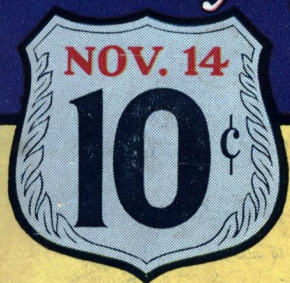


★ DETECTIVE FICTION WEEKLY

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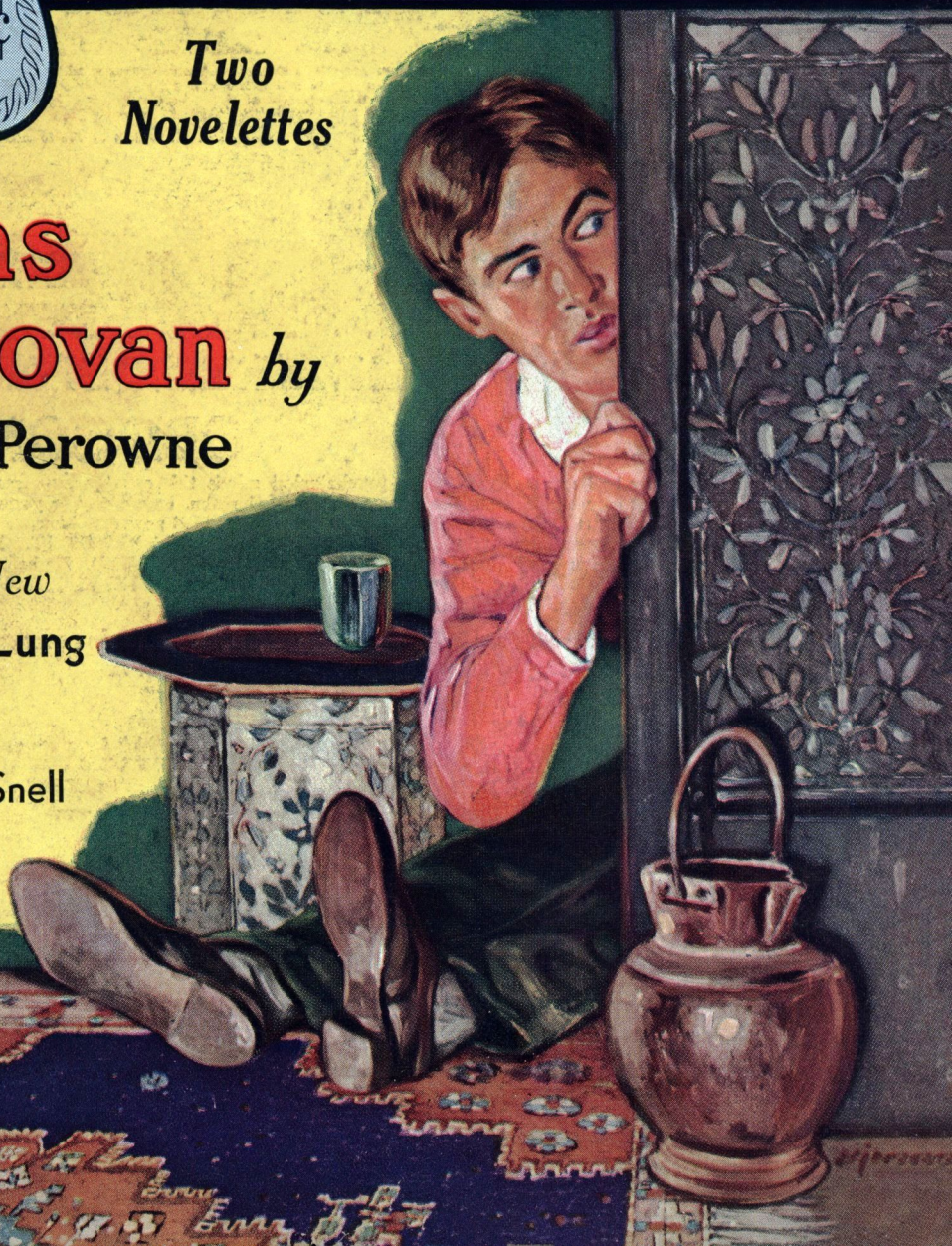


With Thrilling True Stories

*Two
Novelettes*

Alias Donovan *by* Barry Perowne

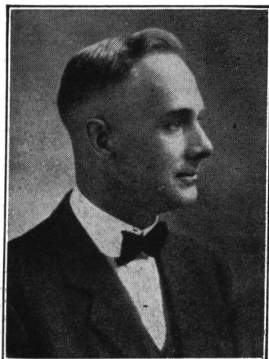
*And a New
Chanda-Lung
Story
by
Edmund Snell*



"PSYCHIANA"

(The New Psychological Religion)

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DR. FRANK B. ROBINSON
Founder of "Psychiana" and author of "The God Nobody Knows," "America Awakening," etc.

"PSYCHIANA" BELIEVES AND TEACHES AS FOLLOWS:

- FIRST**—That there is no such thing as a "subconscious mind."
SECOND—That there is, in this universe, a FAR MORE POTENT and DYNAMIC POWER, the manifestations of which have been erroneously credited to some other supposed power called the "subconscious mind."
THIRD—That this INVISIBLE, DYNAMIC Power is THE VERY SAME POWER that JESUS USED when He staggered the nations by His so-called "miracles," and by raising the dead.
FOURTH—That Jesus had NO MONOPOLY on this Power.
FIFTH—That it is possible for EVERY NORMAL human being understanding spiritual law as He understood it, TO DUPLICATE EVERY WORK THAT THIS CARPENTER OF GALILEE EVER DID. When He said "the things that I do shall YE DO ALSO"—He meant EXACTLY WHAT HE SAID.
SIXTH—That this dynamic Power is NOT TO BE FOUND "within," but has its source in a far different direction.
SEVENTH—THAT THE WORDS OF THIS GALILEAN CARPENTER WENT A THOUSAND MILES OVER THE HEADS OF HIS HEARERS 2,000 YEARS AGO, AND ARE STILL A THOUSAND MILES OVER THE HEADS OF THOSE WHO PROFESS TO FOLLOW HIM TODAY.
EIGHTH—That this same MIGHTY, INVISIBLE, PULSATING, THROBBING POWER can be used by anyone—AT ANY HOUR OF THE DAY OR NIGHT and without such methods as "going into the silence" or "gazing at bright objects," etc.
NINTH—That when once understood and correctly used, this mighty Power is ABUNDANTLY ABLE, AND NEVER FAILS TO GIVE HEALTH, HAPPINESS, and OVERWHELMING SUCCESS in whatever proper line it may be desired.

DR. FRANK B. ROBINSON

considered by many to be one of the keenest psychological minds this country has ever produced, and one of the most earnest, intense searchers into the spiritual realm, believes, after years of experimentation and research, that there is in this world today, an UNSEEN power or force, so dynamic in itself, that all other powers or forces FADE INTO INSIGNIFICANCE BESIDE IT. He believes that this power or force is THE VERY SAME POWER THAT JESUS USED. He believes further that the entire world, including the present church structure, MISSED IN ITS ENTIRETY the message that He came to bring. He believes that

The world is on the verge of the most stupendous spiritual upheaval it has ever experienced—the advent of Christ being of small importance when compared to it.

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Every reader of this magazine is cordially invited to write "PSYCHIANA" for more details of this revolutionary teaching which, if true, might very easily be discussed the ENTIRE WORLD ROUND. Dr. Robinson will tell you something of his years of search for the truth as he KNEW it must exist, and will give you a few facts connected with the founding of "PSYCHIANA." NO OBLIGATIONS WHATSOEVER. Sign your name and address here.

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Requests for this course of instruction and information concerning it have broken all records. Replies have come to us literally by the thousands from more than 53 different countries, and students have enrolled for the course by the hundreds. "Psychiana" expected that the truths of its teachings would be recognized at once, but did not anticipate the overwhelming number of inquiries received to date. We are rapidly expanding our facilities and Dr. Robinson hopes to personally reply to all letters. Please print name and address plainly on the coupon.

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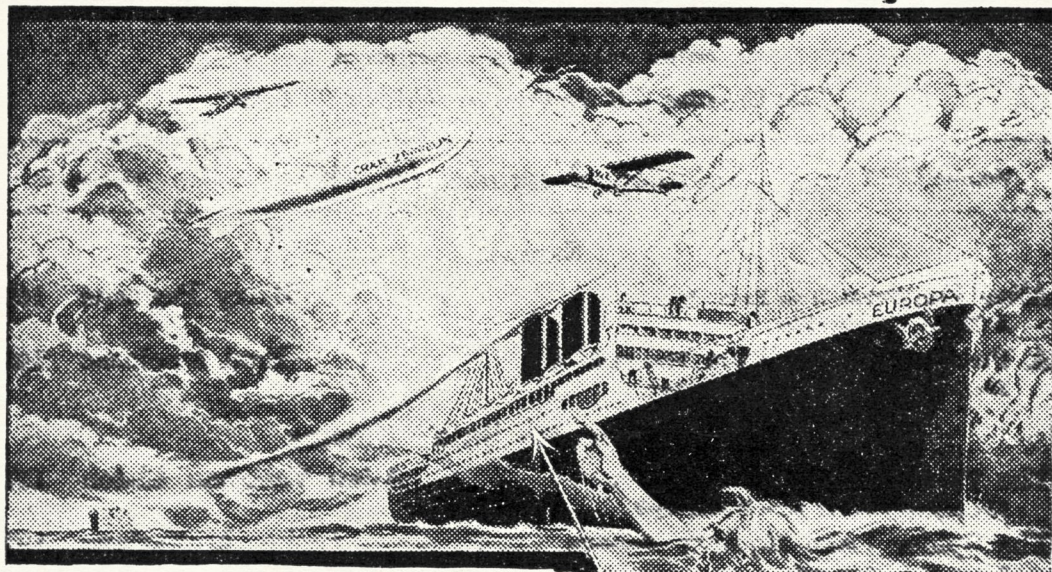
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Qualify for this Opportunity to

Win \$4,000.00 Cash!

S.O.S. HELP! HELP!—Frantic radio messages flash out! The air is electrified with S.O.S. distress signals. "S-E-V-E-N — F-A-M-O-U-S — F-L-Y-E-R-S L-O-S-T!" Great ocean liners, airplanes, and even the Graf Zeppelin are searching the seas and sky to find them. But even now, dark treacherous storm clouds are endangering their lives and YOUR help is needed QUICK! Look! — Old Father Neptune is already reaching greedily out from his stormy black sea to claim these brave flyers for his watery grave.

CAN YOU FIND THE LOST FLYERS? Are your eyes SHARP ENOUGH to save them from the hungry clutches of the Old Man of the Sea? Only dim visions of their faces appear through the storm, and they are almost entirely lost to normal eyesight. Try to find at least FOUR out of the seven. To see them, it may be necessary for you to turn the picture upside down, sideways or even cornerwise. They may be in the clouds or in the sky — almost anywhere — perhaps in the sea itself.

THERE IS \$14,000.00 CASH TO BE GIVEN and you will be eligible for the opportunity to win a sum

as large as \$4,000.00 cash if you are clever enough to find at least four of the seven flyers and I will advise you at once if your answer is correct. There are FIFTEEN big prizes ranging from \$4,000.00 to \$515.00. Duplicate prizes will be paid in case of ties. And, in addition, A LIBERAL CASH AWARD WILL BE PAID TO EVERYONE who takes an active part toward winning these wonderful prizes.

I'LL PAY \$2,400.00 EXTRA CASH FOR PROMPTNESS

YES SIR! — \$2,400.00 EXTRA cash will be given to the first prize winner just for being quick, making \$4,000.00 in all. So, study this picture carefully — see if you can qualify for the opportunity to win that big \$4,000.00 FORTUNE. Just find at least FOUR flyers — mark their faces, cut out the picture and mail it to me with your name and address, that's all. I'll immediately tell you without obligation or a penny of cost just what else to do to win that tremendous prize of \$4,000.00.

Some one is going to get that wonderful \$4,000.00 cash reward. Why not you? Anyone in the U. S. A., outside of Chicago, Illinois, may enter for nothing — so send your answer today. Rush it!

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4619 E. Ravenswood Ave. Dept. 198, CHICAGO, ILL.

DETECTIVE FICTION WEEKLY



TITLE REGISTERED U. S. PATENT OFFICE

"The Magazine With the Detective Shield On the Cover"

VOLUME LXIII

Saturday, November 14, 1931

NUMBER 2

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28x17.00-21"	4.95	3.65	32x32.00-20"	3.95	1.90	30x17.25-21"	5.00	3.70	32x32.50-20"	3.95	1.90
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28x20.50-21"	5.65	4.35	32x39.00-20"	3.95	1.90	30x20.75-21"	5.70	4.40	32x39.50-20"	3.95	1.90
28x20.75-21"	5.70	4.40	32x39.50-20"	3.95	1.90	30x21.00-21"	5.75	4.45	32x40.00-20"	3.95	1.90
28x21.00-21"	5.75	4.45	32x40.00-20"	3.95	1.90	30x21.25-21"	5.80	4.50	32x40.50-20"	3.95	1.90
28x21.25-21"	5.80	4.50	32x40.50-20"	3.95	1.90	30x21.50-21"	5.85	4.55	32x41.00-20"	3.95	1.90
28x21.50-21"	5.85	4.55	32x41.00-20"	3.95	1.90	30x21.75-21"	5.90	4.60	32x41.50-20"	3.95	1.90
28x21.75-21"	5.90	4.60	32x41.50-20"	3.95	1.90	30x22.00-21"	5.95	4.65	32x42.00-20"	3.95	1.90
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28x22.25-21"	6.00	4.70	32x42.50-20"	3.95	1.90	30x22.50-21"	6.05	4.75	32x43.00-20"	3.95	1.90
28x22.50-21"	6.05	4.75	32x43.00-20"	3.95	1.90	30x22.75-21"	6.10	4.80	32x43.50-20"	3.95	1.90
28x22.75-21"	6.10	4.80	32x43.50-20"	3.95	1.90	30x23.00-21"	6.15	4.85	32x44.00-20"	3.95	1.90
28x23.00-21"	6.15	4.85	32x44.00-20"	3.95	1.90	30x23.25-21"	6.20	4.90	32x44.50-20"	3.95	1.90
28x23.25-21"	6.20	4.90	32x44.50-20"	3.95	1.90	30x23.50-21"	6.25	4.95	32x45.00-20"	3.95	1.90
28x23.50-21"	6.25	4.95	32x45.00-20"	3.95	1.90	30x23.75-21"	6.30	5.00	32x45.50-20"	3.95	1.90
28x23.75-21"	6.30	5.00	32x45.50-20"	3.95	1.90	30x24.00-21"	6.35	5.05	32x46.00-20"	3.95	1.90
28x24.00-21"	6.35	5.05	32x46.00-20"	3.95	1.90	30x24.25-21"	6.40	5.10	32x46.50-20"	3.95	1.90
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28x25.25-21"	6.60	5.30	32x48.50-20"	3.95	1.90	30x25.50-21"	6.65	5.35	32x49.00-20"	3.95	1.90
28x25.50-21"	6.65	5.35	32x49.00-20"	3.95	1.90	30x25.75-21"	6.70	5.40	32x49.50-20"	3.95	1.90
28x25.75-21"	6.70	5.40	32x49.50-20"	3.95	1.90	30x26.00-21"	6.75	5.45	32x50.00-20"	3.95	1.90
28x26.00-21"	6.75										

DETECTIVE FICTION WEEKLY



"The Magazine With the Detective Shield On the Cover"

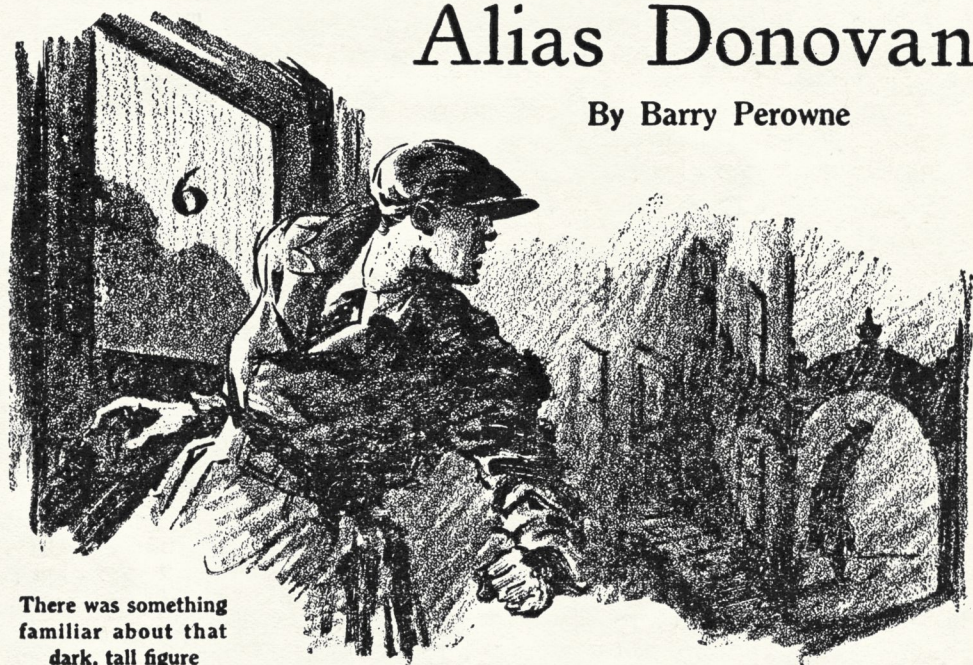
VOLUME LXIII

SATURDAY, NOVEMBER 14, 1931

NUMBER 2

Alias Donovan

By Barry Perowne



There was something
familiar about that
dark, tall figure

*The Only Way to Wipe Out His Criminal Past Was the Way of
Danger; but Kid Donovan Was a Fighter—in the Ring and Out*

CHAPTER I

Undercover Men

IT was a big fight. It was, in fact, a title fight: Hans Berlin (Germany, holder) vs. Kid Donovan (Aldgate) — "for the middleweight championship," said the bills outside, "of Europe."

The great, circular structure of the Albert Hall glared with lights; cars and taxis were parked in long lines against either curb. The bulk of the crowd was inside, now, but people still milled under the portico of the main entrance. From within the huge building, there came the muffled roar of ten thousand voices.

Nella Fane, stepping out from her taxi on to the pavement, heard the roar and saw the glaring lights, and her lovely face flushed a little with pride and excitement.

Kid Donovan's girl! That was what they called her, and she was proud of it, more proud to-night than ever she had been before in her life. Inside that great building Jeff was going to fight, and all that vast crowd in there had come to see him. The telephone wires would hum to-night, up and down the country; the monster presses of a hundred newspapers would thunder and throb.

They expected a lot of Jeff to-night, "A win over Hans Berlin," said the newspapers, "should at last give England a world title challenger in Kid Donovan!"

Well, he wouldn't let them down—not Jeff—not Kid Donovan. That afternoon he had said to her:

"I'm goin' to win, Nella! I've *got* to—for both our sakes, eh?"

"I shall be there, Jeff—to see you win!"

Now, as she moved round the side of the great building, she drew a deep breath that trembled a little from sheer excitement. Of course he was going to win!

She didn't have to go to the main entrance. The card Jeff had given her would gain her entry at the performers' door, so that she could look in at his dressing room to give him a final word for luck. She laughed softly. She'd give him something more than just a word!

After the glare and turmoil of the front gate, it seemed deserted and gloomy round here in the courtyard at the side of the building. Kid Donovan's girl paused for a moment, slim and lovely in her white, short ermine

wrap and her frock that, in the modern style, fell like a faint mist, pale blue, to her small, silver shoes. Her uncovered hair, parted at the side and curved gently back around one small ear, gleamed smooth and golden in the light of the electric bulb beneath which she stood.

She looked uncertainly along the pavement under the narrow *patio* which ran round the building. Which, she wondered, was the fighters' entrance?

A footstep sounded on the pavement behind her. She turned. A man had appeared suddenly, as though from nowhere—a small, slim man in a raincoat and a black velour hat. He touched his hat, smiling round the cigar between his teeth.

"Miss Fane?"

"Why—yes," said Nella, surprised.

"I was watchin' for yuh," the man smiled. "Mr. Donovan wants a word wi' yuh. Sump'n's happened, I think. He just come out. He's waitin' in a car there, round the back, so he won't be rec'nized an' start the fans stampedin'. Best hurry, miss—he's due in the ring in less'n five minutes, now."

"I'LL come at once," Nella said quickly.

At the stranger's side, she moved out from under the *patio* and across the courtyard. Her high heels clicked sharply on the flags. The huge bulk of the Albert Hall loomed darkly behind them; from within the building the confused roar of many voices came subdued and sullen. She glanced anxiously at the man beside her. "Do you know what can possibly have happened?"

The man shook his head. In the dim light she could see his face but vaguely.

"No, 'm. He seemed kind o' wor-

ried an' told me to watch out for yuh—'at's all I know."

Nella said nothing. Her heart beat, slow and heavy, with a sense of foreboding. If anything should have happened to Jeff to-night of all nights . . .

In the shadows at the extreme end of the courtyard, a car was drawn up, its sidelights only burning. Nella's escort glanced through the open window into the back of the sedan.

"O. K., Mr. Donovan. I found her—"

He stepped back, swinging open the door. Nella put one silver-shod foot on the running board, peering into the warm gloom of the car. Dimly against the rear window, she made out a figure. She said softly, anxiously:

"Jeff—here I am—"

That was as far as she got. A pair of hands slid over her shoulders from behind. A pad of cloth, soft and sickly sweet, pressed tight against her mouth and nostrils. Her head was forced back. She tried to breathe, to cry out. But no breath came—no sound. Against her cheek she felt the hot breath of the man behind her. Her lungs swelled, it seemed, to bursting point. Her senses reeled. The car, the vague, far-off boom of many voices, the dim figure on the seat before her spun giddily away into a yawning, black void. She felt herself falling.

Kid Donovan's girl was "out!"

Two minutes later a big black sedan, bearing on its plates the number KN7207, snaked out from the courtyard, turned right, past the glaring façade of the Albert Hall, past the parked vehicles and the police on duty, and purred comfortably away toward Knightsbridge.

A great roar from within the building boomed after the car.

Kid Donovan, English challenger,

had just ducked under the ropes into the ring!

"KID DONOVAN!"

That mighty concourse of fight fans, reaching up tier on tier to the roof of the vast, brilliantly lit building, rose to him with a roar, a stamping of feet, a deafening volley of hand-claps. The whole place stirred and rocked with movement. The small roped square that tradition eccentrically insists upon calling a "ring" alone seemed stable under the glaring arc lights, the writhing smoke from countless cigarettes.

"Kid Donovan!"

The slim youngster in the shabby bathrobe acknowledged the greeting with a broad grin, pounding his gloved fists together over his head. He slid out of his bathrobe, gripped the ropes in his corner, and scuffed the soles of his shoes in the resin. A born middleweight, broad-shouldered, narrow-hipped; the muscles rippled smoothly under the brown skin of his back.

Except for his fine body, the Kid was nobody's matinée idol; his tanned face was too square for that, too tough. At some time in his career his nose had sustained a slight sidewise flattening, and his ears bore the signs of his trade. But, for all that, it was a pleasant face, with the good lines of laughter about blue, keen eyes, and teeth that showed white and level when he grinned. His blond hair, cut short, was entirely innocent of anything resembling a parting.

Looking at him as he sat there in his corner and submitted his gloved hands for examination, there was not a man or a woman in that vast hall who guessed for a second that Kid Donovan had anything on his mind, bar the imminent fight.

But he had. He was wondering why the girl he loved hadn't shown up, and he was aware of that gnawing, nerve-tightening fear which came to him whenever he ducked under the ropes into a public ring—the fear that out of those rows upon rows of blurred faces there would spring suddenly into sharp distinction a long and saturnine face, sunken-cheeked and sallow, with jet-black, ironic eyes and thin lips quirked always in a half smile—the face of Superintendent Slane, of Scotland Yard!

The storm of noise lulled down as the announcer, his arms raised for a hearing, stepped out into the middle of the ring. His voice rang high through the great hall. Then the referee took over, and the Kid moved out from his corner. A word from the referee, a touch of the gloves, then the gong clanged and they were at it, down there in that tiny roped enclosure under the glaring arc lights.

THEY were well matched. From the first blow that was evident.

In height, weight and reach there was little between them; but their methods were as different as a machine gun's from a howitzer's.

A machine gun—that was Kid Donovan. He opened out from the word "Go!"—and that was because only in the heat of battle could he forget that sallow and saturnine face that hovered like a threat in his mind. Brown and swift, he drove in at the German, his long left arm jolting and jabbing, on the offensive from the first second.

Hans Berlin was different, slower in his methods, grim and intent. White-skinned, with cropped black hair and heavy muscles, he fought on the retreat, his pale eyes wary and calculating. Wise in the craft of the ring,

shrewd and cool-headed, he was content to bide his time, to scheme and contrive a trap, to wear his man down and then go in without mercy and shatter him.

So they milled round the ring under the eye of the bobbing and peering referee. They clinched, with the German tattooing the Aldgate boy's ribs with quick, heavy jabs at short range. The referee broke between them. They sparred for a second, then the Kid led with his left, landed and followed up, fighting hotly. He drove his man back on the ropes, and for a damaging half-minute held him there, landing repeatedly with that long, dangerous left of his on the German's face.

The crowd rose to him, yelling. But he did not hear them. He had forgotten them. He had forgotten even that saturnine, sallow face which was the face of Superintendent Slane. He saw only the man before him, bobbing and weaving against the ropes; and he set himself to hit that man.

He landed again with his left—and then a crushing weight kicked paralyzingly against his heart. Through a momentary mist he kept on punching—until, from a great distance, it seemed, there penetrated through the roaring in his ears a tiny, brief clang. The gong. The referee broke between them.

The Kid turned back to his corner, shaking his head a little, grinning. But his manager, ducking up under the ropes, didn't grin. His highly colored countenance was moist and agonized, his gray derby pushed far back on his slicked, sparse hair. He shoved the Kid down on his stool.

"Boy! Boy, you give me heart failure! You're so green folks'll think I train you on a grass seed diet! Take it easy! This is a ten-round fight, not a gold rush!"

"O. K., Oracle," the Kid grinned. His blue eyes flickered along the row of ringside seats, where the pressmen scrawled on telephone forms and the radio broadcaster talked earnestly into a microphone.

The Kid frowned, puzzled. "Nella's seat's still empty. Wonder why she ain't shown up?"

Oracle Hoyt, on his knees to massage the Kid's calf muscles, breathed heavily through his nose.

"Forget the girl, an' listen to what I'm tellin' you. Take it easy for a bit, see? Let Berlin open up 'n' get confident! You keep the brake on till I tell you, or you're goin' to run into a trap like a drunk into a lamp-post. See?"

"O. K.," the Kid grinned.

But again his eyes flickered, uncertain and puzzled, to that empty seat in the press row.

Queer he should connect the non-appearance of Nella with the saturnine and sallow face of Superintendent Slane of Scotland Yard.

But he did.

The gong clanged for Round Two.

THE big black sedan bearing the number KN7207 turned decorously out of Charing Cross Road into that dismal Soho thoroughfare which is known as Old Compton Street. Halfway along Old Compton Street, the sedan shifted into second and turned to the right, passing under an ancient stone arch into a narrow and ill-lighted court.

The side lights of the car cast a thin, moving glow upon the dingy buildings to either side: S. Rosenelli, Gents' Valet Service; Brodnoff Fur Repositories; Greek Restaurant, Z. Rombak, Prop.; I. N. Oppheim, Pawnbroker. Each one of those gloomy establish-

ments was dark and shuttered; but in the building before which the car finally came to a halt, one light showed, glowing dimly through the pane of frosted glass over the front door. Save for that solitary light, the shabby, four-storied, indeterminate building loomed up in darkness over its railed area.

The engine of the black sedan fell silent. A man stepped out on to the pavement. He glanced up and down the alley, evidently listening. But there was no sound, save the sullen rumble of late busses along Charing Cross Road. The man turned abruptly and mounted the steps to the shabby front door. He peered for the bell, found, and pressed it.

The bell rang sharply in the basement of the house, startling the man who lounged there in a leather easy-chair, listening in to the portable radio set on the desk before him. He sat up quickly, taking the cigar from his thick lips. The radio announced:

"They're just coming up for Round Six. Donovan seems to be in good trim in spite of his big effort in the last round. If he can go the distance now, he ought to win on points, but he'll be taking a big chance if he tries for a knockout. The German's defense is the best I've seen. It says a lot for Donovan that he's landed so often with that left of his. There he goes again—a good one to the German's jaw. Berlin's covering up, but Donovan's following him hard. Now—they're in a clinch! By—"

The man in the easy chair reached across and snapped the radio off, his pale brown, almost reddish eyes on the bell-box. Again the arm thrilled against it, and then again. Three times.

The man in the basement heaved himself up from his chair, and leaned with his two hands on the flat-topped

desk, watching the door. There in the bright lit, sparsely furnished basement, he seemed huge—a gross hulk of a man, prodigiously fat. His square, heavy face was as pallid as the stiff-fronted shirt he wore with his crumpled dinner jacket. His hair was reddish and cropped close. His thick lips mouthed restlessly at the stub of cigar.

The door of the basement opened abruptly. Two men filed into the basement, carrying between them the limp figure of a girl in a filmy blue frock and an ermine wrap—Nella Fane. They set her down in one of the several chairs which dotted the carpeted floor. She was quite unconscious.

The big man saw that at a glance. He nodded, smiling a little, showing yellowed, uneven teeth; then, without a word, he snapped on the radio again. The announcer's voice came breathless and excited, filling the basement:

"Right back on the ropes, hitting with both hands! *Now*—he's landed again with his right—and again!" A rising roar drowned the voice out for a moment. Then: "Berlin's down!" It came in a shout. The roar persisted. The announcer's voice came in snatches: "The ref's counting—Berlin's trying to rise! *No!* Seven—eight—Donovan's won!"

Abruptly the big man snapped into silence the unintelligible roar of ten thousand voices. He drew a deep breath, smiling evilly, and reached for the telephone on the desk before him.

CHAPTER II

"Wanted!"

"**B**OY," Oracle Hoyt exulted, "what a fight, what a fight! They'll have to ship that lad back to Germany in sections marked *Fragile*."

Sitting on the seat which ran round the walls of the dressing room, he set his gray derby at a jaunty angle, stuck his left thumb into the armhole of his fancy waistcoat, and with his other hand flourished masterfully a cigar of prodigious length and arresting aroma.

"Champion of Europe, boy—an' you ain't shown 'em nothin' yet! Why, listen—now Berlin's out the way, you're headin' straight, like a ten-ton truck, for a world title an' a cash balance so big the bank'll have to open a special branch to deal with it! I tell you, boy, when I considers what I have made out of you in four years, it takes my breath away so much I needs artificial respiration!"

"Why, when you come to me, you was that iggerant about the fight game you never knew the difference between a solar plexus an' a total eclipse! You thought a rabbit punch was some sort o' booze, an' a clinch was what lovers went into on the movies! That's so, ain't it?"

The Kid grinned, lying full length on the rubbing table, submitting with docility to the ministrations of his seconds, Stoker Sparks and Mose Golden.

"I ain't claimin' I knew much, Oracle," the Kid said briefly.

He never talked to excess when his manager was around. Neither did anybody else. Oracle Hoyt was not so much a conversationalist as a man born with a natural gift for monologue. All he asked was an audience.

He waved his cigar eloquently, his greenish, slightly protuberant eyes twinkling with excitement in his highly colored countenance.

"O. K.! Now, I'll tell you—what I likes about you, boy, you don't get a swelled bean. You're like me, more; you knows a thing or two, but you lies doggo an' uses your mouth just to keep

your tonsils imprisoned! Now, there was a lad I had once—"

He broke off abruptly as the wall telephone, shrilling from a corner of the room, interrupted him in that discourteous way telephones have. The Kid sat up, his blue eyes brightening.

"That'll be Nella!"

"My guess is, it's another newspaper," said Oracle, the man who knew a thing or two.

