sure his victim was dead—saw the knife in Eddie's hand, realized what he had been up to—and got himself a brilliant idea."

"I'm a son of a gun," murmured Wallace. "Maybe you're right."

"Maybe?" snorted Neale. "Of course I'm right. The blade that cut this message left a snapped-off point in the last letter. Eddie's blade isn't damaged. There's only one answer and you've heard it."

"The brilliant idea was to frame Brant, eh?"

"What else? Brant wouldn't have carved his own moniker, would he? That seems to let him out." Neale took up the bit of steel and deposited it carefully in his vest pocket.

"We've got to find the wielder of the damaged blade—fit this tip to it. Then we've got the killer. And it'll be some one who hoped to sink Brant."

"That eliminates all of Brant's mob," Wallace said.

"Does no such thing. I'll wager the culprit's a playmate. He set out to close Eddie's mouth, did so, and saw a chance to pin the job on some one he had a grudge against. Merely another instance of killing two birds with one stone."

"Yeah, it's been done," the sergeant agreed. "There's always a heap of friction in the best of mobs. You think Eddie knew who drilled him?"

"I'll say he did," Neale declared. "It looks like he got hold of the knife and started to leave some sort of a message for us to find. What would be more important than the name of his slayer?"

"Nothing," conceded Wallace.

"The guilty man must have been in a hurry, probably doesn't know what evidence he left behind. Chances are we'll find the knife he used on him."

"That'll be lovely," the sergeant said. "Damned if we won't frisk every mug in this territory. And God help the rat who's carrying a knife with a busted blade!" he added grimly.

Others came into the room now to take charge, to make the usual examinations and reports, but neither Neale nor the sergeant were interested in the dull routine. The halls began to fill with a morbid, buzzing crowd. Questions were asked of those who occupied the adjoining apartments. Nothing new was learned. None recalled hearing a shot, or of seeing any one leave Corbin's room.

"The killer used a muffler on his rod," Neale said, as he and Wallace descended to the street and climbed into their car. "I saw some marks on the window sill that might indicate he came up by the fire escape. Maybe left by the same route. Evidently figured things out in detail."

"We didn't find the door locked," the sergeant remarked. "Eddie had shed his coat and gun. The punk didn't take any chances."

"Didn't give Eddie one either," Neale returned. "A wonder he didn't shoot him in the back. We'll head for Moony's first."

The car deposited them half a block from their destination. The Moony establishment was a pool hall, with an alleged soft drink stand in front and rooms in the back for card playing; a hangout for the undesirables of the neighborhood.

As the two alighted, the patrolman who had talked with them some time before at the apartment, approached.

"I been looking over the premises below," he announced. "You'll find the bunch I mentioned in a back room playing pinochle. Brant's among 'em," he added.

"Better stick around," Neale directed.

"I'll do it," the other answered. "And listen," he went on, "I don't know what you've found, inspector, but after you'd brought up Brant's name a while ago, I remembered something Eddie Corbin dropped yesterday. I run across him on the street, got talking with him about Moony's dump and the bunch that hangs out there. When I mentioned Brant he as much as told me the man was stooling for him."

"Brant stooling for Eddie?" Neale repeated.

"I took it that way," the patrolman answered.

The inspector and Wallace exchanged pertinent glances at that bit of news, but Neale reserved comment until they had walked beyond earshot of the talkative copper.

"That hooks up with what we've found," he declared jubilantly. "The mob got wise to the game. That accounts for Brant's name being engraved on the table. We already got the motive for the murder, and now we're tipped off about the message. It's as plain as rain."

Neale stopped to relight his cigar.

"I'm going to pull something when I get inside," he announced. "Maybe it'll jar some of the punks. One of 'em anyway. Have 'em guessing. Don't be surprised by what I say or do."

"I'm past being surprised," Wallace returned, grinning. "You putting on another sideshow?"

"You might label it that."

IV

THE men strolled through the open doorway of the Moony establishment. The place was empty, except for a girl who sat at the soda counter and the youth who waited on her. They paid no attention to the newcomers. Moony was not in evidence.

Neale headed for the rear of the long room and pushed open the first door he came to. The room he disclosed was small and blue with smoke. The four men, playing cards at a table, looked up and stiffened perceptibly at sight of the two visitors. The men were young, sleek-haired, well groomed, with pale, hard faces.

Neale recognized Joe Dillon, Bert Halsey and Brant. The fourth man he judged to be Evans. The inspector closed the door behind him and eyed the stranger.

"Are you Evans?" he demanded.

"That's me," the man responded.

"Stand up!" Neale ordered.

The man hesitated. Halsey, sitting beside him, whispered something from the corner of his mouth. Evans scowled, put his cards down on the table and got sullenly upon his feet.

"You're under arrest for the murder of Detective Edward Corbin," Neale charged. "Fan him, sergeant!"

Too well schooled to betray surprise at the inspector's tactics, Wallace obeyed. A deliberate and thorough

search of the prisoner produced no gun, no knife.

"What in hell's this foolishness?" Evans growled, as the sergeant stepped back.

Neale's bleak eyes swept the four countenances. He had hoped to learn something, to catch some involuntary flicker of surprise from one of the men when he launched his phony charge. He was disappointed. Except for Evans, who glowered resentfully, the others presented blank, stony faces.

"You say Corbin was bumped off?" Halsey asked. "You mean that kid dick of yours?"

"I said it!" Neale retorted. "In his room—an hour ago. I suppose that's news to the lot of you."

"Why wouldn't it be?" Dillon countered. "We've been parked here all afternoon."

"The four of us," Brant supplemented.

"Right at this table," Halsey testified.

"Quit the stalling," Neale said.

"Ask Moony," Dillon spoke again. "He'll tell you as much."

"Why pick on me?" Evans demanded. "I never heard of Corbin."

"We've got you cold," Neale said quietly. "You used a muffler on your rod. Corbin was unarmed. You didn't give him a chance. But he lived long enough to write a message—leave it for us to find."

Evans started a laugh, but checked it. "Oh, yeah? What sort of a message?" he asked.

"It named the killer."

"Me? There's more than one Evans in this town."

"Only one right one," Neale bluffed.

He wondered if, in shooting in the dark, charging Evans with the crime, he had made a bull's-eye.

"You may as well come clean," he advised. "We'll riddle your alibi. You're sunk."

Halsey laughed. "Don't let him kid you, Evans. You don't know Porky. He's full of tricks."

The inspector turned upon the speaker. "Stand up! Go through him, sergeant!"

Wallace went to his task with undisguised eagerness. Halsey's pockets were speedily emptied, dumped upon the table. No knife rewarded the search. Neale motioned for Brant and Dillon to stand. The men submitted placidly to the sergeant's exploring fingers. A knife was found in Brant's pocket.

The instant Wallace came upon it, he stopped, opened it. Neale leaned forward expectantly. The knife had two blades. Both of them were whole, undamaged.

The men watched the proceedings with marked interest. When their belongings had been restored to their pockets, Dillon spoke.

"Where's a knife figure in this?" he twitted. "I thought you said your dick had been smoked."

Neale did not answer. He cast a glum look at Wallace, and was answered in kind. They were getting nowhere. With three likely suspects before them—Brant being eliminated—they had failed to uncover a scrap of evidence. If the guilty man was in the room, he had got rid of the knife.

Some one knocked on the door. Neale stepped forward, opened it a few inches. A girl stood outside, a plump, over-dressed blonde.

"I want to see—" she began.

"You'll have to wait," Neale interrupted. "We're busy." He closed the door and this time bolted it.

The tension in the room seemed to

have lessened now. The suspects relaxed. Apparently they had been quick to detect the uncertainty in Neale's troubled eyes.

"We may as well lock the bunch of 'em up," Wallace said, obviously aware of his superior's dilemma.

"How do the rest of us figure in this?" Dillon asked. "You're pinning a job on Evans—trying to—and now—"

"Go ahead and call his bluff," Halsey broke in, grinning. "Lock us up, Porky. What'll it get you? We'll be out in an hour."

But Neale was not listening. His eyes dropped to the table, to the scattered cards that had been pitched there. They jumped suddenly to the pad upon which one of the men had been keeping score. It contained the names of the four players. The names were printed in capital letters.

That wasn't all. The "N" in Dillon's name, in Brant's and Evans's were reversed—precisely as the letter had been in the message found on Corbin's table. The score-pad was directly in front of Halsey. No need to ask questions.

Although outwardly calm and betraying none of the thrill that raced through him, Neale's mind was churning. Here was a lead. The reversed letter furnished a clew, but it wasn't indisputable evidence. It would take more than that to convict the man.

He took up the pad, tore off the leaf containing the scores, and thrust the pad at Dillon. "Print your own name and the names of the others," he directed.

Dillon frowned at the singular request. "What the—" he began.

"Print 'em!" Neale repeated.

With a shrug, Dillon took a pencil from his pocket and followed instruc-

tions. He put down the four names. Every "N" he printed was reversed. Wallace, who apparently had not seen Halsey's copy, shot a triumphant look at the inspector, but Neale ignored it.

He reached down, tore off the leaf, thrust the pad at Evans.

"You try it," he ordered.

Evans grinned, took Dillon's pencil. His printing was smaller, neater than his companions. But the "N's" were not reversed.

"What's the racket?" Halsey inquired. "You starting a school of penmanship, Porky?"

Neale's jaw tightened. The reversed letter meant nothing now. Already he had found two examples. No doubt he could find plenty more if he cared to make the test. The lead was worthless.

"Maybe you'd like to have us sing for you," jeered Evans.

The inspector turned his back and strode to the window. He stood there a long time, his hands clenched, his heart in the depths, aware that the men around the table were watching him derisively. He was licked. The confidence he had entertained a few minutes before, the feeling that he was on a hot trail, deserted him. Rage and chagrin were mirrored on his gaunt face.

He might arrest the suspects, grill them, but the chances of wringing anything from the men seemed remote. They were cool, arrogant, assured that Neale was faltering. He was still convinced that Corbin's slayer was in the room.

The message containing Brant's name, the knowledge that the murdered detective had been investigating the activities of these men, the significant information dropped by the patrolman, all pointed that way. But how was

he to pin the crime on the guilty man? The knife with a broken blade was his sole bit of evidence, and that evidence was still to be found.

Neale had hoped, in charging Evans with the crime, to provoke some unguarded comment from the guilty man. But that ruse had failed. The criminal, if present, had been too cagy. He had kept a straight face and a curb on his tongue. And now the inspector must withdraw his charge, admit his trickery.

It was possible, he reflected, that if Brant had been Corbin's stool, the man might be persuaded to squeal. But would Brant know anything? It seemed unlikely that the criminal, having deliberately framed the informer because of his suspected dealings with Corbin, would have confessed to the murder.

Still something might be gleaned from Brant once he learned that his name, not Evans's, had been found cut in the table. That message alone, provided Neale withheld his own discoveries, would convict the man. Although the inspector did not propose to see the innocent suffer, he could hold that threat over Brant's head, perhaps learn a few relevant facts. In the present emergency, any straw was worth grasping.

V

NEALE turned from the window and was on the point of ordering Wallace to take the men to headquarters when his eyes fell upon an object under the table. It was a knife! He crossed the floor, stooped and picked it up.

The knife was a handsome one, expensive. Its ornate handle was inlaid with bands of white and yellow metal—platinum and gold, Neale judged. His heart skipped a beat when he saw,

even before opening the blades, that the point of the larger one was missing.

"Who does this belong to?" he inquired casually.

No one answered him. The four men about the table contemplated the find with passive faces, indifferent eyes. Only Sergeant Wallace, in the background, registered an immediate interest.

"Must belong to one of you," Neale insisted. "One of you must have dropped it."

"I've got mine," Brant stated.

"I never carry one," said Halsey.

Both Dillon and Evans shook their heads when the knife was extended toward them; both favored their inquisitor with thin, mocking smiles that Neale accepted as challenges.

"Somebody must have lost it here before we came in," Evans remarked.

With professed indifference, although his mind was seething, Neale stepped to the window again, as if to inspect his find in a better light. With his back to the audience, he opened the larger blade. From his vest pocket he extracted the bit of steel that he had pried from Corbin's table. The broken point fitted the end of the blade perfectly.

Neale's fingers shook a little as he restored the evidence to his pocket. The murderer was in the room! No doubt of it now. This gold and platinum knife had carved the baited message. Its owner must have noticed the damaged blade, realized where the point of it had been left, tossed the knife away before risking its being found in his possession. How long before, Neale did not attempt to estimate. It was of no consequence now.

The guilty man had been quick to sense his peril, and his companions, whether they had been taken into his confidence or not, were as quick to

shield him. Undoubtedly all of them had identified the knife the moment it had been displayed. Any one of them could have named its owner.

Neale turned to meet four pairs of leveled eyes, four inscrutable countenances.

"Sure none of you lost this?" he asked once more.

"Why all the fuss about a knife?" Halsey countered with a shrug. "Go ahead and keep the thing for a souvenir."

"Better hand it to Moony," Dillon advised. "Maybe the owner'll show up and claim it. Maybe," he added with a smirk, "you'll collect a bit of reward."

As if acting upon that suggestion, Neale unlocked the door and stepped outside. He saw the bald, paunchy proprietor close at hand, beckoned. In the same glance he saw the plump, over-dressed blonde sitting in a chair against the wall, recognized her as the girl who had knocked on the door some time before.

Neale, toying with a sudden inspiration, closed his hand over the knife as Moony approached.

"What's the trouble?" the proprietor asked.

The inspector's question was far remote from his thoughts. "How long have the boys back there been on the premises?"

"All afternoon," Moony assured him promptly. "All of them. Why?"

"I just wanted to know," Neale said.

He turned and reentered the room. His countenance was glum and funereal. "Hustle these punks out of here, sergeant," he ordered wearily. "Load 'em in my car. I'll have a session with 'em later."

The men exchanged amused glances, and without protest or argument per-

mitted Wallace to herd them from the room. They moved leisurely and chatted among themselves, betraying no alarm over the prospective grilling that awaited them. To the few hangers-on present, there was nothing unusual in their departure.

Neale purposely hung back. He saw Dillon wink at Moony; saw Moony nod and head toward the phone. That signal, interpreted, foretold the prompt arrival of a rescuing lawyer at headquarters, a time-honored procedure, too often successful.

It threatened to succeed in the present emergency, Neale reasoned, unless his final maneuver . . .

The blonde got out of her chair, ran up to grab Halsey's arm.

"Listen, Bert," she pleaded. "I been waitin' to see you. You—"

"Beat it!" Halsey growled, and flung off her hand.

The girl fell back and looked after the man, her hands clenched, her face white with rising fury. Neale, watching the performance, glided beside her.

Turning, she glared at the inspector, started to move away, but stopped abruptly at sight of the knife he twirled in his fingers.

"Where'd you get that?" she demanded.

"One of the boys threw it away," he answered, with a nod in the direction of the prisoners.

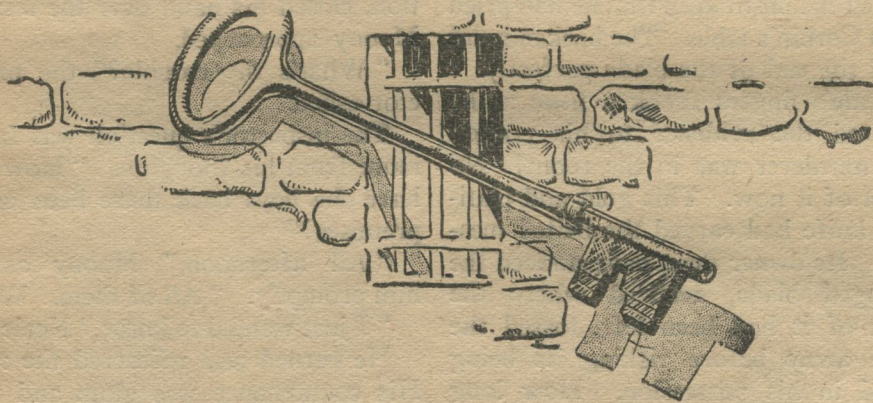
"Threw it away, did he?" The girl's voice quivered indignantly. "The dirty bum! After me payin' fifty berries for it!"

"That's tough," Neale murmured. "You gave it to Halsey?"

"Last week—for his birthday. I—I see myself givin' that egg another present," she choked. "The way he's treated me!"

The blonde began to cry. Neale smiled, turned in time to catch the stricken look on Halsey's face as the man glanced back.

"Cheer up, sister," Neale consoled softly, patting her arm. "You won't be giving him another present. Halsey won't be having another birthday."