He moved over to the telephone, and, lifting the receiver, propped his elbow on the ledge and crossed his check-trousered legs elegantly. "Hello?" he said. "Hello, there? Yes—this is Kid Donovan's dressin' room. No—this ain't Kid Donovan. This is Nahum Hoyt speakin'—Donovan's manager. No, I dunno as you *can* talk to him. Who are you, anyhow?"

Watching, Jeff Donovan saw the little man stiffen suddenly.

"What's that? What's that about Miss Fane? Hey, listen, who—"

THE Kid swung his legs down from the table. In a stride he was at the phone, taking the receiver from Hoyt's hand. The Kid's face was anxious.

"Hello? Donovan speakin'! Who's that?"

A remote chuckle came to him over the wire.

"'Donovan,' eh? You can ditch the name, son. I'm no hawkeye from Scotland Yard! When you talk to me you can use the name your mother gave you—*Jeff Christie!*"

Oracle Hoyt whispered urgently at the Kid's side:

"Who is it?"

But the Kid ignored that. The blood had drained from his brown, young, battered face; his blue eyes were keen and anxious. He spoke slowly.

"I don't quite get you, stranger. Who are you?"

Again there came to him over the wire that remote and meaning chuckle.

"Some one you've not seen for four years, Jeff—not since the night your old man got his packet. Remember that night, Jeff? Up at the Old Asia, with the dicks hammering on the door and us hemmed in there—trapped? The old man had to fight, didn't he? No surrender! If the dicks wanted us, they'd have to shoot us out, he said. Remember that?"

The Kid stood quite still, lean and brown and tense in his black trunks. He said nothing. The sardonic, queerly insinuating voice came thinly over the wire:

"That was a sweet little racket, eh, Jeff—the Old Asia night club? Too bad the dicks got interested! They certainly made a clean-up, eh? Only five of us got away out of forty-seven who were on the racket. Only five of us—you, Jeff, Joe Slovak, Aces Doane an' me, an' Cluny the Piper. Just us five, Jeff! You got me placed now, eh?"

The Kid drew a long breath. He spoke between his teeth:

"Yeh—I got you placed, now—Lew Wolfram! An' I'm tellin' you—I'm on the straight, see? I been on the straight for four years, an' I'm aimin' to stay on it! Bear that in mind, if you got anythin' to say to me!"

The remote voice chuckled softly.

"Easy, Jeff—easy! You're like your old man—hot-tempered, like Spike Christie was, eh? Now, listen—I just want a little quiet chin with you, Jeff, that's all. As old pals o' yours, we'd like to be the first to toast the new champ—me an' Joe Slovak an' Aces Doane! You'll find us at Number Six, One Way Court, off Old Compton

Street. Don't say you're not comin', Jeff. You are. We've made sure o' that. We got somebody here, Jeff, you'll be glad to see—little Miss Fane, the girl friend! Better come over, Jeff, right away!"

THE Kid breathed hard; the muscles corded along his lean jaw.

"You'll be comin', Jeff?" purred the voice over the wire.

The Kid spoke abruptly:

"I'll be comin'!"

He hooked up the receiver, turned slowly to the three men who watched him.

"Well, boys—you heard enough to know what's happened?"

Oracle Hoyt was staring at him whitely.

"The gang, eh?"

The Kid nodded:

"Just that, Oracle—the gang!"

He reached for his shirt.

Oracle Hoyt sat down weakly on the rubbing table. All the bounce had gone out of him; his eyes were tragic.

"After four years—an' I thought you was safe, Kid! I'm lucky, ain't I? Lucky like a bloke who puts a dud shillin' in a slot machine an' then finds the machine's empty—yeh!" He drew a deep breath, pushing his derby far back on his slicked, sparse hair. "I ain't one to bellyache, Kid—but, gee, I've put in a lot of work on you; every bean o' capital I got's wrapped up in you. I always been unlucky—every one knows that. But I thought my luck'd changed to-night, Kid. Champion of Europe—an' to-morrow I'd 'a' been on the transatlantic phone to open negotiations for a world title bout in New York! I thought it was comin' our way at last, Kid, an' then this happens!" He brooded a moment, then

shrugged, blew out his cheeks and rose. "Well—what are we goin' to do?"

The Kid, knotting his tie before the mirror, glanced round.

"I'm sorry, Oracle—for your sake. But don't let it get your goat. You go ahead an' fix up that scrap in New York, an' I'll be there to keep the date. That's a promise, see?" He looked back at his reflection, brown, battered, blue-eyed, in the mirror. His voice was hard: "What Wolfram's after I don't know—yet! But he's got the drop on me, because he's got hold of Nella somehow. All right! Well—this is my pidgin, an' I got to go through with it by myself." Again he glanced round. "Mose, grab me a taxi, will you?"

"Sure." Mose slid out.

"You're goin', then?" Oracle Hoyt said somberly.

The Kid nodded, pulling on his tweed coat.

"Yeh—an' I got to go alone! If I was to take anybody along to this No. 6 One Way Court joint it might be worse for Nella. I know Wolfram, boys, an' he's dangerous—*dangerous!*"

THE fighter who called himself Kid Donovan spoke from personal experience when he said that Lew Wolfram was dangerous. Although the Kid had not set eyes on Wolfram for four years, there had been a time when he had known Spike Donovan's right-hand man well enough to fear him. Now, the Kid no longer feared Wolfram. The Kid was older now. He feared nobody—save, perhaps, Superintendent Slane of Scotland Yard.

Sliding eastward up Piccadilly in his taxi, the Kid tried to think, to figure out in his mind what game it was that Lew Wolfram was playing. But,

somehow, the Kid couldn't seem to think clearly to-night. He was too anxious, too troubled about Nella.

The lights of Piccadilly flickered fitfully in the warm gloom of the taxi. They showed the Kid's battered face, set and hard, under his tweed cap. He sat forward on the seat, his big fists clenched hard on his knees. If he'd hurt Nella, Lew Wolfram would pay heavy for it! He'd get his rotten spine broken, if breaking it was the last thing Kid Donovan ever did!

At the corner of Old Compton Street the Kid paid off his taxi. He hitched up the collar of his trench coat, pulled his cap far down over his eyes, and, turning his back on the lights and the fading rumble of Charing Cross Road, swung on foot into the gloom and silence of Old Compton Street.

The Kid knew London like he knew the strength of his left hand. Thus he found One Way Court without any trouble. Under the ancient stone arch over the entrance to that narrow and ill-lighted *cul de sac*, he paused briefly, weighing up the lay of the land, a trick he had learned in his gangster days under his father, Spike Christie. Then he moved forward into One Way Court.

There was but one light visible in any of the buildings to either side. He made for that light, going without haste, keeping his eyes peeled. As he drew close, he saw that the dim glow of light came through a pane of frosted glass over the door of a tall, four-storied, shabby building with an area. The figure "6" stood out clearly, painted on the glass.

The Kid hesitated for a moment, glancing about him; then he drew a deep breath and mounted the steps. He found the bell, pressed it, and waited, listening intently. He heard the bell

ring faintly, deep down inside the house. His heart was pounding, slow and heavy, at his ribs. He'd have given a lot for a gun.

He glanced back toward the faint yellow glow which marked the mouth of the *cul de sac*. Then he stiffened, peering. Something moved there, a figure, vague, tall and shadowy. For a second he saw it—then the figure was gone, flitting into the shadows under the dark and shuttered bulk of the Brodnoff Fur Repositories.

The Kid stood quite still. He was hot; the hair prickled at the nape of his neck. Was he followed? Vaguely as he had seen it, there had been something familiar about that dark, tall figure. He'd know it anywhere, he thought, in any circumstances—Superintendent Slane!

IN that second, the door of No. 6 One Way Court, opened quietly, startlingly, letting out a square of light. The Kid turned. A man stood on the threshold, dark against the light behind him.

"Howdy, Jeff? Step in—"

The Kid shrugged slightly and obeyed, moving into a narrow, unfurnished passage. His brain was racing. Slane? Maybe he was mistaken! What could Slane be doing here, in One Way Court?

The man who had admitted him closed the door quietly, keeping his eyes on the Kid.

"Well, Jeff, this is a big treat—after four years, eh?"

He spoke ironically, his eyes, small and black in a white, thin face, wary and alert, his hand jabbing forward an automatic in the pocket of his tight-waisted check jacket. The Kid's face was grim.

"I ain't mixin' words with you,

Aces Doane! I want to see Wolfram—an' I want to see him quick!"

"Got kind of uppish, now you're a champ, eh?" Doane sneered.

He stepped forward, his gun ready, and frisked the Kid's pockets swiftly.

"No gun! Gettin' very respectable, ain't we, Jeff?" He jerked his head. "O. K.! Carry on!"

The Kid moved along the bare boards of the passage, down unlighted stairs. Then a door opened before him, and he was blinking in the light of a big basement.

There were three people in the basement—two men and a girl. It was the girl Kid Donovan saw first—Nella. In her blue frock and white wrap, she lay quite still in a leather easy-chair. The Kid moved forward quickly, bending over her. For a moment he listened intently to her breathing, regular and soft, warm against his cheek. Then he straightened up, swinging round on Lew Wolfram, sitting huge and white and fat at his flat-topped desk, his thick lips parted in a smile about his stub of cigar.

"You've doped her, Wolfram," the Kid said grimly. "It's a good job for you it ain't worse!"

The man at the desk shrugged his huge shoulders under his dinner jacket. His cropped red hair glinted in the light from the electric bulb over his head.

"Easy, Jeff, easy! Curb that Christie temper! Take a look around you, and get it into your head that you're in no place to try any rough stuff!"

THE Kid's blue eyes flickered swiftly round the basement. Aces

Doane leaned against the door, gun in hand. A big, black-browed plug-ugly in a gray suit lolled against

the wall to the left of the heavily curtained window recess. The Kid knew him for Joe Slovak, ex-member of the Old Asia mob. Slovak, too, fondled a gun, grinning mirthlessly.

"You see?" Wolfram chuckled. "We're all here, Jeff—all of us who got clear from the Old Asia round-up, except just Cluny the Piper. Nobody knows what happened to Cluny after that night!"

"I ain't here to talk about old times," the Kid said. "If you got anything to say, you'd better say it!"

But his blue eyes flickered again to the window. Could that have been Slane he'd seen? Could Slane be outside there now, maybe—listening? He moistened his lips, looking at Wolfram. The big man ground his stub of cigar into an ash-tray on the desk. His small eyes glinted redly in his pallid, heavy face.

"All right. Did it ever occur to you, Jeff, that your old man made a fortune out of the racket?"

"I've—wondered," the Kid said.

"Sure. Well, he did! He must have made something like half a million—maybe more! Now, the police never recovered that dough, Jeff! Spike Christie had it salted down somewhere—under cover—against the day when he'd quit the racket! Get me?"

The Kid nodded.

"What's it got to do with me, though?"

Wolfram's face creased fatly in a smile.

"I'll tell you, Jeff! Spike used to treat you pretty rough, didn't he? You was too young to stand up to him; you had to play the racket while he was alive, didn't you, or he'd have bumped you off like that!" He snapped his thick fingers. "Sure! But you were his kid, all the same—his flesh and

blood! If anything happened to him, you were to have that dough. Spike always planned that; he told me so more than once. All right. D'you remember Spike had a code of his own, and you were the only other person, bar him, who had a key to it?"

Again the Kid nodded. Wolfram leaned forward across the desk. Sweat gleamed on his pallid face.

"Yeh. Well, Spike Christie left a letter for you. Here it is—an' you're goin' to decode it—for *us*!"

Wolfram's hand went to his pocket, withdrawing a grimy sheet of folded paper. He laid it on the desk before him, his tiny, reddish eyes glaring up at the Kid.

"For *us*—see?"

His voice was smooth with menace. Aces Doane and Joe Slovak closed in quietly about the Kid, covering him with their guns. The unconscious girl drew a long, shuddering breath, on the verge of recovery.

And, in that exact moment, there came from the window the sharp snap of a silencer-fitted automatic. There was a splintering of glass. The electric bulb over Wolfram's head was shattered to powder. The basement was plunged in complete darkness!

CHAPTER III

Vultures' Bait

TO Kid Donovan that sudden darkness seemed to press close, thick and heavy, like a black bag drawn down suddenly over his head and shoulders, pinioning him where he stood.

In one second the little reddish eyes of Lew Wolfram, glaring at him out of a gross and pallid face; in the next—blackness!

He stood poised and tense, getting

his bearings. Before him, he knew, was Wolfram, his huge white hand flat down on that sheet of grimy paper; to his right was Nella, on the verge of consciousness; behind him, armed and ready, were Slovak and Doane. He guessed they were covering the window, watching their chance to shoot. There was no panic, for these were men wily and cool in the trade of violence.

For the space of three seconds, that seemed as long as minutes, there was no sound in that dark cellar under No. 6 One Way Court.

Then, to the Kid's right, some one stirred and sighed—long and shudderingly. Nella! The sigh ended in a quick gasp, a catch of the breath.

Simultaneously, a heavy body charged against the window, to the Kid's left. The glass tingled and clashed. Something struck the stone floor with a muffled bump—the curtain rod, ripped down from its hooks.

In the same second, Slovak and Doane fired together, close at the Kid's back. The momentary red glare showed him a crouching, dark figure half over the low sill into the cellar.

Waking into that abrupt inferno, the girl screamed. Kid Donovan wheeled round toward her, groping in the gloom. A figure lurched against him, cursing hoarsely. The Kid punched blindly, with all his strength, and all but tripped forward over the falling figure of the man he had struck.

He flung out his hands to save himself, and caught the leather arm of the chair. Something soft brushed the backs of his hands—the fur of Nella's wrap. At once he groped for her, got his arms under her, lifted her.

He faced round to the window, a dim square of lesser darkness there before him.

The radio set crashed to the floor

at his feet. Across the desk two men sprawled, interlocked and fighting savagely. Wolfram's voice came, tortured and in gasps, as though clutching fingers imprisoned the words in his windpipe.

"The paper! Slovak—*Aah!*"

The voice broke off in a choking cough. The figures pitched down from the desk, rolling over on the floor.

The Kid stumbled toward the shattered window, intent only on getting clear with the girl in his arms. Again a pistol roared behind him, momentarily lighting the cellar with a lurid glare. The pungent stench of burned powder was in his nostrils.

Some one shouted. Hands clutched at his shoulders. He wheeled, the girl in his arms, and kicked savagely. There was a grunt of pain, and the attacker fell back.

The Kid got one leg over the sill—half fell, half climbed into the area.

Next minute, carrying the girl, he was in the *cul de sac*, running toward the arch at its end. Even as he gained it, a police whistle screamed behind him, shrill, sudden and startling.

He did not look back. He could hear the purr of a car, approaching slowly along Old Compton Street. He hesitated, there under the shadows of the arch. The car came on, stopped before the arch, not six yards from him.

A man leaned out from the back, speaking hoarsely to the driver.

"For the love o' Pete, shut that engine off, Mose! *Listen!*"

The Kid drew a deep breath of relief, his arms tightening about the semi-conscious girl he carried. He stepped out from the shadows under the arch.

"O. K., Oracle! Here we are."

The little manager whistled softly and swung open the door.

"I had a hunch you'd be glad to see us! C'mon! Let's get out o' this—"

Even as the engine of the car hummed and quickened, the police whistle shrilled again in One Way Court!

THE Kid shared an apartment with Oracle Hoyt in Lytton Street, off the Haymarket; but he thought it wiser not to return there directly. Instead, he told Mose Golden to take a roundabout route to the Firefly, an obscure little all-night restaurant in Blackfriars Road, across the river. The run gave him time to think, and at the Firefly, in a dingy little private room over the restaurant proper, he held a council of war with his four allies.

"Here's the lay, folks, as I see it. The old man left me a letter, in code. So far as I know nobody can read that code except me—and I've only got my memory to rely on. In the old days I used to do a lot of the old man's personal business. I was not much more'n a kid then, but I guess I was the only one of the mob he came anywhere near trustin'; that's why we had this code between us.

"Now, I knew the old man must 'a' made a pile out of the Old Asia racket, an' I've often wondered what happened to that dough. After to-night, I quit wonderin'. It seems pretty clear that he hid that dough somewhere with the idea that I should collect it if he checked out. It seems queer he should never have mentioned it to me when he was alive; but I guess he knew I always wanted to go straight, an', although he trusted me more than the others, he never trusted me absolutely. What's more, when he checked out, he checked out mighty sudden!"

He paused to light a cigarette, his

blue eyes flickering keenly from one to another of the four faces that watched him round the table.

"O. K.! Now, I figure he wrote that letter in code a goodish time before he died, an' planted it with some one with instructions to hand it on to me if he got a packet. He used to treat me pretty rough in the old days, but it isn't surprisin' he'd want me to have his dough; after all, I was the only livin' thing that was the same flesh and blood as himself. I haven't got any false ideas about my old man havin' a soft spot for me. Nix! The only thing he ever loved was my mother, who used to be Poppy Delaney, the dancer. Myself, I never hardly knew her; she died when I was fourteen. I guess there wasn't a soft spot left in the old man's heart when my—when Poppy Delaney died."

He drew deeply on his cigarette, his rugged face grim. He shrugged.

"Well, that isn't here or there! What I want to get over is that it isn't surprisin' that he'd want me to have that dough when he checked out—Poppy Delaney's son, see? All right. Now, I'm dead sure he wouldn't leave that letter with Wolfram, or any other close member of the mob. He never trusted 'em. I figure he left the letter with some one who did a bit of outside work for the gang—who didn't know too much, see? I got in mind one man—a bloke called Khafiyeh, who used to run a little Turco *café* down on the edge of Pennyfields. I'll look him up, first chance I get—may learn something useful!"

ORACLE Hoyt stirred abruptly.

"One minute, boy—not so fast! I don't see what you're aimin' at, quite! Way it looks to me your old man wanted you to have this

crooked dough; he leaves you a code letter—I guess with instructions in it about how to collect the money. We'll say he leaves the letter with this Turco, Khafiyeh, to be passed on to you. But you don't show up. You change your name, your identity, your appearance; you disappear—for four years.

"Meantime, this bloke Wolfram gets hold of the letter, somehow, but he can't untangle the code. Then—we don't know how—he finds out that you, Jeff Christie, are masqueradin' as Kid Donovan. Through Nella here, he traps you in this One Way Court hide-out, to try to make you read the letter for him. That's all clear. But the way I see it, it'd pay you to decipher the letter for him, and have done with it. He ain't got no use for you once you've read that letter—an' I take it you don't want your old man's crooked money."

"I wouldn't touch it with boxing gloves on," the Kid said at once, "if it weren't that you're overlookin' two things, Oracle."

"Name 'em!"

The Kid smiled without mirth, his teeth flashing white in his brown face. "Here's number one: We don't know what happened at One Way Court after we left, with the police whistle squallin' in our ears. The bloke who shot from the area was after that paper; he may have got it. Wolfram may not have it now. For all we know, he might even be under arrest! Right. Now, here's number two: Just as I got to Wolfram's hide-out, I saw a man in One Way Court who looked to me mighty like Superintendent Slane of the Yard! My hunch is that it was Slane who shot from the area—Slane who was after that paper.

"How he come to know about it, an' why he should go after it playin' a lone hand, are two questions I'll be mighty

interested to write 'answer' to. But here's the chief point you've overlooked, Oracle. Slane has always sworn to get Jeff Christie—that's me! If Slane was the man in the area, it's mighty likely he overheard enough o' what passed between me an' Wolfram to know that Kid Donovan and Jeff Christie aren't merely Siamese twins—they're one an' the same man!"

There was a little silence, while the full significance of that possibility sank in. Shadows bulked dark in the corners of the dingy room. Nella Fane was the first to speak, her gray eyes wide in her sweet, pale face.

"You mean, Jeff, that you dare not to go about any longer as Kid Donovan."

"That's just what I do mean, Nella," the Kid said quietly. "If Slane was the man in the area, an' if he overheard what passed between me an' Wolfram, he'll be round mighty soon at the chambers in Lytton Street with a warrant for Jeff Christie, alias Kid Donovan—certainly to-morrow, maybe even to-night! Now, p'raps you see what I'm gettin' at, Oracle! Kid Donovan's got to disappear. If any one asks, you don't know nothin' except that Donovan's gone abroad incog for a vacation after the Hans Berlin fight!"

ORACLE HOYT pushed back his gray derby despairingly, blowing out his red cheeks.

"Kid, you got me beat! You—champion of Europe—skulkin' under cover! What about that fight in New York? What about your career?"

The Kid's square, fighter's jaw was set like a rock.

"Those are just two o' the things I'm fighting for, Oracle—those an'—"

He glanced at Nella. She understood, and her sweet face was calm and

courageous. She trusted Jeff utterly, and she was not one to make a song and dance about his present ugly position. She was alone in the world, and from the age of seventeen had made her own living. Now, she was twenty-two, and a manikin in a big West-End store; and the years of loneliness and struggle had taught her to face life bravely and steadfastly.

Months back, when the love between herself and the Kid had come first to words, he had told her the truth about himself; and as then it had made no difference to her, so now she was prepared to stand by him and take the rough with the smooth. She understood what that glance of his meant; that in this crisis, just as his career was at stake, so, too, was their happiness together. And the answering glance of her gray eyes across the table was brave and tender.

"What're you aimin' to do, then, Kid?" Oracle Hoyt asked.

The Kid drew a deep breath.

"I'll tell you! As I see it, there's just one chance for me—an' I'm goin' out after it, tooth and nail! This is how I figure things: Scotland Yard has certainly got plenty of proof of my old connection with the Spike Christie mob, but I don't believe they've got evidence of my being snarled up in any one particular job. A judge might convict if the Yard proved me one of the Old Asia bunch; but I don't believe he'd dole out a long sentence unless they could fasten some special job on me.

"All right. Now, there are plenty of touts and stool pigeons who'd be in Dartmoor this minute if it weren't that they're useful to the Yard. In other words, it sometimes pays the Yard to make a bargain! I'm not aimin' to be a tout or a stool pigeon, but, just the

same, I plan to buy my freedom from the Yard, an' their silence about my identity!"

"How can you do that?" Oracle Hoyt said convulsively.

The Kid's eyes glinted in his brown face.

"By cleanin' up the Wolfram mob, if they're still at large after what happened to-night at One Way Court, and by recoverin' an' turnin' over to the Yard my old man's crooked loot. It's a long-odds chance, but if what I believe is true—that the most they could get me is a short sentence as a dangerous character—I reckon there's just a hope it might come off! Sure, they'd watch me for a long time after; but I'm on the straight now, an' I got nothin' to fear if I can bring this off! What it boils down to is that the Yard've got a bill against me, an' I aim to square that bill by services rendered!"

He sat back in his chair, smiling.

"I got a tough fight in front o' me, an' I got to work lone-handed! My two chief worries are, first, that Slane might tip off the papers at any minute that Kid Donovan is really Jeff Christie, late of the Old Asia gang—in which case I'm ruined in the ring! An' the second worry is that, even if I pull off what I'm settin' out to do, Slane won't make a trade with me. He's been after me for four years, and he's vindictive. But I got to take a chance! This is my only hope, an' I'm goin' for it—all out!" He laughed softly, looking from one to another of them. "My only hope—services rendered!"

THE first gray hint of dawn hung in the night sky eastward over the huddled roofs. The man who walked slowly, with bent head, along Lytton Street, off the Haymarket,

shuddered slightly under his heavy overcoat, for there was a chill bite in the air. The street was deserted and full of shadows still, and the lamps burned paler.

A car turned out of the Haymarket into Lytton Street. It slid to a halt, its engine ticking over softly, before the big apartment house which was No. 21.

The man in the overcoat paused to light a cigarette; but, under the downturned brim of his felt hat, his small, dark eyes were keen, watching the two men who descended from the car and climbed the steps of No. 21. The car quickened and came on; and the man in the overcoat glanced casually at the face of the driver as the car slid by.

The man in the overcoat walked on without haste, past the door of No. 21. He turned into Haymarket, strangely empty at that hour, and began suddenly to hurry. He went straight to an all-night telephone booth in Piccadilly Circus and put through a call on the Pimlico exchange. In a minute he was through.

"That you, Lew? Aces talkin'! Well, they've shown up at last—Hoyt an' them two sparrin' partners! No sign of Christie! What say?"

He listened. A voice came thin to him over the wire:

"Keep that joint marked, Aces! Christie may show up there any time! We got to locate him! It's a cinch the bloke who crashed in from the area was some one Christie had placed there—an' that means Christie's got the paper! We was lucky to make a get-away at all, with the bulls rollin' up in answer to that whistle! Christie got the drop on us good an' plenty there; now, we got to come back at him—an' no breaks this time! Keep that Lytton Street joint marked, an' I'll get along a man to relieve you

soon! Remember what we're playin' for—half a million!"

Five minutes later the man in the heavy overcoat was back again in Lytton Street, glancing up at the windows of No. 21, as he sauntered slowly past.

The vultures smelled gold and were on the spot!

CHAPTER IV

Death Behind the Screen

KID DONOVAN was a professional fighter, and as such he knew the value of a cool head and a steady nerve. When a man prepares himself for the ring he takes every possible precaution against disaster. He trains himself to a hair's point of perfection; he pickles his hands and his face in brine, to toughen the skin; he gets his muscles working limber and easy, and spends anxious hours in laying his plan of battle.

The Kid knew the value of these things, and as far as was possible he prepared his ground for this, the toughest fight of his career.

He had gone to the Firefly, that dingy resort in the Blackfriars Road, because the proprietor, Igor Litvinoff, a Russian, was known to him from his gangster days. Litvinoff was tough, but he was nobody's stool pigeon, and the Kid realized that the Firefly would be as good a temporary hide-out as any.

The first thing he did, then, when his friends had left him—Nella to go to her rooms in Chelsea, Oracle, Mose and Stoker to the apartment in Lytton Street—was to get himself a bedroom at the Firefly, and to turn in.

Long experience of getting his due rest on the eve of important fights stood him now in good stead, and it

was three o'clock in the afternoon before he awoke. He ordered himself a dish of bacon and eggs, with trimmings, and had a word with the big Russian, Litvinoff.

That word bore fruit within ten minutes of the Kid finishing his meal. The Russian came then to the Kid's room, bringing a cheap leather suitcase. Opened, the suitcase revealed a reefer jacket, a sweater, blue serge trousers, shiny with use, and a cap. Further, there were the day's papers, morning and afternoon editions, and a blued automatic, fully loaded.

The Kid washed, shaved and dressed, and went through the papers. They were full of him. The victory over Hans Berlin was regarded as a bright spot in these dog days of English boxing, and the papers made much of it. There was, however, no mention of what had happened at One Way Court; and at that Donovan was at once relieved and disappointed.

He was relieved because the papers had not yet got on to the true identity of Kid Donovan, and he was disappointed because he wanted keenly to know what had happened in One Way Court after Nella and he had made their get-away.

It was important to him that he find out what luck Wolfram and his bunch of toughs had had, and also who, in the end, had emerged from the fracas in possession of Spike Christie's code letter.

Those facts would be the keystones of his coming campaign. One other keystone lay in the identity of the men who had shot at the critical moment from the area of No. 6 One Way Court. The Kid had a hunch that that man had been Superintendent Slane; but it was of vital importance that he make certain, and there was one obvi-

ous way to do that. He must find out if Slane did, in fact, know of the paper, or suspect its existence.

There was one man who might be able to give the Kid that information, Khafiyeh, of the Café Tokat, to whose care the Kid thought it probable that the paper had originally been intrusted. The Kid planned to pay a visit to Khafiyeh to-night, as soon as possible after dark, for he was anxious to hit the trail and get his teeth into something definite.

Meantime, he was waiting for a phone call. Overnight he had arranged with the others that if Oracle had anything to report he would do so first to Nella, at her Chelsea rooms, and that she would then pass on the information. It was simply a precaution—a complication of the trail that led to the Kid.

The phone call got through at eight o'clock, much later than the Kid had hoped. Slane had not shown up, with or without a warrant, at the chambers in Lytton Street, but No. 21 was under observation, nevertheless. From Oracle's description of the watcher, Nella believed him to be the same man who had tricked her last night at the Albert Hall.

"Aces Doane!" the Kid thought grimly.

So, whatever may have happened at One Way Court after he had got away with Nella, Wolfram and his mob were still at large and in the running! But why, if Slane had been the mysterious attacker from the area of No. 6 One Way Court had he not been making inquiries about the Kid at Lytton Street to-day? Had that attacker been somebody else—or was Slane playing some deep game of his own?

With these speculations in his mind, the Kid left the Firefly at half past

eight, en route for Pennyfields and the Café Tokat.

JEMAL KHAFIYEH was by nationality a Turk, and although he had been settled for a long time now in England, he retained still many habits of the Near East.

A man nearing fifty, he looked ten years less than his age. A little under six feet in height, he was slim in build and graceful in movement. His dinner jacket and black trousers were of expensive cut and excellent fit, and his linen was immaculate. On his small feet—of which, with his small, dusky and well-shaped hands, he was inordinately proud—he wore, instead of the customary pumps, a pair of Turkish shoes of the finest red leather. His face was smooth, dark and thin, the features regular, the lips a little full, the eyes large and dark. He wore a red fez, and there was a frost of gray in the smooth, black hair over his temples.

This was the man, Kid Donovan reflected, who in the days of the Old Asia had been a species of outside agent of the gang. His knowledge of the shadowy undercurrents east of Aldgate was omniscient, his acquaintance with London River from Tower Bridge to Blackwall Reach unrivaled. He was a subtle and clever man, suspected by the police of illicit traffic in a dozen forms, though never once had anything been proved against him.

"I am surprised to see you here, Chreestie," he said smoothly, "after all thees time. I had thought you dead, and even so you have changed greatly—greatly. I should not have known you—"

"But you do now, eh?" the Kid said.

Khafiyeh smiled.

"Figure yourself—the papers are full of you, ees it not? You are Donoffon, the fighter; that ees the alias that has hid you all thees time. Even so, from your photographs, I should not have known that Jeff Chreestie was in truth Donoffon, the fighter. It ees only now, when I look close at you, that I realize."

The Kid ran a hand across his face, seamed and hard and brown. Sure, he'd changed, all right! But the Café Tokat had changed not at all since last he had come here, nearly five years before.

He glanced round the room in which they sat. This room was behind the café itself. Small, the room was furnished exotically in the Eastern style: upon the walls, prayer rugs from Persia and Kashmir, curved swords from Damascus, with decorative sheaths in silver and copper and beaten brass. Small tables of brass work and enamels stood beside cushioned divans on a carpet collectors would have come far to purchase, had they known of it. In one corner, a tall screen stood—*mashiyeh* work and dark leather; and the chandelier, too, was of *mashiyeh* work, softening the glare of the electric bulbs within it to a light that was rosy and dim.

"YOU will smoke?" the Turk said, and proffered a box of flat, Turkish cigarettes.

The Kid took one, lighted it, and leaned back on the divan, his blue, keen eyes on Khafiyeh's face.

"Did the dicks ever get on to you after the Old Asia blow-up, Khafiyeh?"

The Turk nodded.

"But yais. I was questioned—many times. And they found out—nothing!"

"Ever see anything of Slane, Superintendent Slane?"

"Certainly. Always it was he who questioned, coming to me here. There was much he wished to know about *you*, Chreestie."

"What did you tell him?"

"That I knew nothing of you—had never seen you."

"Thanks," the Kid said. He hesitated, regarding the tip of his cigarette. "I've often wondered, Khafiyeh, if the old man ever left me a letter? What do *you* think?"

Their eyes met, held for a moment. Then the Turk drew a long breath, leaning forward, his lips drawn back from his white teeth.

"Chreestie, after all these years, you have come to the right man. Your father left you a letter. He left it with me. For two years I held it, waiting for some word from you, some sign. None came. One night, thees place of mine, thees Café Tokat, was—held up! Gunmen! They ransacked the place, looking for that letter. It was in my safe, and in that safe, too, was five thousand pounds' worth of drugs—heroin, hashish, cocaine—a rich haul! They took that letter, and, as an after-thought, they took my drugs! Five thousand pounds' worth! The leader of those men was Wolfram, who once was of your father's gang! One day he shall repay me heavily. You shall see!"

He sat back smiling; but it was not a nice smile. The Kid said nothing. From the café there came the muted sob of stringed instruments, foreign and exotic.

The cold fury which for a moment had glowed in the Turk's eyes died slowly out, and he sat back, bland again and smiling.

"I know not what was in that letter, Chreestie, but I know that it was sorely desired by some several men.