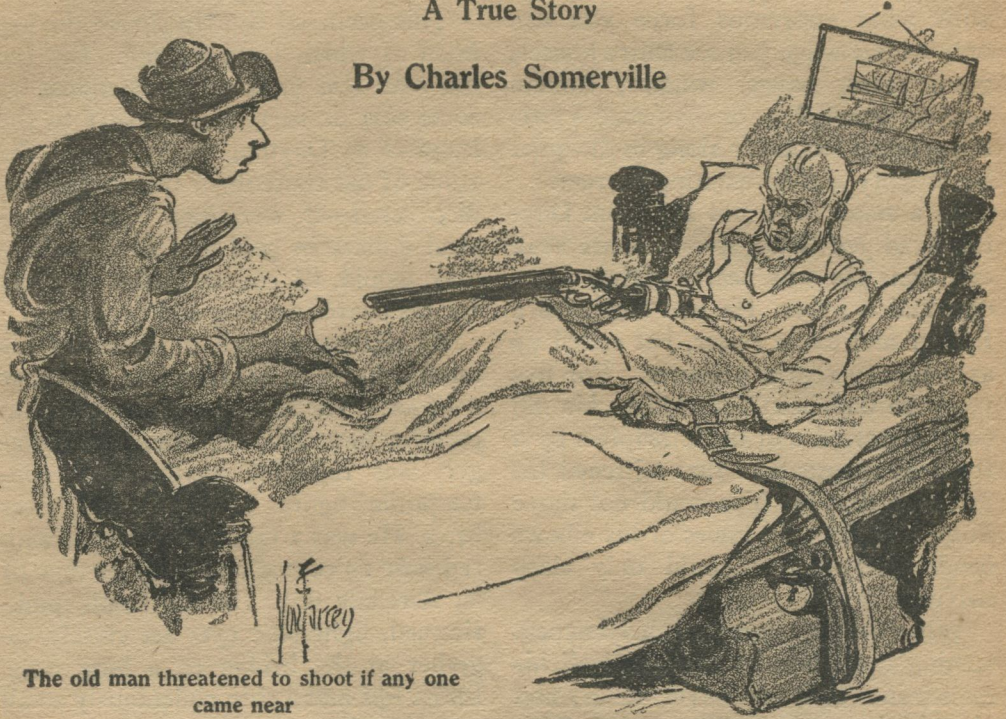


Lester Leith, the inimitable super-crook, will appear in action next week in another of Erle Stanley Gardner's speedy novelettes, "The Girl with the Diamond Legs," in which Lester Leith persuades Scuttle and Sergeant Ackley to become garbage collectors. Don't miss it.

Murder Will Out

A True Story

By Charles Somerville



The old man threatened to shoot if any one came near

*All Through the Stormy Night the Murderer's Victim
Pursued Him Down the Raging Flood of the Ohio River*

THIS weird story came out of a great flood in the Ohio River valley more than twenty-five years ago. A reporter covering the event at the time, I included it in my news dispatches, but it has never yet been as fully told as I mean to tell it here.

Knowledge of part of what actually happened is necessarily drawn from deduction in the uncanny tale—the deductions of a shrewd, practical and observant medical officer of the locality. I will call him Dr. Mason, but must frankly admit I cannot now recall his real name nor that of the little town

from whence the strange tragedy came. But the circumstances of it, its details, and the grim, dramatic explanation the doctor gave of it remains clearly in memory. It is too powerful a story for any one to forget.

Most persons who have never looked on a flood of the mighty rivers of the Middle West picture the rivers as rushing turbulently along, slashing high waves into white foam. But that is only true of the mountain streams that come tumbling down into the broad valleys. A flood of the mighty Ohio is strangely deceptive in appearance. The waters spread out widely,

but the broadened stream appears almost placid. Its surface is quite smooth. It is moving swiftly along to the great Mississippi, but how swiftly, with what enormous force you can only realize when you see entire houses, giant trees, barns, wagons, human bodies, struggling or drowned cattle being borne smoothly along in the quiet but mighty and devastating current.

In a small town not far from Dayton lived Jed Granger—or so we shall call him. He was nearly eighty years old, and a miser. He had begun as a farmer and cattle raiser, but ended up as a money shark, a usurer. For five years he had been bed-ridden, his old body distorted and made helpless by a form of rheumatism that stiffened his joints so that his hips could not move in their sockets, his knees or his elbows bend. His fingers could only clasp halfway.

When he felt complete helplessness coming upon him he converted all his money into gold and silver dollars and placed it in an old leather satchel. This was stored under the bed from which old Jed could not longer arise. He had a heavy lock on the satchel and a leather strap passing from the handle of it to one of his wrists, around which it was securely buckled and bound. When he slept he drew the strap taut, and as the aged are light sleepers no one could touch that strap or satchel without Jed Granger being instantly aware of it.

He had a daughter who married a handsome, good-natured fellow who was always losing his jobs. They had three children. Old Jed was driven into deliriums of anger in those times when his daughter's husband was out of work and he had to support the family. The older he grew the more miserly he became. And although he

sorely needed the nursing his daughter could give him, in the end he turned her, her husband and the children out of the house to shift for themselves.

This occurred shortly before the big flood of which I am writing. But the old man had to have an attendant of some sort or surrender himself to the hospital at Dayton, where, when the value of the contents of the satchel was discovered—it contained sixty thousand dollars in gold and silver coin—they would, of course, make him pay for his board, nursing and doctoring.

As against an evil it shrivelled his miser's heart to contemplate, he chose a lesser. He had a nephew come to care for him. This nephew, Pete Granger, was regarded as the most contemptible figure in the small river town. He was a tall, lanky fellow, with red hair as coarse and wiry as that of an Airedale dog. He had small, pink-rimmed, light blue eyes set closely together at the bridge of a long nose. Loose lips and a chin ridiculously small and shapeless, a long skinny neck to match his body, a shambling gait, clothing always shabby and stained completed the picture.

He skulked about sucking at a corn-cob pipe, taking odd jobs only when stark necessity demanded. He had been caught several times at petty thieveries. Twice he served short terms in prison for petty larceny.

Old Jed Granger knew of this. But he knew also that his lank, chinless nephew was afraid of him. And when Pete received word from Jed's daughter he'd be wanted at the house to care for his uncle, she didn't tell him that the last service she had done the hateful old man was to place a loaded shotgun at his right hand, strapped to his arm so that he could lift it, aim it and pull the trigger.

Pete went. It meant anyway a certain roof over his head and some sort of daily provender. He would stand out for an allowance of two dollars a week extra for tobacco and an occasional flask of white mule.

Pete took up his quarters with old Jed and did his best to please him. He began to have dreams of attaining such an ascendancy over the old man as age continued to weaken him that in the end Jed might leave him the dizzy riches that the worn leather satchel under the bed contained.

The waters of the Ohio began to rise and spread. Reports came to the valleys from the mountain regions that the streams there were smashing down the hillsides to the very tree tops, carrying everything before them. Each day the Ohio spread out farther, went up by inches, then by feet.

The good people with houses near the river bank did what they could to brace them against the pressure—the silent, smooth yet mighty pressure of the flood waters—and then retreated back into regions of safety. Tent colonies grew and welded into a small town overnight on territory known by past experiences to be beyond the sweep of the flood.

Pete Granger was obliged to come ashore from his uncle's house on a rough raft, made of three planks, in order to buy supplies at the general store.

"You'd oughta git the old man out of that house," the storekeeper said to him, and others there nodded agreement. "This here ain't no baby flood. That dern old two-story affair 'll be yanked into it and torn to pieces in no time."

Pete snickered.

"Ain't I bin tellin' him that? But you jest try to git him to leave it!

I did, an' he aimed a shotgun at me. He said he'd shoot to kill any one that tried to take him out of the house. He said the house was strong an' had stood up ag'in' other floods without being torn adrift, an' would weather this one all right."

"But does he know what an extra sized flood this one is, an' more yet to come?"

"Ain't I told him? But it's all right. Don't worry none. He's a mean old cuss and all that, but he's my blood and I'll stick to him. I bin workin' on a raft—you can't see it from here because it's on the other side of the house. I got her pretty nearly done—a good big one with a tent shack built on. An' I found an' old oil stove. When the flood gits too bad I'll just take matters in my own hands, I'll yank that gun away from him and load him and that satchel full o' money he keeps under his bed—though what the hell good the money does him I don't know—an' I'll drift him down the river to the nearest big town and put him in a hospital proper like he should be."

With that Pete departed with his parcels.

"I'm derved," said the storekeeper. "I didn't know that ginger-haired petty larceny beanpole hed thet much decency in him."

"Well, like he said—the old man's of his blood."

"Huh," observed a less sentimental member of the group, "mebbe he figures comin' inter the money over the old man's daughter what the old curmudgeon's rowed with. Mebbe he figures gettin' a will out of him favorin' hisself."

"Sounds more like him, thet does," agreed the storekeeper.

"Oh, shucks," some one protested. "Ain't none of us thet's all bad.

Shouldn't wonder he had a good streak in him."

"Mebbe."

II

THAT night the flood rose to its peak. A torrential downpour of rain with crashing thunder and blinding lightning made the night lurid and increased the might of the flowing waters.

At dawn every available police launch and volunteer boat was out on the river engaged in work of rescue. Women, children and men were plucked off the roofs of floating houses and barns, picked up clinging to the trunks of uprooted trees, or taken, soaked, shivering and half starved from hastily constructed rafts. Now and then a corpse was dragged out of the yellow muddy water.

Down the river, some miles from the small town where the miser had lived, was a bridge, and a police boat there came upon a raft held against a steel prop by a lashing of stout rope. It was a well constructed raft with a small shack built upon it, fitted with two bunks, an oil stove and a stock of canned provisions. There were also two empty whisky bottles and two bottles of whisky untouched.

But these details were a matter of after search.

What had brought the police launch hurrying toward the raft was the sight of two human feet incased in soggy woolen house shoes and showing skinny shanks that were naked, sticking out of the swift-flowing waters of the flood.

When the officers sought to drag the body fully into sight they looked at each other in surprise.

"What can make it so heavy?" demanded one.

"Good Lord—he's got a rope knotted around his neck!"

When they finally got the withered, skinny corpse upon the raft they heaved mightily at the rope. Up came another human foot—bare—and a long, skinny leg. Around the ankle the same rope that was tied about the neck of the aged man on the raft had formed into a slip knot, water soaked so that the rope clung inexorably to the limb.

Now the weight beneath became heavier than ever.

"There's something bulky tied to the other end of this rope—somethin' darn weighty. Let's get that up before we pull this feller's body out. We've run into somethin' darn queer."

"Darn queer for certain!"

They heaved at the rope below the long skinny shank around which the rope was noosed and brought up a small black satchel. Old it was, worn and water soaked—a dead weight.

Their eyes grew staring when they had broken the lock and saw that the shabby thing was filled with silver dollars and five, ten and twenty dollar gold pieces! A fortune!

Then they drew the second body completely out of the water—its red hair matted on the gray-white, ugly face with its long nose and weak chin uplifted from the long, bony neck.

"Pete Granger!" exclaimed one of the policemen. "Had him once for pig stealin'. Put him away for three months. Comes from about twenty miles up the river. The old man with the rope around his neck, this bag chockful of money—what the devil do you make of it, anyhow?"

They pondered, but shook their heads, unable to guess.

It was the shrewd, white-haired medical examiner who obtained the

first clew and who reconstructed the crime.

"The truth came at the autopsy," he said. "I then discovered that the old man had not been drowned. He was dead when his body was cast into the water. There was no water in his lungs. And I discovered the fact that he had been strangled to death. But not by the rope tied around his neck. Beneath that were black and blue marks unquestionably made by the fingers of human hands. Strangled to death before he went overboard!

"Then I made inquiry regarding the old man and the nephew, an innate thief, left in sole charge of this old man with his bag of riches beneath the bed from which he couldn't arise.

"In due course I got all the details. Learned of the statements of the nephew that he couldn't get the old man to leave the house, although he was repeatedly warning him that the flood waters were creeping up to his very bedroom window. I heard of his assurance that he would stand by, and had built a raft, and when actual peril came would remove the old man and his money to the raft and drift him down the river to a hospital. And I discovered how he dissuaded any of the townsmen from going out to warn the old man of his ever increasing peril by saying his uncle had a shotgun at his bedside and would certainly fire at them, thinking they had come to rob him of his money. Meanwhile he was probably telling the old man, who couldn't get up to see for himself, that the flood was a small one.

"Pete Granger was lying all the way. He built the raft all right. And on it, when the time came that night, he forcibly placed the old man and his bag of money. There isn't a doubt in my mind as to what he meant to do,

and in part did. He meant to strangle the old man, chuck him overboard, sink him, and himself proceed down the river on the raft to some place where he could make a railroad connection and then light out for New Orleans and get a ship from there to—anywhere—as far as he could go. By the time the flood waters lifted the swollen body of the old man it would be, he figured, beyond recognition.

"I believe that no sooner had the raft floated a mile or so below the town from whence it started than Pete Granger strangled the old, helpless man, and flung him into the river. He thought he would sink. If he had simply flung him off the raft and let him drown the body would have gone under. But the old man was dead when cast into the river. No water got into his lungs. The body was, therefore, buoyant, and floated down with the flood, keeping pace with the raft.

"You will remember how the lightning flashed all night long. And in these flashes Pete Granger saw the body of the old man he had murdered following the raft. You can see what it did to his nerves. The two emptied whisky bottles will tell you that. Every flash of lightning showed him the corpse of his uncle relentlessly following him—the grim pursuit of a murderer by the corpse of his victim! It would shake the nerve of a man of steel, to say nothing of such a flabby creature as Pete Granger.

"But when the raft approached the bridge, Pete got an idea. He would tie the raft to a steep support of the bridge and let the corpse go floating onward. He would thus be rid of the horrid thing. So he drank his second quart of whisky and fell into a coma.

"Daylight awakened him. The putt-putt of the launches of the police

searchers was beginning to sound around the bend in the river below the bridge.

"It was a good thing, he thought, that he had tied up the bridge. He was rid of that damned corpse! And then, to his horror, he found that he wasn't!

"When he tied the raft it had swung partly around, with the result that the corpse was driven against it with the raft as a barrier to stop the body from floating onward on the flood tide. And Pete Granger saw the terrible thing staring at him, with the police boats not half a mile away!

"He must sink it, since it would not sink of itself, and damned quickly. It almost seemed as if the thing knew this was the way to avenge itself! Why it would not sink he couldn't tell. He was too ignorant to know. What harrowing superstitious dread must have attacked him!

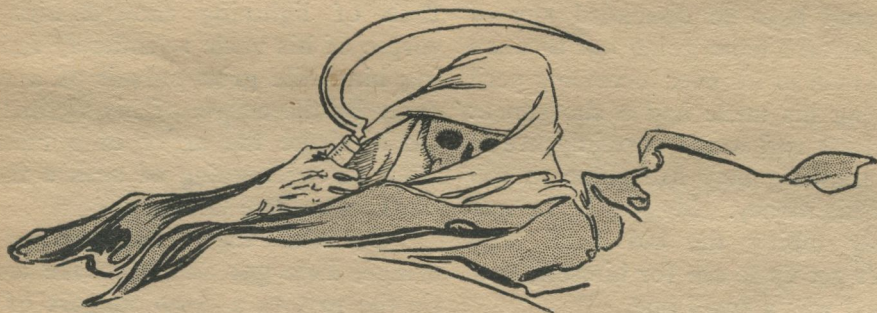
"But, by God, it had to be sunk! It flashed upon him how to do it. There was an extra coil of rope in the raft shack and he got it out. He noosed

one end around the neck of his uncle's corpse and the other end he tied to the handle of the coveted satchel with its heavy burden of glittering coins.

"After the flood subsided, after he and his uncle were given up for lost, he would return and retrieve the satchel. He marked which of the steel supports he was by—the fourth one from the shore. That would tell him where to look when he returned.

"He cast the heavy satchel over. But in his haste he stepped into a loop of the rope which had formed into a slip knot. When the heavy satchel went overboard Pete Granger was yanked from his feet and went after it, and atop of him came, with dead, white fingers distended as if clutching at his throat, the corpse of his uncle!

"The body of Pete Granger, when found, had only been in the water a brief time—it showed scarcely any signs of immersion. But the body, hands and feet and face of old Judd Granger were water withered and puckered. His body had been in the river for many hours."



Does your news dealer reserve your copy of DETECTIVE FICTION WEEKLY for you regularly? If he doesn't, ask him to. It may save you disappointment, for DETECTIVE FICTION WEEKLY sells out early on the news-stands.

Witches' Brew

By Madeleine Sharps Buchanan



"It oughn't to be a shock to an innocent man"

Ransom's Bluff Forces the White Cross Killer into the Open, and Brings About a Dreadful Confession

WHAT HAS GONE BEFORE

WILLIAM DELANEY has been murdered by a poison known as monkshood, and Jane Shannon shot as she entered the room where Delaney slumped in death. When Lieutenant Ransom and Detective Jim Pensbury get to the house of murder, they find the gun which has killed the Shannon woman in the dead hand of Delaney, and a bullet from the same weapon in Delaney's head.

Lieutenant Ransom believes this murder connected somehow with the suicide of Lucius Talbot, Delaney's

stepfather. All through the case runs a strong undercurrent of terror and witchcraft. Delaney's wife, Gail, testifies that her husband was tormented by some mysterious dread preceding his murder. Delaney's brother, Giles, is also sure some powerful criminal force is at work, and Ed Hopeton, who knew Jane Shannon, tells the police that she too walked in fear.

Police are unable to discover why William Delaney was at the house where he was found murdered. The house is owned by Eva Wallace, a ste-

This story began in DETECTIVE FICTION WEEKLY for June 6

nographer in Richard Boyerson's office; Boyerson was a partner of Lucius Talbot.