Wolfram was one, and in the end he got it. Another who guessed at its existence, and sought it here, was Cluny the Piper, who also was of your father's gang. You remember Cluny?"

THE Kid nodded grimly. He remembered Cluny all right! A strange and terrible little man, Cluny, half Japanese. His nickname, "The Piper," was a grim joke based on his addiction to one queer and terrible weapon—a blowpipe, shooting tiny, poisoned darts. So skillful had he become in the concoction of his poisons that, in absolute silence, he could kill a man in sixty seconds, or, with a different poison on his dart, render him senseless for twenty-four hours. Even Spike Christie, who had feared nobody, had never been quite comfortable with Cluny the Piper.

"So Cluny's been here, has he?" the Kid said grimly.

Khafiyeh smiled.

"More than once—and in the end I told him what had become of that letter. I told him Wolfram had it."

"How long ago was that?" the Kid said sharply.

The Turk hesitated.

"A month—maybe more." Again he leaned forward. "Also, Slane suspects the existence of that letter. He has questioned me often—almost what you call third degree. He ees dangerous, that one—but he learned nothing. To the police, I am at all times mute."

The Kid nodded, thinking intensely. He had learned much. He had learned how Wolfram had obtained that letter; he had learned—what he had come especially to find out—that Slane, too, knew of it.

But was he, the Kid asked himself, very much further along, after all? The introduction of Cluny was an un-

foreseen complication. Was it possible, the Kid asked himself, that he had been mistaken in thinking it was Slane he had seen so vaguely in One Way Court? Was it possible that the unknown attacker had been Cluny, seeking that paper?

It was very possible. Yet who, if not Slane, had blown that police whistle?

Even as the Kid speculated upon these things, he became aware that the light of the big Oriental chandelier was subtly changing—from faint rose to deep red.

The Turk's eyes flickered upward, then he rose quickly, crossing to the wall which partitioned off the room from the café itself.

The Kid, too, rose, every nerve on the alert.

"What's the idea?"

The Turk glanced round, his teeth flashing white in his dusky face under the fez.

"Uninvited guests!"

He twitched aside a prayer rug on the wall, applying his eye to what apparently was a spyhole commanding the café. For a full minute he remained there, peering through the spyhole. Then, abruptly, he turned, his eyes narrowed.

"Have you any wish to encounter Superintendent Slane?"

The muted sob of the stringed instruments had ceased. Voices came confused from the café.

"What d'you mean?" the Kid said hoarsely.

Khafiyeh spread his hands.

"In thirty seconds he will be in thees room! You wish to go?"

A thrill of excitement stabbed through Donovan.

"Go? Not on your life!"

He glanced round the room, stepped

across to the *mashiyeh* work screen in the corner. Behind him, the Turk spoke sharply. Khafiyeh was too late. The Kid pulled back one edge of the screen from the wall. In the shadows there, a man in a dark suit sprawled face down, his legs drawn up, one out-flung hand lax and blood-stained.

The Kid checked, staring—but only for a second. Footsteps sounded outside the door of the room. Voices.

With a quick movement the Kid stepped behind the screen into the presence of Death!

CHAPTER V

Slane Talks

THE motive which had prompted Kid Donovan to conceal himself behind that *mashiyeh* work screen in the lair of Jemal Khafiyeh was one of intense curiosity concerning the business that had brought Superintendent Slane, of Scotland Yard, to the Café Tokat.

The discovery that behind that screen there had lain, throughout the conversation with Khafiyeh, the body of a dead man, had come to the Kid as an unpleasant shock. But, with footsteps at the very door of the room, there was no time to be squeamish.

He got behind the screen, and he was none too soon. Within five seconds the door of the room opened sharply. A smooth voice said:

"Well, Khafiyeh—I thought I'd find you in here!"

"Thees ees an unexpected pleasure, superintendent," the Turk said glibly. "Please to accept seat—cigarette, yais?"

The detective's laugh was sardonic.

"Always got a welcome for old friends, Khafiyeh, eh? One smooth little welcomer, aren't you?"

Khafiyeh's composure was remarkable. Knowing what was behind that screen, he yet contrived to preserve an illusion of ease and blandness.

"It pleases the superintendent to gibe at me," he smiled. "You will take coffee, superintendent—or maybe a little curacao?"

"Always the perfect gentleman," Slane said ironically. The divan creaked as he sat down. "No, Khafiyeh, thanks. All I want with you to-night is a little talk."

The light from the chandelier had turned again from crimson to its original dim, rosy hue. Behind the *mashiyeh* work screen, the carpet, the wall, the body on the floor, were checkered with a thousand points of light and shade. The space there was so restricted the Kid had to stand astride the dead man, but now that the first shock of the discovery was passing, the Kid was no longer squeamish about the presence of that still body, for he had looked upon death more than once in his gangster days.

He stood tense and still, his heart thudding at his ribs. Through the delicate metal filigree of the screen he could see both the men in the room; Khafiyeh, neat and slim in his dinner jacket and red fez, standing up as became the solicitous host; Slane sprawling on the divan, facing the screen. The detective's black felt hat was pushed far back on his head, revealing the high forehead and the black hair that was parted in the middle and slicked down over either temple. His sallow skin seemed stretched taut over his high cheek bones. The small, keen, dark eyes were close-set; the nose was thin and prominent, curved by a fracture that had left a white scar across the bridge. The thin mouth was quirked up at the left corner, as in an

ironic half smile that yet was entirely devoid of mirth. A dangerous and vindictive man, Superintendent Slane of Scotland Yard!

Lazily, he lighted a cigarette, blowing the smoke deliberately into the Turk's face.

"Remember what I was after, last time I came here, Khafiyeh?"

"You thought I had something to do with the Old Asia mob," the Turk said innocently. "A strange idea of yours, superintendent!"

The quirk at the corner of the detective's mouth became more pronounced—a sneer.

"You can save yourself the trouble of bluffing, Khafiyeh! I know well enough you were mixed up with the Christie bunch. It just so happens that it's not been worth my while to bother you—as yet!"

"You talk in riddles, superintendent," Khafiyeh told him.

Slane shrugged.

"A lot of water's flowed under Tower Bridge since I saw you last, Khafiyeh. Things have happened. But when I take on a job I usually finish it. I'm apt to get my man, Khafiyeh, before I'm done. It's four years since I cleaned up the Old Asia bunch—most of 'em, that is! But, for once, I left a few ragged ends, and those ragged ends are just beginning to knot themselves together into a very neat little hornets' nest.

"There were one or two men who slipped through my fingers. I've been quietly looking for those men for a long time—one of them, in particular! Scotland Yard's got a longer memory than the daily papers, Khafiyeh; it doesn't stop work when a story loses its interest for the newspapers. It's funny like that!"

"I prostrate myself before the

genius of Scotland Yard, oh, yais," said the Turk satirically. "But what ees thees to do with me, superintendent?"

"I'll tell you," Slane said. "You may remember, Khafiyeh, that I've mentioned to you more than once the possibility that Spike Christie may have left a letter behind him for his son?"

Peering through the screen, the Kid was listening intently.

"Certainly," Khafiyeh said.

Slane drew deep on his cigarette.

"I'll now go further, Khafiyeh. Spike Christie made a fortune out of the Old Asia, and that fortune has never been recovered. It's my belief that Spike left a letter for his son containing full instructions as to how to recover that loot."

The Turk gave a little laugh.

"Figure yourself, superintendent. I know nothing of thees letter or thees Jeff Christie. I have told you already—"

"And you've lied!" Slane rasped.

With a smooth, swift movement, he unfolded his length from the divan. One long, powerful hand shot out, gripping the Turk's immaculate shirt front. The quirk of the detective's lip was like a snarl as he thrust his face close to Khafiyeh's. The Kid watched, tense, with the dead man behind the screen.

"Listen, Khafiyeh"—the detective's voice was silky with menace—"you denied you knew anything of a letter left by Spike Christie for his son! That was a lie! I discovered last night that Spike did leave a letter, and he left it with *you*!" His hand slid up to the Turk's throat. "Khafiyeh, I'm looking for Jeff Christie! I want him—bad! *Has Jeff Christie ever been here after that letter?*"

"I know—nothing," the Turk choked.

Slane's hand tightened mercilessly, his lean fingers biting like screws into Khafiyeh's windpipe. He forced the Turk backward over a small table of metalwork and enamel.

"Khafiyeh—I want the truth!"

The Turk's face grew gray and tortured. He clawed at the detective's hand.

"I know—nothing!"

Sweat gleamed on the detective's face. His mouth was contorted. His other hand came up. His shoulders hunched with the force of his grip on the Turk's throat.

"Khafiyeh, by—"

The Kid's self-control snapped like a cord. For a second he saw red. He stepped out from beyond the screen.

"O. K., Slane! I'm here to answer for myself—"

The detective's head snapped up. He released his hold on the Turk. Khafiyeh fell, bringing down the table; he lay moaning, his hands at his throat. Across him, the detective and the boxer faced each other. Slane was a little crouched, his lip quirked, his eyelids drooping.

"Christie—"

Slane's hand whipped to the pocket of his overcoat. The Kid lunged forward across the body of the fallen Turk. Slane stepped back swiftly, but the Kid's fist jarred full into the detective's mouth. Slane staggered, and the Kid's left took him on the side of the jaw. The detective's knees folded under him. He toppled backward, and lay still where he fell.

Khafiyeh struggled up, his shirt front ripped open, his fez gone. His eyes glared wildly.

"You have killed him, Christie—"

"Forget it," the Kid said grimly.

"A sleeping draught—that's all!" He jerked his head at the door. "Better nip and see if he's got any men on the prowl outside!"

"Yais." The Turk slid out.

The Kid stood irresolute, for a moment, looking down at the fallen detective. Whatever the man may have known before about him, the Kid realized now that he had definitely committed himself against Slane. Knowing the vindictive fury of which the detective was capable, it had been impossible to stand there in inaction behind that screen, seeing the Turk seriously injured, perhaps killed. The Kid had been compelled to intervene, compelled, in his own defense, to lay Slane out.

Well, better go the whole hog now, the Kid reflected. From the first, he'd had a hunch that Slane was playing some game of his own. If he was—if Slane had been, in fact, as the Kid suspected, the man who had attacked from the area of No. 6 One Way Court—there was just a chance that Slane might have on him at this minute Spike Christie's half-million code!

The Kid licked his lips, dry with excitement. He dropped to his knees beside the fallen detective, and began swiftly to frisk the man's pockets.

The room was very quiet. From the café the muted sob of those exotic stringed instruments came no longer. Slane was well known east of Aldgate. The Kid guessed that as soon as the detective had passed through into this inner room, the patrons in the café had quietly and unostentatiously taken their leave. They were not the sort of men who experience security or pleasure in the proximity of plainclothes men.

From the wallet Donovan had taken from Slane's pocket there dropped sud-

denly to the carpet a folded sheet of grimy paper. The Kid snatched it up, unfolded it. There were a few lines on it in faded green ink. Spike Christie had always used green ink! The Kid caught his breath. This was the paper!

His heart was hammering as he knelt there beside the unconscious detective. Slane had the paper. He must have been the attacker from the area of No. 6 One Way Court. He had wrested the paper somehow from Wolfram. Unable to read it, and knowing by some means that it had been left originally with Khafiyeh, he had come here to the Café Tokat in the hope of hitting the trail of the one man who could read that code—the Kid!

There was a sound at the door. Khafiyeh slid in, his face gray.

"Chreestie, thees ees the end of the Café Tokat! There are men outside, waiting—plain-clothes men, I suspect! At any minute they may enter, if Slane does not return to them!"

The Kid straightened. His blue eyes gleamed with excitement. He had the paper! He had struck, at last, a hot trail! At the moment he could think

of nothing but that! He must get away with the paper!

"It looks as though the sooner the pair of us get out of here, the better, eh?"

The Turk nodded. He slid across to a wall of the room, pulled one of the divans round at right angles to the wall. At once a panel in the wall slid up soundlessly, revealing a black opening, perhaps four feet by four.

"Thees will let you out into the alley at the back! Go! In a minute I, too, shall leave the Café Tokat for the last time!" His teeth flashed white for a minute in his dusky face. "I make no complaints. It has been a good racket, while it lasted."

From the outer door of the café there came suddenly an urgent rapping.

"It is them—go!" the Turk said quickly.

The Kid nodded, stuffed the half-million code into his pocket and stepped through that opening in the wall. The panel clicked shut behind him.

In the excitement of finding the paper, he had quite forgotten the body behind the screen.

CONCLUDE THIS STORY NEXT WEEK



The Plaza Murder

A Novelette



"Well, well," chuckled Storm. "So you came back"

"Sixteen Years Ago King Fished Upcreek from Taos; He Was Never Seen Again Until He Fished Down the Same Creek This Morning . . ."

By Allan Vaughan Elston

CHAPTER I

The Angler

WHE five who rode the Santa Fe-Taos bus that morning embarked as total strangers to each other. Yet after a seventy-five mile chat, after exchanging smokes and offering self-introductions, we felt reasonably well acquainted when the bus pulled up before the Don Ricardo Hotel in Taos.

Dillard, Kent, Fleckman and Oaks went in to register. I lingered on the walk, hoping for a sight of my host, Wilbur Storm. Storm, one of the older and better known artists of the Taos colony, had promised to meet the bus. When he failed to appear I strolled in to wait in the lobby.

Shortly my four acquaintances of the bus joined me.

"The joint is full up, hang the luck!" growled Dillard. "The clerk says the

other hotels are in the same fix, so I reckon we'll have to sleep in the street."

"Sorry to be late, Billie, my boy!" boomed a hearty voice. "I'm mighty glad to see you."

The greeting came from Wilbur Storm, who had just entered.

He was a heavy, tall man with a broad, florid face. He had a great shock of hair prematurely white, wore white plus fours, white stockings and tennis shoes; his creamy, silk shirt would have been immaculate but for a tiny smudge of green paint on a sleeve.

Being in a group with them, I was forced to introduce Dillard, Kent, Fleckman and Oaks.

Kent explained their predicament and Storm boomed: "Come right on out to my place. I got twelve mud rooms only a mile outa town. Certainly I'm not going to let any friends of Billie Cotter wander around homeless in Taos."

Kent protested, explaining that they were only chance acquaintances of mine. "We've no right to impose—"

"What of it?" interrupted Storm. "You say you can't find a room and I've plenty of 'em. Stay all night with me, anyway, till you've had a chance to look around."

Storm was that way—cordial to a fault. He was the kind, once he had launched an invitation, to stick to it for better or worse.

"And among the six of us," he added, with a crafty wink of his left eye, "maybe we can solve a crackajack mystery which just dropped out of the sky, landing right smack in the middle of the Taos plaza."

"A mystery!" exclaimed Fleckman. "What kind of a mystery?"

"A stem-winding mystery. I suppose there's no chance that any one of you men is a detective. No? Well, too

bad. What Taos needs right now is a high-class mystery solver. No ordinary one, mind you."

"Where is this mystery?" asked Dillard.

"It's sitting on a bench in the middle of the plaza patio," explained Storm. "What makes it strike close home is that I, Wilbur Storm, am the only witness competent to testify in the mystery. Or rather a picture I painted sixteen years ago is the only witness. Come, I'll show you."

STORM led us out to the front veranda of the hotel. From there we had a commanding view of the colorful traffic of Taos.

We were at the southwest corner of the plaza. This plaza was arranged much like any other county seat public square, except that the center area was not occupied by a courthouse. It was merely a two acre park, or patio, surrounded by a low adobe wall. Around the wall was a quadrangular street, unpaved. Sidewalks were only on the outer rim of the street, the one lined with stores.

There was a good deal of dust from teams, autos, pedestrians and horseback riders. More than half of the folk in sight were Spanish-Americans; indeed the signs over the stores were more often in Spanish than in English. Of the remainder, many were long-braided and blanketed Indians. Riding about were a few synthetic cowboys. On the walks were tourists, art students, ranch hands, loafers and native housewives.

"The only town left in this year 1931," Kent remarked, "where the horse still gets an even break."

He referred to the fact that a traffic sign announced that the east and west sides of the plaza were reserved for

the parking of horses and teams, while the north and south sides were for autos.

"But what do you see in the center of the plaza patio?" insisted Wilbur Storm.

Already I had noted that many of those on the sidewalk were gazing at a figure seated in the park's center. He was seated on an iron bench under a cottonwood tree, and was the only figure within the two acres.

In his aspect there was something peculiarly lonely and forlorn. He was staring with an expression which might have been stupid, or which might have been merely timid, first one side and then the other of the quadrangle which enclosed him.

"How would you classify him?" asked Storm.

"What's the gag?" countered Oaks brusquely. "Anybody could see what that bird is. He's a fisherman."

That much was obvious. The seated man wore red rubber hip waders, a buckskin jacket, and an old Spanish sombrero in whose band were hooked a number of artificial flies. Over his shoulder hung a wicker creel. Against the bench beside him was a fly rod equipped with line, leader and reel.

"The amazing thing," explained Storm, "is that he went fishing exactly sixteen years ago and only returned an hour ago."

"Where did he go?" asked Kent.

"Who knows?" countered Storm, with a spreading of his broad palms. "What we do know is this: he fished upcreek out of Taos sixteen years ago, and was never seen again until he fished down the same creek this morning, wearing the same clothes and fishing with the same rod. He tells what I call an incredible story."

"It's bunk on the face of it!" exclaimed Dillard. "Can't be the same clothes. Those rubber boots would have rotted in sixteen years."

"So I would think," agreed Storm. "Yet Don Guillermo Pacheco, the local hardware man, went out a half hour ago and shook hands with this fisherman. Pacheco's an old-timer and remembers him. He examined the boots, rod, reel, jacket, creel and hat, and swears it's the selfsame outfit he sold this fellow the day before he went fishing out of Taos sixteen years ago."

"There are conditions," suggested Kent, "under which the clothing might have been preserved so that they would be wearable after that period of time. What's the chap's name, anyway?"

"His name," Storm told us, "is Victor King. He came to Taos a young man of about twenty-four, I should say. He lived here five months, which is long enough to get well acquainted in Taos. See, there's another old resident who used to know him going out to shake hands."

WE saw a portly man with three chins push through a turnstile on the north side of the enclosure. He was dressed in white ducks and wore on his head a flat helmet. I learned later that he was Dr. Ed Thorne, leading Taos physician, as well as official medical examiner for the county.

We saw him greet the forlorn fisherman, converse with him a few minutes and then walk away with a sad wag of his head.

"Sixteen years ago Victor King went afishing up the Little Rio Grande," said Storm. "He rode a horse from here to the cañon, then led the horse from riffle to riffle upstream

as he fished. That morning I had set up for a landscape in Little Rio Grande cañon. When the picture was done, I decided that it needed a figure. It needed a fisherman standing in those riffles which flashed on my foreground, casting his fly for trout.

"Just as I made that decision, Victor King came along. I knew him and greeted him. He said the fish were not striking and probably wouldn't until afternoon. 'In that case,' I said, 'you can do me a favor. You can pause here half an hour, standing in those riffles in the pose of casting. I need a figure in this picture.'

"I recall that he pulled out a gold watch to mark the time. It was stopped. I gave him the correct time; he wound the watch and restored it to his pocket. He was in an accommodating humor. He stood in the riffle half an hour, posing while I painted. He was dressed exactly as he is now."

Oaks, who was the only markedly uncouth man of our group, blurted: "What you tryin' to do, kid us? Them can't be the same outfit of clothes."

Ignoring him, Storm continued: "The picture was as good a piece of work as I ever did. At least the likeness of King was excellent. Because he seemed to dominate the landscape and because of his Spanish sombrero, I called the canvas *El Pescador*."

"Meaning?" inquired Kent.

"Meaning The Angler. Because of the remarkable story connected with it, the picture has become quite well known and now hangs in a New York gallery. The known fact is that the subject, after posing, continued upstream fishing and leading his horse. He did not come back. He was never heard from until he fished back down the same creek this morning, with the

same outfit, and took a seat in the plaza patio."

CHAPTER II

The Gold Watch

"YOU say he tells an incredible story," reminded Dillard.

"Personally, I haven't talked with him," admitted Storm. "But many of the older storekeepers around the plaza have, and from them I have his story. They asked: 'Where have you been these last sixteen years?' He answered, 'In Peru.' They asked, 'Why did you go away from Taos?' He answered, 'Did I go away from Taos?' They asked, 'Can't you remember going fishing out of here sixteen years ago?'"

"He answered, 'No. I remember falling out of a tree, though, of riding a long ways on a horse, on a train, on a ship. I know I've lived fifteen years in Peru as John Good, or Juan Bueno. A month ago I landed in New York and wandered about. In time I wandered into a public gallery and saw a painting called *El Pescador*. I was in it.

" 'Seeing that likeness of myself,' " Storm continued his recital of King's response, "'enabled me to add one short link to the broken chain of my memory. I recalled posing in a stream, then moving on upcreek, finally being drenched in a downpour of rain. After dark I came to an old stone cabin, near the top of a ridge along which I had tried some shortcut to the Raton highway. The cabin door was ajar, though there was an open padlock hanging in the hasp. I entered, struck a match, found only a bare floor and walls from which hung some cast-off overalls and a pair of out-of-toe miner's boots. It appeared that some prospector had

built and deserted the cabin. I was cold. I changed my drenched clothing for the overalls and boots. I hung up my waders, jacket, hat, creel; I stood my rod in a corner. At dawn I climbed to the top of a high fir to see directions. I fell and was knocked out; when I came to I did not know my name. I snapped the padlock in the hasp of the cabin door, climbed my horse and rode away.

"That link popped into my brain when I saw the fishing portrait, a month ago in New York. It inspired me to seek new links, reaching further back, to peep behind a curtain which obscured my earlier life. The place to start was that cabin. I came West. I found the cabin. The padlock was still on the door. I broke it with a rock. Inside I found this outfit, kept dry all through the years that I have been away.

"That was yesterday. Far below me I saw the head of a cañon stream. I knew that long ago I had come up that stream afishing. So I reasoned that if I fished down the same creek, in the same outfit, I would encounter some one who once knew me. I did. Here I am. And men tell me I am Victor King."

"That," concluded Wilbur Storm, "is *el pescador's* story."

"And you don't believe it?" asked Kent.

"No. At least not all of it."

"Why?" argued Kent. "I've heard of cases of walled-off memory."

"To me such cases have never been any too convincing," answered Storm. "Especially this one. Take King's point about being drenched in a rain. I recall that here in Taos it did not rain at all."

"But there might have been a mountain rain at that high cabin, which did

not fall here," persisted Kent. He had taken out a knife and opened a file blade. Though he seemed well bred in all other respects, Kent was addicted to the *gaucherie* of filing his nails in public.

"True. But if we grant the drenching rain," answered Storm, "then we must explain why the clothing did not rot in sixteen years. I will grant that new boots, jacket and hat hung up dry on a wall might still be wearable after that period; assuming a tight, weather-proof cabin. But not if the clothing were hung up soaking wet."

"IF his story's false," pondered Fleckman, "then what's the *real* reason for his disappearance?"

"And what," added Storm, "is the real reason for his return? A sweet mystery, I call it. And now while you fellows"—he addressed Dillard, Kent, Fleckman and Oaks—"transfer your baggage to my car. I'll step over and shake hands with my old model."

"I'll go with you," I said quickly, for I wanted to see Storm alone.

Storm pointed out a long, low-seven-passenger touring car with the top down. The four chance guests set about putting baggage in it.

Storm and I crossed the street. "Wilbur," I said when we were out of hearing, "I'm sorry as the devil to be responsible for saddling four strangers on you. I can't vouch for 'em. For all I know they might be—"

"Forget it," adjured Storm, as he pushed through a turnstile and entered the plaza patio.

We approached the iron bench on which sat Victor King. He seemed to be a thin, dark, sharp-featured fellow of about forty years who had taken more than a few hard knocks through life. His face, shaded by the broad

brim of the old sombrero, gave one the impression of a battered down-and-out. There were a few pocks on his cheek and his eyes were sunk deep in his head. He might, however, at one time have been fairly personable.

He struck me as a pathetic figure. Had I not known his story he would have been fairly ludicrous. For sitting there in those high red boots whose tops bagged like loose sacks on his thighs, he looked quite like a picture-book pirate weather-worn and down on his luck. He stared dully at Storm.

"Welcome home, fisherman!" boomed Storm, extending one of his hamlike hands.

King shook hands, though no recognition came to his eyes.

"I'm Wilbur Storm, the last man who saw you. Remember? I painted you into a landscape up the Little Rio Grande."

A pleased and childlike smile formed on King's face. "Ah!" he said. "Yes, I saw the name Storm signed to a picture in New York. That's why I came back."

"Well, well!" chuckled Storm. "So you came back, like the ghost of a victim, to haunt the scene of my crime!"

"I really fished as I came down this morning," said King. "Every bend of the creek led my memory just that far. When I came to the place of the picture, I knew it. I even caught trout in those same riffles. In all I caught seven."

King opened his creel and displayed seven nice trout, each about ten inches long. They were orange-gilled natives, known as cutthroats. Storm laughed uproariously.

"That's rich. Man goes fishing sixteen years ago and comes back with

seven fresh fish. Whatcha going to do with 'em?"

"I can't use them," said King. "Won't you let me give them to you?" He extended the creel.

TO my surprise Storm accepted the gift. He took the creel, saying: "King, it's lunch time. You seem to be at a loose end, so why not come on out to my place? While we eat, we'll mull over old times and try to stick a tuning fork in your memory."

King declined. He said he was sitting here keeping an eye open for José Sanchez. "Don Guillermo Pacheco told me that Sanchez drove to Questa this morning, but will be coming back pretty soon. He said Sanchez will park somewhere on the plaza and that I'll know him by his blue Chevy coupé. I want to see Sanchez."

"What for?"

"I asked Don Guillermo where I used to live, here in Taos. He told me I lived in an old two-room adobe hut which is part of the Sanchez estate."

"Yes, I recall that you lived there," affirmed Storm.

"Well, I want to get busy right away picking up the threads," explained King. "I'll begin by moving back into that same house, if I may. The same bed, the same walls—they ought to help tie lost threads. I am told that various renters have lived there since I left, but that the place happens to be vacant now. The town is so full that I might not get it unless I sit right here and accost Sanchez the minute he returns."

"Humph!" murmured Storm. His expression told me that he was not entirely convinced as to why King wanted to move back into his old house.

"Well, thanks for the fish, King. I'll return your creel this afternoon."

Leaving him, we passed through the turnstile and crossed the street. Dillard, Kent, Fleckman and Oaks were waiting at Storm's car. The six of us drove a mile out of town to Storm's well-nigh palatial abode.

It was of adobe, after the architecture of the Taos Indian pueblos. In one wing was the studio. We did not enter there; it was into a long, beam-ceilinged, combination living room and dining room that we were ushered by Storm.

Storm handed the creel to a mozo. "Miguel, it's too late to have these for lunch. Keep them for supper, then put the creel back in my car."

We were soon seated at an exceptional lunch. While Storm rehashed the story of the forlorn fisherman, I took opportunity to appraise the four guests.

Dillard claimed to be a Texan. Indeed he looked like a prosperous ranchman. He was swarthy, rawboned, and wore a red mustache. He was gruff, but not uncouth, as was Oaks.

Oaks was a shorter man with steely eyes and a tough, undershot jaw. His speech was rude, and I saw now that he wore a diamond in his tie. I was fairly sure he was a professional gambler, because coming up on the bus he had asked if the perennially wide open Taos gambling hall was still running. When the busman told him that District Attorney Arch Kraemer had just padlocked it he had shown disappointment.

More and more I was sorry for having inflicted Oaks upon Storm. Storm, however, did not mind. He was used to it. Taos has ever been a port of strange bedfellows—bankers and bootleggers on vacation, rich men, poor

men, beggarmen, thieves; they all mingle and no questions asked in Taos.

KENT was fastidiously dressed and claimed to be from Boston.

He was argumentative. He was as thin as a rail and wore horn-rimmed glasses which he frequently took off, blew upon, then wiped with a handkerchief.

Fleckman was a quiet, squint-eyed fellow with wiry, pompadour hair. He was dark, and spoke with a foreign accent. His blue serge coat fitted him too tightly and he did not take it off when others of us did in the heat of noon time.

"Many thought that the fisherman disappeared on purpose sixteen years ago," Storm was saying. "Yet one clew denies that theory. When King stepped out of the riffles after posing before me he took a handkerchief from his inside jacket pocket and mopped perspiration from his brow. Doing so he dropped a folded paper at the creek's edge. Neither of us noticed it then. I saw it there a half hour after he was gone. I looked at it in order to see whether it was something I had dropped myself. It was a receipt for ten dollars, given that same morning to King, covering a month's rent in advance on the Sanchez house. Paying rent in advance indicates that King intended to come back."

"My theory," offered Dillard, "would have been foul play. Knocked on the head and robbed."

"That theory had a good leg," answered Storm. "Because the day after he disappeared an Indian was found trying to sell a gold watch to a tourist at Ranchos de Taos. The watch was identified as King's. I actually saw it in his possession when he posed for the picture. The Indian—one of that

wandering trader tribe, the Santo Domingos—claimed to have found it on the ground a mile farther up the cañon."

"Did they pinch the Indian?" inquired Oaks.

"They held him on suspicion for a week, then turned him loose for lack of further evidence. After all, he might actually have found the watch. Incidentally, that watch ought still to be on file at the sheriff's office. Hanged if I don't dig it up this afternoon and deliver it to King when I return the the creel."

"It might help," agreed Kent, "to clear the chap's befogged memory."

"Assuming that his memory is really befogged," corrected Storm. "My hunch is that he remembers everything perfectly, that he disappeared and returned for some definite and guileful purpose."

"What purpose?" asked Dillard.

"If we knew that there'd be no mystery." Storm turned to me. "Any bright ideas, Billie?"

I admitted that I could conceive of no reason why a fisherman should disappear and return wearing the same boots after sixteen years. Kent and Fleckman asserted that they were quite willing to accept King's own explanation of his return. The only committal from Oaks was: "It's some gag—a lota bunk!"

"Take away the rain-drenched clothing end of it and I'll swallow his yarn," growled Dillard.

CHAPTER III

The Sniper

FINALLY Kent suggested that he, Oaks, Dillard and Fleckman go in and look for permanent quarters, so that they need not inflict them-

selves on the hospitality of Storm for more than one night.

"I got errands myself, so we'll all go in," agreed Storm.

We embarked in Storm's car and drove to the plaza. There we parked in front of a long, low building on the north walk; by the signs over its entrances the building housed various county offices.

"Let's see if the sheriff has that watch on file," suggested Storm.

He led us into the corridor of the jail; at the rear of this corridor we came to the sheriff's office. It was a dingy quarter, through whose open rear door we could see into a narrow, adobe-walled alley.

Storm introduced us to Sheriff Pancho Sandoval. Sandoval was an extremely well-dressed official who spoke precise English. He was courteous and would have been good-looking except for a bad left eye; over this he kept a patch. At a question from Storm, he said that the King disappearance had occurred long before his time. He believed, however, that there was a certain gold watch on file in the district attorney's safe.

Storm and Sandoval passed into an adjoining suite. While we waited I noticed a short-barreled rifle leaning near the open rear door. "A posse gun!" commented the Texan, Dillard. He picked it up, hefted it, then set it down.

At that moment Storm and Sandoval returned, accompanied by District Attorney Arch Kraemer. Kraemer was a heavy-set, slow-moving man of about forty-five. I knew him by sight and had heard he was an able attorney. In his hand he held a pasteboard box; on the box was a tag with a sixteen-year-old date and the inscription: "Property of missing fisherman, Victor King."

Kraemer took a gold watch from the box and handed it to Storm. "If you're positive it's the same fellow, you can deliver it with my compliments," he said.

We thanked him, then passed up the corridor to the plaza walk. At the curb was Storm's auto. Directly over it and across the street we could see the plaza patio. Our forlorn fisherman was still seated on the iron bench.

"I reckon Oaks, Fleckman, Kent and I'd better scout around for rooms," drawled Dillard.

"Very well," said Storm. "Let's all meet here at my car at four o'clock."

The four agreed, then scattered. Each went his own way to look for a room. Storm took King's empty creel from the automobile. With it we crossed the street and made our way to the center of the park.

King's bench, I later estimated, was about two hundred feet from any one of the four sidewalks which rimmed the plaza. Just now a group of loafers were confronting it, questioning King.