Ann Darien, a newspaper reporter, comes forward with the story that her brother was framed and sent to prison several years ago in Montana, in a case strangely resembling the Delaney one. Lieutenant Ransom immediately gets in touch with the Great Falls Montana, police department.

CHAPTER XLVIII

Ransom's Bluff

AFTER Delaney had left him, Lieutenant Ransom took up the receiver of his desk phone and called the sergeant on duty in the room below.

"Get hold of Pensbury, Ralph," he instructed him, "and tell him to throw things about in Boyerson's apartment as though a detailed search has taken place. I want Boyerson to know it. See? No; I don't know just where Jim is at present. But get this over to him immediately."

Replacing the receiver, he called the hospital where death had stepped in and robbed him of his strongest card in the complicated witch murders as the cases had come to be called—Jane Shannon. The expressionless voice of the head nurse spoke to him after a time.

"Miss Garfield, I don't want the news of Jane Shannon's death to creep out until I permit it," he told the woman. "Simply say to people who inquire that she is still very ill, but will be able to talk to the police in the morning. Be sure to give that out. And let my guard remain outside the door of the room where she died. If you can keep her there until to-morrow, it will be a big help."

The editor of the *Daily Messenger*, who was a close friend of Ransom's, received his next call.

"Frank, I want you to do something a bit out of the usual for me," said Ransom when the editor's booming voice spoke to him. "I want you to run in your next edition scareheads or whatever you call them announcing that the mystery woman in the Wallace house murder, Jane Shannon, is about to talk to the police. Say that she is anxious to tell all she knows about the case, that the identity of the criminal will be published within another twelve hours. Get that? Do that for me, will you?"

"But, why the ingratiating tone and the request?" laughed Frank Cogswell. "That's big news. Will I publish it? Try to stop me!"

"You don't get me right," said Ransom. "It isn't news, Frank. It's a lie. Jane Shannon died to-day."

"What!"

"Yes. In dying without opening her lips she knocked the props from under our investigation, and we're up against a tough proposition. I want the man we are after to think his game is up. That the girl is about to talk. And I want you to help me."

"I suppose you'll stand back of our statement," said the editor caustically.

"Certainly we will," snapped Ransom. And the girl has no people. If we get the man through this ruse you'll be a public benefactor."

"Well, on one condition," agreed Cogswell finally. "That you let us have the news of her death before any other paper."

"You know how I play, Frank—fair," said Ransom.

The lieutenant's next call was to the offices of a broadcasting station where, nightly, local news was sent out

over the air. The man in charge of the station was another good friend of Lieutenant Ransom's. Ransom had found that it was important to have friends in certain positions.

"Ray, I want you to do something for me in this Delaney case," he told the man earnestly. "I want you to slip into your broadcast to-night the announcement that Jane Shannon is about to talk to the police and tell what she knows about the Wallace house murder. Say that she knows the identity of the criminal and will not hesitate to make it known to the police. Lay it on thick, Ray."

"That's big news!" said the other man. "Sure I'll have it announced for you."

"Not so fast," said Ransom grimly. "Jane Shannon died to-day. She was our one best bet to get this fiend. I'm trying to reach him through the same medium he used to wrest money and their lives from his victims—*fear*. Whether it will turn and trap him or not I can't say. But we've got to try it. Do this for me, will you? Our department is back of any statement you make."

As Ransom replaced the receiver he sat for a moment in silence, staring across the office.

The man, whoever he was, who had poisoned Delaney and killed Jane Shannon, had not only been able to get Hopeton's gun from his room and place it in the dead man's hand. He had used some of Hopeton's paper, in all probability—although they could not be sure of this—to write that note to Delaney, the note which had cost three lives. The killer, then, knew all about the Wallace house and Hopeton.

He had acted with demoniac humor, for he had used Hopeton's gun to kill the woman Hopeton loved, and

at the same time had tied her up with murder! He had known that Jane Shannon was breaking under what she knew and that she was going to the Wallace house to meet Delaney. The killing in Montana had pointed the way to this second spectacular crime.

Sergeant Pierce entered the office while Ransom sat deep in his depressing thoughts.

"Lieutenant, I've got something and thought maybe I'd better tell you before we went any farther," he announced. "I started in on the Wallace woman with my inquiries about Montana, because Eva Wallace worked for Talbot, and Talbot was Boyerson's pal. And she spilled right away that both men had once been in Great Falls, Montana, for a year off and on. As far as she can judge, it was five or six years ago."

"Good work, Pierce!" cried Ransom, his face brightening. "We are getting somewhere. Go on with your work. I think you've hit the right spot, but go over the others anyhow."

"Right." Pierce left the office.

CHAPTER XLIX

On the Floor

BIG JIM PENSURRY jimmied open a window in Boyerson's living room, hanging precariously on a fancy little balcony while he worked, and let his bulk soundlessly into a luxuriously furnished apartment, lighted by one solitary lamp.

Moving without the slightest noise, Big Jim saw to it first that he had the place entirely to himself. The chief was right, of course. Boyerson was with Mrs. Delaney.

The instructions he had received to tear up the Boyerson apartment delighted Jim. It made his task easier.

A half hour later, however, he was feeling decidedly down-in-the-mouth. After a minute search of the entire place, from kitchen to bathroom, the only thing of any suspicious or interesting nature which he had unearthed was Boyerson's bank book, or rather, one of them. Examining this carefully, Big Jim decided that, since a scare was to be thrown into the lawyer, he might as well take the book with him instead of copying its contents.

Placing it in his pocket he looked about at the living room with a grin. It would throw a shock into Boyerson all right when he entered it! The disappearance of the bank book might add to the shock.

Opening the door, Big Jim left the apartment by way of the stairs which wound down behind the elevators.

At the garage which ran along the rear of the huge apartment house he sought the man in charge with no attempt at secrecy.

"Police business," he announced, displaying his badge. "Which is the garage where Mr. Boyerson keeps his car?"

"This one, sir," said the man, walking along the row of doors. "One of Mr. Boyerson's cars is out. He took it himself."

Jim nodded. "Got two, has he?"

"Yes, sir. Roadster and sedan."

"Which is out?"

"The roadster."

"All right, let me into the garage. I want to examine that sedan."

Looking very uneasy, the man opened the garage door and Jim walked up to the sedan, a handsome, expensive car. The doors were unlocked, and bidding the curious and anxious garage man to hold his flash light inside the car, Jim took out the rugs and proceeded to examine the floor thoroughly.

As he worked, he wondered how the chief was going to get out of this tangle if Boyerson was an innocent man. He was a clever lawyer. He could make a squawk. But in Big Jim's mind Boyerson was not an innocent man. And suddenly, on the floor of the car, he discovered what, in his opinion, closed the case definitely. Instructing the garage man to hold the flash light closer, he proceeded gleefully to work scraping up the damning evidence. Wait until he showed this to Ransom!

CHAPTER I

The Broadcast

AT quarter to eight that evening, Dorothy Wilde was dismissed from the hospital, a bandage fastened about her head, and rage in her heart.

What was the use of a girl getting mixed up in such a notorious case as this and being interviewed and all, if she couldn't make something out of it? Both Bacon and Delaney had failed her.

Even the interview she had given the reporters who had stopped her as she was descending the hospital steps did not soothe her disappointment. She had hoped to get her hands on some real cash.

And then she heard the raucous cries of the newsboys, shouting the late editions.

"Read about de mystery girl! Extry! Jane Shannon talks to the police! Extry! Jane Shannon says she knows de killer in de witch moiders!"

Jane Shannon! The little widow that lived across the street. She was able to talk! The case was, then, finished.

Buying a paper, Dorothy held it in shaking hands while she waited for a

bus to take her back to the Wallace house. The announcement about Jane was run in as a bulletin—four sentences. But they were set in huge black letters.

"Jane Shannon has recovered and will talk to police and give details of the witch crimes. She says she knows the killer. The mystery of the salt cross will be explained, police believe."

She had thought that that girl was going to die. Dorothy sat motionless in the bus as it bore her uptown to the Wallace house. Nobody knew her. Every one around her, reading the extra, talking about the cases, ignored her as she sat back in her corner, her close little hat drawn down about the bandage under her hair. Even when she slipped out at Camac Avenue they did not notice her. All heads were craned to get a good look at the notorious Wallace house.

The next night she would be able to go back to her place in the Bolton Avenue Theater. Life would go on. And if she had been smart she would have got some sort of a haul out of this murder!

Closing the front door of the Wallace house carefully behind her, Dorothy Wilde stopped short, staring with a touch of horror into the apartment the papers had called the murder room. Albert Bacon was reclining in an easy chair near the table lamp, reading, and the radio was playing softly. Bacon was a cold-blooded one, he was.

"Hullo!" said Dorothy with a sneer as she entered the room. "I should think you'd find a pleasanter place than this to sit."

"Oh, so you're back, my pretty little liar!" remarked Bacon, glancing up from his book.

"Yes," said Dorothy, with a yawn,

throwing off her hat and coat. "You didn't kill me, after all, with that wallop. Honest, Bert Bacon, where *were* you going when you knocked me out?"

Bacon lifted his brows.

"Say, they oughtn't to have let you out when you're running a temperature," he said soothingly.

"Oh, yeah?" Miss Wilde sauntered to a chair and sat down, spreading the evening paper on her knee. "Well, it won't be long now! Not long. Have you seen the *Daily Messenger*?"

"No."

"Well, you ought to read it. Jane Shannon is going to talk to the cops. She says she knows the name of the killer an' all. She's got well."

"What!"

Bacon dropped his book and bent forward. There was an unpleasant look in his eyes.

"Yeah. Is that a shock? It ought not to be to an innocent man. Here, read it, big boy, and weep. If you are what I think you are, you better beat it."

Bacon seized the paper and read the extra, while Dorothy watched his paling face. She grew honestly interested in the man while she sat there looking at him. Did the recovery of Jane Shannon really throw a scare into him?

"This is newspaper talk," said Bacon presently, throwing the paper back at her with contempt. "That girl could never talk yet with the kind of wound she had."

"Anybody would think you don't want her to talk," observed Dorothy mildly. "What is it to you?"

"Nothing."

"You look as though it's nothing to you, getting as white as chalk, with your eyes bulging with fright. You

ought to see yourself. I'll get you yet, Bert Bacon, for trying to get me mixed up in this case and for handing me that wallop."

"I tell you, I never hit you in my life," snarled Bacon. "And I never knew the Shannon woman. She can die or she can get well. It's nothing to me. But she can't get well with the shot she had in her."

As though to give the lie to his words, a man's voice spoke suddenly over the radio in the far corner.

"Word has just come from the hospital that Mrs. Jane Shannon, mystery girl in the Wallace house murder, has recovered sufficiently to talk to the police and tell what she knows about the case. She has already informed her nurse that she knows the name of the killer. I believe that by morning the doctors will judge her in strong enough condition to make a statement."

Dorothy Wilde rose to her feet with a piercing scream, the evening paper dropping to the floor.

"Bert Bacon, don't you dare!" she shrieked. "*Don't you dare!*"

CHAPTER LI

The Man Behind Bacon

"I TOOK this bank book," said Big Jim, as he handed the book to Ransom, "because I thought it would throw an extra scare into him maybe. You can see what enormous deposits he has been making these last six months. Guess he has other banks, too."

"Wonder where he got all this money," mused Ransom, as he studied the book. "It will be interesting to find out, Jim. No lawyer on this earth ever made this much in this length of time. Not honestly."

"He ain't honest," chuckled Big

Jim, taking an envelope from his pocket. "Look here what I scraped up from the floor of his sedan after I took out the carpet."

Onto a piece of carbon paper Big Jim poured a tablespoonful of small, white grains.

"What is it?" asked Ransom, bending forward.

"You can taste it," exulted Jim. "It's salt!"

"Salt!"

"Yep. Guess he hauled the bags of salt around in that sedan. Had to have a good sized bag to make that salt cross like we saw on the Wallace porch and the Raddock porch. Wet salt."

Ransom's eyes were shining with excitement.

"He kept all his supplies or whatever he wanted to hide at that cottage which he burned out at Sparrow Wood, I'll wager," he said. "Jim, I believe he is our man!"

"I'll say he is. What you tumbled to about poor Talbot yelling at him when he jumped that it was the only way out was a plenty. Boyerson knew why he took that way all right."

"Poor Mrs. Delaney," said Ransom softly. "She seems out of luck. I can't believe she is involved."

"She had enough luck getting rid of Bill Delaney," said Big Jim indifferently. "That woman has darn bad taste, if you ask me."

As Jim spoke, Sergeant Pierce burst into the office, agitation written all over his round face.

"Lieutenant, that Wilde girl from the Wallace house just telephoned us," he cried, "and she's plain goofy. Gone off her head. She's yelling that Bacon just shot himself after he heard the radio broadcast about Jane Shannon getting well!"

Ransom and Big Jim, both on their

feet, looked at each other speechlessly and then Big Jim blurted two words as he reached for his hat.

"Bacon! *Damn!*"

Eva Wallace and Hopeton were both in the living room of the Wallace house when Ransom and Big Jim arrived. They were trying to quiet Dorothy Wilde, who was in hysterics.

Across the same chair where the body of Delaney had sat upright for so many hours, the inert form of Albert Bacon was flung, the gun with which he had ended his life fallen from his hand onto the rug.

Dr. Vandyke, arriving a few minutes after the others, pronounced Bacon dead.

As he spoke Dorothy roused from her hysterical condition and breaking away from Mrs. Wallace walked to Ransom's side. She dropped her contemptuous glance upon the body of Bacon as she passed him.

"He tried to get me mixed up in this, the cheap skate," she sneered. "Well, I handed him a shock all right. I beat the radio to it."

"Tell us about it," urged Ransom gently, and Big Jim, chewing gum, stared a bit impatiently. He never could see how his chief could be so decent with these skirts.

"I got out of the hospital and escaped from the reporters to hear what the boys was yelling about this Shannon woman getting well and talking," said Dorothy. "I bought a *Daily Messenger* and read about it. When I walked in the house here Bert Bacon was sitting right there in that chair reading that book. I sat down and said a few things to him about me not dying on account of the wallop he had given me, and I asked him if he'd seen the paper. I gave it to him to read and he looked sick. It gave me a shock

to see how sick he looked, and for the first time I really believed he had killed Delaney and the girl.

"And then when he was trying to act natural and saying it was just newspaper talk, the man on the radio cut loose about Jane being well and talking to the police and knowing who the killer was. And right on the heels of it Bert whipped out that gun. I was scared silly then. I yelled at him not to dare to shoot, for I thought he was going to end me that time for good, but he turned it on himself. I was that scared I could hardly get to the telephone."

"Bacon!" muttered Ransom, looking down at the body and biting his lip. "We slipped badly somewhere, Jim."

"Nix," said Big Jim cheerfully. "I got two men watching Boyerson. He's our man, no matter how Bacon was tied up in it."

"But just how *was* Bacon tied up in it?" Ransom asked himself dully, still staring at the slumped body.

"Where did he get that gun, is what I want to know," said Big Jim briskly. "No gun in this house when I searched it, only the one that shot Jane Shannon. That was Hopeton's."

"He kept that gun in the office where he worked," said Eva Wallace, with a toss of her head. "He used it on the road. I knew he had it."

"And you kept quiet, huh?" sneered Jim, turning upon her. "You can keep quiet like an expert, can't you?"

"When I want to!" snapped Mrs. Wallace.

"No matter about the gun," said Ransom sharply. "Did you see Bacon to-night, Mrs. Wallace?"

"No."

"She wouldn't," sneered Jim. "Nobody in this house ever sees anything."

"Mrs. Wallace," asked Ransom

sternly, "was it Bacon Bill Delaney came here twice before he died to visit?"

"I don't know anything about him being here twice before. I told you that a dozen times," said Eva Wallace.

"I think that Bacon's suicide answers that," said Ransom gravely, turning back to the dead man. "It was Bacon Delaney came to see, Bacon who wrote him that note on Hopeton's paper, and Bacon who got Hopeton's gun from his room. Very strange things have happened in this house, but these matters were taken in charge by some one who was known here, seen about here, and familiar with each detail of the house. It is the man behind Bacon whom we must get, Jim."

"Well, we'd have had him long ago if we had an honest lot of folks to deal with," said Big Jim with a disgusted glance at Hopeton, the two women and the dead man.

CHAPTER LII

Ransom Makes an Offer

DOROTHY WILDE crossed the room and stood beside the body of Bacon. Her pert little face was twisted with disappointment.

"To think of me coming out of this pretty business without getting a cent out of anybody," she sighed. "I guess I haven't got any brains."

Ransom had a sudden thought as he studied the little gold digger.

"Dorothy, have you any nerve?" he asked.

"Nerve? Didn't I dope that cop of yours and trail after Bert Bacon?" demanded Dorothy angrily. "Sure I've got nerve, but I don't know how to use it. That's what ails me."

"Come down to headquarters with me and I'll tell you," said Ransom,

briskly. "Jim, can you get a couple of men into the Boyerson apartment and conceal them there?"

"Sure."