Storm elbowed his way through them and delivered the creel to its owner.

"Here I am again, fisherman. Are you still on the lookout for Sanchez, my friend?"

"I'm still on the lookout for a blue Chevvy coupé," said King. "That's the only way I'll know Sanchez."

"Can you remember," inquired Storm, "being robbed by an Indian just after I painted your picture in the cañon? Robbed of a gold watch?"

"No."

"Do you recall lying down to sleep, then waking up to find the watch was gone?" Storm extended a gold watch.

"No," said King. "If that's my watch, I don't know how I lost it."

"It's yours. Take it."

KING took the watch; he opened it and saw that it wasn't running.

"It will need cleaning, after sixteen years," suggested Storm.

"Yes," agreed King. "I'll take it to a jewelry store."

The group of loafers melted away one by one, leaving only Storm and myself. Again Storm offered to put King up at his studio.

"No," said King stubbornly. "I want to move back into my old house; I'll sit pat here till I see Sanchez."

We left him. As we walked away Storm said: "He seems to be in an all-fired hurry to get back into that house."

"Maybe there's something in there he wants," I suggested.

Storm whacked a fist against palm. "That may be the key to the entire mystery, Billie."

Returning to the sidewalk in front of the jail, we bumped into Sheriff Pancho Sandoval, who came hurriedly from the door. A deputy was lounging near by and Sandoval called him.

"Manuel, did you take that rifle out of my office?"

"No, señor."

"Who did?"

"*Quien sabe?*"

"The devil!" Sandoval exploded to Storm. "In the last five minutes some one has stolen a rifle from my office."

"How could any one do that?" inquired Storm.

"The office was empty for a few minutes," explained the sheriff. "The alley door was open; easy for any one to step in and take the rifle."

"Was it loaded?"

"A sheriff's rifle is always loaded,"

said Sandoval, a trifle of rebuke in his tone. He hurried off with Manuel to ask other deputies if they could explain the missing rifle.

Storm and I strolled on around the plaza. He stopped and introduced me to several shopkeepers. Among them I met the hardware man, Don Guillermo Pacheco. Pacheco was a small, bullet-headed man with a tuft of goatee, one of the solid merchants of Taos.

Storm and I passed on to the Don Ricardo Hotel. We loitered there for a while. When we emerged I looked all about the plaza for Kent, Fleckman, Oaks and Dillard. I saw none of them.

Just then a sound which I at first took for the backfiring of an automobile came from the opposite side of the square. I would have paid no attention to it had not Storm become instantly alert.

"What was that?" I asked.

"Sounded like a gunshot," he said.

"No, I think it was either a backfire or the cracking of a teamster's whip," I said.

But Storm was staring at a certain point about two hundred feet away, an iron bench in the plaza patio. I looked. I saw the forlorn and red-booted fisherman falling sidewise to the bench. I saw him clutch wildly at his breast.

He crumpled there on the park bench.

FROM over in front of the Rio Grande drug store a voice shouted, "*Un tiro! Quien lo tiró?*"

A shot! Who fired it?

Already Wilbur Storm was dashing across the street. In spite of his great bulk he vaulted easily over the adobe wall and raced toward the fallen fisherman. I was close at his heels. Others were coming from all sides of the quadrangle.

We found Victor King with blood

staining his buckskin jacket. He was still breathing, although he had been shot cleanly through the breast.

District Attorney Arch Kraemer came elbowing through the crowd. On his heels came a mountain of flesh, Dr. Ed Thorne. Kraemer peeled off his coat, made a pillow of it, raised King's legs to the bench, and made him as comfortable as possible. While Dr. Thorne bent over the man, Kraemer said to Storm:

"It's a dead center hit in the breast, the bullet emerging from the middle of the back. Which way was he facing?"

"The bench faces the Pacheco store on the west side of the plaza," said Storm. "But this man was alertly watching all the while for Sanchez to park his Chevy coupé on the plaza. The coupé was bound to be parked on either the north or south side, therefore this man was continually turning to the right, then to the left. He could have been shot from west, north or south."

"Did you hear the shot?"

"Yes. It seemed to come from the north side of the plaza, possibly from between the Rio Grande drug store and the jail."

"I heard it," said Guillermo Pacheco, edging in. "I think it came from the south side, from somewhere around that padlocked gambling hall. Maybe from the roof of it."

"He was shot from a car in the street," insisted another.

"You're all wrong," cried another.

"I heard it. It was from a second-story window of the Pacheco store."

There were a score of opinions as to the direction of the shot. One witness even swore that the shot had come from the front porch of the Don Ricardo; such could not possibly have been the case because Storm and I had been on that spot ourselves.

"Of one thing we may be sure," boomed Storm above the hubbub, "the shot came from a rifle. This man was the only human inside a two-acre enclosure. Any place from beyond that wall, in any direction, would be no decent pistol range."

Just then the deputy sheriff I had heard addressed as Manuel came running up. He informed Kraemer that early in the afternoon a posse rifle had been stolen from the sheriff's office. It was the first Kraemer had heard of it.

"It means," he said, "that some one who had no rifle of his own, and who had a quick motive for dispatching King, sneaked in from the alley. My own idea is that the shot was fired from either a window or a roof on the north side of the plaza. Manuel, go tell Sandoval to look for that rifle on all the roofs around the plaza."

Manuel dashed off.

I noted that the structures on the various sides of the quadrangle were, for the most part, one-story adobes with low, false fronts, or parapets. Any one of those parapets would have furnished an excellent blind for a sniper. The range would be about eighty yards, almost prohibitive for a pistol.

"Everybody clear out," ordered Kraemer, "except Dr. Thorne, Don Guillermo, Wilbur Storm and myself."

The others withdrew, but at Storm's solicitation I was permitted to remain.

Thorne had done all he could for King. "At the most he may live twenty minutes," he said. "If we move him, he won't live ten."

"Is he conscious?"

"Yes."

"Well," said Kraemer, "we must try to get a line of evidence from him before he passes on. Maybe if he tells all he knows, we could figure out who shot him."

Thorne again bent over King.

A moment later we heard the voice of Sheriff Pancho Sandoval shouting at us. Looking north, we saw Sandoval on the roof of a low building two doors from the jail. The building was labeled "Trabajo Imprenta," meaning "Job Printing." Sandoval, at the front parapet of the roof, was waving a rifle.

"Here it is," he shouted to Kraemer.

Kraemer turned to Guillermo Pacheco, saying, "Bill, do me a favor, will you? Go help Sandoval look for signs where the killer climbed from the alley to the roof. Inquire of the neighbors across the alley if they saw anything. Tell Sandoval to look for fingerprints. Work that end of it while we work this. Tell Manuel to guard the turnstiles and give us absolute privacy while we try to get a story from the victim."

Pacheco hurried over to the jail.

CHAPTER IV

The Man Called Frank

"**K**ING," said Kraemer, as he stooped over the dying fisherman, "you're about ready to draw your last breath. You've nothing to lose by telling me whether the story you gave out this morning is or is not true."

King lay there for a moment, staring at the sky. Then he moistened his pale lips and said, "Since I'm about to kick out, I'll say this: the story I gave out this morning was true except for the rainstorm and the motives."

"What motives?" prompted Kraemer. He was standing ready with pencil and notebook.

King coughed. After a moment his breath came easier and he said, "The truth is I'm a crook. I always have

been. Sixteen and a half years ago I and a partner tunneled through a basement wall and entered the biggest jewelry house in El Paso, Texas. We made a haul in diamonds, watches, emeralds—a total value of about a hundred and fifty thousand."

King spoke with his eyes closed, pausing now and then to catch his breath. We stood about, tense, expecting every instant that death would seal his lips before the story was told.

"In the get-away," continued Victor King, "we ran into a night watchman. He clinched with me and had a good look at my face. My partner shot him in the back, he fell, two cops came up, I ran with the loot, my partner remained to cover my retreat, shooting it out with the cops, I got away in the dark. We had agreed in case of an emergency like this, to go by separate ways to Taos, New Mexico. I came here. I rented the two-room Sanchez adobe, buried the box of loot under the back room floor—all but one plain gold watch which I kept to wear and use."

King coughed convulsively; I turned my head while Dr. Thorne held a cloth to his lips. When I looked again King seemed so still and white I thought he was dead.

Storm said to Kraemer: "We know now why he was so keen to rent his old house. He returned for the loot."

"Do you imagine it's still there?" asked Kraemer. "Various renters have lived in that house these last sixteen years."

"But with no motive to take up boards from the rear floor and dig in the earth," reminded Storm.

Just then I saw Dillard, our Texas guest, coming across the north street. He reached the turnstile and was stopped by the deputy, Manuel. I saw Manuel shake his head. Dillard,

barred from joining us, re-crossed the street and leaned against an auto parked in front of the jail. It was Storm's car, where we had agreed to convene at four o'clock.

It now lacked fifteen minutes of that hour.

"His heart still beats," Dr. Thorne was saying. "I think we'll hear a little more from him."

WE did. With a dogged effort, King continued:

"I lived in Taos five months. One day I planned a fishing trip up the Little Rio Grande. As I rode out of town I stopped at the post office and took from my box a letter postmarked Los Angeles. I read it in the saddle as I rode toward the cañon. It told me that the watchman recovered, and he had had a good look at me. So don't show yourself in El Paso, my partner wrote. One of the cops croaked. Frank said he'd been laying up there with bullet fever, and said to keep the stuff cached till he joined me in Taos. He gave his address in Los Angeles.

"I should have burned the letter, but kept it in order to memorize the address. I put it in my inside jacket pocket. I fished up the cañon, came to Storm and posed for him. As I stepped out of the raffles I pulled a handkerchief from my inside jacket pocket to mop the sweat. Doing so I must have dropped, unknowingly, two folded sheets. One was a rent receipt. I did not even realize that I had that receipt in my pocket."

Kraemer was taking notes rapidly. While King rested, Storm remarked: "That clicks with me. I picked up the receipt."

"I can easily understand," commented Kraemer, "that he might not even be aware of having the receipt."

Men always pocket trivial receipts and then forget them. But I've got such scraps in my own pockets right now that I don't know are there."

"The other sheet I dropped," continued King feebly, "was the letter from Frank. I now know that it dropped inside the big open top of my left wader."

We all looked at the waders he now wore. They drooped in flabby folds above the knees.

"I went on up the creek," stated King. "Suddenly I felt for Frank's letter. It was gone. I searched every pocket in alarm. I knew I must have dropped it while posing. I raced back to recover it. From a distance, through the timber, I saw Storm pick up a folded sheet from the stream's edge, at the spot where I had used my handkerchief. He read it, then got in his flivver and drove down the cañon.

"To me, the thing meant certain conviction for murder. Storm was bound to give it to the local sheriff, who would inform El Paso. I would be held for identification by the watchman. So I was afraid to go back. I was even afraid to keep my watch, which was part of the loot. Then and there I threw it away. I rode up-country, found the cabin, and changed clothes just as I said this morning.

"I hid out two nights. The third night I rode via Taos Creek to Taos, to scout the chances of recovering my loot. Creeping up in the dark, I saw the sheriff and deputies vigilant in front of my house. That was enough. I retreated for good, rode by horse to Lamy and by freight to Los Angeles."

"The sheriff was on the job," explained Storm, "mostly because of a half-baked murder case against an Indian. Also, many search parties were out for you; your own house was natu-

rally the hub of the search. What did you do in Los Angeles?"

"I hunted for Frank. Having not memorized the street address, I failed to find him. I was picked up in a drag-net for vagrants and questioned. That frightened me; when I was free I shipped as John Good for Peru. I was there more than fifteen years, and then came to New York. I saw the picture called *El Pescador*. I was in it.

"There was a gallery catalogue. Naturally I looked up the catalogue item about *El Pescador*. I remember it said the picture was painted by Wilbur Storm, of Taos, in 1915, and explained that an odd fact was that the subject, after posing, went his way afishing up the creek and had never been seen since, and that he had not intended to disappear because a receipt, for house rent paid in advance that very morning, was dropped and recovered by the artist."

"I wrote that squib for the catalogue myself," said Storm to Kraemer. "Since he remembers it pretty correctly I know he speaks the truth."

KING rested again with his eyes closed. I looked over toward Storm's automobile and saw that Kent had joined Dillard. They were standing in the street, leaning against the car and facing our way.

King revived and continued, though more feebly than ever:

"I reviewed the incident of posing. If it was a mere receipt which had dropped to the ground, where had I dropped the letter from Frank? It was in my own portrait that I saw the clew. The wide open boot tops! One of those might have caught the letter.

"Were the boots still hanging in the cabin? If ever I got that far west again I resolved to look them up. A week

later I started west. I was broke—and still a crook. I stood up a filling station in Dodge City and got thirteen dollars. I had to hit an attendant over the head; was nearly grabbed, but got a freight to Raton, New Mexico.

"There I read a news item about the Dodge stick-up, with a poor description of me but an exact description of my clothes. I needed two things—a safe hideout and a change of clothes. The old stone cabin might furnish both. And there I might shake an old letter from a boot. If so, it would mean that there never had been any search for the El Paso loot in Taos. I might still get it.

"I reached the cabin; it was just as I had left it. I smashed the padlock and entered. There hung my old outfit. I shook a boot; out fell the letter from Frank. For sixteen years I'd been a fugitive for no use."

King lapsed into weary silence. Kraemer asked: "What was the idea of walking down into Taos in the fishing togs, claiming a lost memory?"

Storm answered: "In the first place there was the advantage of changing clothes. Next, a presumed lost memory would protect him from answering questions which went further back than sixteen years. Next, it would excuse his insisting on moving back into the old Sanchez house. He could say he wanted to pick up the threads; really he wanted to pick up one hundred and fifty thousand dollars in jewelry. Next, he realized that the character of Victor King was the safest character he could assume. No one was looking for Victor King. No one has ever looked for Victor King except as a lost fisherman. Dressed in those fishing togs he knew Taos would accept him as Victor King."

"Can't you give us a last word?"

Kraemer pleaded of the dying man. He stood ready with pencil poised over notebook.

I heard a bell strike the hour of four. I saw that three men were now standing in front of Storm's car—Dillard, Kent and Fleckman. Of the four who were to meet us there at this hour, only Oaks had failed to appear.

However, I saw Oaks coming down the walk. He arrived at the car; just as he did so Sheriff Sandoval emerged from the jail and accosted him. The sheriff, I thought, would quite properly be questioning all the strangers in town. I saw Oaks shake his head vigorously, scowl at the sheriff, then come around to the street side of Storm's car, where he joined Dillard, Fleckman and Kent.

King had not yet replied to Kraemer. Kraemer pleaded once more. "Haven't you any idea who shot you?"

King opened his eyes and said, "Of course. Only one man had a motive. He had two motives."

"Who?"

"My old partner, Frank."

"You mean he's in Taos?" eagerly from Kraemer.

"What two motives did he have for killing you?" inserted Wilbur Storm. Storm from the first had been as keen as any hired detective.

In a mere whisper King answered: "First, for sixteen years he must have thought that I double-crossed him."

That I understood perfectly. Thinking that, Frank would have become bitter against the deserter, King. By the code of outlaws it would have furnished motive for lethal vengeance. Especially since Frank had shot the watchman loose from King in El Paso, and had then remained to wage a fatal gun battle with two policemen in order to speed King's escape. For sixteen years he must have seethed under the

absolute conviction that King had kept all of the loot for himself.

“YET murder is seldom committed after a meditation of years,” objected Kraemer. “What fresher motive inspired the crime?”

“To me it’s an incredible coincidence,” said Storm, “if Frank should happen to be in Taos, to-day of all days.”

“He must be,” whispered King. “Who else would have shot me? His fresher motive was that he thought I was sitting here with my mind slowly coming out of a fog. He thought the crazy quilt-work of my memory was being patched, bit by bit. That situation frightened him. I might remember the wrong things first. I might remember El Paso before I remembered why I left there. I might remember jewelry before I recalled how it was obtained.”

“You *did* mention the term ‘jewelry store’ before a crowd of loafers,” said Storm. “That gossip probably carried quickly all around the plaza. If Frank’s on the plaza, he heard it. It would have worried him. You would have begun to look, to him, like a reef to a ship in a storm.”

“So he shot me,” finished King.

“Doctor,” said Kraemer to Thorne, “let’s support him upright and see if he can point out Frank anywhere on the plaza. Maybe Frank’s there.”

Thorne and Kraemer raised the dying man to a sitting posture on the bench.

“Can you see Frank anywhere?” pleaded the district attorney.

Victor King looked first at the sidewalk on the south side of the plaza. His vision passed over a score of men lounging there. Many autos were parked at the south curb. He looked

them all over. For a long while his vision concentrated on a group formed in front of the padlocked door of the recent gambling hall of Taos. He made no identification there and his eyes came to rest on the veranda of the Don Ricardo Hotel.

A large group was there, every one of them gazing at us in the center of the plaza park. King looked them over one by one. He shook his head wearily, his deep-set eyes shifting on to the right. They swept up the west sidewalk, noting men, cars, teamsters; he overlooked no single male human on the walk or in the street.

His head kept turning. He was now appraising the north side of the plaza and for a time he gazed fixedly at a group of tourists who chanced to be standing in front of the job printer’s. Then his eyes moved on until he was staring directly north.

He gave a low cry. He pointed a finger.

“There he is,” cried Victor King, “standing right there in front of that car—”

The identification had taken the last ounce of his strength. He fell back on the bench. Thorne, after a quick examination, faced us solemnly.

“He’s dead.”

“But he lived long enough,” exulted Kraemer, “to identify the killer. You saw where he pointed, didn’t you, Storm?”

“He pointed,” Storm gravely admitted, “directly at my own automobile.”

“That’s right,” agreed Thorne.

I added my own vote of assent. Shocked, I was still staring at Storm’s car. The last words of King, “There he is, standing right in front of that car,” were still ringing in my ears. And I saw plainly that there were four men

standing in the street, in a row, in front of Storm's car. They had kept a four o'clock tryst; they were Dillard, Kent, Oaks and Fleckman, waiting to be hauled out to Storm's.

CHAPTER V

Four Men

"ONE of 'em," said Kraemer grimly, "is the El Paso murderer."

"Also the Taos murderer," added Storm.

"I don't want to flush them," said the D. A. thoughtfully, "until I've checked up on the jewelry story. At the same time I want to watch them. Had you arranged to take these men out to your studio?"

"Yes," said Storm.

"Do so, then, without letting them know of the accusation. Keep them in conversation in your living room until I arrive with two deputies. I'll post a deputy at each door, then I'll work these fellows over."

"Very well," agreed Storm.

Kraemer beckoned now to Sheriff Sandoval, whom we saw standing in the door of the jail. Sandoval came briskly across the street, pushed through the turnstile, and joined us.

"Sheriff, one of the four men standing in front of Mr. Storm's car did the shooting. Now listen to these instructions and carry them out discreetly, without any show of excitement. First, the victim claimed that he once buried a box of jewelry under the floor in the back room of the old José Sanchez house—the one just north of Kit Carson's grave. You know that house?"

"But of course!" gasped Sandoval.

"All right, get a shovel and check up on it. But first, tell two deputies to arm themselves with rifles and board my flivver. They'll drive with me out

to Storm's just behind Storm and the suspects. I'll hold them there. When you've checked up at the Sanchez house, report to me at Storm's."

"It is perfectly understood," agreed Sandoval, and dashed off.

Kraemer, Storm and I left Thorne with the corpse and went out to the north street. Kraemer passed by Dillard, Oaks, Fleckman, and Kent without seeming to see them at all; he moved on to his own flivver parked farther down the street.

Storm and I joined our guests.

"Sorry to keep you waiting," said Storm easily.

"Did they find out who bumped off the fisherman?" inquired Oaks.

"No. But it was some sneak who took a rifle from the sheriff's back door. He climbed to the roof of the print shop and potted King."

"The dirty crook!" exclaimed Oaks.

"Is the victim dead?" inquired Kent.

"He is," informed Storm. "Let's leave him to the county officials and go home."

WE climbed into the car, circled the plaza and turned east on the Raton Road. I looked back. I saw a flivver following us; Kraemer and two men were in it. The afternoon sun glinted on rifles carried by these two men.

Just then Kent, on the rear seat with me, also looked back. He turned quickly and said to Storm: "I won't trouble you any longer than to stop and pick up my bags. I got a room in town. So—"

"Forget it," protested Storm. "Stay all night and look up your room tomorrow. Anyway your name's already in the pot for supper."

"The squalid hut I rented," asserted

Fleckman, "won't be ready until tomorrow."

"I found no room at all," growled Dillard.

"Neither did I," chirped Oaks. "And danged if this burg don't give me the willies. I'm roundin' up my bags, then I'm grabbin' the first bus out."

Storm stopped in front of his great, rambling house. We all trooped into the main room. At the rear end of it the servant, Miguel, was already setting service for supper on the long walnut table. At the front end, by the hearth, were stacked the bags of Dillard, Oaks, Fleckman and Kent.

Kent walked over and picked up two bags. So did Oaks.

"Thanks," said Kent. "Got any one who can chauffeur us into town?"

"If not, we'll walk," said Oaks.

Just then another car was heard to pull up outside. There was a tramping on the porch. I could hear one man circling the house. Then the door opened and Kraemer's broad-shouldered bulk filled it. He took a step inside and stood there, tamping his long-stem pipe.

Beyond him, on the porch, we could see a deputy armed with a rifle. That he was a sentry was all too evident.

"What's the big idea?" inquired Dillard, flushing.

Kraemer made no reply until he had lit the pipe and puffed it three times. Then he said bluntly: "King accused one of you four of the crime."

His eyes shifted sternly from Dillard to Kent to Fleckman to Oaks.

Kent and Oaks dropped their grips to the floor. Then Oaks took a step forward; he assumed a hostile stance before Kraemer, his legs wide apart and his tough, undershot jaw thrust challengingly forward.

"Is this a frame-up?"

"More likely a gag," suggested Kent with a pale smile.

Fleckman sat down. He brushed back his wiry pompadour and gazed squintily at Kraemer. He said nothing at all.

Dillard's flush, as red as his mustache, had now suffused him to the forehead. "Mister, when you pull a gag like that on Tom Dillard, you're tolerable likely to choke on it."

"It's no gag," said Kraemer. "King stated definitely that one of you men was once known as Frank, a man who helped him commit grand larceny and murder sixteen and a half years ago in El Paso."

"As far as I'm concerned he's a damned liar," exploded Oaks, "and both of you can go to hell."

"Come now," offered Kent in a tone of conciliation, and with a sickly smile on his face, "it simply means there's been some silly confusion."

But Tom Dillard of Texas was getting madder and madder. He advanced until he was within a foot of Kraemer. "You're lookin' for a goat, are you? So you pick on four strangers! Any one of 'em 'll do, just so you make a pinch."

His right fist was clenched. I thought he was going to take a punch at Kraemer.

"The shot was fired at about three thirty-five," offered Wilbur Storm. "Suppose we ask each man two questions: 'Why did you come to Taos?' And, 'Where were you at three thirty-five?'"

Fleckman, usually taciturn, was the first to speak. "I came to Taos merely to look around, as thousands do every year. I hope it's no crime. I don't know exactly where I was at three thirty-five. Some time between three

and four I found and rented a room just south of the post office. I paid a week's rent, then joined the crowd on the plaza."

"Me, I had no luck finding a room," growled Dillard. "I came up to this country for a little fishing and hunting. I'm well known in Amarillo and no one ever called me Frank."

"How long have you been in Amarillo?"

"Fourteen years."

"And before that?"

"I punched cows all over the Southwest."

"What about you, Kent?"

"I was never known as Frank," said Kent stiffly. "I came from Boston for a quiet vacation. At three thirty-five to-day I was talking to a Mrs. Gutierrez about a room."

"The Gutierrez house," Kraemer said quickly, "is directly across the alley from the jail. Incidentally I know that the Señora Gutierrez does not speak English. Did you learn Spanish in Boston, Kent?"

I wanted to add, "And did you learn to file your finger nails in public in Boston?"

KENT turned sulkily to Storm. "Can you recommend a good attorney? It seems I need protection from the bullyragging of this backwoods prosecutor."

Before Storm could reply Kraemer began quizzing Oaks.

"Where did you come from?"

"None of your damned business," barked Oaks.

The look of him was dangerous, and Kraemer said, "I'm going to frisk you for a gun, Oaks."

"Keep your dirty hands offen me," snarled Oaks. He backed against a wall, his eyes defying Kraemer.

Kraemer whistled. A rifle-armed deputy came in from the porch. He covered Oaks while Kraemer searched him.

He found no weapon. Yet he did find a package of six Liberty Bonds. They were coupon bonds of a thousand dollars each.

"Where did you get 'em?" demanded Kraemer.

"Who wants to know?" snarled Oaks, and snatched them back. "And what about these others guys? Am I the only one you frisk?"

In justice Kraemer was now forced to search Dillard, Kent and Fleckman. Kent sulked. Fleckman submitted peacefully. Dillard stood there boiling with rage.

Yet, to my complete astonishment, the only pistol found came from the hip pocket of Fleckman. It was a .38.

"And why not?" inquired Fleckman decorously. "I presumed this to be a lawless country and my presumption has been proved correct. So I brought along a gun."

"Manuel," said Kraemer to the deputy, "hang on to this until we uncover the guilt."

Manuel, with his own rifle and Fleckman's pistol, returned to the front porch.

I offered a suggestion myself. "What about the coincidence of Frank's arriving in Taos on the same day with Victor King? I mean we can't accept it as a coincidence. There must be a reason for the killer's timely arrival."

That seemed to put Kraemer in a hole. He puffed thoughtfully at his pipe and then offered: "Frank hastily planned the murder after he arrived. Storm took these four men into the sheriff's office on an errand and there Frank saw the rifle. He also saw an

open alley door. From that instant he began planning the crime."

"But why should Frank have arrived to-day of all days?" I objected.

Kraemer shrugged. He said, "It simply means that King left some simple detail out of his story."

Just then we heard a car pull up in front. Kraemer looked out. "It's Sheriff Sandoval," he said, "coming to report."

The tall and well-dressed sheriff, who would have been exceptionally personable but for a patch over his left eye, came in and reported in his precise English:

"Mr. Kraemer, within the last few hours some one has looted the old Sanchez house you spoke of. A window has been smashed. Boards of the rear room floor have been taken up. Underneath is a freshly dug hole in the earth."

It was a concise, definite report. I could feel the tension of our group grow as each successive word of it was uttered. When he had finished the air seemed charged. I stood there appraising in turn the flushed temper of Dillard, the sulk of Kent, the mean defiance of Oaks and the perfect nonchalance of Fleckman. Surely one of these four, while pretending to look for a room, had really looked only for the rear room of that old abode of Victor King.

STORM asked Sandoval, "Does it look like anything's been taken from the hole?"

"There is a cubical impression," affirmed Sandoval, "with rust on its walls, as though some metal box had been there a long time."

"But how do you know that the digging occurred within the last few hours?" inquired Storm keenly.

"Because a shovel, with fresh clay on its blade, is left there. I find that the shovel belongs to the woodshed of the house next door. The owner of the shovel says it was in the woodshed at noon."

"In that case," I offered, "the loot could not have been recovered by *el pescador* himself. He sat on the bench from eleven in the morning until the hour of his death."

"What happened," asserted Kraemer with conviction, "is that our man Frank took it while pretending to scout for a room. Whatever tip informed him that King was coming back to-day also informed him of the cache."

For the last minute I had seen an odd expression forming on the broad, florid features of Wilbur Storm. He ran a hand through his shaggy white hair and then said to Kraemer:

"It's barely possible that we might be overlooking a very simple and natural solution. Will you humor a whim of mine, Kraemer? Question these four men while I make a quick trip to town. There's something I want to check up."

Kraemer agreed and Storm hurried from the house.

Then for a full hour I stood aside with Sheriff Sandoval while Kraemer quizzed his four suspects. He did so separately, leading each one aside in turn. He asked innumerable questions of each and took voluminous notes.

"This man Frank, whoever he is," Sheriff Sandoval said to me, "seems to be a fast worker. He had less than two hours to dig up the loot, hide it somewhere else, steal a rifle, and shoot King."

"If he knew exactly where the loot was he could have recovered it in fifteen minutes," I said. "To acquire

the rifle and shoot King would have taken scarcely five."

The mantel clock struck six chimes and still Storm had not returned. The mozo Miguel, as though entirely unaware of his prospective dinner guests were being grilled on a murder charge, came in repeatedly and placed dishes on the table at the deep end of the room.

Finally we heard Storm's car arrive in front. It came to a stop with a squealing of brakes that rasped my nerves. We heard Storm leaping up the steps. Then he charged into our midst, his broad face more florid than I had ever seen it before. He was puffing; he seemed to have executed some program of violent exertion.

Under his arm he carried a metal box about the size of a shoe box. Its hasp seemed to have been freshly broken. All outer surfaces of the box were rusted and soiled with fresh clay.

Storm handed the box to District Attorney Arch Kraemer. "Open it," he said.

Kraemer raised the lid of the box. What I saw seemed to be a tangled heap of ornaments of brilliant settings—diamonds, emeralds, pearls. I seemed to see the treasure box of some Indian rajah into which the glittering contents had been pitched by handfuls. There were fancy watches, too, in this heap, fine jewelry of all kinds. I only had time to catch a flash of it before Kraemer snapped shut the lid.

"**W**HERE did you find it?" Kraemer asked Storm.

In the moment before Storm replied I thought the tension would choke every breath in the room and snap every taut nerve.

"I found it," Storm said finally, "in a suitcase packed with clothing, all

ready for its owner to make a hasty exit from Taos."

"Where," cried Kraemer, "did you find this suitcase?"

"In the room of Sheriff Pancho Sandoval," announced Storm.

"If it was there," cried the sheriff shrilly, "it was framed on me." He was suddenly pale and he edged two steps toward a far side of the room.

"Then some one also framed your toothbrush and your best shirts in the same suitcase," retorted Wilbur Storm.

"Does this mean," roared Kraemer, "that the sheriff, in pursuance of my instructions, went to the cache and actually found the loot? That he succumbed to a temptation and kept it himself? That he made ready to leave town with it? Then came here to report that some one had beaten him to the cache?"

"It means more than that," explained Storm. "It means that the El Paso murderer, Frank, came here about fifteen years ago to join King. He found that King had disappeared. Frank hung around indefinitely, on the chance that King might reappear. He took root here. After fourteen years he was elected sheriff. He is Pancho Sandoval and he shot Victor King for the two motives given by King himself."

"It is not true," shrieked Sandoval, backing toward a far window with his face a pattern of fright. Storm strode to him and laid a hand on his arm.

"Hold on," objected Kraemer. "What about the accusation we heard from the lips of King himself? He did not accuse the sheriff. He accused one of four men standing in front of the car."

"The key to that," explained Storm, "lies in the translation of a simple Spanish word. Don't forget that King

lived fifteen years in Peru, where he would have become quite familiar—"

"You mean," cut in Kraemer, "that Pancho is the nickname for Francisco, which in turn means Frank?"

"No. I mean that four men stood in front of my low, topless, touring car. Beyond was the sidewalk fronting the jail. At the door of the jail stood the sheriff. Over the door is a sign in Spanish—

LA CARCEL

"King was trying to say, 'There he stands, right in front of that *carcel*'—when death abruptly cut off his last syllable."

Sandoval jerked loose from Storm's grasp and dived for the window. Storm lunged for him; his shoulder caught Sandoval in the groin and they both sprawled.

Each scrambled quickly to his feet. Sandoval whipped out a gun and for an instant of horror I saw his livid face as he fired at Storm. Yet in the space of that same instant Storm's clenched fist was raking the sheriff's jaw. Both men staggered. Again both sprawled to the floor.

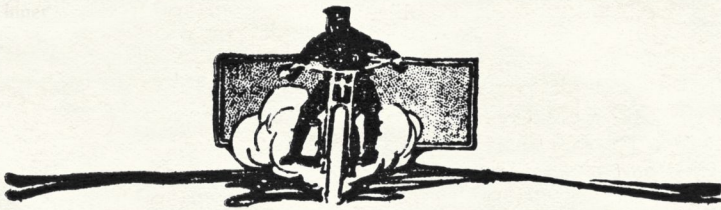
I thought Storm was shot dead. There was powder on his face.