"All right. Do that right away. Call the Delaney house first and find out from Shafter whether or not Boyerson is still there. Do that skillfully. I don't want him to bolt yet. See that your men are armed and ready for any emergency. We've got to make a play to-night or it will be too late. And just come with us, Mrs. Wallace and Hopeton. We are not taking any chances with you two until this case is cleared up. Get busy on this, Jim. Time is precious. When Boyerson enters his apartment, he must not know you are there."

"Okay!"

In Ransom's private office, whither she had driven in a car with a raging Mrs. Wallace and a sullen Hopeton, Dorothy Wilde regarded the lieutenant with curious eyes.

"What you got up your sleeve?" she asked.

"If you want to make a couple of hundred dollars, you will help us out on this," smiled Ransom. "You will be taking a chance. It will be dangerous if we are right. Want to try it?"

"I want some cash," said Dorothy frankly. "What do you want me to do?"

"Go to Boyerson's swell apartment as though you sneaked there after Bacon shot himself, and tell Boyerson all about the suicide and the radio and the evening paper. But tell him, too, that while you were alone with Bacon and before he shot, he told you all about the witch killings and who the man is.

"Tell him you want cash and that unless he pays you to keep quiet, you will tell the police what Bacon told you. Tell him Jane Shannon won't be ques-

tioned until morning and he will have a chance to leave town. Ask him a thousand dollars or even more. Any amount at all."

"And get myself bumped off!" said Dorothy, wide-eyed. "For goodness' sake, what do you take me for?"

"You said you had nerve," reminded Ransom, turning to his desk. "All right. You may go."

"Not so fast. Who is going to act my hero stuff while I am holding up this swell lawyer?"

"Big Jim and a couple of my men. They will be hidden close by. I don't think Boyerson will want to leave your body in his apartment after he leaves town anyhow. He doesn't think we have much on him."

"You're cheerful," sneered Dorothy. "Why can't you wait until this Shannon girl sees you?"

"I am offering you a chance to get out of the case with a little cash to hasten matters," said Ransom impatiently. "Do you take it or leave it?"

"If you tell me where this bird lives and what I am to do, I'll take it," said Dorothy finally, "provided I see the money first. Maybe it will have to be used to bury me."

Ransom grinned as he walked to the safe in a corner of his office.

"I hardly think so," he said. "I would not ask you to do this if I thought Boyerson would kill you. By his attitude toward you and your offer he will condemn himself. Lead him on. Get him into the case as deeply as you can. You are a clever girl. Here is your two hundred. If you work this well, I'll add another fifty."

Dorothy Wilde took the money in a dazed fashion, counting it, folding it, and placing it in her gaudy beaded bag. Then she lifted her suspicious gaze to the young lieutenant's impassive face.

"Say, did this Shannon girl die?" she asked quietly.

"All you have to know at present is what I am about to tell you. And we have to work fast. Boyerson may return at any moment from the Delaney house. Now, you listen carefully to instructions."

CHAPTER LIII

The Test

BEHIND a thick silken curtain in Boyerson's living room, Big Jim Pensbury chafed at the enforced inaction. His gun was in his hand, and he hoped that he could use it. A picture of the Raddock girl as he entered her bedroom floated before his eyes, and the thought of Jane Shannon filled him with rage.

Across the room, cleverly concealed, two other detectives also waited, in grim silence.

Two clocks ticked somewhere and one of them chimed richly every fifteen minutes. The air was warm.

After what seemed like years to Jim, there was the sound of a key in the lock, and the door at the end of the long, handsomely furnished corridor which led back to the living room was opened, and the waiting men heard Boyerson's voice and then Dorothy Wilde's. The girl had evidently waited for him outside.

The two came along the corridor and Boyerson turned on several lamps in the living room, threw off his coat and hat, and turned to the girl.

"Now, what can I do for you?" asked the lawyer.

"Don't try to be high hat," said Dorothy, leaning back against the wall with her hands in the pockets of her swagger little coat. "Bacon shot himself to-night."

There was a tense silence, during which Jim knew that Boyerson had experienced a dreadful shock. But when he spoke his voice was still suave and pleasant.

"Bacon?" he asked. "I don't know who you mean. You are, I think you told me, Miss Wilde, one of the inmates of the Wallace house where Delaney was murdered."

"Yeah, and don't call me an inmate," said Dorothy. "It sounds like I'm crazy. I guess you know Bacon, Bert Bacon. Anyhow, he said you did. He said it before he died."

"Suppose you tell me what you are getting at," said Boyerson in a level, dangerous voice. "Sit down."

"No, thanks," said Dorothy. "I haven't got time and neither have you. You see, Bacon has spilled the beans. He shot himself, and then he told on you. I'll tell you how it was. They released me from the hospital after I got that wallop on my head when I followed Bacon out of the Wallace house. When I got home there was Bert sitting in the room where Delaney was murdered, reading a book. He sure had his nerve. So I went in and started to razz him about handing me that slam, and then I showed him the evening paper where it said Jane Shannon was going to talk to the police tomorrow, that she knew who had killed Delaney and was getting well. That threw a terrible scare into Bert. But he bluffed it.

"He said it was newspaper talk and that the girl couldn't live with the kind of shot she had in her. And just then the radio broke loose with that evening news broadcast, and the fellow announced that Jane Shannon was about to talk and tell what she knew. Well, I'll never forget that. Bert just went wild. First thing I knew he had

brought out a gun from one of his pockets and I thought he was going to shoot me with it. But he didn't. He shot himself. Was I a wreck? I'll tell the world."

Dorothy shivered with the memory of that awful moment, but went boldly on, to Jim's everlasting admiration.

"And then Bacon began to talk to me. He told me everything, Mr. Boyerson, before he died. And if you will hand me over a thousand dollars I'll keep quiet until you get out of town. But it will have to be now, for Jane Shannon will talk to Ransom in the morning."

"Why, what do you mean?"

Boyerson spoke with a cold, contained sort of rage that was more alarming than a burst of temper. He thrust his head forward and stared at the girl in so menacing a fashion that Big Jim's hands tightened on the gun that was pointed at Boyerson's heart.

"Say, you know what I mean!" Dorothy managed to laugh tauntingly. "Want me to say it? Bacon told me you killed Delaney. He said you were mixed up in that killing out in Great Falls, Montana, and that when you started in on your getting money from rich men here, Talbot, who knew about that Montana killing, threatened you. Then you scared him with threats, because he had been out there with you. You could throw the blame on him, for you were a slick lawyer with plenty of pull.

"And you drove Talbot crazy as, one by one, these men killed themselves, driven to it by you. He took the only way out. He told you so when he jumped. He couldn't stand it any longer. And he was fond of Bill Delaney, and Bill was in your power.

"You see, Bacon told me all about it, Boyerson. But nobody else heard

it. I was there alone with him right after the shot. You got Rose Raddock because Gail Delaney, the woman you loved, told you about the note in the pocket of that dressing gown, the note Bacon himself wrote on Ed Hopeton's paper. On my typewriter, I bet. But Ransom was too clever to catch Hopeton in his net, even if the gun in the dead man's hand was his. Ransom is a smart bird, Mr. Boyerson."

"You must be mad!" roared Boyerson furiously. "How dare you come in here and tell me this rot? I don't know Bacon. I was never in the Wallace house. I'll call the police and have you arrested!"

Dorothy giggled nervously.

"Say, that would be a good one. Go ahead and call. I can see you. Fork out a thousand dollars and as far as I am concerned, Bert Bacon died with his mouth shut. But you only got until Ransom sees Jane Shannon."

In the darkness, Big Jim grinned. The girl was good.

"Get out of here," snapped Boyerson. "You little gold digger! Get out of my apartment at once."

"Oh, sure, I'll go," said Dorothy, turning to the door. "But I'll stop off at headquarters."

There followed a terrible moment for Big Jim. While Dorothy Wilde walked down that long corridor to the door, each step she took seemed to fall on his twitching nerves. Could it be that Boyerson was not their man? But everything pointed to the lawyer.

The girl had almost reached the door. And then Boyerson sprang forward.

"Come back here, you!" he snarled.

And with a vast breath quickly smothered, Big Jim knew they had won.

Dorothy had turned. Insolently,

with one hand on her hip, she walked toward the lawyer.

"Well?" she asked.

"How can I be sure you'll keep your mouth shut?" grated Boyerson as he stepped to an inlaid desk which stood near one of the hiding places of the police.

"I don't know," said Dorothy. "I'll just swear I will. What would I get out of it if I talked after you paid me? Nobody else would pay me anything. The cops wouldn't."

Boyerson was making out a check, and as he signed his name to it he signed his death warrant. The weird, mysterious witch murders were at an end! Mysterious still to Big Jim, but he cared little for the explanation of them. He had his man. Ransom could take care of the rest.

CHAPTER LIV

A Woman in Montana

DOROTHY Wilde took the check from Boyerson's hand and scanned it through her heavily made-up lashes.

"Suppose you stop payment on this, big boy?" she wanted to know.

"Don't worry," said Boyerson. "I dare say you've lied to me, but I can't take a chance on you. You know too much."

"Well, you better get a move on," said Dorothy as she placed the check in her beaded bag and turned to the door. "That lieutenant gets up early."

Boyerson thrust his hands into his pockets as Dorothy turned away. Big Jim, fearing that the man might, after all, shoot the girl, sprang from his hiding place and thrust both arms through Boyerson's from the rear, taking him utterly by surprise. The other two men stepped out of their corners.

A sharp ring came at the door. Dorothy opened it to Ransom and Sergeant Pierce.

As he passed the girl, Ransom gave her a pat on the shoulder.

"Good kid," he approved. "It worked, did it?"

"Worked!" cried Dorothy delightedly. "He's your man, all right, lieutenant. I certainly had him going with Bacon's confession and all the dope you had told me."

When Ransom reached Big Jim's side, Boyerson had been forced into a chair and handcuffs snapped on his wrists.

"Boyerson," asked Ransom, standing before the cornered man, "why did you do it?"

Richard Boyerson was a brilliant man. He had played a wild game and had lost. He knew when he was beaten. He wasted no time in useless denials. He even smiled sardonically into Ransom's eyes.

"A woman, first, out in Montana," he said with a shrug. "Women have always been the ruin of me. This girl to-night—she was your tool? It was a trap?"

Ransom nodded. "A trap, Boyerson. Bacon is dead all right, but he didn't talk."

"You're honest with me," said Boyerson. "Thanks. I have no chance now, however. I'm lawyer enough to know that. And when Jane speaks—"

Ransom said nothing. Of no use now to tell this man that Jane Shannon lay cold and dead and speechless.

"It was a woman in Montana where I first met Talbot," said Boyerson presently. "Years ago I met Talbot out there, but this happened more recently. We had gone back there together on a business trip. About five years ago it

was. There were two men whom this woman seemed to prefer to me. I knew that if they were out of the way I would have a chance. She had almost told me so. I was mad about her and ready to do anything to win her.

"I killed one of these men with aconitine which I had taken from his own amateur laboratory, and I killed him on a night when I knew my second rival was going to his home to see him. After he died, I waited there for the other man, and when he came I shot him, fired a shot into the first chap's head, and placed the gun in the first chap's hand.

"I hoped the cops might think it suicide and murder, and I involved a young fool who had been hanging around Ida for weeks, for it was his gun. I had not figured in any way in the case, and I needed to use this kid. It was strange that he had the same name as the girl who testified to-day for young Delaney—Darien. That upset me a bit, Ransom."

"She was his sister," said Ransom softly.

"Ah!" For a moment amazement seemed to keep Boyerson silent. "Well, life is strange," he went on. "Not much use going wrong. It traps you sooner or later. You see, out west I was not Boyerson. Years before, I practiced law under my own name, that of Gray Patricks. When Talbot and I went back I went as Patricks. Of course Lucius knew all this. I had a rather shady past out there and he started to worry me about it after the crimes, after that Darien boy went to jail. But I had him fixed. I knew too much about him in the old days for him to get smart with me."

"Then you never saw Darien's sister in Montana?" asked Ransom.

"No. I was out of there the mo-

ment those chaps died. I was not even served with a subpoena. I worked it cleverly and I kept away."

"And afterward? When you came east?"

"I had learned then how easy it was to commit crime," mused the lawyer. "I wanted big money. I saw how I could intimidate Talbot. I got the idea of getting stuff on other men and working them. And then the witchcraft murders broke in Pennsylvania. I read up a lot on them. I saw in my work how you can twist some people around by fear—superstitious fear. I used the cross of salt, the old voodoo warning of trouble. And people kept quiet about it.

"I suppose they laughed at it until they began to know that some anonymous person meant business, and then the less they said the better. I got all sorts of stuff on wealthy men I went about with. Crooked card tricks, affairs with women, rotten politics, graft. I used it all and they paid me well. Some of them ended their lives when they got tired paying. I sat pretty then, too, for they were obvious suicides.

"And then Talbot jumped out of his office window. He did it because he knew too much and his conscience drove him mad, and because I had forced him to make a will leaving all his money to Bill Delaney, the husband of the woman I meant to marry. I intended to get rid of Bill. I had plenty on him and I had been demanding sums of money from him for some time. Of course, neither he nor any of the other men knew who I was."

"But Bacon and Jane Shannon came into it," reminded Ransom.

"Yes. I'd seen Bacon with Mrs. Wallace, who worked for Lucius, and I knew Mrs. Wallace owned just the sort of house I might need in my plans.

I cultivated Bacon. Six months ago I saw to it that Jane Shannon moved into the house across the street from the Wallace house. She and her husband, Horace, had lived in Great Falls. Horace knew me well and he trailed me east and forced me to send him enough money to live on. He had a bad heart and a touch of lung trouble. I knew he would not last long. It was his wife I feared. He was onto my game and of course he told her before he died.

"When she came to me to protest and to say that she must tell if the suicides did not cease, I knew I had to get rid of her. Bacon put me wise to the vacant little house on Camac Avenue and we sent her advertisements about it with many cheap inducements, and since it was going to cost her less to live there than where she was, in an apartment, finally she went to see it and moved in. I wanted her here, because already the plot which was to finish her off with Delaney was seething in my mind.

"As long as she was where Bacon could report to me regarding her movements and friends, I felt better, and she was hardly ever from under Bacon's eye. He knew every one who went to her house and he reported when Hopeton began to get attentive. That looked good to me."

"Just tell me this," put in Big Jim, "You burned that cottage at Sparrow Wood, didn't you?"

Boyerson nodded, sneering. "If you cops have ever gone over that, the game would have been up. We kept everything of any importance out there."

"But what had the police done that made you take that step?" asked Jim.

"You had taken to questioning Hopeton," replied Boyerson. "And we didn't know what Jane had told him."

"What did you have on Bill Delaney?" asked Ransom, while Big Jim returned to jotting down the story as the lawyer told it.

"Bill ran a sort of mild drug traffic," said Boyerson. "He let people come to his house where his wife and kids were to get the stuff. He was a bad lot, and finally I sent him the last of my notes, which Bacon wrote on some of Hopeton's paper in the Wallace house. Bacon had summoned Delaney to that house before, when he was alone in it. Nobody knew Delaney knew Bacon. He had scraped acquaintance with him soon after we started our partnership, and he let him think he was interested in the drug racket. Bacon was clever."

"Then after you had that note sent to Delaney you made the appointment for Jane to meet Delaney in the Wallace house and you waited in the living room and shot her as she entered," stated Ransom. "Or was it Bacon?"

"No." Boyerson shook his head. "You see, Jane didn't know Delaney and she was dead against me. When Bacon wrote the note to her, which was apparently from Delaney, telling her he was in trouble and had known her husband in Montana and wanted to see her about it that he might expose the man who was causing all these deaths, she fell for it. In the note she was asked to meet Delaney in the Wallace living room at midnight. She was probably suspicious because Delaney asked that, for Hopeton lived there. That was likely why she did not go in alone, but hung around watching, not knowing what to do until the taxi came along. I guess she was sweet on Hopeton or she would have let him in on this."

"It was Bacon who did for Delaney, then?"

"Yes. I gave him the aconitine and

he met Delaney in the living room of the Wallace house and offered him a drink. That was all there was to it. He had Hopeton's gun and he simply hid it in the living room where I could get it when I arrived later on. Bacon kept an eye on the living room and intended to steer any one away from it who seemed inclined to enter it. If the body of Delaney had been discovered, well—no one was involved, and we would have finished off the Shannon girl before morning anyhow."

"Where did you get the aconitine?" demanded Ransom.

"I took a good supply of several deadly poisons from my rival's laboratory in Great Falls," replied Boyerson. "I didn't know when I might need them, and I wasn't anxious to sign a paper to get possession of one of them."

"This Shannon girl knew, I suppose, about the cottage at Sparrow Wood, and she muttered a lot about hex and made the sign of the horned fingers," mused Ransom. "Was she trying to tell me something, Boyerson?"

"Maybe Horace told her all he knew. Some of the people I worked for cash were very superstitious. I knew that if I used the witch stuff strong in the Delaney case and the Raddock case it would make my game all the easier. The papers eat that sort of thing. When Gail told me about the note she found in Bill's dressing gown and that she had let Shafter take it to the Raddock family, hoping that it would be used by some of that down-at-the-heels lot to injure Bill or bring him to his senses or expose what he was up to, I knew I had to get that note."

"I went to the Raddock house early in the morning while it was still dark and looked the place over. Gail had

told me exactly where it was. I had a thought of breaking in and scaring them into giving up the note, but when I walked around back I saw a lighted window and the figure of a girl outlined in it. The girl was posing in that red dressing gown.

"The next morning I returned, watched my chance, made the cross of salt on the ramshackle porch, and went in and found Rose alone with the baby. She defied me and held back the note. She was a regular little vixen. Well, I had no choice. I had to get rid of her. Then I walked out the back door and reached my car on another street."

Feeling a repulsion at the horrible crimes of this polished looking gentleman, who sat so calmly in his handsome living room and talked about them, Ransom kept his voice quiet as he asked his questions, and only the scratch of Jim's pencil broke the silence when both men paused for a moment.

"And so you shot the dead Delaney to throw us off the track?" asked Ransom presently.

"Not entirely," said Boyerson. "That hadn't worked in Great Falls. No; it gave me a kind of satisfaction to pretend that Jane had been killed by the man with whom she was plotting to expose me."

"You were the cowed figure Dorgan and Jane saw on the Wallace porch?"

"Of course. Wasn't that clever? Aconitine, monkshood, the cowed figure of the monk! And it was witches' brew all right, first brewed by that witch in Great Falls. I went to the Wallace house to lay the cross of salt, to see if Delaney had been done for, to learn if our plot had been discovered and if it was safe for me to enter the house and wait for Jane. With

Delaney out of the way I could marry Gail and get Lu's fortune, and with Jane out, Bacon and I could go ahead with our scheme and pile up a few more fortunes."

Dorothy Wilde drew a gasping breath.

"God!" she whispered to the officer beside her. "I'm breaking out in a rash!"

CHAPTER LV

Red Ink

"WHAT gave me a jolt were those two words spelled on the card table before Delaney's body," went on Boyerson gloomily. "Those words, 'Find Jane'. I knew Bacon had not done that, for he was true to me. He has a fat bank account where you cops haven't located it. But there, when I crept into the living room where Delaney sat alone, dead, staring at me, I saw those words! I tell you, it gave me a turn. I didn't know then that Bacon had seen Mrs. Delaney creep into the living room and discover her husband's body. He let me know that later. It seems strange that Bill was talking to me over the telephone the day Gail overheard the mention of Jane. He had called me to read me a note he had received from his stepfather, Talbot, and in it Talbot told him to find Jane, that Jane could tell him all he wanted to know.

"I knew at that moment that Lu Talbot was breaking, that sooner or later he would tell one of his boys about the game I was playing for millions. I knew Gail had heard that conversation, for she had hinted at it to me several times since the death of Bill and the shooting of Jane."

"Why was that red ink spilled on the floor of the Wallace living room,

Boyerson?" asked Ransom, determined to clear up everything while this amazing criminal was in a mood to talk.

"I don't know," replied the lawyer. "I suppose Bill or Bacon knocked the bottle on the floor."

Ransom was silent for a moment, then, exchanging a glance with Big Jim. For the red ink, accidentally spilled, into which Dorothy Wilde had stepped and which had caused Bacon to try to entangle the girl in the case, had actually trapped Richard Boyerson! Ransom, knowing the man, doubted if in any other way than through this trap baited by a little gold digger, could he have so satisfactorily caught the killer.

"And it was you who telephoned young Delaney and summoned him to the Blue Dragon Inn to meet the brother who would never come there," Ransom said.

Boyerson smiled grimly.

"Yes. Rather clever, wasn't it? I knew young Giles was not known in such places and I hoped it would make him tell a fishy story. The Darien girl ruined that. It would have been so nice if both Delaney men were out of the picture and Gail and her fortune were undisputably mine."

"Those acorns filled with hair," said Ransom. "Talbot got one. It scared him to death."

"Others had them, too. But they were suicides. Nobody found them or thought of them if they did. Talbot knew when he got his that I would kill him. I was mad then with gain. It was so easy to play people! I wanted to be famous as a kind of unique terror. A long time ago I paid Race Shannon twenty dollars for a lock of his wife's hair. I could tie her up then with any crime I was caught with if she got

unruly. I fancied I could protect myself against her, and I never believed she would really squeal. It would place her in too bad a position herself. But I found she meant to. You can't tell about these women."

"You unnatural devil!" cried Ransom, giving way for a moment to the rage which consumed him.

Dorothy Wilde rose from the couch and went close to the handcuffed man, her small face blazing with fury.

"Say, it was you who hit me that wallop the time I followed Bacon!" she cried hysterically. "It was you Dorgan saw in that monk rig."

Boyerson grinned.

"Quite easy, my dear, to slip the hood on my head," Boyerson said. "The story Dorgan told bears out my theory of carefully-built-up superstition. My fame was growing! And it was my one mistake, that. I did not hit you hard enough."

"Oh, yeah?" screamed Dorothy, completely out of control now. "Well, we're quits! I not only lied to you to-night about Bacon, I don't only have your thousand dollars, but I'm going to be the first to hand you a bit of cheerful news! You are the world's prize dumb-bell. Jane Shannon is *dead*! She died hours ago! She couldn't squeal now if she wanted to!"

Boyerson sprang from his chair, his face livid with fury, his handcuffed arms lifted as though he would bring them down with crashing force on the little tap dancer's defiant head, but Big Jim thrust out a powerful arm and flung him back in his chair.

"You better behave yourself!" he growled. "Dorothy, you calm down now. Your act's done."

"Well, I got him told, anyhow!" she said triumphantly.

THE END

The Man Who Died Twice

By William C. Davis

TO die once is a misfortune; to die twice is a miracle. The ex-confidence man who revealed to me this grimly humorous chapter out of his life, insists that he is the only man who has died twice and made money both times.

His first death followed a deep vermillion spree in Little Rock, Arkansas. His family had literally thrown him out of the house, and he was doing his best to drown his sorrow. A young scion of a Virginia family swimming in tobacco money was suffering from a similar desire in the same city. The two met.

They got to comparing notes and holding post-mortems on happiness and contentment, when the young scion—Muller, we'll call him—proposed a novel stunt.

"Suppose we send telegrams to our respective and revered families," he suggested, "to find out how we stand. Judging from what you tell me, you are in Dutch with yours. I'm in the same position with mine. None of our parents seems to care anything about us living; let's find out how they like us dead."

The following telegram was framed, a copy being sent the father of each, over the signature of "O'Connor, coroner":

THE BODY OF YOUR SON
WILL ARRIVE ON THE EVENING
TRAIN TUESDAY.

Having sent the wires, each took a train for his respective home, the con-

fidence man—whom we'll call Wesley—to Huntsville, Alabama, and Muller to a town in Virginia.

Wesley, who was very drunk when he stepped off the train at Huntsville, never dreamed that his death would be accorded such a demonstration. At least two hundred girls from his father's college, a score of teachers also, half a hundred boys and girls of his own age and set, over a hundred carriages of prominent citizens, and two heavily laden wagons of floral tokens were there at the station to greet his coffin.

As Wesley climbed heavily down the train steps, there rose a sudden gasp of amazement; or it might have been chagrin. Wesley's mother promptly fainted. His father registered indignation, put his wife into a carriage and drove home, leaving his "dead" son to attend to whatever obsequies might seem meet.

Most of the crowd faded silently away, though naturally many gathered around Wesley to inquire what it was all about.

"Well," he explained, answering numerous queries, "I had sent a good many letters and telegrams home without receiving any answers. I decided that nobody cared for me living, so I thought I would see if my death would change their attitude."

It did. The morning paper—the *Mercury*, had come out with an article headed "Requiescat in Pace." The condolences of the journal were extended the bereaved parents. As there

was little of good to say about the "deceased," his record for chicanery being pretty well known, the paper did the next best thing. It spoke highly of the bereft parents.

However, everything considered, the young scamp had been treated with lavish charity.

For a week he remained at the hotel when his mother drove up and asked him to come home. His father was in the house when he walked in with his mother, but the old man treated him with scant consideration. Late that night the boy overheard his father say to his mother:

"The young rascal never told any lie in that telegram. He merely wired that his body would be here on such and such a train. And sure enough it was, though not in the form we expected."

And then he laughed so heartily over the situation that Wesley began to think the storm clouds had dispersed, and by morning had summoned up enough courage to invade his father's den, hoping to touch him for a few dollars. But the old man ordered him out of the house, and told him never to return.

How his friend Muller fared he never heard. Wesley's second death came about in this fashion a few years later:

He was in New York, and having just been handed a suspended sentence in a petty jam, was broke. He wired home for fifty dollars, stating that he had been hurt in an accident and needed the money for medical attention. It happened that a friend of the family was visiting the family home at the time, and he promptly heaved a monkey wrench into the machinery by informing Wesley's father that all the medical attention needed could be had

at the New York free hospitals. So—"Go to a hospital," was the curt reply in a wire.

Desperately in need of cash, Wesley got a doctor friend in New York to send this wire:

YOUR SON SERIOUSLY ILL.
WIRE \$100.

No answer. The following day Wesley had this wire sent:

YOUR SON IS SINKING. WHAT
SHALL WE DO IN CASE OF THE
WORST?

This, apparently, made the family's New York friend think there might be some truth in the young man's reported illness, for he wired a mutual friend for corroboration. The friend made inquiries, and Wesley explained the situation. This wire resulted:

WESLEY PASSED AWAY AT 2
P.M. IF BURIED HERE WILL
COST \$250. IF BODY SHIPPED
HOME WIRE \$300.

"Bury him there," came the answer with unwonted rapidity, accompanied by \$250.

It got around his home town that the boy had died of an accident, and once again he became the subject of sorrowing friends of his father. Hundreds of floral tokens arrived at the family home, and an obituary notice appeared in the *Sun* of Jackson, to which city the family had moved following their son's first "taking off."

When Wesley was handed the \$250, he sent his father the following wire:

FIRST TELEGRAM IN ERROR
WAS IN COMATOSE CONDITION
FOR SEVERAL HOURS AND DR.
COHN THOUGHT I HAD DIED
UPON RECEIPT OF MONEY
HOWEVER I SOON REVIVED
AND AM RAPIDLY RECOVER-
ING.
WESLEY.

He Died Laughing

By J. Lane Linklater



"There's the chair he was sitting in," Hugo Oakes said

Hugo Oakes Borrows a Stepladder to Demonstrate Why a Man Might Chuckle When Murdered

HUGO OAKES, lawyer, walked along the corridor of the ground floor of the Spinner Apartments. Noting the shabby rug upon which he was trudging, and the niggardliness with which the hall was lighted, he concluded that the sign outside which read "Beautiful Singles, \$37.50," had been conceived by an optimist.

He stopped before number seven, which was the last apartment to the right, and tapped on the door.

Presently the door opened. A young woman, modestly pretty and modestly dressed, stared at him. Her brown eyes were hazy pools of trouble. She stared

at Oakes as if she could scarcely believe what she saw.

"Well," demanded Oakes, gruffly, "what's the idea keeping me standing here?"

"Oh!" she gasped, and her eyes became wells of happiness. "Come in!"

Oakes followed her in and sank his short, fleshy ungainly form into a cheap overstuffed chair. The girl stood in front of him, her quick, nervous hands clasped.

"I—I'm so glad!" she said. "I thought you told me that you wouldn't take the case, and I was feeling frightfully blue. I—I—"

"When I work," Oakes grumbled,

"I got to have money. You said you didn't have any, didn't you?"

"That's right." The worried look returned. Really, I haven't any—"

"Yeah. Well, after you left, I got to thinking. Mamie, my secretary, tells me I got four hundred and ninety-nine people on my books that owe me money. So I thought maybe I ought to make it an even five hundred."

Oakes said it seriously enough, but the young lady laughed in relief.

"That's what they told me," she said. "Everybody says that you're the last hope of penniless people in trouble—"

"Don't remind me of it," cut in Oakes, gloomily. "Your name's Miss Sutter, ain't it?"

"Yes, sir," said the girl. "Mary Sutter."

"All right, Mary. Your father, Jerry Sutter, was arrested last night and held in connection with the murder of John Spinner, huh?"

"Yes, sir."

"You live in this apartment with your father?"

"Yes, sir."

"And John Spinner owned the dump?"

"Yes. Mr. Spinner owned the apartment house. He lived in the apartment on the second floor, just above this one."

"And your father worked here, too."

The girl flushed slightly.

"Yes. My father lost all he had a couple of years ago. He is getting old. He—he did janitor work around the apartment house in exchange for an apartment. I am not trained to work, but sometimes I get a little office work, and manage to bring in enough money for groceries."

"Uh huh," said Oakes pessimisti-

cally. "That's tough. Probably have to do something like that myself pretty soon, unless I can make some quick collections. Now, about this John Spinner, what kind of a guy was he?"

"I—I suppose I shouldn't say it, Mr. Oakes. But I thought him mean and unkind."

Oakes looked at her shrewdly.

"Mean, huh? I thought the papers said he died laughing?"

"Well, it looks as if he did. At any rate, he was heard laughing quite heartily, and he stopped in the middle of the laugh."

"Yeah. Well, do mean guys laugh?"

"I don't know, Mr. Oakes. But I do know that about the only time I ever heard Mr. Spinner laugh was when somebody else was in trouble."

"Yeah?"

"Yes, sir. Dad, as I told you, was getting old. Sometimes he would make a mess of things. Then Mr. Spinner would laugh at him. That is, he would laugh unless it was costing him something, in which case he would become very angry. You—you understand about dad, do you, Mr. Oakes?"

"Oh, sure. That's all right. Some of the best people on earth find it tough going when they get old—sometimes because they *are* so blame good. Sometimes looks like it's all hooey about the survival of the fittest—more like the survival of the most ruthless."

The girl nodded in agreement.

"And your father was fired?"

"Yes. Mr. Spinner had given us until the first to get out. That's three days from now."

"Sure. My friend Inspector Mallory will probably claim that as the motive."

"He does," said the girl.

"Uh huh. Well, we'll fix that guy Mallory," Oakes threatened. "Spinner was shot in the forehead, wasn't he?"

"Yes." The girl's voice was steady, but her face was very pale. "They say that one shot did it, fired at about fifteen feet."

"Fifteen feet!" Oakes repeated. "That ain't so far, but it would take a pretty fair shot to drill a hole through a guy's forehead, neat and clean, even at fifteen feet."

The girl hesitated a moment.

"Dad could have done it," she said quietly. "He has been an excellent shot all his life. And he's still good, even at sixty. He's shaky on his legs, but his hand is steady."

"Yeah?" Oakes complained. "Well, that ain't going to do him no good. Everybody knows about him being a good shot, huh?"

"Yes, sir." She paused thoughtfully. "But it was a rather funny thing about this place. There are, or were, several good shots here."

"Yeah?" said Oakes, his small eyes gleaming with interest. "Who were these guys that could shoot good?"

"Mr. Spinner himself," said the girl, "was an excellent revolver shot. Both he and his son, Frank. Then there is a man named Bill Nevvin, who has an apartment on the second floor—I think he originally got acquainted with the Spinners because of their mutual interest in revolver shooting."

"They found the revolver in your father's apartment here, huh?"

"Yes, sir. In a bureau drawer."

"And you don't know how it got there?"

"I haven't any idea. I never saw it before, and neither did dad. It must have been planted."

"Uh huh. Where were you, Mary, last evening, while Spinner was getting shot?"

"At a branch library, Mr. Oakes, about two blocks away."

Oakes rubbed his hands.

"Uh huh. Your dad was a good shot. So was John Spinner, and his son, Frank. And another tenant by the name of Bill Nevvin. Any one else?"

"Well," said Mary Sutter. "I am rather good at it myself."

II

OAKES glared at her disagreeably. "Yeah?" he said. "Well, I don't want to know nothing about that. Let's take a look at the place where Spinner was shot."

"Very well," said the girl. "That was on the second floor. I'll take you up there."

At the door Oakes stopped and carefully scrutinized the lock.

"Scratched!" he muttered.

"What's that?" said the girl.

"Never mind," said Oakes, "We'll see about that later."

She led him along the corridor toward the stairway.

"Only two floors, ain't there?" queried Oakes.

"Yes. Just two floors."

"Uh huh. Now that John Spinner is croaked, who is in charge of the house?"

"His son, Frank, I think," the girl told him.

"Well, is he around? I think maybe we ought to take him along."

"If he is," Miss Sutter said, "he'll probably be in number twelve. That's upstairs, too."

They mounted the stairs and walked along the second floor hall toward the rear. The hall widened at the end, and close to the window which opened on the back of the house were several chairs and a small table. It was a sort of miniature social hall.

The girl pointed to one of the chairs.

"It was a hot night last night," she said, "and Mr. Spinner was sitting there where he could get some air—"

"Let's get this young guy, Frank Spinner, first," interrupted Oakes.

Number twelve was the back apartment on the right, within a few feet of the space in which the chairs were. Oakes rapped on the door and waited. Presently the door opened and a young man looked out inquiringly. He was dark, rather handsome, and well and expensively dressed.

Oakes introduced himself and stated his business.

"Certainly," said young Frank Spinner. "Look around all you want to."