But he arose just as the deputies dashed in. It was Sheriff Pancho Sandoval who failed to arise.

"Take him," bawled Kraemer to the deputies.

The deputies dragged Sandoval out. Kraemer remained, which made seven of us in the room.

"Supper serves itself!" announced the mozo, Miguel, as he entered with a platter; on it were seven crisply fried trout, the catch of *El Pescador*.



Meanest Thief

CARL J. BAKER, of Pomona, California, trapped under his overturned truck, said a small prayer of thanksgiving when a car pulled up on the highway and a man ran over to him.

"Can't you get out?" asked the man.

"No," said Baker. "I'm pinned in here tight. And my back is sprained, I think. If you could get some leverage under—"

He broke off, for the man had reached forward and was running a deft hand into Baker's inside pocket. The man's hand came out with Baker's wallet and ninety-five dollars . . . "As long as you can't get out," remarked the man, and turned and fled back to his car.

The Spider Lake Mystery

A Novelette

By Leslie McFarlane



Mounty Donovan Was Hot with Anger—Three Men Murdered, and the Killers Had Slipped Out of His Very Hands

CHAPTER I

The Mystery Launch

THE launch was known as the "Eagle." It raced down Spider Lake that November day, beaten and battered by great leaden waves, driving before a howling blizzard that swept from the north.

The launch ran crazily. Sometimes it scudded directly before the gale, but more often than not the rollers caught it broadside, and then the craft heeled violently over. By some miracle it did

not capsize. The Eagle was racing at top speed, but the man crouched at the helm made no move to hold the launch to her course.

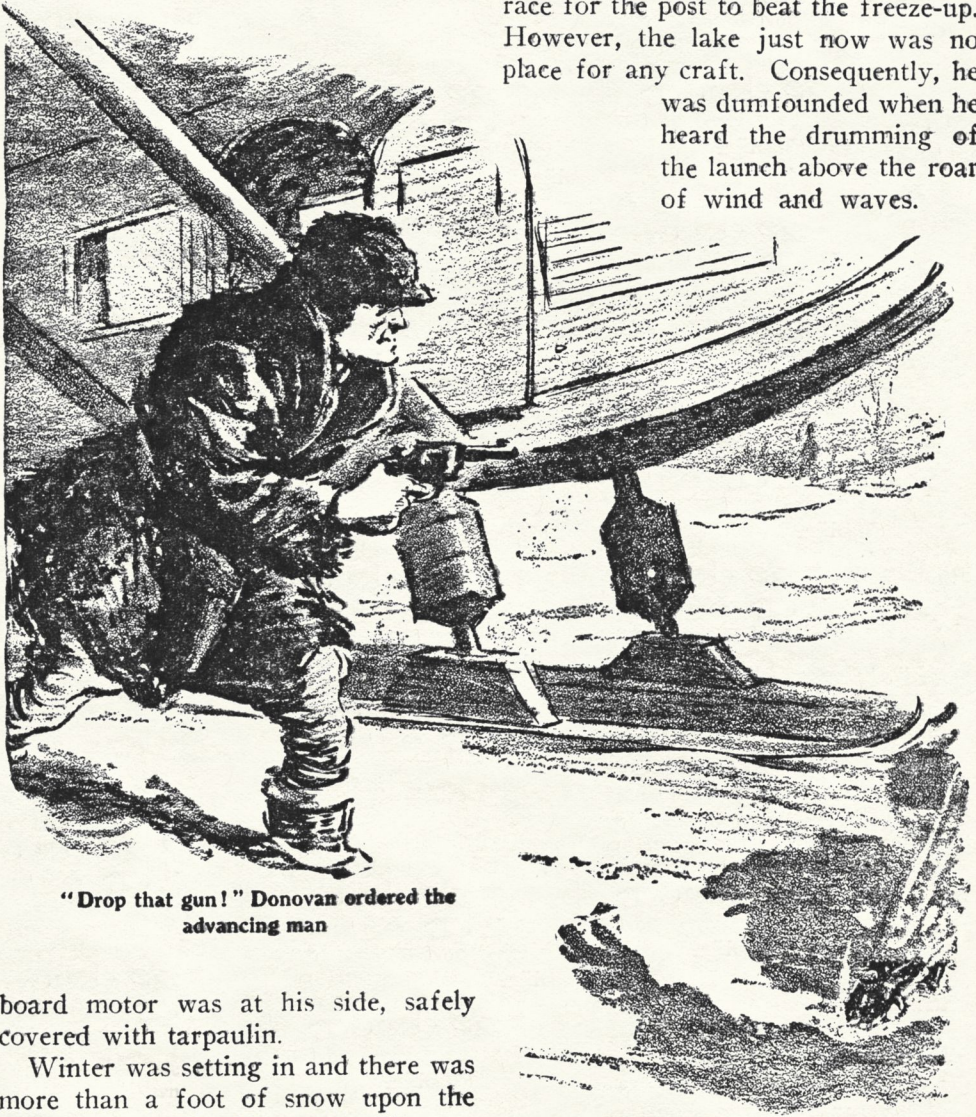
He crouched there, dimly visible through the flying snow, and he did not move. He was dead.

Tim Donovan, a constable of the Royal Canadian Mounted Police, did not see the speeding launch until it was abreast of the little cove on the lee shore where he had taken refuge from the storm.

He crouched beneath an improvised

lean-to of spruce boughs, warming himself at a little fire. His canoe was drawn up on the beach and the out-

There was little chance that Spider Lake would freeze in this storm, but when the wind died he would have to race for the post to beat the freeze-up. However, the lake just now was no place for any craft. Consequently, he was dumfounded when he heard the drumming of the launch above the roar of wind and waves.



"Drop that gun!" Donovan ordered the advancing man

board motor was at his side, safely covered with tarpaulin.

Winter was setting in and there was more than a foot of snow upon the countryside. The lake was still open, although great sheets of snow swirled above the waves, whipped by the bitter wind. Freeze-up was not far distant.

"It would be bad," reflected Donovan as he puffed at his pipe, "if the Spider froze up now and left me stranded. Fifty miles from here to the post! What a fine, long walk!"

Donovan blinked and peeped around the side of the lean-to.

"Now who in the divvil," he muttered, "is out joy ridin' on a day like this?"

The lake was an inferno of wild water and twisting banners of snow. And out in the bay, out in the tossing

waste, he saw the boat roaring down from the north.

Donovan stared, mouth agape. He saw the launch heel far over, saw it disappear for a moment, then saw it shoot into view again, recklessly plunging on. The waves hurling themselves into the cove had beaten the bow of the launch around so that the craft was heading directly toward the rocks of the Point, three hundred yards below, but the dim figure at the wheel had made no effort to slacken speed, no move to swing the launch out of its dangerous course.

"The dizzy ape!" growled Donovan, scrambling out. "He'll be wrecked sure as guns!"

He ran down the windy beach, waving his arms, trying to signal to the man in the boat.

But the launch raced on. The rapid throb of the engine was undiminished.

A great roller capped with foam bore down on the craft, crashed over it in foam, sent it reeling, gunwale to the water.

Donovan stood rooted to the spot, staring. He fully expected to see the boat capsize, but somehow it struggled free. And it still headed recklessly toward the harsh shore, strewn with boulders.

Constable Donovan babbled helplessly. He could scarcely credit his eyes as he saw the launch driving on to destruction.

IT rose high in the air, flung forward by a great wave as if the lake contemptuously rid itself of an unwelcome burden. Then it hurled onto the rocks with a terrific crash. There was an explosion and a great burst of flame. A dark figure was catapulted through the flying fragments of wreckage.

Donovan ran stumbling among the icy rocks.

"Suicide!" he blurted, panting. "He ran her ashore deliberately."

It was not until he reached the limp, broken body among the boulders, flung far up on the shore by the violent impact, that he realized that this explanation was wrong. Then the reason for the abandoned course of the launch became obvious.

The body was riddled with bullets. A bullet had drilled its way through the victim's head. There were bullet holes through the man's back and shoulders.

Constable Donovan crouched beside that limp, bullet-ridden form among the rocks, with the wind whipping snow about him and the wreckage of the launch breaking up on the shore, and he knew he confronted the strangest mystery of all his years in the Northland.

Not alone was it because of the extraordinary circumstance by which this murdered man had been literally flung up at his feet by the storm. That mystery was puzzling enough, but it was dwarfed by a greater and more bewildering riddle—the appearance of the man himself.

He was a man of middle age, clean-shaved, sharp-featured, with iron-gray hair. His physique was frail, his hands were white and well kept. His body was drenched with spray and already incrusting with ice.

And he was clothed as though he had just stepped off a city street!

Here, on the remote, wind-swept shore of Spider Lake, three hundred miles from the nearest town, he lay dead—but not clad in the rough, heavy garments of the wilderness.

He was clad in a neat, gray suit of excellent cut, and he wore a striped

blue shirt with starched collar and cuffs, low black oxfords, silk socks. Drenched and sodden though these garments were, they were city clothes, clothes as utterly foreign to the Spider Lake country as the breech-clout of an African savage.

This was the circumstance that bewildered Donovan even more than the fact of the murder itself. It was the one paramount, baffling fact upon which his curiosity centered. He expressed himself in his own fashion.

"Well, I'll be utterly and completely damned!" said Donovan.

HE examined the dead man's clothes. The search revealed a bunch of keys, a packet of American cigarettes, a wallet containing more than a hundred dollars in American currency. He found no letters that would serve to identify the corpse, but when he examined a tag inside the coat pocket he found the neatly-lettered name, "J. Benderson," then the tailor's name, and the address, "New York."

Donovan stood up and scratched his head reflectively.

"Well, Mr. Benderson," he muttered, "somebody certainly finished you mighty thorough. But how did you *get* here? Especially in them clothes."

Men, even tourists, do not come into the Spider Lake country still clad in the garments of the city. And how, of all things, did this man come to be huddled dead at the wheel of a speeding launch?

"Was he killed first, then put into the launch?" muttered Donovan, "or was he shot *after* he got into the launch? If he was killed first, what was the idea of puttin' him in the boat at all? If he was killed after he got into the boat, what was his idea of

starting out on a day like this, bare-headed, in clothes like them? How did he ever get into this country in that outfit anyway?"

He looked down at the body with an aggrieved air, as though resenting the challenge the dead man presented. But Donovan was not resentful; this problem came in the line of duty and must be solved.

He turned his attention to the wreckage of the boat. The force of the impact, the explosion of the gasoline tank and the subsequent pounding of the waves had reduced it to a shattered skeleton of wood and steel, but the gilt plate on the bow was still plainly visible.

This plate, at least, offered him a definite clew.

"THE Eagle, huh? That would be the speedboat from Green's place at Wolverine Bay, I'm thinkin'."

But this presented an additional puzzling angle.

Green's place at Wolverine Bay was a large cabin owned by a wealthy American who occupied the building only during the summer months. Occasionally he remained on into October for the hunting, when he entertained guests from the cities, but Donovan happened to know that Mr. Green had not stayed on for the hunting that year.

"No, sir," he recollected. "Last time I passed Wolverine Bay was in the middle of September, and the lodge was closed up for the season."

He looked down at the dead man again, then at the brass name plate of the boat. The murdered man was a New Yorker, he had been in Green's boat, and Green was an American. There was more than a hint of logical

explanation of the victim's presence in the Spider Lake country.

"Perhaps Green *did* come back after all," considered Donovan. "Maybe he brought some friends with him and there's been some trouble. But even at that I don't get the idea of them fancy clothes."

He looked out at the raging lake. The storm showed no sign of abating.

It was late in the afternoon before the wind died and he was able to leave the cove. The outboard motor sputtered noisily as his canoe breasted the leaden waves of Spider Lake. The craft was low in the water from the weight of an extra passenger—the bullet-ridden body of the stranger.

Constable Donovan was bound for Wolverine Bay, where he hoped to learn more about J. Benderson, of New York. He wanted to know why Mr. Benderson had not changed the habiliments of Broadway for the cold-weather garments of the North Country—he was very curious on that point. He wanted to know how Mr. Benderson came to be at the wheel of the speeding launch in that blizzard. Chiefly, of course, he wanted to know why Benderson had been killed and who had killed him.

And while the canoe was breasting the slaty waves of Spider Lake, three miles to the north, at Wolverine Bay another man was occupied with a mystery quite as bewildering as the strange riddle that held the attention of Constable Donovan.

CHAPTER II

The Body in the Drift

PIERRE LAROSE, trapper, faced the north wind with a smile. The icy gale had no terrors for him. He was glad winter was setting in.

Pierre's little cabin at the head of Spider Lake was well stocked with provisions, his trap lines were laid out, and his wife and daughter had come north with him this year so that the long months of snow would not be lonely.

Pierre Larose was happy. He would be home before darkness fell and there would be a good, hot stew awaiting him. Life was good. Last season's catch had been excellent, he was out of debt, and with any luck winter's end would see him with money in the bank.

He trudged down the white slope of Wolverine Hill and struck out toward the great open plain that lay back of the bay. Away off in the distance he could see the black streak of open water, and the huddle of pine trees where nestled the summer lodge of Mr. Green, the wealthy American.

"Nex' year," reflected Pierre, "I t'ink I ask M'sieu Green to make me be caretaker of dat place for winter. It is one big shame to see grand cabin like dat empty for eight mont's of a year, w'ile me I live in a little shack."

It really did not seem just. The trapper's thrifty soul was scandalized by the waste. All through the long winter, all through the spring the great log cabin lay closed and deserted, while Pierre Larose lived in a cramped little shack scarcely larger than the kitchen of the Green place.

"How 'appy we could be in a grand big cabin like dat," went on the trapper wistfully, talking to himself in the manner of men who are much alone. "It lies dere, all empty, wit' a big fireplace, and all furnish' so nice, and it needs somebody to look after it. Twice now, it has been enter' and robbed in the winter time. Nex' year I ask M'sieu Green if he let me live dere and be caretaker."

Now Pierre Larose was an honest,

kind-hearted fellow and occasionally he stopped in at the big cabin to see that everything was in good order. This was done through sheer goodness of heart, simply because M'sieu Green was, after all, a neighbor. Pierre had laid eyes on the man but twice in his life, but in the Northland the word "neighbor" means a great deal indeed.

"I pass by dat place now," he decided, "and see if everyt'ing is all right."

AT this time of year, with many trappers going north by Spider Lake, the cabin was more than usually open to visitations, and some of the trappers were unscrupulous rascals. Pierre Larose felt he owed it to his neighbor to keep an eye on things.

So, striding along on his snowshoes, swinging his arms across his chest to keep himself warm, Pierre struck down across the treeless plain toward the bay.

It was this decision, a decision that would take him about a mile out of his ordinary course toward home, that resulted in his strange and momentous discovery.

Pierre Larose had keen eyes and he missed very little when he was on the trail. A tenderfoot might have given the hole in the snow no more than a casual glance, but the trapper regarded it with all the inquisitive eagerness of a wolf investigating a new scent.

This hole in the snow was on the side of a little slope where the drifts were already deep and its form was roughly that of a cross, somewhat larger than a man. The snow on all sides of this odd depression was quite unbroken.

This, to Pierre Larose, was the intriguing part of it. If some animal had

collapsed and fallen here to die the depression in the snowdrift was easily explained. But the animal would leave a trail. There had been a blizzard all afternoon, just clearing now, but this slope was protected from the wind. If the hole in the drift had not filled up with snow, then the tracks leading to it should not have filled up.

He trudged over to the slope, circled around that crude, crosslike depression.

It was about four feet in depth, the full depth of the snowdrift, and although a great deal of loose snow had fallen from the sides he could distinguish a dark object at the bottom.

"*Sacre!*" muttered the trapper, in excitement, for he knew at once that the object was not an animal, but a man.

He broke away the snow at the side and leaped down into the trench. Hastily he cleared the snow away from the body, which lay with arms outspread. This explained the crosslike formation of the impromptu grave.

Pierre uttered a few ejaculations of fearful astonishment in French, and crossed himself rapidly. The man in the drift was dead.

Now when Constable Donovan came upon the corpse of the man flung up on the shore of Spider Lake from the wreckage of the launch his curiosity centered in the fact that the man was clad in city clothes. It was characteristic of Pierre Larose, the woodsman, that when he came upon this body in the snowdrift his curiosity centered in the fact that there were no tracks leading to or from the body.

The matter of clothes, of course, puzzled him. For this man in the drift was not clad as any Northerner. He was a heavily-built, broad-shouldered fellow with a black mustache, a hard

mouth and stubborn chin, and he was clad in a blue serge suit, a soft white shirt and tan shoes. He was hatless and his hands were bare.

"MON Dieu!" muttered Larose, dazed by the discovery. "I nevaire hear of such a t'ing!" He drew back from the sprawled and frozen form, after ascertaining that the man was indeed dead and not merely lying in that sleep that precedes death by exposure.

Pierre Larose had a healthy respect for the police and he knew that this was a matter for the Mounted. True, there were no marks of external violence on the body, although the man's head was oddly twisted, but the circumstances were so unusual that he decided to leave things severely alone.

He eyed the distant Green cabin suspiciously.

"Dis man is city feller. Mebbe M'sieu Green has come back. Mebbe he has friends wit' him. Mebbe dis feller wander away and freeze to deat'. But how come he leave no tracks? *Sacre!* I cannot understan' dis, me."

After a while he retraced his steps toward a clump of trees, cut down a sapling and carried it back to the spot, where he planted it in the snow to mark the place in case the drifts should have completely hidden the body before he returned.

Then, at a rapid gait, he went on toward the Green cabin, mumbling with excitement.

A drifting curl of white smoke above the chimney of the cabin caught his eye as he drew near the pines.

There was no other sign of life. The windows of the cabin were boarded up, as they had been boarded when the owner went away. That cloud of smoke gave a sinister aspect to the

lonely lodge, set back among the pines, facing the frozen shore where the black waves splashed sullenly against the rocks.

Larose felt a chill of apprehension.

The trapper frowned in perplexity as he came swinging toward the pines. If Green had actually returned, why were the windows still boarded up?

He advanced cautiously, rifle in hand. There were footprints in the snow about the front steps.

Larose removed his snowshoes, went up onto the veranda and stood listening at the door. He could hear nothing. After a while he tried the door. It was not locked. He stepped inside.

The trapper found himself in the great main room of the lodge, a room warm from the blaze that crackled in the fireplace. The room was gloomy, because of the boarded windows, but there was sufficient light to reveal the fur rugs on the floor, the huge leather chairs, the cosy window seat.

There were two closed doors on the opposite side of the room. And as Pierre Larose stood on the threshold he heard a sudden scuffle, a strangled voice. Then one of the doors was flung violently open.

He caught a momentary glimpse of a woman struggling in the doorway.

His own daughter, Cecile!

He had only that one fleeting glimpse of her, had only that stunning recognition, heard only the wild scream of warning she uttered before an arm dragged her back into the other room. Perhaps he heard the rustle at his side, received the instinctive feeling of danger . . .

There was a dazzling shock. The room seemed to explode before his eyes and disappear in a confusion of blinding lights.

Oblivion followed.

Pierre Larose crumpled heavily to the floor.

CHAPTER III

Donovan Investigates

TWILIGHT had fallen when Donovan reached Wolverine Bay. At first glance he thought the lodge was deserted, for no lights were in evidence; then he caught the glint of sparks against the black background of the pines, and saw the white film of smoke above the chimney.

He left Benderson's body in the canoe, tied the craft up to the little dock, and went on up to the cabin.

The fact of the boarded windows as against the evidence of human habitation indicated by the smoke puzzled him. However, he went up onto the veranda without the preliminary investigation and banged on the door.

It was opened immediately by a sallow, undersized man in breeks and mackinaw shirt.

"Hello, constable!" he said affably. "Step right inside." He called over his shoulder to a man by the fireplace, "It's a Mounty, Mr. Green."

Donovan had met Green on other occasions. The New Yorker advanced, hand extended.

"Good night, Donovan. What brings you up this way?"

Green was a corpulent, shrewd-eyed man of about fifty, with ruddy jowls and a neat gray mustache. He had a way of looking vaguely beyond you when he spoke and of darting quick, disconcerting glances at you when you replied.

"Just on my way up to the Post," said Donovan, easily. "Thought I'd drop in here overnight. It's rough on the lake. I didn't know there was any one here."

"We just came up yesterday," returned Green. He introduced the sallow man as Mr. Axelson, and a tall, athletic fellow who emerged presently from one of the other rooms as Mr. Muir. "Friends of mine from New York. We thought we'd come up for a little hunting."

Donovan bided his time. Axelson and Muir seemed friendly enough, the atmosphere was apparently casual, but he sensed a restraint, as though this greeting had been carefully prepared. Green offered him cigarettes and said supper would be ready shortly.

"We didn't bring a cook with us," he said. "Figure on staying for only a few days."

"How's the patient, Jerry?" demanded Axelson, suddenly.

Muir shrugged. "He's all right. A bit out of his head yet, I guess." He turned to Donovan. "There's a man in one of the bedrooms—trapper from this neighborhood—got hurt in the storm—tree fell on him and nearly broke his neck."

"You probably know him, Donovan," said Green, smoothing his mustache. "Larose, the trapper. We sent for his daughter and she's looking after him."

"Pierre Larose, eh?" said Donovan. "I'm sorry to hear that. Let's have a look at him."

Green got up and opened the door of one of the bedrooms. A lamp on the dresser cast a hazy radiance through the room and revealed the man who lay groaning on the bed, and the white-faced girl who crouched at his side.

SHE sprang up with a sigh of relief. "Oh, M'sieu Donovan. I am so glad you have come. My father—he has had—an accident—!" Her voice faltered; she was looking di-

rectly at Donovan and there was an intense appeal in her eyes, as if she tried to convey some message to him.

"How did it happen?"

She hesitated. Then, "A tree—these men said it was a tree—"

"The girl didn't see the accident," said Green, from behind the constable. "We sent for her. Larose was evidently coming in here to take shelter from the storm, and the wind blew down one of the pines. It struck him on the back of the head."

Donovan made a brief examination. Larose was mumbling unintelligibly. His head was bandaged and it was evident that he had suffered a severe blow.

"I guess you've done all that could be done, Miss Larose," said the constable. "We'll just let him rest for a while. If he isn't better by morning I'll take him up to the doctor at the Post."

"Wouldn't you like to come out and have supper with us, miss?" invited Green. "You've been watching him for quite a while now."

"No, thank you," she answered. "I would rather stay with him."

She had a slight, charming accent. Even as he left the room Donovan thought he detected another appealing glance from her dark eyes, though her voice strove to convey a message beyond her actual words.

Out in the living room again he sat down, lit a cigarette. He was still feeling his way.

"How did you come up, Mr. Green?" he asked. "They didn't tell me at the railway that you had passed through."

"We came by plane."

"The machine dropped us here and went back to Montreal," volunteered Axelson.

"I see." Donovan glanced at his watch. "Do you know, it just occurred to me—Larose, in there, might have concussion of the brain. I'd really like to get him to a doctor and if the lake freezes to-night I'll be out of luck. My canoe is a risky proposition. I just thought about your launch. I could get Larose to the Post to-night if you'd lend me the boat."

Donovan thought he saw a gleam of satisfaction in Green's eyes. Muir laughed.

"Now you *are* asking something," he said. "That's a sore point, constable. When we reached here yesterday, Green found that his launch had been stolen."

"Stolen?"

"Yes," admitted Green, regretfully. "It's missing from the boathouse. Must have been taken since I closed up camp in September. I'll report the loss to you officially right now."

"Are you sure it wasn't in the boathouse to-day?"

Again that fleeting, malicious glance in Green's eyes. "The boat was missing when we came to camp."

"Good thing we didn't depend on it to take us out," said Muir. "We'd have been marooned."

DONOVAN lounged back in his chair and hooked his thumbs in his belt, close to his revolver holster.

"Maybe you'd better come clean," he suggested. "How about this fellow Benderson?"

"Benderson!" exclaimed Axelson.

"Who's he?" demanded Muir, in a tone of surprise.

Green simply looked steadily at the constable: "Well, what about him?"

"Who was he?"

"Never heard the name in my life."

Donovan raised his eyebrows as though venturing a respectful contradiction: "No?"

"I don't get it, officer," said Muir. "What's the answer?"

"The answer," said Donovan, "is that I found the boat."

There was a dead silence. Then Green said gently: "My boat."

"Yes. It ran ashore about three miles south. Benderson was in it. I'd like to know who killed him."

"Look here!" said Alexson, brushing his fair hair out of his eyes with a hasty gesture. "What are you getting at? You're talking about a boat that was stolen before we got here, and about a man named Benderson that none of us ever heard of? You say he was killed. Well, what's that got to do with us?"

"Perhaps nothing," replied Donovan. "He was killed, though, and he was in a boat from this camp. Naturally I come here to investigate."

"I don't blame you, officer," said Green placatingly. "In your place I imagine we'd do the same. But this is all news to us. So far as this Benderson is concerned, I'll say right here and now that *I* didn't shoot him."

"I didn't say he was shot," said Donovan.

Green blinked. "Well—of course—you say he was killed, so I thought—"

"You jumped to a very correct conclusion. As a matter of fact, he *was* shot. How did you know?"

Muir leaned across the table.

"Listen, constable!" he said.

"You're asking questions. We're willing to help. But I'd advise you not to take that attitude. Mr. Green is our host and we are his guests. We're respectable business men up here on a holiday and we don't intend to have any backwoods cop trying to be smart with us. Get that? We don't know

anything about this Benderson or the boat either, so be mighty careful how you go about questioning us."

Donovan shrugged.

"Just as you like," he said. "However, I think I'll have a few more words with the girl in there."

And he rose suddenly from his chair, stepped over to the bedroom door and flung it open.

A gust of wind made the lamp flicker wildly.

The boards outside the window had been pried loose and the sill was partly raised. Pierre Larose still lay on the bed, but the girl had disappeared.

CHAPTER IV

Death in the Dark

PURSUIT was out of the question. Ten minutes' search outside the cabin convinced Donovan of that. The night was black as ink, with a howling wind. The great pines roared and threshed above him as he hunted for some trace of the girl, without success. Perhaps she was hiding somewhere outside the building, perhaps she had set out for her own home.

The question was—why?

Why had she deserted her injured father? Why had she fled from the cabin, like a prisoner making her escape?

Donovan had plunged out of the cabin alone, the moment he discovered the girl's disappearance. He had searched in the darkness of the pines alone, with no help from the others, and he was just about to return to the cabin when a dark figure blundered toward him from among the trees.

"Did you find her?" shouted a voice.

The man was Axelson.

"No," growled Donovan, in disgust. "And let me tell you, my friend, you

chaps are going to tell me the truth about this business or I'll know the reason why. There's something mighty queer going on. Why did the girl clear out like that?"

"Listen, constable," panted Axel-son, "I'll tell you the truth. I couldn't speak when the others were there. That's why I came out—"

He was interrupted by a sudden shout.

"Here! Where are you?"

The two other men emerged from behind a thicket only a few yards away and plunged toward them.

Axel-son gripped Donovan's arm.

"Later!" he whispered.

"Where did she go?" blustered Muir. "What's the idea? Did the fool girl go crazy?"

"I think we'd better go back to the cabin and talk this over," snapped Donovan.

"But she'll freeze to death on a night like this. We've got to find her. Why did she sneak out?"

"She won't freeze," returned Donovan. "Did she come here on snowshoes? Where did she leave them?"

"Skis!" said Green. "They're on the veranda."

But when Donovan searched he found that the skis were gone. He was satisfied, then, that the girl had fled back to her own home. He was not worried about her safety. She knew the country like an open book and she was as hardy as any daughter of the North. But some powerful motive lay behind her escape. Of that he was sure, and that it was connected with the murder of Benderson and the accident to her father seemed certain.

He kicked open the cabin door.

"Inside, you men!" he ordered sharply. "No more nonsense. We're

going to hold a little court of inquiry right here and now."

They shuffled into the cabin with the air of men at bay. Donovan drew his revolver.

"**N**OW!" he snapped. "I'm boss here, see! I'm going to get the truth. I want to know why Benderson was shot. I want to know why you three are here. I want to know what really happened to Larose, in there. That fallen tree story sounds fishy. Sit down!"

With the revolver he gestured toward chairs. Silently they obeyed.

"You can talk it over and I'd advise you to come clean. In the meantime I'm going to see if Larose is in shape to tell me anything."

He strode into the little bedroom. Pierre Larose looked up at him blankly; there was no recognition in the trapper's eyes.

"How's the head, Pierre?" asked Donovan.

The man groaned. Then he spoke, slowly, with difficulty, like a man talking in his sleep:

"Dead man . . . dead man out dere . . . in the snow . . ."

"What's that? A dead man? Where?"

"Cecile . . . how did she come by dis place?" muttered Larose. "I see her . . . den somet'ing hit me on my head . . . mus' be bad men here . . . dead man out in the snow . . . man all dress' up in good clothes . . ."

Larose sighed and was silent.

"Pierre! Can't you speak? See! I'm Donovan, the Mounty. I'm trying to help you. How were you hurt? Where did you see this dead man?"

There was another groan from the man on the bed.

"My head she hurt mighty bad . . .

somebody hit me jus' when I see Cecile . . . how did she come here? . . . where is she now, dat girl?"

"She was here when you came to the cabin? You weren't hit by a tree?"

"Somebody hit me w'en I come in the door . . . I see my Cecile and she is fight wit' some man . . . den I get hit . . ."

Donovan's mouth set grimly. "So!"

The fallen tree story, then, had been a lie. Cecile had been in the cabin before Larose came. One of the trio had deliberately knocked the trapper out.

Green and his two companions were playing a strange game. What was behind it all? There was no doubt that they had murdered Benderson—and now Larose spoke of another dead man, a dead man lying in the snow.

He turned away from the bed.

"No more foolin'," muttered Donovan. "I'll get the truth out of these babies."

A slanting bar of light fell across the floor through the door leading into the next room. Even as Donovan turned the light vanished. The other room was plunged into darkness.

He flung up his revolver and strode through the doorway. Some one had blown out the lamp on the big center table.

"Light that lamp again!" growled Donovan. "Light it, or I'll start shootin' . . ."

The pitch blackness was broken by a spurt of flame as a revolver crashed from beyond the table. Donovan heard the splintering of wood as the bullet smacked into the door beside him.

He flung himself to the floor. That first shot was followed swiftly by three more; the room was full of the roar and echo of gunfire, reeking with the smell of smoke.

Under cover of the noise and darkness, Donovan was crawling swiftly across the floor toward the table. He did not return the shots.

Once beneath the table he crouched, listening. The gunfire ceased. Silence hung over the place for a moment, broken suddenly by the frightened, quavering cries of Pierre Larose.

DONOVAN did not move. If the others thought they had killed him, so much the better. They would be more apt to betray themselves.

Because the windows were boarded up, not a ray of light entered the room.

He thought he heard a sigh, a soft thud, just a few feet away. At the same time he heard a sound like the crunching of snow just outside the cabin.

Donovan's nerves leaped. *Outside the cabin!* Surely the men had not escaped, under cover of their own fire. He recalled then that he had heard a noise like the closing of a door, while he was scrambling toward the shelter of the table.

Pierre Larose was shouting again, clamoring with fear, but still Donovan dared not move.

There was another man in the room.

He knew that. He could sense it. Even had he not heard that sigh and the soft thud a little distance away, he would have sensed it. The ominous presence made itself felt, somehow, in spite of utter blackness and silence.

Then, out on the veranda, he suddenly heard swift, crunching footsteps. They drew nearer and nearer, halted just outside the door. He heard the rattle of the latch, but the door did not open. The footsteps receded as swiftly as they had come.

Donovan was puzzled. Even the

sounds of the person at the door failed to arouse any response from within the room. Pierre Larose had subsided to a vague mumbling and whining.

He crept from beneath the table, ever so cautiously, feeling his way through the darkness, inch by inch, aware that one false move might draw a bullet.

Nothing happened.

Donovan waited, motionless, then resumed his careful progress back toward the door of the bedroom.

Suddenly he stiffened. His outstretched hand touched a human arm. Instantly he flung himself into action, springing upon the other man, gripping that outstretched arm . . .

But the invisible opponent did not fight back.

Donovan's reaction had been instinctive. He was grappling with the enemy in all desperation before he realized that the other made not a move to defend himself. The man's body was limp and unresisting beneath him.