"Yeah," Oakes said dubiously. "But I'd like to have you along."

Frank Spinner shrugged indifferently, closed the door of his apartment and joined them.

"That your apartment?" asked Oakes, indicating the door of number twelve.

"I suppose it is just now," said the young man. "It wasn't, though, until this morning. It was my father's."

"Uh huh," said Oakes. "And which apartment was yours?"

"Why, I lived across the street, in the Albert Manor. It's a much better place, you know. My things are still there. Now that father is gone, I'll probably sell this place—it's a shabby hole, anyway."

"Well," said Oakes, "I know a lot of folks who would be tickled to death to live here. But that's your business. Now, where was your father sitting when he was shot?"

The young man pointed to the swivel chair that the girl had already indicated. The chair was facing down the hall, toward the front of the building, the back of the chair toward the window at the rear.

"Is the chair in the same position as when Mr. Spinner was found?" queried Oakes.

"Exactly," said the young man.

"And the bullet entered the forehead, indicating that the shot had been fired from farther down the hall?"

"Obviously."

Oakes grunted, walked to the window and stared out absently. Back of the building was a row of small garages the roofs of which were several feet beneath the window. About ten feet separated the garages from the building.

Presently he returned to the others. He looked from the door of number twelve to the door of number thirteen, which was directly across the hall.

"These two apartments," he asked Frank Spinner, "are the two back apartments?"

"Of course."

"Who lives in number thirteen?"

"No one. It's vacant just now."

"Then, if your father was out in the hall here when he was shot, there was no one in either apartment at the time?"

"Correct," smiled the young man.

Oakes turned to the girl.

"And where was your dad when this happened?"

"Why, he was in the next apartment down the hall here, number eleven. That was vacant, too, and he was cleaning it up so that it could be shown to prospective tenants this morning."

"Uh huh. And he heard no shot?"

"No, sir. No one heard it. The police say that a silencer was used."

"Oh, sure. It was your dad who found Spinner dead, huh?"

"Yes. When he came out of number eleven, he noticed Mr. Spinner sitting there, facing toward him, slumped over. He spoke to him,

and got no answer. Then, of course, he discovered what had been done."

"Yeah. And it ain't the first time the cops have tried to nail a guy because he was honest enough to report finding a stiff," growled Oakes. "Another thing. Spinner, they say, died laughing. That is, he was heard to break off in the middle of a laugh. Did your dad hear him laugh?"

"No," said the girl. "The door of number eleven, where he was working, was closed, of course. And dad's hearing was quite poor."

"Uh huh. Well, who did hear that laugh?"

"Oh," put in Frank Spinner, "Bill Nevvin heard it. He says it was quite distinct."

"Bill Nevvin heard it, did he? And where was he?"

"In his apartment. That's number ten, right across from number eleven. Bill's door was open a little at the time, and he was in his apartment, reading."

III

OAKES waddled down the hall. It was just a few steps to where the doors of numbers ten and eleven faced each other. He looked at one door and then the other, then turned and looked back toward the swivel chair in which John Spinner had been sitting—and laughing—when he was shot.

Oakes walked slowly back to the others. He spoke to the young man.

"So Jerry Sutter was working in number eleven, and Bill Nevvin was reading in number ten, when Spinner got bumped off?"

"So it seems," said Frank Spinner. "I know only what I've been told about that, of course."

"Sure. And who is this guy Nevvin?"

Young Spinner smirked.

"It's pretty well known around here," he said, "so I guess it won't hurt to tell you. Bill is a wholesale bootlegger."

Oakes looked pleased.

"A bootlegger! That's fine! Bill and your father were pretty thick, were they?"

"They were together a great deal."

"Sure. When did they let you know about your father being shot?"

"A few minutes after Sutter found him. I was over in my apartment across the street, in the Albert Manor, and they phoned me."

Considering that his father had been shot to death the night before, young Frank Spinner seemed very cool. Oakes apparently noted this.

"Your father didn't seem to be very popular, huh?" he suggested.

"He didn't deserve to be," the young man said frankly. "He could be pretty mean at times."

"Uh huh. And yet he died laughing."

"Well, he laughed occasionally. The last time I saw him alive, which was early yesterday afternoon, he was laughing."

"Yeah? What did he laugh at?"

"Well, Sutter was going down the stairs there. He slipped and fell. He really did look rather funny, and my father laughed then."

Oakes glanced at the girl. Her lips were tightened and her face was flushed.

"Old man Sutter is a good guy," Oakes said harshly. "But it's interesting about that laugh. So Bill Nevvin heard it, huh? What do you think made him laugh—somebody tell him a funny story?"

"There was no one with him to tell him stories," the young man pointed

out. "At least, no one that we know of."

"Yeah. Your father have lots of money, did he?"

"I believe so."

"Do you get it now?"

"I don't know," said Frank Spinner, sourly. "He had a will leaving most everything to me, but he got angry with me a couple of days ago and said he was going to make a new will. I know he tore the old one up."

"Uh huh. Who was his lawyer?"

"Harlan Mears."

"I know Mears well," said Oakes. He paused thoughtfully. "Now, most of these liquor dealers have lawyers, too. Do you happen to know who Bill Nevvin had for a lawyer?"

"I certainly do," said the young man. "He had the same lawyer—Mears."

"And where is Nevvin now?" Oakes asked, with a chuckle.

"I rather think," said Frank Spinner, "that he's in his apartment right now. He's usually in about this time. Would you like to see him?"

"You bet I would," said Oakes vigorously.

"Very well. We'll get him—"

"Wait a minute," said Oakes. "First, I'm going to get a friend of mine down here from headquarters. Where's your telephone?"

IV

FRANK SPINNER obligingly led Oakes into the apartment his father had occupied. Oakes, however, did not at once call headquarters. First he put in a call for his own office.

"Mamie," he told his stenographer. "I want you to run over to the office of Harlan Mears—it's right across the street."

"Yes, sir," Mamie's voice came to him obediently.

"Mears is out of town," Oakes went on. "But you can get around his stenographer somehow. Get her to show you any of his recent correspondence or records of interest to John Spinner, who was his client. Can you do that?"

"You bet!" said Mamie.

"Make a copy of anything you see, and bring it around to me at the Spinner Apartments right away."

"I'm on the way right now," said Mamie.

Oakes rang off, and soon had Inspector Mallory on the wire. There was a brief and rather bitter verbal tussle, at the conclusion of which Mallory agreed to join Oakes at the Spinner Apartments within a few minutes.

After all, Mallory's experience with Oakes was such as to have encouraged him to treat the pudgy lawyer's suggestions with greater respect than he was willing to admit outwardly.

Oakes, still accompanied by the young man, went back out to the hall, where Mary Sutter was waiting.

"This Bill Nevvin is a good revolver shot, too, ain't he?" asked Oakes, apparently filling in the time with conversation.

"An excellent shot," Frank Spinner agreed. "In fact, shooting was quite a popular topic of conversation in this house. Several good—"

"Yeah," said Oakes. "So I've heard. By the way, who uses those garages back of the house here?"

"Oh, various tenants, of course."

"Uh huh. And uses the one directly opposite that rear window?"

"Why, that's Bill's."

"Bill Nevvin has his car in that garage?"

"Yes." Young Spinner eyed Oakes

curiously. "But surely that has nothing to do with the killing of my father. It's quite certain, apparently, that the shot came from the opposite direction, judging by the position of the chair, which was facing down the hall, just as it is now."

"Uh huh." Oakes suddenly got up. "Me and Miss Sutter," he said, "will go downstairs for a few minutes. Mallory will be along by the time we get back. You can wait in your apartment, young fellow."

"Very well," the young man smiled his cool, indifferent smile. "I'll be here when you want me."

"And don't wise Bill Nevvin while I'm gone, either," Oakes instructed gruffly.

He escorted the girl back down the stairs to her apartment.

"Mary," he said kindly, "you can go rest in your own place. I don't need you now. I'll let you know when I want you."

The girl smiled her thanks, and entered number seven.

Oakes proceeded the short distance to the rear door. Just inside the door he stopped and noted that at that point another door opened on some steps that led down to the basement.

He stared down into the gloom below, muttering to himself.

In a few minutes he swung about and walked out of the rear door. Here he was standing between the back of the house and the row of garages, just outside of the garage used by the bootlegger, Bill Nevvin.

Oakes casually examined the ground between the house and the garage, and was just about to open the door of the garage when he was hailed from the window immediately above. Frank Spinner's smirking face was showing at the window.

"Inspector Mallory is here," announced the young man.

"Tell the old scoundrel," said Oakes, "that I'll be right up."

He trudged back into the house, along the hall, and back up the stairs. Mallory glowered at him grimly as he approached.

"What are you doing here?" grumbled Mallory.

"Just correcting another of your mistakes," Oakes told him genially. "You ought to feel sorry for a good old guy like Jerry Sutter."

"I can't afford to feel sorry for nobody," snapped Mallory. "What's the dope, anyway?"

"Why," said Oakes, "first, let's go see this bootlegger guy, Bill Nevvin."

Frank Spinner escorted them to the door of number ten, and knocked.

While they were waiting, Oakes nodded a greeting to a large man lounging at the top of the stairway. This was Mallory's man, Carter.

"Who is it?" called a voice presently.

"It's all right, Bill," Frank assured him. "A couple of gentlemen to see you."

The door opened. It was a flashily-dressed man of middle age who greeted them. Bill Nevvin, dark and roughly good-looking, had a naturally suspicious eye, and the suspicion in his eye was working overtime as he looked them over.

Oakes grinned at Nevvin, but it was Mallory's grim insistence that prompted Nevvin to admit them. At a gesture from Oakes, however, young Spinner refrained from accompanying them into the apartment.

"About this killing last night," Oakes said, when they were in the apartment. "You were in here at the time?"

"Sure," said Nevvin, resentfully.

"Uh huh. And it was you who heard the old guy laugh, just as he was shot?"

"Sure. He laughed a minute before, see? I heard him plain. Then he laughed again, louder, but the laugh busted off right in the middle. It was funny—"

"It must have been," said Oakes. "But you didn't go out to see why he didn't finish the laugh?"

"Hell, no," said Bill Nevvin. "Why should I?"

"You're supposed to answer questions, not me," Oakes reproved him. "Now, how about your garage?"

Nevvin fixed him with a steady stare.

"Yeah, what about it? It's right beneath the back window, ain't it?"

"Sure. But I didn't put it there."

"No, but you use it. And the roof of that garage has needed fixing lately, ain't it?"

"Sure. But who cares about that?"

Obviously, Bill Nevvin's suspicion had not abated, and he was inclined to be defiant.

"Well," said Oakes, placidly, "it's a flat roof, and I noticed a little while ago that one or two of them long boards in the roof seemed loose. You never made no kick about it, did you?"

"I sure did," blurted Nevvin. "It let the rain leak in on my car. I told old man Spinner he'd have to have it fixed."

"And did he say he'd attend to it?"

"Yeah. He told me yesterday he'd take care of it right away."

"Uh huh. Now let's go out to your hall door, Bill," said Oaks familiarly.

He got up and led the way to the door, opened it. Followed by Nevvin and Mallory, he stepped into the hall. A few feet across the hall was the door of number ten.

"Inspector," Oakes said to Mallory, "your idea is that poor old Jerry Sutter came out of number ten there, and plugged Spinner from the doorway."

"Yeah," said Mallory. "It's about the right distance."

"On the other hand," Oakes pointed out, "it's just the same distance from the door of number eleven, where Bill here lives, as it is from number ten. That is, the same distance to the chair where Spinner was sitting."

"Yeah," agreed Mallory dubiously. Bill Nevvin swore vigorously.

"What's the idea?" he shouted. "You two guys are trying to railroad me—"

"Aw, shut up, Bill," Oakes soothed him. "It don't make no difference, anyway."

"Why not?" queried Mallory.

"Because," said Oakes, "Spinner wasn't shot from this direction at all."

Mallory gazed at him in bewilderment.

"He wasn't, huh?"

"Naw. The way I got it figured, Spinner was shot from the other direction, through the open window."

"Through the window?" repeated Bill Nevvin, somewhat mollified. "But this is the second floor, not—"

"Uh huh," said Oakes. "But he was shot from the roof of your garage, Bill."

V

NEVVIN spluttered angrily again. But Mallory was keeping a cold and watchful eye on him now.

"Wait a minute," Oakes said suddenly. And he turned and walked toward Mallory's man, Carter, who was resting on the top step of the stairway. Oakes spoke to him in an undertone, and Carter, with a pleased grin, got up and went downstairs.

Oakes rejoined the two men.

"Now there's the chair he was sitting in. Let's take a look at it," he suggested, and they approached the chair.

Oakes bent close, and presently chuckled.

"Here's luck," he said enthusiastically.

"What's luck?" grouched Mallory, who looked as if he really didn't believe in luck.

"Well," said Oakes, "the thing that had you fooled was that the chair was facing down the hall, so that old Spinner's back was toward the window. And Spinner was shot in the forehead. Now if he was shot from the roof of the garage, he must have been facing the window at the time."

"Sure," said Mallory.

"And in that case," Oakes went on, "the killer must have swung the chair around after he fired."

"That's hooley," put in Nevvin. "He couldn't reach across the roof. It's all of fifteen feet from the roof to the chair."

Oakes beamed at him.

"Bill," he said, "you ought to ask Mallory for a job on the force—you've got a cop's mentality. But the killer *could* reach across with one of those loose roof boards, couldn't he?"

Mallory nodded. Bill Nevvin was silent.

"And there are scratches showing," Oakes went on, "in the varnish on the arm of the chair. At the end of the arm, where the killer would naturally have pushed against it with the board."

Mallory inspected the scratches Oakes indicated with a stubby forefinger. Then he looked out of the window, and wagged his head as he apparently noted that a man standing on the garage roof would have fired about

on a level with old John Spinner's head.

Suddenly, as if an unexpected thought had struck him, Oakes joined him at the window, bent down and examined the window sill.

"The paint on the window sill is scratched, too," he remarked.

"Yeah," said Mallory. "But I still claim that old Jerry Sutter could have—"

"Sure he could have," interrupted Oakes. "But he's a grand old man, and even if he did it I'd still be for him. Now let's get hold of young Spinner and go downstairs."

As they turned and made for the stairway, Frank Spinner came up.

"Just looking for you," Oakes told him. "We need you to tell us where things are around here."

"Certainly," said the young man, and went back downstairs with them.

At the door of number seven Oakes stopped.

"Here's where Jerry Sutter lives with his daughter Mary," he remarked. "It is also where the revolver was found."

"I know that," said Mallory.

"Uh huh." He advanced a few steps. "And here is a door leading down into the basement, inspector. You'll observe it's just inside the door leading out to the garages."

"Yeah," said Mallory sarcastically. "These apartment houses do have basements."

Oakes grinned, and turned to Frank Spinner.

"By the way," he said. "I suppose there's a stepladder down in the basement?"

"Of course," said the young man.

"Get it for us, will you?" asked Oakes. "We'll need it to look at the garage roof."

Frank Spinner trotted down the steps to the basement, and quickly returned with a stepladder. Oakes thanked him, and they all moved out to the walk between the house and the garages.

Young Spinner leaned the stepladder against the back of the house.

Oakes pointed down at the dirt walk close to the garage.

"Four indentations in the dirt there, inspector," he noted. "Made not long ago. Look like they were made by the legs of the ladder—"

Oakes stopped abruptly as the rear door opened again. A young lady in short dress, smiling impishly, came out.

"Hello, Mamie," said Oakes. "What you got?"

She handed him a typewritten slip of paper. Oakes glanced at it and stuffed it into his pocket.

"All right, Mamie," he said. "You can stick around, if you want to."

Evidently Mamie wanted to.

"Now," Oakes went on, "my idea is that the killer got the stepladder out of the basement, used it to climb on to the roof, and when he got up there, he plugged old man Spinner from there."

"Hooley!" commented bootlegger Bill Nevvin.

"Shut up!" Mallory told Nevvin.

"Then," Oakes continued, disregarding interruptions, "he could easily climb down again, put the ladder back in the basement, stop at number seven and ditch the revolver in Jerry Sutter's apartment, and beat it."

"Of course he could," agreed young Frank Spinner. "But could it be proved?"

"Sure," snarled Bill Nevvin. "Go ahead and prove it."

"Well," said Oakes. "There's one thing that might help us."

"What's that?" asked Mallory.

"The fact," explained Oakes, "that the old man died laughing!"

The others were silent for a little while. It was apparent that they couldn't quite see the significance of the laughing death.

"I suppose," Frank Spinner said presently, "that you're trying to prove that it was Bill who—"

"Naw," cut in Oakes. "Not Bill. It was old man Spinner's son, Frank, that plugged him."

VI

YOUNG FRANK SPINNER sucked in his breath and stared at Oakes. Then he laughed nervously.

"Ridiculous!" he said.

"Yeah?" Oakes grinned good-naturedly. "Well, the way I got it figured, the reason you bumped your old man—"

Again the rear door opened. It was Mallory's man, Carter, this time. Carter winked at Oakes slowly. The wink seemed to hold some special meaning for Oakes.