Slowly the constable drew back, gripped by a sudden suspicion. He ran his hand along the other man's arm until his fingers touched a revolver, loosely clutched in the unresponsive hand. He felt for the other's face; the head sagged slightly to his touch and he knew he felt the face of a dead man.

He had made some little noise when he had encountered the body and launched his attack, yet there had not been a sound from elsewhere in the room. The others, therefore, must have escaped, else they would have opened fire.

Donovan groped for matches. He found them at last and struck one against the floor. The tiny flame

leaped up and from the darkness emerged an unreal and shadowy face, a face that seemed a part of the gloom and detached from any body, a sallow face with fair, stringy hair and closed eyes and a jaw that hung slack in death.

Axelson!

ABULLET had drilled its way through Axelson's head, from beneath the ear. He had been instantly killed.

Axelson would never speak again. He would never tell Donovan the truth of things, as he had been about to do when Donovan encountered him outside beneath the pines a little while back. And when Donovan remembered that his mind leaped to the one conclusion.

Murder!

Had the others overheard Axelson's whispered promise? Had they feared betrayal? They had escaped, and in covering their own flight they had rid themselves of one who had been about to turn against them.

Donovan rose to his feet and went over to the door. It did not budge. He rattled the latch, tugged at the door violently, but it would not open. Locked—on the outside.

He strode back, then halted suddenly when he heard an abrupt sound.

It was the clatter of a falling board. The sound came from the bedroom where Pierre Larose was lying. He remembered then the boards that had been wrenched partly loose from the window of the room when the girl escaped.

The constable stood there, listening. He heard a cautious rustle, then the creak of the window. He sped silently over to the door of the room and peered inside.

Half the window stood out in gray relief against the snow outside. The straight line of the lower ledge was broken by a dark protuberance that rose slowly until a head and shoulders became outlined.

Donovan raised his revolver and covered the intruder.

A hand came up. The window was raised to its full height. The figure gave a lunge and began to scramble across the ledge.

Donovan waited. He heard Pierre Larose's quavering voice, trembling with fear:

"Who is dis? Hey! M'sieu Donovan—"

The intruder thudded into the room. And Donovan, with revolver leveled, with finger lurking on the trigger, snapped:

"Put up your hands!"

CHAPTER V

The Get-away

HE was answered by a girl's voice: "It is you—M'sieu Donovan?"

"Who's that? Miss Larose?"

She rustled toward him through the gloom.

"I came back," she said, breathlessly. "I heard the shooting. I was afraid for my father."

Donovan lowered the revolver. The girl turned aside and leaned over the bed.

"Is he all right? Nothing has happened to him?"

"He's all right," returned the constable.

"Where you go, Cecile?" demanded Larose, querulously. "Why you come back? It is danger for you. Shooting."

"That is why I came back." She turned swiftly to Donovan. "Why do

you not go after them? They will get away."

"The door is locked. They shot one of their own men. But look here—what's it all about? Why did you go away? Where were you hiding? How was your father hurt?"

But she was urging him toward the half-open window.

"Go now. They'll get away. They are taking your canoe. Quickly! Take no chances with them."

The canoe!

Donovan had forgotten about that. It was the only means of escape. If Muir and Green made their get-away in his canoe it was probable that he would never see them again. Moreover, he would be marooned here, unable to pursue them, unable to get away from Wolverine Bay save by dog team overland.

He sprang toward the window, scrambled over the sill, plunged out into deep snow. Even as the cold air struck his face he heard the spasmodic clatter of the outboard motor, down by the little dock.

He struggled through the drifts, around to the side of the lodge, raced down the slope in the darkness. The night was black, but he could distinguish the shore line, the lake black as distinguished from the whiteness of the snow.

Donovan could not see the canoe, could scarcely see the darker shadow of the dock. Then a tiny flame flashed for a moment in the heavy gloom of night and the coughing bark of the motor broke out afresh.

He fired at the light of the flaring match. The light described an arc through the darkness and went out. He fired again as he ran, then reached the icy rocks, stumbled and fell. Donovan lost the revolver for a moment, groped

about and found it lying beside a boulder. The outboard motor was clamoring steadily now. He staggered toward the dock.

A vivid scarlet flame licked its way out of the night as a rifle barked sharply above the dull splash and murmur of beating waves. A bullet whined overhead. He crouched on the dock, fired back at the flash, raced out on the slippery planks.

THEN he saw the canoe, a dark smudge against the water. It was gliding away from the dock, picking up speed. Donovan sent another shot coursing in its wake as he ran; then he stumbled over an object lying on the dock and fell down.

This accident undoubtedly saved his life, for another rifle shot crashed out and another bullet winged its way through the night as he fell, a bullet uncomfortably close above his prostrate body. By the time he struggled to his feet and knelt on the dock, emptying the chamber of his gun after the fugitives, the canoe was already swallowed up by the darkness.

Presumably none of the shots took effect. The outboard motor clattered steadily and the noise grew fainter and fainter as the canoe sped away.

Mechanically Donovan fumbled at the object over which he had stumbled. It was a dead body, stiff and cold. For a moment he thought that one of the fugitives had killed the other and made his escape alone, but by the light of a match, quickly extinguished in the wind, he glimpsed the still face of Benderson, the man whose body had been cast ashore from the wreckage of the Eagle.

The fugitives had taken Benderson's body from the canoe, not caring to be hampered by the extra weight.

Well, they had made good their getaway. Donovan felt a weary discouragement as he realized what this meant. They had slipped through his fingers and it would be days before he could pick up the trail again. Even if the freeze-up came at once, the ice would be unsafe for at least a week, and land travel was at its worst just now in the light snow.

Without the canoe he was helpless, and they knew it. The Eagle was wreckage, and they knew that.

"Licked!" muttered Donovan.

They had left two dead men behind—and perhaps a third, if any stock could be taken in the ravings of Larose. And the canoe was fully equipped with Donovan's own tent and his supply of provisions, enough to take them far on their way to safety.

The steady beat of the receding motor could scarcely be heard now. At last it died.

Donovan retraced his steps toward the shore, growling savagely. The fur would fly when he made his report to the inspector. He could imagine that official's scathing sarcasm, his blistering invective. And he would deserve it.

"Had 'em right where I wanted them and I sat down to talk it over, instead of clapping the cuffs on 'em then and there!"

There still remained Larose and the girl, who might be able to tell him something of what lay behind the strange events of Green lodge, but he had little consolation in that thought. Even if they could give him the solution to the mystery it would not help him recapture the fugitives.

He stamped up onto the veranda. The door was padlocked, but the key had not been removed and he was able to unsnap the lock.

Cecile had relighted the lamp in his

absence and in its glow he saw her kneeling by the body of Axelson. Pierre Larose himself, evidently feeling better, had got out of bed and had made his way to a chair in the outer room, where he sat rubbing his head.

The girl looked up swiftly. She read Donovan's crestfallen expression in a glance.

"They got away?"

The constable nodded and kicked the door shut behind him.

"Clean get-away," he said bitterly.

"They made off with my canoe."

"Bad fellers, dem," growled Pierre. "I guess dey kill that man I find out in the snow."

"You said something about that before," returned Donovan, but I thought you were raving."

"It's true," intervened Cecile. "It's true. That's how I came to be here. I saw him killed—"

"Who? You saw *who* killed? When? I don't get this—"

"Me, I find him out in the snow," declared Larose. "He's lying away in the bottom of a big drift. He's a city man, all dress' up in good clothes. W'en I fin' him I come right here to see w'at is the trouble and one of dose fellers hit me on my head—"

"They kept me here and wouldn't let me go," said Cecile, excitedly. "I saw him fall. I came here even before my father, and they made me stay. It was this man," and she gestured toward Axelson's body, "who struck my father—"

"Dis man he's lying out in the snow 'bout five hundred yards away," chimed in Pierre.

THE old trapper and his daughter were so excited, so anxious to tell their stories at last, that they interrupted one another continually

and Donovan could scarcely make head or tail of what they were trying to tell him. He silenced Pierre with a wave of his hand and turned back to the girl.

"Now, let's get this straight. Tell it to me from the beginning. I'll hear your story later, Pierre. Now—what do you mean when you say you saw the man fall?"

She became calmer.

"I saw the plane early this afternoon and I knew it had landed here."

"But the men said they came here yesterday."

"No. It was this afternoon. I heard the noise of the plane and I watched for it from our cabin. I saw it flying up from the south and it landed here. So I put on my skis and came over this way."

"Ah!" shouted Pierre. "So dat's how it was, eh? I see dat plane myself, me, w'en I was out on my trap line. I never t'ink it come here. By gar, dat's how dat feller—"

"Let Cecile tell it, Pierre. Go on, Cecile."

"The machine couldn't have been here very long," resumed the girl, "because I was just in sight of the lodge when I heard the engine again. Then I saw the plane taking off from the field up below the hill. It left the snow and went out over the lake and circled back and it seemed to be climbing higher when something went wrong. The plane went sidewise and then it went back again and went higher and higher, but all the time it seemed to be going from side to side as if the man couldn't handle it. And after a while, when it was away up in the air, it turned right over—"

"And crashed!" gasped Donovan.

She shook her head.

"No! It did not come down. But

a man fell out. I saw the whole thing." Her face was pale with the recollection. "He fell out and I could see him come down twisting and turning in the air until he fell into the snow in the field."

"But the plane! What happened to the plane?"

"It had turned right over in the air—what do you call it?—a loop-the-loop. And then it came right side up again and it flew away off across the lake toward the south."

"The plane didn't land again after the man fell out?" demanded Donovan in amazement.

"No! That's why I was so surprised. And I couldn't see any one around, but I saw the smoke from the cabin so I hurried down to see if there was any one here, so I could tell them."

"By gar!" exclaimed Larose. "So dat's how you come to be here! Me, I wonder 'bout dat. W'en I come in, I see you here, Cecile, and I cannot believe my eye—and den—bang! Dat's all I know until I wake up."

"What did the men say when you came to the cabin?" asked Donovan.

"They were quite polite, but they said they didn't know anything about the plane and they pretended that they didn't believe my story. Then one of them grabbed me and put me in this room and locked the door. I could hear them talking for a long time and one of them seemed to be in favor of letting me go, but the others were against it. I must have been locked up for several hours. Finally I heard one of them say that a man was coming down the slope and that he had found the body in the snow."

"Dat was me!" said Pierre.

"I started to scream then, but Muir came into the room and held his hand over my mouth. Axelson waited beside the door with a rifle. The minute

my father stepped inside the door, Axelson struck him down."

"Where was Green?"

"I don't know. I didn't see him."

Donovan considered the girl's amazing story. From her description of the airplane's flight it would seem that the man who had fallen to his death had been deliberately thrown from the machine—perhaps after a battle with the pilot. He had been thrown out, the plane had righted itself and flown away, and the men in the cabin had paid no attention.

"One fellow makes his get-away by plane, two clear out in my canoe, and the others are dead," muttered Donovan gloomily. "All I've got is the mystery."

CHAPTER VI

Out of the Sky

THE more Donovan tried to piece together the details of the extraordinary happenings at the Green lodge the more he realized the enormity of his carelessness in letting his prisoners escape.

What had brought these men to the wilderness in the first place, what lay behind the killings he did not know. He could not even guess, for all theories were improbable. But that night, after he had gone out with Pierre Larose and brought back the body of the man the old trapper had found in the drift he knew that he faced the most bizarre, the most inexplicable case of all his experience in the Northland.

The big, black-mustached stranger who had been hurled to his death from the airplane could not be identified.

Donovan searched the pockets of the man's clothing. He found a small quantity of money, a tobacco pouch

and the fragments of a broken pipe. That was all. There were no papers. The man's suit was ready made.

Pierre Larose and Cecile, who had been thrown into a state of horrified amazement when Benderson's body was brought up from the dock and placed beside the other victims, could suggest little.

"W'y was two of dose men dress' up in store clothes?" demanded Pierre, rubbing his injured head. "I cannot understan' dat."

"I think they were brought here as prisoners," said Cecile flatly.

Donovan had already reached the same conclusion.

"If they had been invited up here by Green in the ordinary way, just for a hunting trip, they wouldn't have worn their city clothes, that's certain. They may have been lured into that plane on some pretext and found themselves flying north before they realized it. And that means Green, Axelson and Muir framed the plot."

"They brought those two men up here to *kill* them!" exclaimed the girl, incredulously.

"It looks like it. They're dead. I think Axelson's death was a side issue. He was killed because he was frightened and was ready to double cross his companions."

"But dis man," said Pierre, indicating Benderson's body, "was in dat launch. If dey was brought here to be kill' dey would bot' be kill' at same time."

Donovan shrugged. "That's the strange part of it." He looked down at the broken body of the other man. "Thrown from an airplane. Maybe *he* was double crossed too."

All their discussion was fruitless. It was Cecile who finally suggested that she and her father return home. Pierre

Larose had recovered from the violent blow he had received, and although there was a nasty cut across the back of his skull it was evident that he had suffered no serious injury.

"My mother will be worrying," the girl said apologetically to Donovan. "You do not mind if we leave you?"

"YES, I guess you'd better go along," agreed Donovan. "You can't do any good by staying here with me. I'm up against it. I'll just have to leave these bodies here tomorrow and start south on foot."

He knew what would happen when he reached the railway. He would never come back to the Spider Lake country as a member of the Mounted.

The girl sensed his discouragement. He felt her warm hand laid on his shoulder.

"Never mind," she said softly. "Perhaps everything will be all right. It was not your fault."

"Try and make the inspector believe that," said Donovan, wryly.

At length they departed, the girl erect and confident on the slender skis, old Pierre trudging along on snowshoes. He stood on the veranda and watched as they disappeared beyond the pines. Then he went back into the lodge.

He was alone with three dead men, and the mystery that underlay their deaths only emphasized the galling recognition of his own failure.

Donovan set about exploring the cabin. In the kitchen he found, to his surprise, a considerable quantity of provisions. Much of the food had not even been unpacked. Green and his satellites evidently planned an indefinite stay.

"And somehow," mused the constable, "you tricked those poor devils

into the plane and brought them up here to die."

The girl's story that the black-mustached man had fallen from the airplane puzzled him. How did the man come to be in the plane, dressed as he was, without flying togs, without even an overcoat? How did Benderson come to be in the launch, also lightly clad?

These thoughts and others ran through his mind as he continued his search.

Green's cabin was so well equipped and furnished that it was ready for occupancy at a moment's notice. There were blankets on all the beds, firewood beside the kitchen stove. And in one of the bedrooms Donovan made a discovery.

He found three suits of clothes, expensive and well made. They were strewn about the room, as if hastily discarded. They had the appearance of garments but recently worn. And in the cupboard he found a miscellaneous assortment of breeches, mackinaws, moccasins, heavy socks.

Donovan examined the suits. The pockets were empty. But inside one of the coats he found the neatly-lettered name of J. W. Green, and the tag of a New York tailor. Both of the other coats were tailor-made, but in each case the tag had been ripped away. Underneath the bed he found three pairs of good quality shoes, and in other parts of the room he found shirts, neckties, socks. In a closet he discovered hats and overcoats—one an expensive beaver coat.

Three of the men, therefore, had made a complete change of clothing when they arrived at the lodge. These three were Green, Muir and Axelson.

Benderson and the black-mustached

stranger had not donned the rough, heavy garments of the North.

THIS discovery opened up a new line of thought, and Donovan was whistling reflectively when he made another find—this time beneath the window seat of the living room.

It was a leather briefcase, and it was bulging with documents. When Donovan dragged it out from beneath the window seat and brought it over to the light he was consumed with excitement.

"I'll bet this is what caused all the trouble," he muttered as he unsnapped the catch.

An avalanche of papers slid out onto the table when he emptied the briefcase. They were crisp, official-looking documents, and when he examined them Donovan was astounded at the wealth that lay before him. Securities, stock certificates, bonds—that briefcase held papers representing many thousands of dollars, besides scores of slips that he recognized as voting proxies.

Examining the latter, he found out that they were made out in favor of Mr. Green, of New York. And when he looked over the bonds, certificates and other securities and roughly estimated the staggering sum they represented it dawned on him that he had stumbled on the solution of the Spider Lake Mystery.

Green had absconded.

That was the answer. He knew nothing of Green's affairs, save that the man was a capitalist, a wealthy man, prominent in the affairs of many international concerns. But Donovan knew that many men of wealth had been hard pressed, even ruined, following the stock market crash—and here

was Green fleeing by plane to his wilderness refuge with a briefcase crammed with riches.

But where did the other men enter the affair? Three men had changed into bush clothes when they arrived at the cabin; two had not. And these two had been murdered.

Donovan puzzled over the confusing and contradictory elements of the situation for a long time. The briefcase yielded no further information. Guesswork proved nothing. Axelson might have told, but Axelson had been silenced.

Wearily, at last, he went to bed. When he extinguished the light he was uncomfortably conscious of the sinister presence of the three dead men. Their very silence seemed to mock him.

He had failed.

TIM DONOVAN was so tired, however, that even discouragement could not keep him awake. He dropped instantly to sleep and nine hours passed in a flash, for it seemed that he had scarcely closed his eyes before a strange, thrumming sound brought him back to consciousness.

It drew nearer and nearer, like the humming of a gigantic bee, and he blinked drowsily. He saw that the room was flooded with gray light and he knew that it was morning, but the insistent humming still puzzled him.

Then, suddenly, he sprang to his feet, tingling with excitement. He was quite awake now.

The humming had increased to a roar, almost directly overhead. Donovan ran out onto the veranda. With a deafening roar the airplane sped above the cabin, then circled away out over Wolverine Bay. It banked and came soaring back toward the shore.

A long, graceful glide and the plane

slipped down, skimming just above the snowy field; it dipped, its skis kicked up a great flurry of snow, and then the plane settled, taxied across the surface and gradually came to a stop.

Donovan could scarcely believe this good fortune. He was hustling into his clothes in a desperate hurry; he loaded his revolver; then he dragged the body of the black-mustached stranger into one of the bedrooms and closed the door.

The clamor of the plane had died away. The deep silence of the wilderness again settled down.

Through the snow, swinging down toward the cabin, came a figure in helmet and goggles.

Donovan was waiting.

CHAPTER VII

The Forced Flight

DONOVAN hooked his thumbs in his belt; his hand lurked conveniently near the butt of his revolver. After a while he could hear the scuff-scuff of footsteps in the snow; then came a stamping on the veranda; the door opened.

The gloom of the cabin in contrast to the intense white light of outdoors left the pilot momentarily blinded. He stood there blinking for a moment, peering at Donovan.

"Hello, stranger!" said Donovan. "Where did you drop from?"

The pilot's hand had made an instinctive movement toward his hip. Then, realizing that the other man was a constable, he evidently thought better of it, but it was plain that he was confused and frightened.

"Hello!" he gulped. "Where's Mr. Green—and the others?"

Donovan shrugged. "That's what I'd like to know. Sit down."

"Aren't they here?"

"Two of 'em," replied Donovan, gesturing toward the bodies.

The pilot started violently. "What the hell?" he exclaimed. He strode over to the bodies of Benderson and Axelson, mouth agape. "Say! They're dead! What's been going on here? I've stepped into something, eh?"

"You sure have. Sit down."

The man hesitated, then obeyed quietly.

"What's your name?"

"Flack."

"Where do you come from?"

"Quebec City."

"Were you here yesterday?"

"No."

"Why are you here now?"

"I was sent up by the office."

"What office?"

"Great Northern Airplane Company."

"Why?"

Flack shrugged. "I don't know. I suppose I was sent in to pick up some passengers. Is that them there?" And he pointed toward the bodies.

"Maybe. Was one of your company machines in here yesterday?"

"Not that I know of. I wasn't told anything. The superintendent simply showed me a map and told me to fly in to Wolverine Bay and report to Mr. Green."

Donovan nodded. "I see. Well, there's been some trouble here. I'm in charge. You'll take your orders from me."

"Trouble is right. I didn't know I was going to run into anything like this. Is Green one of those fellows? How did they get killed?"

"The fewer questions you ask, the better."

Flack looked sulky. "Oh, all right. You can't blame me for askin' ques-

tions. It isn't every day a guy runs into a mess like this."

"No," said Donovan, "it doesn't happen every day. However, you'll learn all about it after a while. Right now I want you to take me up for a little flight."

"Where to?" asked Flack, suspiciously.

"Out over the lake. Mr. Green and one of his friends went out in the canoe last night and they haven't come back. I want to find them."

Flack looked at him steadily.

"Queer business," he muttered. "Well, I'm not arguin' with a cop, but I wish I knew what it was all about. I'll take you up. Come along."

"Good. I'm glad you're reasonable about this, Flack."

"Why shouldn't I be reasonable?"

"You might have your own ideas. I can take the plane up myself, you know, but I didn't want to do that unless it was necessary."

Flack looked surprised.

"You can handle the stick, eh?"

"Three years with the Ontario Forestry Service," returned Donovan, casually.

HE left Flack to digest this bit of information. The pilot would think twice before trying any duplicity if he thought Donovan could take over the controls. And Donovan, who was not taking any one on trust, was not exactly sure of Flack even yet.

Donovan turned toward the table to pick up his gauntlets. And at that moment Flack launched his attack.

The constable was wheeling about just as Flack came plunging toward him, but the sudden onslaught caught him off guard and he went crashing back over the table beneath the other man's weight. Before he could re-

cover, Flack's fist had crashed into his face, an arm had hooked about his throat, with his free hand the pilot was grappling for Donovan's revolver.

Donovan put all his strength into a violent lunge that sent him clear of the table, but Flack clung to him like a limpet. Donovan battered his opponent with short, jabbing blows to the body then managed a hook to the head that sent Flack staggering.

Donovan's hand flew to the holster, but Flack was plunging in at him again before he could get the weapon free. The pilot was a big man, heavily-built and strong, in good condition, every bit a match for the hard-bitten constable. A stunning blow caught Donovan on the side of the jaw; he covered up under a rain of blows and then they wrestled about, crashing into the table, against the wall, until finally they went banging into a chair that overturned and they went sprawling on the floor.

Then it was a matter of kick, gouge and pummel, with no quarter and no rules recognized. They fought their way completely across the room, sometimes on their feet, but more often than not rolling wildly on the floor in a welter of plunging legs and swinging fists. Both men were hampered by the weight of their outdoor garments, but each had the urge of desperation.

Donovan's face was bleeding, his ribs were sore from the battering punches of the other man, his knuckles were raw; Flack, on the other hand, was in no better shape and one eye was almost closed. But they fought on, crashing against the table, against the wall, against the fireplace, almost rolling into the embers.

The constable managed to struggle to his feet. Flack, wavering, came after him, staggering forward with his fists still moving mechanically. Donovan

fell back, dodged, and got the revolver free from the holster. But a wild swing of Flack's arm knocked the weapon out of his hand; it went spinning across the room and clattered to the floor beneath the window.

THEY dived for it simultaneously. Flack was quickest and pounced upon the weapon, but Donovan launched himself on the other man with a growl and hurled him aside. The revolver itself was ignored as the battle was resumed with new ferocity. They rolled over, punching wildly at one another, until they went beneath the table.

A random blow caught Donovan full in the throat with such jolting force that he felt suddenly sick. All the strength seemed to go out of his body. He sagged back limply and he was conscious of Flack scrambling across the floor toward the precious weapon.

Flack must not have it. By a supreme effort of will Donovan conquered his flagging muscles, rolled over and over, crawled slowly out from beneath the table, face swollen and bleeding, crawled after the other man.

The pilot's eager hand swooped down on the revolver. He, too, was exhausted from the struggle, scarcely able to grip the weapon in his bruised and broken fingers.

Flack swung slowly around to face Donovan. The revolver roared. But Flack's hand trembled with weakness and Donovan lunged sidewise as he saw the finger press the trigger. The bullet missed its mark and in the next instant Donovan's arm shot out, he gripped the other man's wrist, the revolver crashed out again, but the muzzle had been twisted toward the ceiling. With his free hand Donovan struck the pilot cruelly in the face.

He tumbled back, gasping. The revolver was in Donovan's hand wrenched from the other's grasp. Flack made a feeble lunge to recover the weapon, but Donovan eluded him, struggled and covered the pilot.

"Up with 'em, Flack!" he panted. "You're through."

Flack's eyes glinted as he estimated the odds against another attack. He knew he was beaten. He rose slowly and painfully from the floor, then held his hands aloft.

"Well?" he growled.

"You made a bad break that time," said Donovan. "Now I know you lied. You're in with Green and his crowd. Maybe it's just as well. I know where you stand now. You're going to take me in that plane, Flack, anyway!"

"Yeah?"

"You're going to take me up and we're going to scour the countryside until we catch sight of Green and his pal—if they haven't been drowned already. No more monkey business now! I've got this gun and it's loaded. I'll use it in a split second if you don't obey orders. Get that? One false move while we're in the air, and I'll shoot you and take over the controls myself."

Flack shrugged.

"You win," he said sullenly.

"I know it. Get going!"

Donovan gestured curtly with the revolver. Flack limped past and made his way toward the door. Donovan followed with the weapon leveled at the pilot's back. In this manner they trudged through the snow up the slope and out onto the white field where the plane lay at rest.

WITH the constable's revolver still covering him, Flack sent the machine skimming across the snow ten minutes later, rising from

the surface of the plain and skimming out above the bay.

Tight-lipped and grim, Donovan crouched in the little cabin. The harsh countryside, with its inhospitable reaches of rock and snow and forest dropped away beneath them. The sprawling contour of Spider Lake showed black and stark against the white background of the snowy wilderness.

His keen eyes scanned the great, lonely lake. As the plane sped swiftly through the air he gave a murmur of satisfaction. The freeze-up had already hit the Narrows, at the southern end of the lake. A narrow band of white lay between the trees from shore to shore.

This meant but one thing. Green and Muir could not return to civilization by canoe.

Anxiously he gazed down at the enormous sweep of countryside to the south. The plane sped low. Tossing waters, little clumps of trees, great reaches of snowy plain rushed away beneath.

CHAPTER VIII

The Capture of Mr. Green

PRESENTLY Donovan caught sight of the canoe, a black speck on the water north of the Narrows, while it was still far ahead.

Exultantly, he prodded Flack with the revolver. The pilot replied by a surly nod. The plane roared on, eating up distance, swiftly overtaking the fugitives.

At last it passed directly over their canoe, flying at a height of about a hundred feet. Donovan could see Green and Muir waving their arms. He grinned. No doubt they thought Flack had come out to rescue them.

The plane banked, swung around in a wide circle, gained altitude while Flack surveyed the country beneath. The machine was equipped with skis, but at this in-between season of the year it was not always possible to find a landing place. The smaller lakes of the North were frozen, but large bodies of water such as Spider Lake were still open. One had to seek an open plain.

It was this fact that had convinced Donovan that the pilot lied when he said it was his first trip to Wolverine Bay. He would never have attempted the flight with skis had he not known of the open field back of the Green lodge.

About half a mile east of the lake, divided from the larger body by a narrow ridge, lay a small lake. It was little larger than a pond, but it afforded sufficient space for landing and take-off. Flack gestured curtly toward it.

Donovan looked down. The canoe, he saw, had changed its course. It was now heading toward shore.

The fugitives were moving into the trap.

The plane dipped and soared above the little lake, came lower and lower, finally glided gently down to the white surface. A cloud of snow rose before the skis and then the machine settled down, rocking from side to side, taxied a little distance and stopped.

Flack shut off the motor. The roar of the plane still rang in Donovan's ears in spite of the heavy silence.

"Well," growled Flack, slipping the goggles up on his forehead, "there they are."

"We can wait. It will take them about half an hour to get over here."

The pilot stared sullenly ahead. Donovan had relieved him of his revolver; he was unarmed and at the constable's mercy.

"I should 'a' cracked up this crate when we came down," he said bitterly.

"I guess you figure your neck is just as valuable as mine."

"More," snapped Flack.

"To you."

They waited in silence.

"Maybe you'd like to tell me why you came up here this morning," suggested Donovan.

"I did tell you. Company orders."

"I happen to know the markings. This isn't a Great Northern machine. It's a private plane. Does Green own it?"

"Better ask him," snarled Flack.

"I'll do that, all right."

DONOVAN eyed the top of the ridge. There was no sign of the other men yet. But they would come. They would come, thinking that Flack, their ally, waited for them alone.

Judging by the distance they had traveled in the canoe they must have camped on the shore overnight. With the frozen Narrows confronting them, faced by a long overland journey on foot, they would welcome the appearance of the plane as a providential gift.

And at length they came.

Over the ridge, down the white slope leading to the little lake trudged the two dark figures, plunging through the snow.

"You'd better get out!" ordered Donovan. "Stand beside the plane and keep in sight. One word of warning to either of those men and I'll drill you."

Flack muttered a curse, but scrambled out of the pilot's seat and opened the cabin door. He dropped out into the snow. He looked back, saw that Donovan's revolver was leveled at him, and waited submissively.

The other men had reached the shore

of the lake. They trudged across the level surface. Green was ahead, hands thrust deep in his coat pockets. Muir was plainly jubilant.

Donovan crouched at the door of the little cabin. Each man was covered.

"Not a word out of you!" he growled at Flack.

The pilot remained silent.

The others drew nearer. Donovan did not see Flack's hand come up sharply in a warning signal, but he knew something had gone wrong when he saw Muir halt suspiciously.

The next moment Muir's revolver was out. Donovan fired over the man's head. At the same instant Flack dodged, ducked and fled toward the tail of the plane out of Donovan's range of vision.

Muir was standing uncertainly, revolver half raised. Donovan leaped out into the snow.

"Put 'em up!" he shouted.

Muir's hands rose slowly.

"Drop that gun!"

The revolver fell into the snow. Then something whizzed through the air. Donovan felt a stunning blow on the temple. Only his heavy fur cap saved him from being knocked unconscious by the wrench Flack had hurled at him.

As it was he was rendered groggy by the blow; the snow swam before his eyes. Muir and Green were only hazy figures. He was dimly aware of Muir retrieving the revolver from the snow, and then he was knocked staggering by the impact of Flack's body as the pilot plunged at him.

They went down in a flurry of snow. Donovan instinctively pressed the trigger of the revolver again and again. The shots rang deafening in his ears, but his arm had been seized in an iron grip and the bullets went wild.

Through his mind flashed the conviction that this time he was indeed beaten. Three men against one! He knew that there could be but one ending to this combat.

FLACK was wrenching at the revolver. He tore it from Donovan's grasp, grasping it by the barrel, but before he could reverse the weapon Donovan was after him like a wildcat. The revolver crashed into the constable's face, blinding him with pain, as the two men rolled over and over in the snow. It came down again, this time on top of his head.

Donovan was still clinging to Flack, vainly trying to regain possession of the weapon. A violent lunge and he was flung aside. Flack was struggling away from him. Donovan sprawled in the snow. He floundered, trying to rise, and then his outstretched hand touched a metallic object. The wrench!

His fingers closed about it. He was aware of Flack struggling free, panting. Through a misty haze he saw the revolver coming down again. Somehow he dodged the blow and managed a last despairing lunge. The wrench crashed down on Flack's head with the last vestige of Donovan's strength.

The pilot slumped suddenly into the snow, unconscious.

Donovan scrambled to his knees, hastily seeking for the revolver. The other men had been very slow in coming to the pilot's help. And then, as he snatched the weapon from Flack's limp hand, he learned the reason.

Muir and Green were staging a little battle of their own. They were fighting desperately in a cloud of snow a few yards away.

Donovan could scarcely credit this stroke of fortune, but he wasted no time wondering at the cause. He got

to his feet and plunged through the snow toward them. His revolver covered the struggling pair.

"Break loose!" he snarled at them. "Break loose and get your hands up!"

Slowly they fell apart. Covered with snow, gasping, they got up. Muir's hands went in the air.

"You too, Green!" snapped Donovan. "I've got you!"

A look of surprise came into Green's bleeding face. And it was matched by the surprise on Donovan's countenance when Green merely panted: "Yes—thank God!"

CHAPTER IX

The Plot

WHEN Flack, sullen and subdued, with aching head, dropped the plane on the meadow back of Green lodge later that morning, Donovan found Pierre Larose and Cecile there to meet them.

Donovan, gun in hand, ushered two crestfallen prisoners out into the snow—Muir in handcuffs, Flack cowed by the menace of a weapon.

Mr. Green, however, was not a prisoner. He trudged along at Donovan's side, spluttering expressions of gratitude.

"I can still make it. I can still make it," he was saying. "Thanks to you, constable. We can reach Montreal this afternoon and I'll be in New York to-morrow morning."

"W'at has happen'?" Pierre was clamoring. "You bring dose fellers back, hey? Good! Now we fin' out all dis trouble."

But Cecile's curiosity was lost in her concern for Constable Donovan, whose bruised and battered face presented a most unlovely appearance. When they reached the cabin she busied herself

heating water and she insisted on attending to his injuries before a word of the story could be told. In these ministrations she was hampered by Green's ejaculations of delight as he recovered his briefcase and found the contents intact, and by his frequent insistence on shaking Donovan's hand.

The briefcase, it appeared, had been at the bottom of all the trouble.

"Kidnaped!" explained Green excitedly. "They kidnaped me. Look! I made a special trip to Montreal for these securities to tide my corporation over. And these proxies! They're from the Canadian shareholders and they give me the voting control I need. The board of directors meet in New York to-morrow. If I miss that meeting I'll be frozen out."

Donovan, feeling better for the soothing touch of soft fingers, said quietly to Cecile:

"You'll have to be patient. I can't let Green say too much. We'll have to get out of here right away. You'll hear the whole yarn when I come back."

"You are going away—now?"

"We can't lose a minute. I'm going to make Flack bring us out to Montreal. He doesn't know it yet, because he doesn't know we found that body in the snow, but he's going to be turned over to the police on murder charges when we get there. And Green has to make the New York train. I'll get a plane and fly back to-morrow."

So it was not until next day, after Donovan returned to Wolverine Bay in a chartered plane, that Pierre Larose and his daughter heard the whole story of the Spider Lake mystery.

"It was a plot to ruin Green," explained Donovan, "and it was engineered by an unscrupulous group of financiers trying to get control of his

corporation. They were trying to force a merger of the corporation with their own firm, and Green would have been forced out.

"Green had been forced into such a position that he had to raise not only a large amount of cash, but also the voting support that would enable him to keep control at the annual meeting. He stole a march on his enemies, located certain Canadian shareholders who owned large blocks of stock, got their proxies in his favor and also realized sufficient cash to hold the fort. He was on his way back to New York when his enemies played their last card. They kidnaped him."

"But how?" asked Cecile.

"Green had with him his private secretary, Benderson, and a private detective named Hogue. He had chartered a plane to bring them back to New York, but his enemies learned of this and had a plane of their own waiting in its stead. Flack was in charge of this machine, and before Green realized what was happening he found himself being whirled north to his own cabin, where Muir and Axelson, who came in a few days previous, were waiting. The plot was to hold Green here until after the annual meeting. By that time Green's absence and the disappearance of the huge sum of money he had raised would definitely settle the fate of his corporation.

"That was how Benderson and Hogue came to be dressed in city clothes when their bodies were found. You see, both the secretary and the detective managed to put up a fight and escape when they reached here. Benderson got out in the launch and was heading south when Flack shot him just as the boat got under way. In the excitement Hogue disappeared. He had made his way back to the plane and

was hidden there. When Flack took off to return south, where he could check up on developments and report to his superiors, Hogue tackled him in the plane, but Flack managed to wrench open the cabin door, bring the plane into a loop, and Hogue fell to his death. Axelson was killed by Muir because he had become frightened and was about to double cross the others."

"But w'y did not M'sieu Green tell you all dis w'en you came to the cabin?" demanded Pierre, astonished.

"He didn't dare. He was dealing with desperate men. Muir would have dropped him with a bullet. Muir forced him to escape in the canoe at the point of a gun."

"I know," nodded Cecile, solemnly. "They told me, when you came to the cabin, that they would shoot my father if I breathed the truth."

"So now," concluded Donovan, "Flack and Muir are in jail, charged with murder, and Mr. Green's fortune is saved. By the way, Pierre, he said to tell you to move into the lodge as caretaker from now on."

After Pierre's delight had subsided in some measure, the old trapper said, curiously:

"You mus' be very brave man to let dis Flack run dat airplane when he knew he was to be put in jail when he got back to Montreal. Mebbe he try to upset and kill himself and everybody."

"It did worry me a bit," confessed Donovan, "but you see I told him I had been an aviator too."

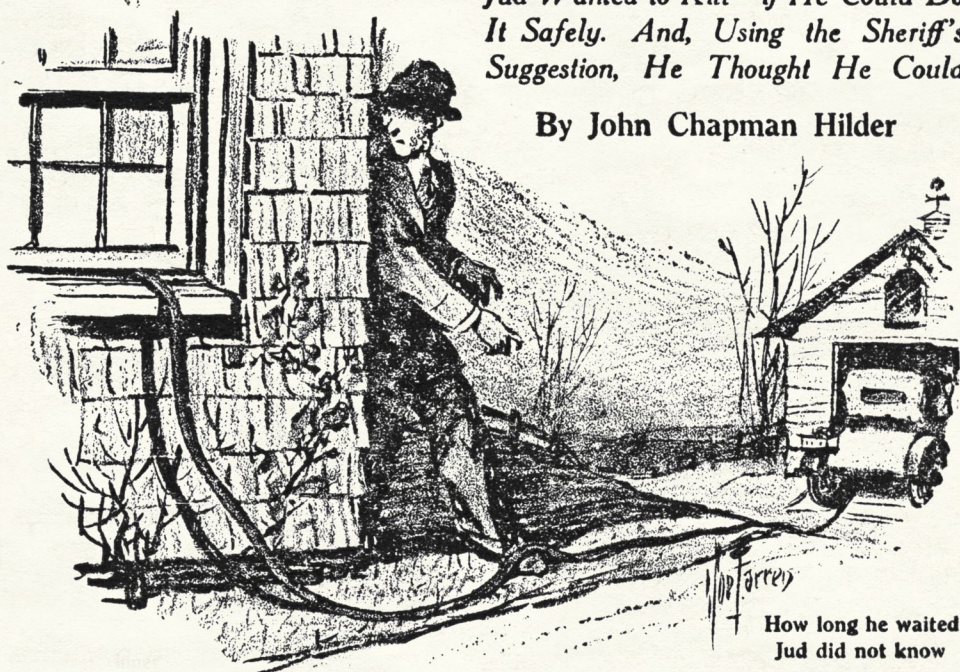
"I never knew you were an aviator," said Cecile.

"Neither did I," grinned Donovan. "When I made him take me up to go in pursuit of Green and Muir it was the first time I'd ever been in a plane in my life. You've got to run a bluff once in a while in this game."

Outside the Reckoning

Jud Wanted to Kill—if He Could Do It Safely. And, Using the Sheriff's Suggestion, He Thought He Could

By John Chapman Hilder



How long he waited
Jud did not know

ALL through their silent supper, Jud Weed tried to keep from looking directly at Lem. He was afraid his brother, who could have crushed him with one calloused hand, might read his purpose in his eyes. Though not hungry, he forced himself to eat, lest his lack of appetite awaken the other's suspicion. And, while he choked down the food, he examined in his mind, for the thousandth time, the details of his plan. As before, he could find no flaws in it. Yet, as each minute brought closer the time for its execution, he was beset by doubts. In almost every murder he had ever heard of, some trivial, unforeseen mistake had betrayed the murderer. Suppose he had not thought of everything . . . He shivered.

It was not so much the prospect of

what he intended to do that made him shiver, as the prospect of being caught. It was not the vision of Lem lying dead that turned his blood to ice, but the vision of a court room and a solemn judge—and himself on trial for his life.

After supper, when he had washed the dishes, a chore that had fallen to him since their mother's death, Jud went into the parlor. As usual, his brother was half dozing in the rocker, with a farm paper on his knee and Tom, his old cat, perched on his shoulder. Jud hated that cat almost as much as he hated its owner. It was deaf and half blind, a toothless, repulsive creature. Malevolent, too. Though he had never harmed it, for fear of his brother's wrath, in some occult way it seemed to sense and reciprocate his hatred, arching its back and

spitting whenever he drew near. It did so now.

ROUSED by the animal's movement, Lem blinked at the lamp and rubbed his eyes. "What's the time, Runt?" he asked, yawning.

"After eight," said Jud. "I'm goin' to the pictures."

"All right. Who's stoppin' you?"

"Nobody," said Jud, licking his lips. "I'm only tellin' you, that's all—so if you hear noises around to-night you won't need to get excited."

"What's the matter—'fraid of gittin' shot?" The other sneered. "Don't worry. When I sleep I sleep. Wouldn't waste a cartridge on you anyway."

Clenching his fists, Jud flung out of the room. It was always like that. He could never say a word to Lem without being sneered at. That was one of the reasons why he was going to kill him. . .

As he drove up the grade leading from the barn, Jud's nerves were taut. It seemed to him that the motor, which he had worked hard to make quiet, was full of new taps and clicks. If only he had had money enough to buy a new car . . . But that had been out of the question. At any rate, he was familiar with this one; could depend on it to keep running as long as there was a drop of gas in the tank. That was something. It would be quiet enough, probably, when it was warmed up.

Part way along the dirt lane between the isolated farm and the paved highway, he stopped the machine, got out and felt around in the undergrowth behind a stone fence. Then, satisfied that the rubber hose he had hidden there had not been disturbed, he drove on toward town. Once on the open road, with the motor pulling smoothly, his confidence

flowed back. It was as though the car whispered to him: "With me to help you, you can't fail."

FOLLOWING his plan, Jud parked his car in a conspicuous spot in the village. He visited the drug store and the smoke shop, making purchases in each. Then he sauntered up the street to the theater, stopping for a word with Will Everett, the sheriff, and old Dr. Martin, who were standing outside, chatting, following their almost nightly custom. Neither man had any love for him, Jud knew, though both were civil enough whenever he talked with them. It suited his purpose to do so now.

"First show still runnin'?" he inquired casually.

The doctor nodded. "Going to take in the second?"

"Yep," Jud assented. "Can't seem to get to town early any more. Too many chores."

"Everything all right up to the farm?" asked the sheriff.

Jud caught his breath. "Sure," he replied. "Why not?"

"No reason," said the sheriff. "Wondered how you two was hittin' it off, is all."

"Oh," Jud said, inwardly squirming under the man's gaze, "we get along, I guess . . . Well, reckon I'll be goin' in. Night folks."

As he turned toward the ticket booth, Jud felt them watching him, and for a moment his hand shook, so that he dropped the half dollar he had been about to lay down at the wicket, and, in the moment it took to retrieve the coin, fought for self-possession.

Recovering himself, Jud took his ticket and sauntered up the theater lobby. The two men watched him briefly, then faced the street.

"Kinda jumpy to-night, that young feller," said Everett, after a few puffs at his cigar.

The doctor assented. "Been that way ever since he came back from New York," he remarked. "Guess that two-year term he served didn't help his nerves any."

"No—an' livin' with that roughneck brother don't help much neither. Reckon Lem don't give him much chance to forget he's a jailbird. Keeps a-rubbin' it in. Thinks Jud's too scared to do anything. I warned him once. 'You want to leave him alone,' I told him, 'because if you don't you're like to wake up some fine mornin' with your throat cut.' But hell, you can't tell that bird anything . . . Not," he added, "that anybody'd care a particular damn what happened to either of them two. One's 'bout as bad as the other, when you come right down to it."

"It's hard to believe poor Myra could have had sons like that," said the doctor. "She deserved better, hard as she worked to keep things going after Wes died."

"Too easy with 'em," said the sheriff. "That was Myra's trouble. I told her so, many a time. But she wouldn't listen to a word ag'in' 'em. You can't tell a woman nothin'."

"Sometimes you can," demurred the old doctor. "Remember that good-looking hired girl the Harringtons brought down last summer? Well—she came pretty near marrying Lem Weed."

"Probably she would have, if I hadn't found out in time. You see, Lem came to my office one day and asked me to look him over and began bragging about having taken this girl away from some other fellow. And I thought to myself, 'there's a girl don't know what she's getting into.'" The

doctor chuckled. "None of my business, of course, but I tipped off Harrington and he managed to talk her out of it."

As the first-show audience began to straggle out of the lobby, Dr. Martin looked at his watch, bade the sheriff good night and drove home. Inside the theater, Jud Weed, who had been standing at the rear during the last of the main feature, took a seat well toward the front. Soon the lights went out and the newsreel started.

II

JUD neither saw the scenes flickering before him, nor heard the voices of the actors. His brain was occupied with pictures of its own—more vivid and more absorbing than those on any theater screen. As if in a slow-motion film, he could see himself, deliberately, carefully, carrying out his plan.

Concurrently there flashed into his mind swift glimpses of other scenes—the whole bitter sequence that so far had made up his life. There was his venture to New York in an effort to escape the grind of the farm under the dictatorship of his brother. There was his futile attempt at burglary, followed by capture and imprisonment; and the return home.

There were the countless moments when, stung by Lem's unveiled contempt, he had been on the verge of assaulting him, but had been held back by fear. He could see, as plainly as though it happened that day, Lem's cold-blooded shooting of his hound pup, because it had chased old Tom, the cat.

In a blind fury Jud had tried to wrest the gun from Lem, to turn it on him, but the other had flung him to the ground and laughed in his face.

After that Jud had pretended to be beaten and had swallowed Lem's insults in sullen silence. But he was not beaten; he was merely biding his time. And then, one day, the way out had come to him. It had come, ironically enough, from the sheriff's suggestion of a good method for exterminating moles. A very successful method for killing animals—or men.

At last the show was over and the lights roused Jud from his brooding. Walking leisurely, he went to his car, stopped at a filling station for gasoline, and drove out of the town. Turning off the main highway, he stopped to pick up the coils of hose concealed in the brush beside the lane and went on slowly over the mile of dirt road that led to the farm. The last hundred yards being downhill, he was able to coast, at snail's pace, right to the barn.

LEAVING the motor running he crept to the house, to reconnoiter. Two of the three windows in the ground floor bedroom were closed. The third was a few inches open. He crouched beneath it and listened. From within drifted the measured cadence of snoring. Hearing that, he lost his last vestige of nervousness.

Returning to the barn, he lifted the rings of hose out of the car, cut the tape with which each was tied, and, laying two on the floor, began carefully to uncoil the third. When at last the three were stretched in a line, from barn to house, with their brass connections tightly screwed together, Jud stole to the open window to listen again. The snoring kept on, evenly, as before. The parlor clock struck the half hour, but the sleeper did not stir. Jud thanked his stars there was no telephone.

He stole along the strip of grass

bordering the lane and once more entered the barn. Wrapping a strip of rubber from an inner tube around the end of the hose, he jammed it firmly into the exhaust pipe of the car. Setting the hand throttle so that the motor speeded up just a trifle, he then made his way stealthily back to the house. All was quiet within, except for Lem's snoring. With extreme care, hairbreadth by hairbreadth, he lowered the window until it was open only about an inch. Then he reached down, found the free end of the hose, slipped it through the aperture into the room and drew the sash on to it. This done, he stood, rigid and alert, waiting.

How long he waited he did not know. It seemed an eternity. He heard the clock strike, but could not count its notes. Once, wondering if the car had failed him, he tiptoed to the barn. But the motor was still softly hissing, distilling venom for the long snake that had its mouth in the farm house room. Jud resumed his vigil.

The air was very calm. From afar the mournful hoot of a locomotive and the baying of some lone hound were carried faintly to his ears. Near by a cricket chirped. Suddenly Jud's scalp tingled and his blood congealed. The bed creaked violently. He held his breath. Again the bed creaked. His heart stood still. Then came another sound—a ghastly, drawn-out, strangling moan, followed by a heavy crash. Then silence.

For some minutes Jud leaned against the house, shaking as with an ague. But when presently it began to rain he pulled himself together. He could not afford to lose his nerve now. He hid the hose and stood looking at the ominous bulk of the house. Sooner or later, he realized, he would have to go inside—but not yet—not before day-

break! He spent the time until dawn in the barn, sitting on the running board of the car, huddled under a horse blanket.

WITH the first faint light, he roused himself, stamped his feet and rubbed his hands to quicken his blood, and went into the yard. It had stopped raining now, but the sky was heavy and lowering. The trees and bushes dripped and the ground was yellow with fallen leaves.

Jud braced himself, walked stiffly to the bedroom windows, opened them wide, stepped quickly away without looking in. Then he opened the other ground-floor windows, the front door and the kitchen door. If the gas had seeped through the house, he would give it plenty of chance to escape. For the next hour or so he busied himself about the place—milked the cows and turned them out to pasture, fed the chickens—the usual morning chores. These tasks done, he ventured into the kitchen and sniffed. It smelled much as on ordinary days, though a little less stuffy, perhaps. The fire was out in the range. He shook the grates, threw in a few sticks of wood and set the coffee pot on the front ring to boil. He could not safely delay much longer. If he did not drive to the village early, to get the doctor, it would look queer.

The coffee was thin and watery, but he drank two scalding cups. Then, summoning every ounce of will power, he went to the bedroom door, threw it wide and forced himself to gaze at the thing that lay grotesquely sprawled across the faded old rag rug. Stepping gingerly over its outstretched arms, he lowered the windows and backed out of the room. Then, hurriedly, he closed all the other windows and doors and raced to the barn.

He need not have driven all the way to the doctor's house. He could have telephoned from another farm, down on the State highway. But he didn't want a crowd of the curious to come, nosing about the place, filling the air with their chatter, insatiably asking questions.

Dr. Martin was eating breakfast when Jud arrived. His wife showed the visitor into the musty office, with its ancient roll-top desk and its white, glass-fronted cabinet of glistening instruments.

"Tell him to come quick," Jud begged her, twisting his wrinkled felt hat in nervous fingers.

The doctor came in at once, holding a napkin. He was a tall man, become stooped from bending over beds with a stethoscope. He peered at Jud from under shaggy gray brows.

"Ah, Jud," he said. "What's the trouble?"

"It's Lem," Jud blurted. "He's dead—I just found him—"

"Dead! Lem dead! What happened—an accident?"

"No—no accident. He didn't get up early, like he generally does. So I went to his room and found him—on the floor." He fixed his eyes steadily on the doctor's.

"Humph," commented the latter. "Well, well. All right. I'll come right up." He put on a seedy black topcoat and picked up his well-worn bag. "Cup of coffee before you go? You look a mite shaky."

"I'm all right," said Jud. "Goin' to come in my car?"

"You go ahead," said the doctor. "I'll be right behind you." He started for his garage, then reentered the house and telephoned the sheriff. "Will," he said hastily, "Jud Weed's just come in—says he found Lem dead—yes—"

lying on the floor in his room. Yes—seems funny to me, too. I'm going up now. What? No, make it about half an hour."

JUD drew a breath of relief when he got into the car. The worst was not yet over. The big test was to come. But already he felt a shade easier. He had confronted another human being, had talked to him, actually had told him his brother was dead. Doc Martin had seemed a little surprised, but not unnaturally so. After all, people had to die and Doc Martin was used to deaths.

While the doctor was making his examination, Jud paced up and down in the parlor. It took only a few minutes by the clock, but they were longer than any minutes he had ever spent, longer even than those of his vigil the night before. Suppose his whole scheme had been based on a mistake! He had read that the external signs of exhaust gas poisoning were similar to those of heart disease. But what if that was not always the case? What if Doc Martin could tell at a glance? He broke out into a sweat. He looked at himself in the mirror and was shocked by his haggard face and bloodshot eyes. He did not hear a car coast to a silent stop outside the house.

At last Dr. Martin appeared at the parlor door. "Help me lift him onto the bed, will you please?"

Jud licked his dry lips and followed him into the bedroom. As he touched

the body, cold through its nightclothes, he shivered violently. It was very heavy. The bluish tinge of its features gave him a feeling of nausea.

"What was it, Doc," he asked, "his heart?"

"That's certainly what it looks like," replied the other, meeting his gaze levelly. "It's strange, too. When I examined him last summer, his heart seemed as sound as a dollar."

Jud felt an icy hand clutch at his own heart. Here was a factor he had overlooked.

"Maybe," he suggested desperately, "maybe he strained it—he was lifting stone yesterday—"

"Maybe—" said Dr. Martin, "and maybe not . . . I kind of think we've got a case for Will Everett," he added, as the sheriff came quietly into the house and stood in the doorway. "Your brother Lem may have had an attack, from lifting stone. But that would hardly explain this—" Swiftly the doctor bent down and drew from beneath the bed the stiffening form of old Tom. "Possibly the cat was lifting stone, too. It has the same symptoms as its master."

"If you'd had wit enough to look under the bed this morning you might have got away with this murder. But the game's up now, Jud Weed . . ."

Jud Weed gasped. For a moment he stared wild-eyed at the telltale corpse of the cat. Then he knees buckled and he slumped into the arms of Sheriff Everett.



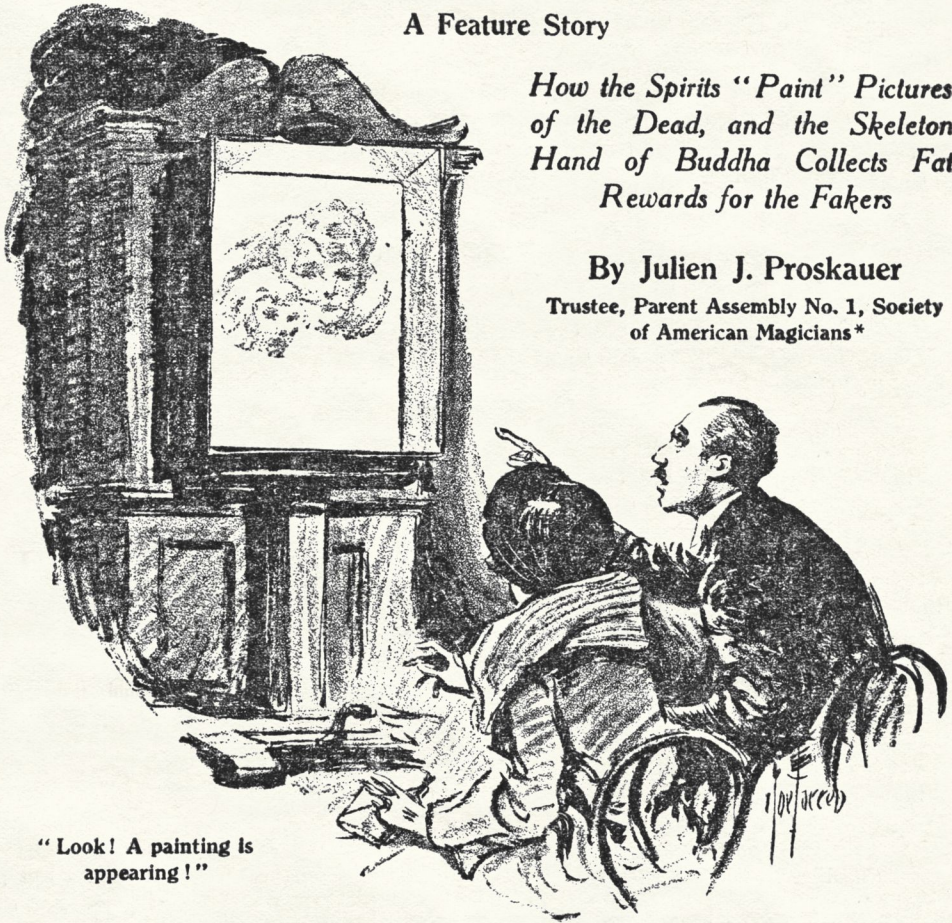
Spook Crooks

A Feature Story

*How the Spirits "Paint" Pictures
of the Dead, and the Skeleton
Hand of Buddha Collects Fat
Rewards for the Fakers*

By Julien J. Proskauer

Trustee, Parent Assembly No. 1, Society
of American Magicians*



"Look! A painting is
appearing!"

GEORGE BORDEN LAMBERT was one of the shrewdest traders on the floor of the Stock Exchange. He was wealthy, and well liked. But tragedy had thrown a dark shadow over his life. The year before his wife had died. And a month ago his daughter had followed her mother.

Lambert, on account of his wealth,

had become a mark for religious quacks and fortune tellers of all description, but he was an extremely intelligent man with a keen business mind, and not to be taken in.

One evening, however, he dined with an old friend of his and Mrs. Lambert's, a widow, Florence Rhoades, and met at her apartment a Captain Fitz-

**All the events narrated in "Spook Crooks" are true, and their details appear on police blotters or in the records of investigations made by the Society of American Magicians coöperating with police and prosecutors. Names and places are disguised, to spare the feelings of the victims. DETECTIVE FICTION WEEKLY, now aiding in the exposure of fortune tellers and fake mediums, wants readers who have been victimized by these charlatans to write to this magazine and describe their experiences. Your name will be held in strictest confidence, and the powerful Society of American Magicians will privately investigate.*

gerald, former British army officer. Captain Fitzgerald was a fascinating talker. He had been stationed in Singapore for many years, he said, and later had served at an inland Indian post. He had picked up innumerable stories of India, and Mrs. Rhoades and Lambert spent the evening listening to his singular tales of mystery and occult science practiced in that shadowy and exotic country.

It was a few days later that Mrs. Rhoades called Lambert up and said that Captain Fitzgerald wanted them to meet a friend of his, an Indian Yogi. Lambert at first demurred, but he admitted a curiosity and finally consented.

Florence Rhoades was waiting for him at her apartment that night. The lovely and vivacious widow was quite fascinated at the prospect of meeting the Yogi, and Lambert began to catch her interest. They were talking about it when Captain Fitzgerald was announced.

"Good evening," said the captain, bending low over Mrs. Rhoades's hand and giving Lambert a salute. "I have arranged everything for to-night and trust that the fondest hopes of all of us will be realized. I understand that conditions right now are exceptional for a test, for Rhandi—that is the Yogi's name—told me on the telephone this afternoon that he had got some exceptional results lately with spirit portraiture."

"Spirit portraiture?"

"Yes; the spirit medium, while in a trance, gets in touch with an artist who is in heaven, and through this spirit's endeavors reproduces a portrait of a lost one on any ordinary artist's canvas."

Lambert smiled a little skeptically.

"It is a fact," the captain said. "I have seen this done in Bengali when I

was stationed near there nearly twenty years ago. In this instance the Maharanee, wife of a near-by Maharajah, had died, and there was no picture of her. High caste male natives of India rarely had their photographs taken, as they believed some of their soul went into the snapshot. The male rulers did have portraits done in oils to preserve their features for posterity, but women never were painted or photographed in those days.

"The Maharajah was just learning the English idea of having photographs or paintings of loved ones about him, and had his wife lived a little longer he would have defied the precepts of his ancestors and had a picture taken of her. After her death, he was inconsolable because he had no likeness of her.

"About four months after the death of the Maharanee, there came to this prince of India, one Rabjha, an officer of the Rajput bodyguard of the Maharajah. A Rajput, you know, is a Hindu of the warrior cast whose creed is 'death before dishonor.'

"This fighter told the Maharajah of a disciple of Tiresias, the blind sorcerer of the time of Buddha, who, by using his supernatural powers, reproduced on parchment, or a specially prepared skin of a lamb, a portrait of any one, living or dead.

ACCORDING to the traditions of the students of Tiresias, any seeking help had to make a pilgrimage on foot to the home of the disciple, so the Maharajah and I, accompanied by a bodyguard of fifty horsemen, set out early one morning for the home of the disciple in the hills. At last we came in sight of the hut of this modern oracle. In front of the door burned a smudge pot.

"Advancing alone, on foot, the Maharajah disappeared through the smoke and entered the hut. He was gone for fully twenty minutes, when he reappeared with a gaunt, lean figure of a man who might have been a hundred years old. His face was heavily lined with furrows and wrinkles. He was unclothed except for a loin cloth.

"There were several moments of intense silence, then the sorcerer mumbled some sort of heretical imprecation which was followed by a string of words designed to shock the listeners. As we all watched the parchment we were startled to see, before our eyes, the face and features of a woman appearing. When you understand how careful the high caste in India are to have the faces of their women hidden, you will realize the strangeness of watching the portrait of a woman none of us had seen slowly appearing before us.

"The Maharajah cried out, 'It is she. It is my queen.' We were spell-bound. We had seen a miracle performed!

"Faster and faster, the colors began to fill in on the parchment until, in less than twenty minutes, there was a completed portrait that the Maharajah proclaimed was a perfect likeness of his dead consort.

"To end the story, we returned to town, and for a solid week there were special prayers and fasting in honor of the wizard. This Yogi whom we will visit to-night is said also to produce spirit paintings of one's lost ones. To-night's visit is simply to make arrangements."

Lambert was impressed.

"Fitzgerald!" he exclaimed. "If this man can get me a picture of my wife and little girl, I'll make him a rich man."

"No," the captain said. "These Yogis despise money. They simply want to exist. They have no idea of the value of money nor the desire for it. Don't you talk money with him. Let me arrange that."

II

ON a brownstone three-story building that bore evidence of the first signs of decay was a small, dignified sign that stated:

**DR. RHANDI ALAMHA
YOGI DISCIPLE
BY APPOINTMENT ONLY**

Captain Fitzgerald rang the bell, which was one of the ancient twist type, and shortly the door was opened by an attendant in a twisted turban, leather puttees and coat of many colors. He bowed to Florence, saluted Captain Fitzgerald courteously, and nodded to Lambert. "Dr. Rhandi awaits."

The attendant led them into a hall, turned to the left, and lifting some heavy curtains, motioned the guests to enter a room and showed the visitors to seats. At one end of the room was a slightly raised platform, behind which were draped British and American flags. In the center of the platform was a huge cabinet, and in front of this was a small standing lamp.

From an entrance to the left of the platform there stepped a short, thin, dignified figure dressed in occidental clothes. The attendant salaamed, and announced to the three guests:

"Dr. Rhandi Alamha, the master, bids you welcome."

Salaaming once more and touching his head, lips and breast in the salute of the Hindus, he withdrew. Rhandi came forward, took Florence's hand, and greeted the others while he held it, an unusual feature, for the oriental

races do not take or shake hands as we do.

Captain Fitzgerald explained in detail what Lambert wanted.

"My friend the captain," Rhandi said, "perhaps over-exaggerates my humble powers. It is true that I have been, and shall be again, in touch with the spirit world, as you call the heaven where dwells the departed. On many occasions I have received messages, and on others had portraits appear out of the nowhere.

"If you wish a serious test, I will be glad to arrange one for you. To-night there is little I can do, for I did not fully realize from what Captain Fitzgerald told me on the telephone just what you wished. Would a minor test be of interest to you?"

"Doctor," Lambert said, "please do something to let me know that some kind of communication with my wife and child is possible. Mrs. Rhoades also wants to converse with her late husband."

"Very well," Rhandi agreed. "For a simple test, I wish you'd think of something you would like to learn from those who are gone. Concentrate. Watch me."

The Yogi drew a small mirror from his coat pocket, handed it to Lambert, and said:

"There is nothing on that mirror. If the spirits wish you to have a message from beyond, they will bring it. Think. Concentrate. Breathe on the mirror. Breathe your thoughts!"

Lambert breathed on the mirror. Almost simultaneously white letters flashed across the face of the mirror.

*Darling. We both long for you.
We will send our pictures to you
from the spirit land. Love,
Fanchette and Mary.*

Lambert's hand trembled. The unexpected swiftness of the spirit writing, and the use of the first names of his wife and daughter unnerved him.

"Do not fear," the Yogi said. "This is but a simple proof of communication with the other world. Now, I would like Mrs. Rhoades to try."

He took another mirror from his pocket.

"Examine it carefully," he told Mrs. Rhoades as he handed it to her.

Florence looked at it carefully, back and front. All she could see was her own image.

"Concentrate. Think. Take a deep breath. Exhale!"

Florence exhaled. On her mirror there jumped into view, in the same shaky white hand writing:

Flo, Sweet:

*I've awaited your coming.
Come again. Regards to George.
All my love, Ed.*

FOR the last ten years of Florence Rhoades's life no one had ever seen her at a loss for words. She was now speechless.

"My friends," the Yogi broke in, "you have seen but a little of the possibilities of spirit communication. If you are interested further I suggest that to-morrow one of you come prepared for a serious test, a test that will show just how far I can go. I believe Mr. Lambert should try it first for he seems to be so anxious for further mediumistic development.

"Mr. Lambert, please bring with you to-morrow a piece of canvas such as artists use. This should be nailed on white pine strips one-half inch square. The canvas should be exactly fourteen inches by twenty-two inches. I will then see what can be done to get

a spirit painting for you. Maybe I can get an artist in spirit to give you an actual painting of your lost ones in the same manner my control spirit brought the messages to-night.