"Glad you got here, Carter," Oakes said. "Got a little job for you. Want you to climb the stepladder here on to the garage roof and see what you can find. Guess you know what to look for."

"Sure," said Carter. He placed the ladder, mounted it, reached the roof.

Oakes turned his attention to Frank Spinner.

"As I was saying, I figure that you croaked your old man because you liked to fly high, and the old man had lots of cash that he hung on to pretty tight. This here place wasn't good enough for you to live in—you had to live in a classy dump like the Albert Manor."

The young man laughed derisively.

"Why," he said, "my father had disowned me, only a day or two ago—"

"You mean," Oakes retorted, "he destroyed the will making you his heir. But he hadn't made another one yet. And as long as no new will was made, you would inherit the estate."

Mallory grunted, and shifted his position closer to young Spinner.

"My secretary," Oakes proceeded, "was just over to the office of your father's lawyer, Harlan Mears, and she brought me a copy of a letter which Mears wrote your father two days ago. This letter says that Mears was to be out of town for a few days, but that as soon as he returned he would call and fix up a new will. Doubtless you saw the original of that letter, young man, and—"

"Of course I saw it," broke in Frank Spinner, suddenly savage. "My father was mean, cold—"

"Yeah," said Oakes. "And his son ain't much different. Selfish and cold-blooded."

Carter appeared at the edge of the garage roof. He was just pocketing a magnifying glass. Carefully he descended the ladder.

"Find anything?" queried Oakes.

"Yes, sir," said Carter. "Traces of varnish on the end of one of them long boards—"

"From the arm of the chair," put in Oakes.

"And some paint," Carter went on, "along the bottom of the board, where it rubbed against the window sill, I guess."

"You guess right," said Oakes. "Anything else?"

"Sure," Carter grinned happily—he was always happy when given an opportunity to demonstrate what a good eye he had. "Shreds of glove—some processed material—on the board, too.

Also some shreds of cloth—gray—caught on a nail on the roof."

"Uh-huh. Know where the cloth came from?"

"Sure. From a pair of pants belonging to this young man." And he pointed at Frank Spinner.

The young man indicated suddenly sat down on the door step, and his face dropped into his shaking hands. Cool enough in the commission of a crime, his nerves were speedily shattered when he was caught.

"Inspector," Oakes explained, "I took the liberty of sending Carter across the street to the Albert Manor, where young Spinner lives, a little while ago. And I believe Carter discovered something."

"Yes, sir," said Carter. "I expected to get into the young fellow's apartment to see if I could find the gloves and pants, like Mr. Oakes said. But when I got over there I spotted him coming out of the side entrance and going around the back of the building. I waited until he came back and crossed the street. Then I went back there and batted around until I had a hunch to look in the old waste barrel. Buried under a lot of stuff in the barrel was a newspaper package, and in it was a pair of gray pants and a pair of gloves—I've got 'em inside."

Carter finished his recital breathlessly, pridefully. For a moment there was silence, except for a moan from young Mr. Spinner.

"The pants, sir," Carter added presently, "were torn near the knee."

Mallory stood over the young man.

"So you croaked your own father?" he demanded sternly.

"He deserved it!" the young man cried, a little hysterically. "He had money, lots of it, but he was hard with me! Why, he even had me doing jani-

tor work around the building sometimes!"

"Tough!" murmured Oakes, not very sympathetically.

"That was what gave me the idea," Frank Spinner went on. "He told me that I was to fix that garage roof. I would do it at night, anyway, so that no one would see me—the light from the window and the alley lamp was sufficient for the job. I knew that old Jerry Sutter would be working in number eleven. I knew that Miss Sutter was down at the library. I knew that there would be no one in the two back apartments, so that I would be unobserved—"

"But you did *not* know," Oakes

supplemented, "that your father was going to laugh."

"Yes," said the young man bitterly, staring up at Oakes, "he laughed!"

"He laughed!" said Oakes, "when you slipped on the roof—and tore your pants on a nail?"

"Yes," lamented Frank Spinner. "He always laughed when anything like that happened—to some one else!"

"I thought it was something like that," Oakes said, "that made the old man die laughing."

"Well," said Mallory to the young man, heavily, "you'll be dying yourself before long."

"But not laughing," concluded Hugo Oakes.



They Threatened Themselves

A NEW racket to get gun permits from the police was recently spotted in New York City. Pistol permits are hard to get, and issued only after certain strict requirements have been lived up to and the approval of the commanding officer of the local precinct has been obtained.

So one person thought of writing himself threatening letters. He appeared at the precinct with a tale of the dangers he was running, and displayed the letters to the sergeant at the desk. The first couple of times, the police were impressed. But threatening letters became so frequently a plea for a gun permit that investigations were made. Some of the letters were genuine, but the majority were written by the receivers themselves.

A Daring Breakaway

By James B. M. Clark

IT is seldom that the officials of Sing Sing let a man slip through their fingers, but once in a while the impossible is achieved, and some criminal succeeds in making a get-away. The escape of two notorious crooks, Pallister and Rohlf, some years ago is possibly the most remarkable case in the annals of the institution in recent times.

Both had been condemned to die in the electric chair for the brutal murder of a farmer in a lonely district, a man who had shown them hospitality and whose kindness they had rewarded by killing him. But Pallister was a clever man, and in this desperate corner his wit did not desert him. Rohlf simply followed the lead of his chief.

The problem of a break at the outset looked hopeless. But they knew well enough there was no hope of a reprieve, and that their only chance of life lay in escape from the walls. In addition to the formidable bolts, bars, locks and walls of this renowned jail, extra guards had been placed on duty, on account of the bad records of the prisoners, and the fact that Pallister had once before succeeded in breaking out of a State prison. Nothing was being left to chance, and nothing seemed more certain than that the hours of the pair were numbered. But Pallister's busy brain was always at work, and before the fatal day arrived he had concocted a scheme.

For some days in advance of the date on which the attempt was to be made Pallister played sick. On the night chosen for the attempt, at 10 P.M.,

he dressed underneath the bedclothes. Then he called out to the warder on duty. The warder immediately came to the spy-hole in the cell door and asked what the trouble was. Pallister explained that he was very sick with a dreadful pain in his stomach, and asked if it would be possible to get a glass of hot milk. As condemned men are generally humored, the warder consented to see what could be done and called to the guard stationed at the other end of the corridor to go and get the milk from the kitchen. The second guard went off, and after a short interval returned with the milk, which he gave to the guard who had called for it.

This guard unlocked the door and entered Pallister's cell, whereupon Pallister, a powerful man, seized him by the throat in a terrible grip, preventing him from crying out and giving the alarm. Then he gagged him and bound him, and laid him on the bed, took the man's keys, and, watching his opportunity, stole out into the corridor and released Rohlf and three other convicts in adjoining cells. Pallister had deemed it safer to take several other desperate men into their confidence so that, if it came to a fight with the guards, they would have plenty of forces. But once clear of the prison he meant to let these men shift for themselves.

By choosing their time carefully, the five were able to come unawares upon the warder at the end of the corridor, and had not much difficulty in overpowering him also. Yet although such

a statement sounds simple the deed itself was not accomplished without extraordinary caution and care. Pallister had had to wait until this man had left his post for a few minutes before he could release Rohlf and the others, and after that the task of slipping along the corridor on stocking feet to catch the warder off his guard as he sat in his seat was in itself a task of the utmost nicety. A single slip meant disaster, for there were guards within hail and it was essential that the man be prevented from uttering a single cry. However, under Pallister's guidance, the job was safely accomplished and the man securely bound and gagged.

The escaping prisoners now had all the necessary keys for the main doors of the prison, and Rohlf suggested that the simplest thing to do would be just to walk right out. But Pallister knew the danger of that. The chances of being able to carry out such a plan without encountering other guards were one in a hundred. The safer course, Pallister urged, was to climb out through a skylight on to the roof of the building and make their way from there to the street. A suitable skylight was selected, and the five clambered up without difficulty to the prison roof. They crossed several buildings and finally reached a point overlooking a quiet street, which seemed the most likely place to make their get-away. The sidewalk, however, was still twenty feet below, and as they had not thought to bring any sheets or blankets to use for ropes, there was nothing for it but to take a chance and drop. All five succeeded in making the jump safely, with the exception of Rohlf, who hurt his left arm rather badly.

The whole affair had been well timed

and Pallister was certain their absence would not be discovered for several hours at least. As a matter of fact it was well into the small hours of the morning before the alarm was raised, and by that time the prisoners had scattered. Pallister and Rohlf kept together, and as the former knew the country well he was able to lead his friend without mishap to New York City, where a saloon keeper, who was under an obligation to Pallister, concealed them in his cellar.

The other three convicts, being strangers to that country, did not get very far and were recaptured without much difficulty.

All over the countryside the alarm was raised, pictures of Pallister and Rohlf appeared in all the newspapers, and a reward was offered for information that might lead to their arrest. They lay low in their cellar. The days went past without mishap, and by and by it was deemed safe to attempt to get Rohlf away. Accordingly he was decked out in an old suit of clothes that the saloon keeper procured for him and furnished with the outfit of a street peddler. In this guise he set out from New York into the country, and ultimately succeeded in making his way to Brazil, after which nothing further was heard of him. Pallister, in the meantime, continued to lie low in the cellar.

The hunt was still in full swing, and in spite of their failure to locate the men, the police had not slackened their efforts. Both were known to be desperate criminals and a menace to society.

The saloon keeper who had taken in the fugitives had not the best of reputations, and presently, in the combing of Pallister's old haunts, the police decided to raid that particular place.

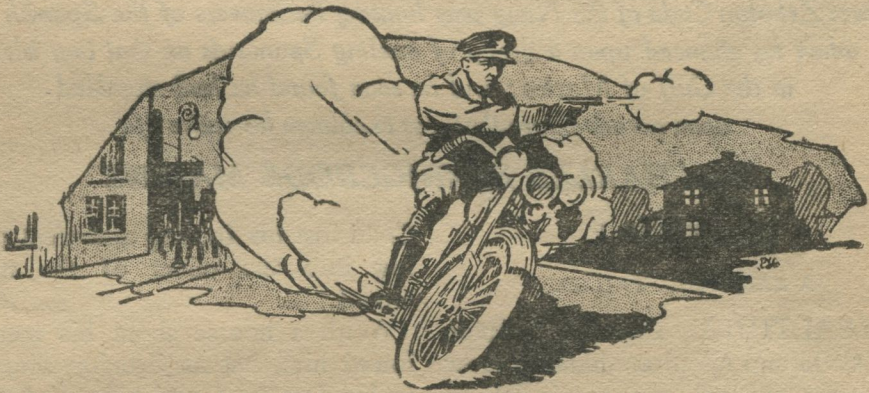
Pallister was in bed in one of the attics of the house when the saloon keeper got word that the "bulls" were close at hand. He had just time to rush his friend down to the cellar again and get back to his front premises when the police entered. The saloon keeper protested against this, trying to give Pallister time to hide.

In the cellar were a number of barrels, some empty, others more or less full of water. Into one of the latter Pallister squeezed himself and waited, his head just above the surface of the liquid. The officers entered the cellar and proceeded to search it, tapping the floors and walls in their hunt for concealed trapdoors.

They moved the empty barrels and put their hands into the full ones.

Finally a patrolman approached the barrel that held the escaped convict. It was a critical moment for Pallister. Taking a deep breath, he ducked his head as far below the surface as possible, and kept it there as long as he was able. The officer reached the barrel, inserted his hand, found water, and passed to the next barrel. In a few seconds they were far enough off so Pallister could bring up his head and take another breath, and presently they left the cellar and went upstairs again. Shortly afterward they left and Pallister crept from his hiding place shaking himself like a half-drowned dog.

And that was the closest the police ever came to the man they were after, for a few days later Pallister made his escape to Mexico.



Compare DETECTIVE FICTION WEEKLY with any detective magazine. And DETECTIVE FICTION WEEKLY sells for only ten cents!

DO YOU READ THE ARGOSY?



With a shout of defiance Codd charged

Swordsmen of Florida

Captain Zebulon Codd of the Navy was hunting buccaneers of the Spanish Main when he chanced upon a group of dueling Spaniards on that tiny islet in the Gulf of Mexico; and he soon found he had stumbled upon an adventure that was to change his entire life

By CHARLES MINNIGERODE MAIGNE

CHAPTER I.

A RAID THAT FAILED.

STEALTHILY Captain Zebulon Codd and his pirate-hunting crew crept through the tropic foliage toward the group on the beach below, staring in amazement at the remarkable duel being waged there as a single fencer, his rapier flashing, held off three lunging antagonists. Suddenly

Codd lost his footing and went plunging into the midst of the milling crowd.

With a hoarse shout his men followed him, but as Zebulon scrambled to his feet he found himself facing a calmly quizzical and very beautiful girl.

Follow this remarkable novel of Seminole days in next week's (July 11) issue.

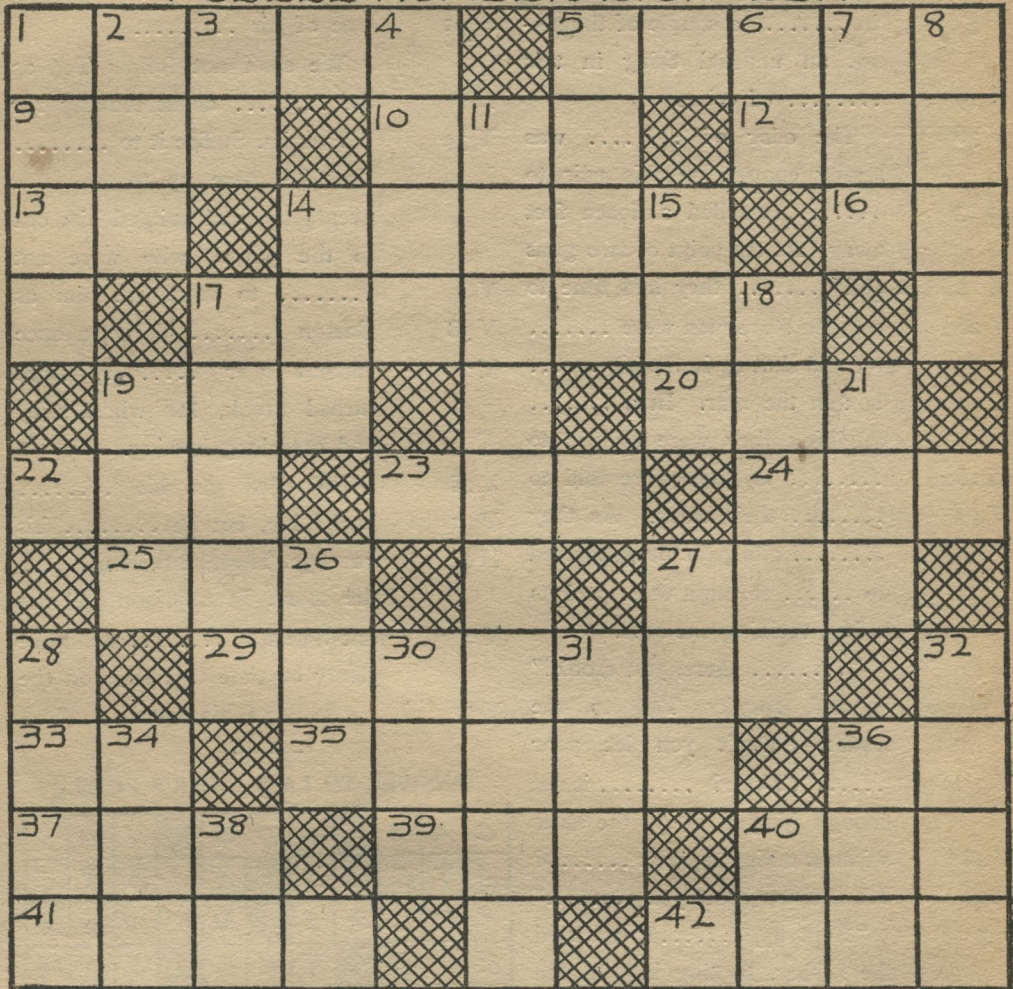
ARGOSY—THE GREAT ADVENTURE WEEKLY—10c

Narrative Cross-Word Puzzle

TED GETS HIS REVENGE

By Richard Hoadley Tingley

PUZZLE NUMBER EIGHTEEN



V-VERTICAL

H-HORIZONTAL

Try This New Puzzle! Correct Answer Next Week

The chain grocery store in a H 23 day not long James,
H 17 newly block on Third H 29 the-minded manager, as
Avenue belonging to one of the H 39 his custom, had just
big companies had H 22 finished the -weekly
H 42 a good business one V 15 balance of his of

- books and had put the cash in H 24
 V 18 the safe. Together with H 20
 the assistant, and Ted, the er- V 21
 H 19 rand boy, he was on the
 V 32 V 6 of going when! H 13 V 11 easily because of
 V 27 out of the in the street, V 31 (poetic) a very conspicuous scar
 H 5 in a couple of thugs— H 41
 not an unusual thing in this
 V 19 of crime. H 1
 V 36 The odor of was V 34
 strong enough on this pair to H 40
 H 13 smelled a dozen feet
 away. At the point of two guns
 V 14 and they had time to V 8
 V 26 act, the store men were V 38
 H 9 off and shut up in the big V 2
 H 35 box in the rear. In a
 condition they were obliged to
 H 16 as they were told to V 28
 V 4 their skins. As they V 21
 V 5 along the thugs started H 14
 H 36 to through their pockets
 before tackling the safe. V 2
 V 40 "..... there, you crook!"
 shouted spunky Ted to the V 17
 leader. "Can't you let poor
 V 3 H 33 alone? it not
 enough for you to rob the store
 V 28 without taking my last?
 H 10 It's a cheap sport you"
 V 7 "Shut up,!" growled
 the robber, kicking him in the
 V 1 V 30, giving him a
 H 27 (slang) on the jaw with his
 H 25 and not at worried by
 V 34 what the boy had to
 V 28 But he kept the
 Afterward he wished he hadn't.
 H 40 That ten-cent piece cost
 H 37 dear, for Ted was and

registered a that he
 would that man and
 not rest till he even
 with him. He knew he would
 easily because of
 V 31 (poetic) a very conspicuous scar
 one of his

We shall not follow Ted as
 he about looking for
 his victim. Suffice it to
 that he came up to
 eventually, and pointed him out
 to the police, who were not
 to recognize him as
 Gaston Verne, a once
 famous war, since
 turned crook, for whom they
 had been long looking.

Did Ted get his
 back? No, but he his
 revenge. That, he thinks,
 the score. In a prison cell the
 one-time war will have
 plenty of time to reflect on the
 of his ways.

ANSWER TO LAST WEEK'S PUZZLE

C	A	B		A	D	O		H	A	S
A	T	O	M	S				W	H	E
P	O	L	E	S				N	E	R
E	N	D		E	R	E		S	A	M
R	E		S	T	O	R	E		S	O
S		A	H		B		N	O		N
	A	L	A	S		S	T	U	N	
S		A	R	T		H	E	T		M
I	S		P	R	I	O	R		B	E
N	O	T		A	I	R		G	E	T
G	L	O	R	Y		E	V	A	D	E



FLASHES FROM READERS

*Where Readers and Editor Get Together to Gossip
and Argue, and Everyone Speaks Up His Mind*

LOUIS LACY STEVENSON, whose exciting serial, "The Girl in the Desk," begins in this issue, is a former newspaper man. He was covering the "lobster trick" at 3 A.M. in Chicago's Loop back in the days when "Hinky Dink" and "Bath House John" were at the zenith of their power, and it was there he got his first impressions of the glittering, tawdry, and unbridled underworld.

From Chicago Mr. Stevenson wandered far and wide in the course of his newspaper career, working all over the United States, with side jaunts down to Mexico, and across the Atlantic to various European countries where excitement might be happening. In one year he managed to get involved in a revolution in Mexico, the Dayton flood, and a vicious copper mine strike in Michigan.

Settling down for a while in Traverse City, Michigan, he married and became editor of the *Evening Record*. But the call of the big city was too strong, and Mr. Stevenson first went to Detroit, then started on the roving assignments that have furnished him with so much local color and adventure material for his exciting yarns.

With many police contacts in his newspaper work, Louis Lacy Stevenson says that whenever he is in a strange city he immediately familiarizes himself with the workings of the police department, so that his material will always have authenticity.

His chief claim to fame, his friends insist, is the fact that Theodore Roosevelt once borrowed his glasses. On a speaking tour which Stevenson was covering for a newspaper, the speaker's stand collapsed once and the Colonel lost his glasses, but not his presence of mind. Immediately borrowing the Stevenson glasses, which were the exact model of his own, Colonel Roosevelt successfully delivered his speech.

It is Stevenson's sorrow that he could not wangle his way into active duty in the World War. Trying thirteen times to enlist, and being turned down every time because of defective eyesight, he managed at last to get overseas as a Y. M. C. A. secretary, but took some of the sting out of his failure by doing newspaper work at the same time.

Now he writes fiction, utilizing all his experiences for color and characters. Since modesty forbids him from

admitting the fact himself, we have no scruples in saying that he's a darn good fictioneer, and we're pretty certain you're going to like his new serial.

ZOOM AND BEELE

DEAR EDITOR:

Your stories are all fine and I hardly know which to rate first. I enjoy the serials and *Sidney Zoom* and *Arty Beele* most. I haven't missed a copy since I became acquainted with DETECTIVE FICTION WEEKLY.

Yours for continued success,
REVENA VAN WINKLE,
Omaha, Neb.

HIS FAVORITES

DEAR EDITOR:

I think you have the best detective magazine I ever read. My favorite authors are Madeleine Sharps Buchanan, Erle Stanley Gardner, J. Allan Dunn, Edward Parrish Ware and Harold de Polo. My favorite characters are *Lester Leith*, *Jimmy Dugan*, *Sidney Zoom*, *Calhoun*, *Tug Norton* and the *Griffin*. I started reading this magazine last September and have been taking it ever since. Have more *Sidney Zoom* and the *Griffin* stories. I like your magazine very much.

Sincerely yours,
N. O. FOWLER,
Memphis, Tenn.

A WOW!

DEAR SIR:

I have been reading DETECTIVE FICTION WEEKLY for quite a while and can assure you that I have enjoyed every one of the stories.

I must congratulate you on having published a serial by "Sapper," an author I have enjoyed reading on more than one occasion.

Now, as to your new feature, the crossword puzzle, it is a wow! I have worked on crossword puzzles, but this one beats them all.

Thanking you once again for having given me such pleasure and wishing you all the success in the world, I remain,

Respectfully yours,
EUGENE H. DUPONT,
Jersey City, N. J.

BOUND VOLUMES

DEAR SIR:

Was very glad to read of the finishing chapters of Irene Schroeder's life. A short while back I had read some of her exploits in a paper and also in some other article, but never knew or heard of her finish till I read "The Tiger Woman" in DETECTIVE FICTION WEEKLY. I pass my DETECTIVE FICTION WEEKLY on to others to read.

Shepherders, cow-punchers, school lads and others enjoy reading your magazine. I've finally decided to keep my issues for a couple of years and have them bound. Am a great lover of books, especially those of deep mystery stories. A battle of wits is the most snappy and interesting material to read. And sometimes one actually learns something from some of the stories.

Sincerely,
CLARA M. CARMAN,
Madeline, Calif.

IN THE BUSINESS

DEAR SIR:

My husband is a periodical salesman, and so we have some thirty publications that we read free every week or month. But in spite of that can hardly wait till DETECTIVE FICTION WEEKLY is out, which is the only extra magazine we buy. We have been reading it for years and it gets better every week.

Best wishes,
MRS. O. T. HARRINGTON,
Frankfort, Ind.

Send us coupon from ten different issues of DETECTIVE FICTION WEEKLY and get an artist's illustration.

"HERE'S MY VOTE"

Editor,
DETECTIVE FICTION WEEKLY,
280 Broadway, N. Y. C., N. Y.

The stories I like best in this issue of the magazine are as follows:

1.
2.
3.
4.
5.
6.
7.

Name.....

Street.....

City.....State.....

(This coupon not good after October 8.)

SOLVING CIPHER SECRETS

A cipher is secret writing. The way to solve ciphers is to experiment with substitute letters until real words begin to appear. In solving, notice the frequency of certain letters. For instance, the letters e, t, a, o, n, i, are the most used in our language. So if the puzzle maker has



M. E. OHAVER

used x to represent e, x will probably appear very frequently. Combinations of letters will also give you clues. For instance, affixes -ing, -ion, -ally are frequent. Read the helpful hints at the beginning of this department each week. The first puzzle each week is the easiest.

LONG DIVISION addicts, try your luck with I. A. Schrier's No. 151! To inform the uninitiated, we may add that this is a problem in ordinary long division in which the figures have been replaced by the letters of a ten-letter keyword, the first letter being used for 1, the second for 2, etc. Try to find the keyword! A solution of this problem will be given next week.

No. 151—Long Division. By I. A. Schrier.

O A B F) L B O R F L A (R I L B
A I T B

R R T F F
P B L R E

O A R F L
O F E I T

O P L O A
O E R A R

P T T I

Here is H. V. B.'s solution of his multiplication problem, last week's No. 145. In multiplying, G times N, U, and R gave N, U, and R, respectively; consequently G must represent 1. In column three, D plus U plus D gave U; so there must be 2 carried from column four, which also contained two D's, and D would therefore have to be 9.

Next, in column two, G (already identified as 1) plus U plus O, plus 2 carried from column three, gave O; so U would be 7. Further, in line four, multiplying U (7) by D (9) gave U (7), carrying 4. U (7) times O would thus give 40 plus R, or 42. So O and R would follow as 6 and 2. Y would then show as 4, in column one; etc. The answer is given on page 142.

The characteristic use of the letters *h* and *n* should have been a valuable asset in solving last week's "Inner Circle" cipher, No. 150 by F. B. M. The symbol A, occurring nine times altogether, four times as second letter, had all the earmarks of *h*. And this letter would of course at once lead to OARFA (-*h-h*) as *which* and OAHQH (-*h--*) as *where*.

And the use of the symbol U in next-to-last position was similarly suggestive of *n*. Trying this letter, the groups PHRUT (-*ein-*) and URTAC (*ni-h-*), both with unknown symbol T, would follow as *being* and *night*, checking with CRTHQ (-*i-er*) as *tiger*. TQHLQ (*gre-t*) would then obviously be *great*; and so to the full translation as on page 142.

This week's spread presents several

new contributors to our ever-growing family of cryptic devotees. Noble Holderread's first attempt offers a number of short words for your consideration. The single-letter word M will give you the first letter of MRN, MLF, and MLHIRN, which contain all the letters in LHMN. BEF, ABCDD, and CB, similarly, check with ACBA.

In Abie Pea's crypt JU, BJU, and VJUO may be guessed from the letters they have in common. The missing letters in CO and SOX can then be supplied, leading to LOCRL-LOUUX, etc. Common affixes will give you a lift in Hector's crypt. Compare the endings -TUO and -CTRU, and the beginnings TU- and NRU-. Then tackle the long eleventh and twelfth words.

Initial doubles provide the entering wedge in Jack Northam's production. Guess JJTC and then try TTLFLC. EEMJ will then fall in line; then WEQ and WQEF, TTEZX and FBX; etc. Everybody should have a good time with "Whoopee!" Tyro has tried hard to set up an interesting "Inner Circle" job, and we are sure you'll agree that he has succeeded!

No. 152—Landmark. By Noble Holderread.

ABCDD ACBA BEF AGEHHDEHIAF JK
BEF LHMN, M LMOOFN JFOOML
ADFFQCRO; MLHIRN CB ABCDD BEF
AISMGEA OLHT, MRN JDMGUJFLK
WCRA MLF GLFFQCRO.

No. 153—Dodging Inkwells! By Abie Pea.

CFE LOCRL-LOUUX, RCRLUAUX DC-
CLLUUGUE LOCRLUX JMP SVLVSEX
LOFRLYUX LOUP CO JMP XSEL CSL
XUPL SOX PBEFRL JMP OURL CO BJU
EMRLUBA ESRL VJUO JU XFRLUX
DSRLVSEX.

No. 154—Show Sixty. By Hector.

"YRAU, GFTNWSX MEATHTC QTZM
LRB. OTIJ DPKJV."—CATV VARPC,
JFBBSTUO, CXJROPKJATNKS NRUOSR-
IMPKCTRU TUNSFLMV DARSM KSJA-
KHMC, JSFV VNKUCX NSMDV!

No. 155—Two Abreast. By Jack Northam.

TTEZX, TTLSJQE, IBLQXJX TTLFLC
AVHTJ ALPKVHSI JJTC EEMJ WQEF
FBX SJLQ JJTWLQJ. LLQES, VHC
KEFRLSHES, XHOJX WEQ EETHPHK
CRJKHFJSC.

No. 156—Whoopee! By Tyro.

FIKOUWCIOM PYHNLCFIKOCMN
BSJHINCTYM AOFFCVFY UOXCXYHWY;
OJLIULCIOM BCFULCNS, NOGOFNOIOM
WIHZOMCIH WIHMYKOYHN. JIFCWY-
GUH YRYLWCMYM OHKOYMNCIHUV-
FY UONBILCNS. NLUHKOCFCNS MOW-
WYYXM BSMNYLCU.

LAST WEEK'S ANSWERS

145—Key: 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 0
G R E Y H O U N D S

146—What a relief long trousers of the present day would have been for the "he hens" that formerly wore skin-tight, hip-length silk hose!

147—"Solving Cipher Secrets" requires patience and perseverance, but it is well worth the effort.

148—Burglars attack anemic, apologetic mechanic with antiquated mahogany-handled blunderbuss. Bookworm reading "Antizymotic solution prevents fermentation also acetifying" rises to relief.

149—Terrific earthquake wrecks Managua, Nicaragua. Thousands die. U. S. Marines guard ruins to prevent looting. Airplanes bring help.

150—Flash-light photo found. Bears great value being vital point which helps prove woman often would visit blind-tiger where night-clerk found slain child.

Fans sending us one or more answers to this week's puzzles will be enrolled in the July Cipher Solvers' Club! Answers will appear next week.

Exciting, Unusual Tales by the Greatest Authors

Action Stories of Every Variety

ARGOSY

JULY 4
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ON SALE EVERY WEDNESDAY

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In answering this advertisement it is desirable that you mention this magazine.

COMING NEXT WEEK!

INSPECTOR PORKY NEALE had left his desk at headquarters. He was in plain clothes, walking through the early dusk under the Elevated trestle in a run-down and dissolute neighborhood. It was a tough-looking section. It was tough. It belonged to Monk Kurtz.

The thing that had brought Inspector Porky Neale there was police business, but it had a personal angle to it.

Narrowly, he scrutinized the slender young man in the snappy brown suit ahead of him—the man he had been trailing. It was the youngster Walt Lane, all right, Porky followed. Lane turned at the corner . . .

There was the roar of a gun. Porky saw the orange flash just ahead of him. A Thompson gun. Somebody screamed. A car shot off in the gathering darkness. Kurtz's killers. Porky knew it in a flash. An instant later, Porky was bending over the prone figure of the young man in the brown suit. He peered down at the sprawled form, into the white face of the dead man. But it wasn't Walt Lane!

Half an hour later, Porky had found Walt Lane, was facing him in a dingy tenement house room, was listening to the boy's broken, stammering story of the last eight hours.

There had been a party. He and this other boy had got drunk. The other had got into a fight, had had his clothes half torn off his back. They had come back to Walt's room, and the other had put Walt's clothes on just to go home, had put on the snappy brown suit.

Neale told him, then, what he had just seen, the young man in the brown suit, evidently mistaken for Walt Lane, slain by Kurtz's guns.

"Killed!" Lane weaved toward Neale, clutching his sleeve. His face was gray. "Bob was—murdered? God—Inspector—Bob put on the spot! That was Bob Kurtz. That was Monk Kurtz's son!"

Porky stared. He knew what it meant. Monk Kurtz's son accidentally slain—slain by his own guns! Hell would break loose. Kurtz wouldn't stop to think. He was not the kind to think—bestial, a killer, knowing no method but ferocious action. And hell did break loose. Guns roared in Monk Kurtz's territory, and Inspector Porky Neale, roaring and mad as a wounded bear, was in the middle of it. A fighting story and a fighting cop!

Red Night

A Novelette

By Roland Phillips

Also, stories by ERLE STANLEY GARDNER, MILO RAY PHELPS, CAPTAIN CORNELIUS W. WILLEMSE, CHARLES SOMERVILLE, LOUIS LACY STEVENSON, and others in

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In order to get quick action we're giving this beautiful new Ford Roadster, latest model, absolutely FREE. Or, if you prefer, you may have your choice of the Roadster, a Coupe, or Sedan, or \$500.00 Cash. This is your opportunity. Send a name at once, be the winner, surprise your friends and neighbors by having the car and \$1000.00 delivered at your door or \$1500.00 all cash if you prefer. Don't think you can't win, for your opportunity is just as good as anyone's, if you will send a name at once. It costs you nothing to try.

Send In a Name Win This Big Prize

We are inviting everyone, no matter who they are, to participate in this interesting prize contest. It's a prize well worth going after; \$1,000 in cash, and \$500.00 extra, if you are prompt, or \$1500 in all if you want cash. This amount can be yours just for naming our delightful new hand lotion. Nothing else to do. No purchase necessary, nothing to buy or sell, and no slogan or story to write to win this splendid prize. All we want is a name, and if you send in your suggestion it may be just the one we want. Who knows, every one has a lucky day and this may be yours. It costs you nothing to try, so why not send a name and be in line for the prize? Think of the thrill you can get winning a prize like this.

Make Sure of the Promptness Prize

A gift of \$500.00 extra or a latest new Ford Roadster will be given the winner of the \$1000.00 prize if the name is mailed within three days after this announcement is read. This extra prize is certainly worth going after quick. Bear in mind only one name must be submitted by each contestant and notice of the approximate time of the prize award will be sent you as soon as your suggestion is received. The prize or prizes will be awarded to the person or persons sending the name we choose from among those submitted and duplicate prizes will be given to all who send the winning name. This means you can't lose even if others send the winning name first.

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