"I am giving you both these mirrors on which appears the spirit messages. Before the sun is here in the morning the messages will be gone. Perhaps there will be a trace left, but the main part will have vanished. Put the mirrors where too much light will not strike the writing and perhaps it will last longer.

"Permit me now to ring for my attendant, who will escort you to the door. I am too exhausted after even short séances like this to talk very much. Remember the size canvas I want, and be here at this hour on tomorrow."

He would accept neither thanks nor money. Abruptly he left the room.

Next day Lambert stopped at an artists' supply house on East Twenty-Third Street on his way to Mrs. Rhoades's apartment and purchased the canvas the size the Yogi had ordered. He watched the small pine strips being placed on the back and then carefully carried it himself to Florence's living room.

III

IT was eight o'clock exactly when Lambert and Mrs. Rhoades arrived at the Yogi's house. Admitted by the same attendant, ushered into the same room, they were greeted there by Rhandi, who was reading a huge book seated at a table in front of the cabinet.

He nodded to them, and resumed reading. The attendant explained that he was offering up a prayer, and would soon be with them. He further stated that the cabinet was the same as those

used in the last decade for spirit manifestations, but that the doctor used it only when he was seeking the aid of a spirit artist, for, the attendant said:

"When the doctor is ready he will introduce a large frame and shadow box in which he will insert your canvas. Then, if he is successful, you will see a spirit paint a portrait, the features of the spirit subject taking shape in color without brush or paint being visible."

The doctor finally stopped reading and came to his visitors. He seemed to be absorbed in his thoughts, for his greeting was most perfunctory.

Taking the package containing the canvas which Lambert had brought, the doctor gave it to his assistant, who carefully unwrapped the bundle. He then measured the canvas, examined the pine strips and pronounced them satisfactory. The Yogi was now ready to proceed.

"My friends," he said in a low voice, "you have come here to test the ability of those loved ones in the other world to come from behind the veil, to delve into the mysteries of spirit portraiture, and to try to cross the uncharted course between this life and the next.

"Do not reproach me if I fail, for what I propose to do has never been done before. One face has often been painted by spirit hands, but two at once! Many times have there been failures when one has been greedy and tried to ask too much of those of the spirit world. Now, we ask that the faces of a loving mother and daughter who are together in the Beyond come forth in earthly colors on this canvas which the dear husband and father has brought. Can this be done?

"Well, I can but try. If I fail, it is but the will of Buddha. Watch me closely and carefully. I place this canvas in your hands to hold until I am

ready. Mr. Lambert, don't once take your mind off your wife and child."

RHANDI mounted the few steps leading to the platform. His assistant stepped forward bringing with him a modernized version of the old-style shadow box, in which precious oil paintings were always hung, and an artist's easel. He placed the box on the easel, in front of the cabinet. He then placed a small light before the cabinet so that its rays fell directly on the shadow box. The assistant then salaamed to Rhandi and left the room.

The Yogi asked Lambert to bring him the canvas, which the broker had been holding.

"We are ready," the doctor said. "I will place this canvas in the shadow box in full view of you. We will then put out all lights save that falling directly onto the canvas. Keep your thoughts concentrated on your loved ones."

Holding the canvas in its frame above his head, the Yogi walked directly to the cabinet.

"I place this canvas in the shadow box. So. You now see your canvas in place. I leave the platform and lower the lights."

Rhandi walked to a light control box in the rear of the room and put out all the lights save the one which was burning brightly before the cabinet. Florence and Lambert had followed his movements with fascination.

"Before we go ahead," the Yogi said, "I wish Mr. Lambert would mark the canvas he brought in some manner that will instantly identify it, for, if we are successful there will be such furor created in the scientific world that I will need the word of a man as well known as you to substantiate my claims."

Lambert signed his full name across

the back of the canvas, high up, where Rhandi told him to write it.

This done, the Yogi started a prayer in what sounded like Arabic. After several minutes of what seemed to be intense strain on the sorcerer's part, he ceased his unintelligible chant and in English said:

"Watch, my friends of the occult! My prayer is o'er. My labors done. In the hands of Buddha the Omnipresent, the great Artist who made this Universe, rests what is to be. What is willed, happens. What is forbidden, doesn't.

"Watch closely. Keep your eyes on the canvas. Oh, protector of the poor, and guide of the ignorant, oh, Buddha who knows we are but dust on the face of the earth, send Thou mystically the painting of the two in Spirit whose likenesses we seek."

With eyes glued to the canvas, with his heart thumping, Lambert watched. Suddenly a flash of what seemed to be brown hair appeared on the blank canvas!

He gasped. He grabbed Florence's hand.

"Look! A painting is appearing!" Florence was spellbound.

Slowly but surely the picture of a woman appeared on the canvas.

Not a brush was seen, not a hand was visible. It was truly a "spirit painting."

IV

MY fortune is yours," Lambert cried, "to carry on this work—"

Rhandi stopped him.

"Silence," he commanded. "Wait until this portrait is finished. It may not be your wife. Besides your child is not painted yet. Stop. Not another word until I speak. Do not spoil our

chances of success in getting a double portrait. Silence is essential."

Lambert subsided. Slowly but definitely the lines of another face were appearing. The red of the bloom of cheeks, the delicate brown of the hair, the sparkle of the blue eyes of Lambert's daughter were shaping up in the frame.

The picture of the two faces was finished. It was Mrs. Lambert and her daughter. There was no question about it! They looked as they had when alive, but in their expressions was an intangible something that indicated a supreme happiness which was beyond earthly understanding.

The light over the shadow box seemed to flicker. A sudden breath as though of cold air from a tomb seemed to be wafted through the room. The silence of the grave. Then:

"O! Buddha, my friend and counsellor," Rhandi prayed, "I thank you for this miracle Thou has performed. I beseech Thee, however, to do one more thing for Thy unworthy disciple. Let the painted ones speak. Let their voices be heard. Let the lover left behind know they are happy."

Lambert cried:

"No, no! It is too much! I can not stand it!"

But from the very center of the painting, in a childish voice, came these words:

"Daddy, Daddy dear. It is Baby. I am happy with mother in Spirit. Come to visit us often. Here's mother." And as the voice died away, another voice was heard in a low contralto.

"I knew that some day you would pierce the veil that separated us, my dear one. In Spirit I am happy and watching over you."

Lambert's sobs shook the room! Rhandi ran back to turn on the light,

and as the flood of the wall fixtures illuminated everything, Florence put her arm around Lambert and comforted him.

She was as shocked and nervous as he. There was no doubt but that the portrait was of Lambert's wife and child.

Lambert asked in a broken voice:

"May I go on the platform and examine the portrait?"

Rhandi consented and took his client to the cabinet and, calling the attendant who had left the room before the séance, told him to take down the shadow box and easel. Lambert examined the still wet canvas, noted that his signature was on the back exactly where he had placed it, and was satisfied no trickery or fraud had been perpetrated.

"You can take this portrait with you to-night," Rhandi said, "if you'll wait five minutes while I have Hassan, my man, put glass on it and frame it."

WHILE Lambert was waiting for the picture he and Florence conversed with the Yogi on the occult and spiritualistic cults. They were greatly impressed when the Yogi stated it took from twenty to thirty years to master the fundamentals of spirit communication.

"I'm so interested in this supernatural art," Lambert said. "I could stay up all night listening to it."

Rhandi lifted his hand, smiled and said:

"The strain of an evening like this, my friend, leaves me on pins and needles for days and even weeks to come. I will shut myself up after you leave me now and not be seen again for a long, long time."

"But, doctor," protested Lambert, "how about the charges for these two

sessions, and how about Mrs. Rhoades's visit? She wants to get in communication with her late husband. When can she do that?"

"In about ten days or two weeks, provided she wants a regular séance. Perhaps a simple rapping hand answer will do." Turning to Florence, the Yogi said. "In my library is a rapping hand, so called because you speak to it and it answers by raps. One rap is for 'yes' and two raps mean 'no.' If the question you have in mind is one that can be answered positively in the negative or affirmative, maybe this session will end your visits for some time."

Florence eagerly took up the Yogi's offer.

"I'd love to ask the hand a question."

Rhandi smiled his enigmatic smile.

"Very well," he said. "Come into my library and we shall see what we shall see."

All three adjourned to the second floor of the Yogi's home. Here they entered a room curtained entirely in black. On three sides of the chamber were massive bookcases filled with heavy books.

There was an oriental, sensuous and heavy atmosphere.

"Be seated," the Yogi invited them. "I will get the Spirit Hand."

HE left the room, and returned carrying a glass plate about one inch thick, and a skeleton of a hand.

Placing the hand on Florence's lap, without as much as a "by your leave," Rhandi held the glass before him.

"This plate," he said, "is of solid glass. I tap it with this pencil to prove my statement, and now ask you to examine it. I also want you both to look at the hand of one long since dead. I obtained this hand in Orandhi Shrine,

in India, where for five hundred years it has answered all questions asked it, under odd circumstances which I will relate.

"In this Orandhi Temple, where the natives held it to be the hand of the Old One Himself, there was a priest of the Sardini sect who had taught me the art of concentration. This holy man was at least one hundred years old when I first knew him and as he was a celibate, had no family, he lavished on me all the pent-up natural paternal devotion which never had an outlet.

"About fourteen years ago, when I was home, I visited the Orandhi Shrine, and found my old friend and teacher at death's door. He greeted me most tenderly. Just before he died, he told his fellow holy men that the powers of the Rapping Hand would pass away on the moment of his passing on, and suggested that they bury the spirit hand miles away from the shrine, so it would not bring the Evil One back to earth.

"The priest died, and with his going the holy men made preparations for the burial of the spirit hand. By some strange coincidence I stopped to talk to the new high priest who took my friend's place just as he was selecting those who were to destroy the hand. I explained that I was leaving for good, returning to the western world, and wanted to express thanks for all the shelter and hospitality the priesthood had extended to me.

"To my amazement he destroyed the list he was making up and gave me the hand. He asked me, when miles out at sea to throw it overboard. This was the best way of getting rid of it, he said. He further stated that he would put a blessing on me which the worst jinni or devil could not offset, so that while carrying the spirit hand I would

be under Buddha's protection and thus need have no fear.

"I accepted the spirit hand and the blessing. I reached the coast without difficulty and took the first boat for England. When about a thousand miles off the Indian shores I took the spirit hand out of the bag of homespun cloth in which it had been placed, and prepared to throw it out of the porthole.

"As I started to open the port, I thought, 'Is this a good place to throw the spirit hand away?' I was startled beyond belief when I heard two sharp raps on the dresser where I had left the hand. It had said 'No' in its own mysterious way! Turning to it, I asked, 'Is your power still with you?' A quick rap, 'yes,' was the reply. I knew then a miracle had happened! The spirit hand was still favored by God!

"Falling to my knees before it, I recited the litany of Buddha. Then I asked the hand, 'Have I offended you in any way?' Two raps clearly and distinctly indicating that 'no' was the answer.

"From that day to this this spirit hand has never been out of my possession. I rarely use it for affairs of my ordinary visitors. But now, for you, because of your friendship with Captain Fitzgerald, I shall let you put your question to it directly."

RHANDI took the glass plate and the spirit hand and placed them both on a corner of his desk before their eyes.

Taking up a board just the size of the glass, he rested the spirit hand on it. Taking four hard rubber posts, he placed one at each corner of the board, put the hand in the center of the board and placed the glass plate on the top of the rubber supports.

Walking to the other side of the

room, and standing directly in front of Florence, about three feet from her and ten feet from the ghastly arrangement of bones, the Yogi ordered:

"Think of your question, gracious lady! . . . Think of your answer, Heavenly Relic. If you are ready, rap once to signify readiness for the question. Twice, if not ready, three times if in doubt. Ready."

As Rhandi stopped speaking, Florence and Lambert watched the spirit hand with a sense of the uncanny, the unknown, filled with awe.

Rap!

The skeleton hand visibly pivoted on the wrist bones, and the fingers hit the board with resounding force.

"One rap, the board is ready!" said Rhandi.

"Concentrate! Quick! Your question!"

In a faltering voice, Florence asked: "Shall I marry again?"

Rap!

Florence caught her breath and ventured:

"Shall I wait long before I marry again?"

Rap! Rap! No, was the answer.

"Will I be happy?"

Rap! Yes.

"One more question," cried Lambert. "Tell us what will happen in Wall Street in 1932."

Rap! Rap! Rap! Doubt.

Smiling, the Yogi picked up the spirit hand and passed it to his visitors for re-examination, as he remarked, "Even the spirits cannot guess what will happen in the financial world."

As he handed the spirit hand to Lambert for examination, the doctor turned to Florence.

"Lady," he declared, solemnly, "you have witnessed two miracles—the portrait painting and the working

of the spirit hand that answers all questions. Remember this night above all other nights, for it is destiny that brought you here and fate that gave you word that you should reward. It is given to few mortals to see the gods at work!"

Lambert gave the spirit hand back to Rhandi, and stated:

"Fitzgerald said that he would make arrangements with you for the payment for all that you have done. Send him to me at any time. My address is 11 Wall Street, if he doesn't know it, and I'll be glad to have you set any fee on your achievements that you wish."

V

SEVERAL days later Fitzgerald called on Lambert and discussed the supernatural feats that Rhandi had accomplished, and also stated that Rhandi had been taken sick from the strain of the evening's communication with the spirits.

"I don't know just what you ought to give Dr. Rhandi," the captain said. "I should give him whatever you thought it was worth to you to have the portrait. He did say that he would like to go back to India on a visit to spread the tale of the double spirit painting. I figured the cost of this, and think between ten thousand dollars and fifteen thousand dollars would pay for everything. Don't think that the Yogi expects this, it's just my own idea. He certainly did perform a miracle for you. But I leave it distinctly up to you. Give what you will."

Lambert said earnestly, "You cannot imagine what the experience meant to me, the joy in seeing and hearing my wife and daughter. Let me give Rhandi the fifteen thousand dollars he needs to return to India."

He wrote out his check and gave it

to the captain, who said he'd give it to Dr. Rhandi in the morning.

The following day, Lambert took his spirit picture to a friend, an expert in an art gallery to get advice on the framing of it.

The expert looked at the portrait closely.

"Mine friend," he exclaimed in his Teutonic accent, "is it you have been doing funny things with this picture? It is not oil painting, neither water painting, is it? It ain't canvas on which it's painted. What is it all? I haf nefer seen such paintings. I cannot tell you what it is. Please make me an explanation of how you got it."

Lambert told of his experiences with the Yogi, and told him that the picture was a spirit painting. He started to tell of buying the canvas, but Heine broke in:

"I know, I know. It's so fake that I didn't understand at first. Listen, this is no spirit painting. This is no canvas. It is all muslin. Permit me please to tell you all about the trickery. You have been faked badly."

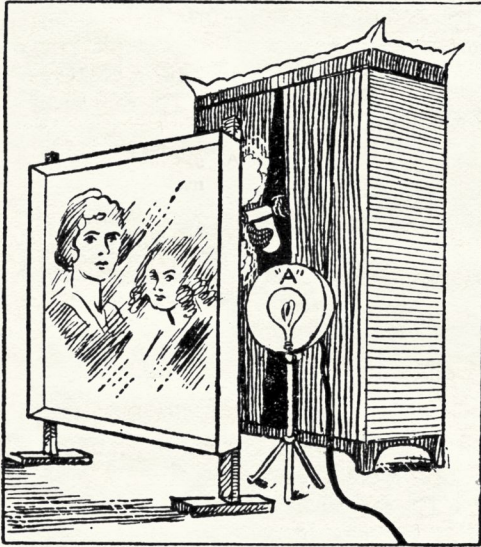
And without Heine's accent, here is the story the dumfounded Lambert heard:

"It is many years since I have seen anything like this, so I was misled. I did not know that so-called spirit paintings were in vogue any longer. Back in the first part of this century two sisters by the name of Bangs set up an establishment in Chicago. These Bangs sisters were famous mediums of their day. One invented the idea of delivering spirit paintings of the dead to credulous believers.

"Thus so-called spirit paintings came into existence. The Bangs sisters sold their paintings for from fifty dollars to, in one instance, thirty-five thousand dollars. They hired a fairly good artist,

and had him working eight hours a day turning out the portraits.

"I imagine this alleged Yogi, Dr. Rhandi, made this painting by much the same method the Bangs sisters used, which was most effective. There are several methods.



A "Spirit Portrait"

"The Bangs sisters set up the easel and shadow box in front of a spirit cabinet. They then took from the victim the canvas which he had brought, and one of them mounted to the platform with the canvas visible, even as your Rhandi did.

"This was then placed in the shadow box, but the attention of the victim was distracted for a moment or two so the entire shadow box and canvas could be switched for another. You will recall the Yogi walked to the back of the room and your eyes followed him. That was when the exchange was made, probably by the attendant. This new 'canvas' was then signed by the victim who could swear it was the one he brought and personally had bought.

"As soon as the exchange was made,

and the new canvas identified, the medium was ready to proceed. And the method was pathetically simple. On the substituted canvas, which was actually unbleached muslin, the complete painting which was to be reproduced was already painted, but not in pigments sold by any ordinary art store.

"The painting was done with chemicals! Sulphate of iron is used for the blue tones, nitrate of bismuth for yellow, and sulphate of copper for brown. These chemicals are mixed with fairly hot water in a very strong solution, the exact formula varying, for many different pieces of unbleached muslin require different strengths of the chemicals.

"The medium had already obtained the portrait which was to be reproduced, and had had a large photostat made of it. An artist then had painted with chemicals on the muslin the picture which the "spirits" were to reproduce. He then allowed the muslin to dry and the picture painted by the chemicals was absolutely invisible.

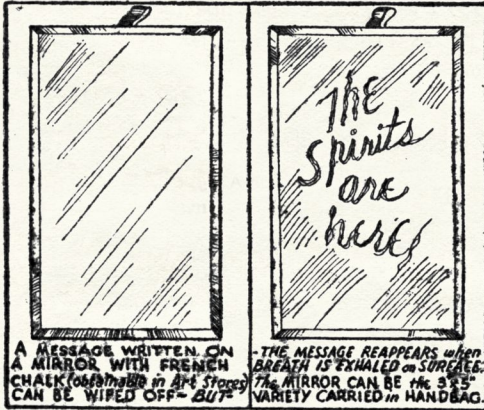
"This dried muslin, with the picture already on it, invisible, was back of the spirit cabinet in which was hidden the medium's assistant, who was dressed in black, a hood over his face. When the medium called the attention of the victim elsewhere, the unseen assistant made the exchange of the canvas to the prepared muslin.

NOW the hardest part of the trick. The hidden assistant had a huge atomizer which was filled with a solution of Prussiate of Potash.* He then carefully sprayed the back of the muslin with this reagent and as it penetrated, the chemical action it produced

*Another formula: Potassium Ferrocyanide for blue, Potassium Sodium Sulphocyanate for red, Tannic Acid for black, Sulphate of Iron. In this formula, Iron Chloride is used in the atomizer.

brought out the colors. Thus the painting already on the cloth became visible. It takes skill and care to get an even appearance of the colors by this method.

"The effect is weird. I don't blame you for being fooled."



"A Simple Proof of the Spirits"

"But I never gave Rhandi a picture," Lambert said. "I am certain he had nothing to go by, and these are certainly the features of my dead wife and child."

"I can't tell you about that," Heine replied. "But perhaps a friend of mine can."

The picture expert telephoned a member of the Parent Assembly of the Society of American Magicians, and introduced Lambert to him over the telephone. Their talk lasted for some time.

"Whee!" was the broker's comment, when he finally hung up. "He says that Fitzgerald was an accomplice and probably stole the pictures, or had duplicate prints made by the same photographer who made the original negatives. This magician confirms your story about the methods of making spirit paintings. He is on his way here now because he is very much interested in my story. It seems that there is a

campaign under way now to expose fake mediums' methods, and this magician is anxious to talk to me.

"This painting business had died out, he told me, but was revived this year in Brooklyn and now is gaining popularity all over the country. Fake mediums find it a great aid in their business, he said."

THE bell rang and a magician, who wishes to remain anonymous in this story, was ushered in. Lambert plunged into the story of his experiences with the so-called Yogi. And when he finished, the magician started an uninterrupted explanation of all the ghostly and ghastly stunts Rhandi had performed.

"Tracing back your experiences," the magician said, "let us start with the mirror episode, which impressed you greatly. I am willing to admit that this is a stirring means of convincing you that the spirits were at the faker's beck and call.

"This trick with the mirror is one of the oldest. I thought every one knew how it was done. You can do it with any ordinary mirror. All one needs is a piece of French chalk, which can be bought for fifteen cents at any art store.

"Sharpen this piece of French chalk to a sharp point. Then write anything you wish on the mirror. Now take a silk handkerchief, and brush the surface of the mirror until the writing is invisible. To make the writing appear again, simply exhale or breathe on the surface of the mirror. The writing jumps into sight immediately.

"The rapping hand story—why, rapping hands and rapping skulls have been used by magicians for years! Crooked fortune tellers and mediums lately have started using them. There are a dozen different ways of produc-

ing results with hands, but from your description I believe the method used by Rhandi was the electric system.

"This consists of a hand, or network of 'bones' to resemble a skeleton. The skeleton hand may be made of wax. Sometimes papier-mâché is used to get the proper ghostly effect, but no matter what material is used, the system, if it be the electric one, is the same.

* "In the wrist bones are concealed a quantity of iron filings, sunk beneath the surface. In the board on which the 'spirit hand' rests, below the surface of the wood, is an electro magnet. If you recall, Rhandi showed the glass base, but used it for a top, and placed the skeleton on the wood board, which was not shown for examination.

"When Rhandi placed the board in the exact position on the desk that he did, he placed it so that two very small, unseen contact points on the bottom of the board touched a negative and positive wire which ran up through the desk from a six-volt storage battery.

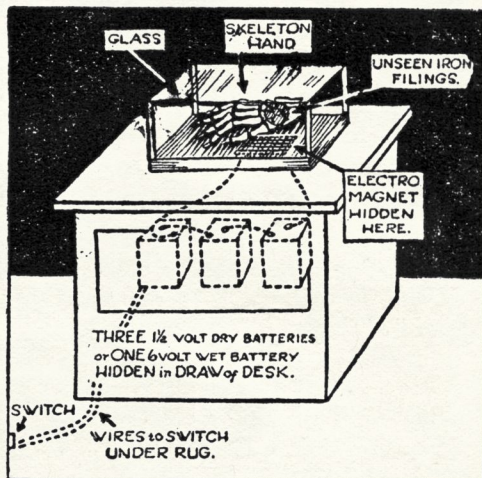
"When Rhandi stepped away from the desk, he moved to a position where under the rug, was a switch connected to the battery.

"By stepping away from the hand he removed any suspicion in the dupe's mind that he had anything to do with the raps. All he had to do to make the skeleton hand tap the board was to press the concealed switch with his foot. The eyes of the victims were on the spirit hand and not on him.

"THE tale of the 'Hand of Buddha' is one that has been told thousands of times before. As a matter of fact, practically as you have recited it to me to-day, does it ap-

pear in Fawcett's 'Home Study Course for Spirit Mediums.'

"Incidentally, a United Press dispatch sent over the wires on August 9, 1931, a story of the arrest in Pitts-



The Skeleton Hand of Buddha

burgh, Pa., of an old Negro 'preacher,' who conducted a home study course for spirit mediums and who charged fifty dollars for the lessons.

"Fawcett's book made up the entire course, it was said. As a side line, this minister sold, according to the United Press, love potions, rabbit foot charms, sticks for chasing devils, and sufficient other equipment to set any one up anywhere as a graduate medium ready to practice without further cost. Those who did not have the fifty dollars were sold the course on the installment plan of five dollars down and four dollars a week.

"The voices you heard coming from the lips of the painted faces were probably the recorded words of some women especially trained or coached for the occasion. In any store handling phonographic supplies one may buy specially prepared records on which may be recorded anything you desire.

* See DETECTIVE FICTION WEEKLY for September 19 to see how iron filings and a magnet are used with "spirit slates."

In your case, Rhandi probably engaged a woman or two to speak into the recording device and make the records used for the demonstration before you.

"You mention that there seemed to be a blast of cold air coming through the room as though to indicate the visit of a ghost. This was either your imagination, or Rhandi was working a stunt that some of the more celebrated mediums use. This consists in having a huge exhaust fan concealed behind curtains. When the effect of a change in atmosphere is wanted, these curtains are simply pulled back. The dead air being sucked out, gives the effect of cold air pouring in.

"Another stunt, of the same type, is to have several large cakes of ice con-

cealed, resting in large tins on the floor of the spirit cabinet. A powerful electric fan (that has been well-oiled and the blades so bent that little air resistance noise is heard) is turned on for a few seconds. This sweeps the cold wet air out into the room. Either the medium talks loudly or has music played to kill any noise of the fan.

"I have never found either of these methods very practical, but they have been used to my personal knowledge on many occasions, and maybe Rhandi used one of them. I do not know.

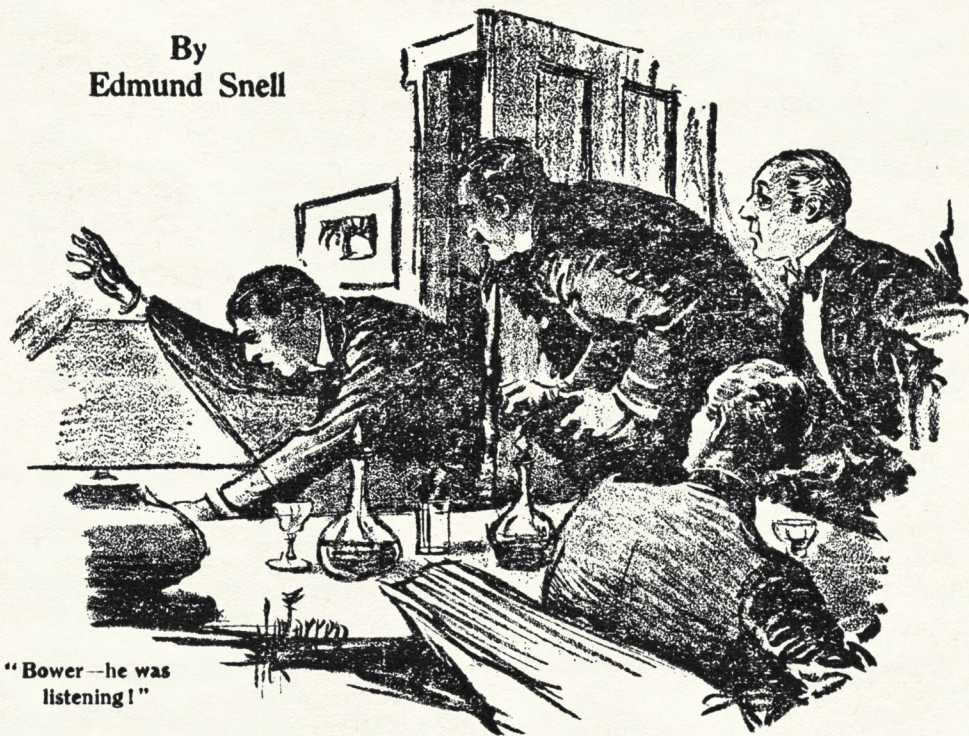
"I think I have told you enough of the fake spirit medium racket. You say you paid fifteen thousand dollars for this spirit painting. You were swindled!"

WATCH for the next "Spook Crooks" story in an early issue of **DETECTIVE FICTION WEEKLY**. Mr. Proskauer is going to expose more tricks of charlatans who prey on the susceptible and mulct the American public annually of \$125,000,000.



Three Doomed Men

By
Edmund Snell



"Bower—he was
listening!"

Chinese Pennington Uses a Daring Method to Guard a Man Who Has Received the Dread "Sign of the Scorpion"

IT was the day, I remember, after the blowing up of the yacht "Isis" in Cowes harbor, the luxury ship owned by the Anglo-Indian financier, Mr. Hugo Tremaine. The skipper of the Isis, together with seven of the crew had been involved in the disaster, and Tremaine himself had been actually alongside in a dinghy when the explosion occurred. The force of the detonation was such that scores of windows on the shore front were shattered and several vessels broke from their moorings.

I guessed, even before I received Chinese Pennington's wire from Ports-

mouth, that this must be the work of "The Yellow Jacket," the murder gang presided over by that arch-schemer and crazy idealist Chanda-Lung. On the face of it, there could be no other explanation.

Tremaine was a popular personality who had spent the greater portion of his existence in the East and contributed largely to Indian charities. He was wrapped up in India. It could only have been Chanda-Lung, with that fierce jealousy of his against Western domination, who would have wished to deprive him of his existence. And it was barely a week since Lord Adver-

sane and his guests at a private dinner party at the New Venice Hotel had been fatally gassed with Orlenite.

Instructing Clements, my man, to pack a bag, I hurried to my room and changed.

Detective Sergeant Hodges, of Scotland Yard, joined me on the train. Frankly, I was glad to see him. He was one of the few men I knew who could smile in the face of adversity, and one of the most powerfully built men, incidentally, that I have ever met. He shambled into a first class compartment, empty at that moment except for myself, and planted himself at my side.

"A bad business, Gray," he said, "although it might have been worse. Tremaine must have had the luck of the deuce. He was pitched into the water, you know, and clung to the keel of the upturned dinghy until a fellow in a motor boat came along and hauled him on board."

I nodded.

"What's brought you down?" I asked.

"Pennington wired Parsons. He's on the sick list for the time being, and so I came instead. Miserable weather, isn't it?" He dug out his pipe and scraped the bowl with a penknife. "Not that our going down there now is likely to do much good," he added with a touch of pessimism. "Chanda-Lung's like a snake. He just gets his fangs into somebody—and then sneaks off where nobody can find him."

"Pennington's cornered him before," I reminded him, "and he'll do it again."

MY companion grunted.

"You and I, Gray—and I know you'll pardon me when I say it—are just subordinates. We've got our uses, I suppose, although I be-

gin to doubt that sometimes. I'm told it's bad form for subordinates to criticize their superiors, but my opinion is that *our* superiors are getting a bit past it. Chanda-Lung's one too many for 'em. Look at the last job. Pennington picking up what he thought to be Professor Orlen in the Mile-End Road, and the 'Professor' turning out to be Chanda-Lung himself all the while! The old Pennington would have seen through that inside five minutes; so would the old Parsons. You twigged the game, or none of us'd be here now. What's more, if you hadn't had to keep your foot jammed in the door with the spring lock, you'd have had Mr. Chanda-Lung cold."

"I plugged the blighter in the arm," I interposed. "It was a Servicee bullet, too; one of those fat little lead fellows that spread. I've dreamed of that shot ever since! But you're wrong about Parsons and Pennington, old son. Chanda's disguise was good. It was only when his beard came unstuck that I tumbled to it."

Hodges lit up, filling the small compartment with fumes that would have disgraced the average luggage van, a peculiar brand of "shag" that he carried about with him in an old tin box.

"You may be right," he conceded grudgingly. "Personally, I hope you are. But this Yellow Jacket business is getting on my nerves. Give me the good old-fashioned brand of crime, the sort of thing I can get my teeth into. You find the motive—and you've got your man. Here, you know the motive and the man before you start, but you never find him! What's more, you know he's tucked away somewhere, laughing like blazes at his own devilish cunning!" Drawing a folded newspaper from under his arm, he glared into my laughing face. "You and I

may be the next, for all we know," he concluded heavily.

I saw him wet his thumb and shuffle through the top corners of the *Daily Post* until he had found the page he sought.

"Hullo!" he muttered, "we're moving!" He smoothed out the folds of the paper on his knee.

Suddenly he started violently and sat rigid, staring down at large black headlines and two things like labels, pasted neatly at the side. Glancing across curiously, I felt my heart miss a beat. The headlines dealt with the loss of the *Isis*, the affair which occupied our attentions at the moment. The labels were yellow, and each the size of the average playing card, and in the center of each was printed a small black "m," with a curiously barbed tail! Our names were there in full, too, carefully written in a woman's hand: "Henry Hodges" and "George Irvine Gray."

Hodges took out a handkerchief and mopped his forehead. The paper slipped from his knees to the floor. I bent down and recovered it. For some seconds I sat staring at those grim warning tokens of our enemy, the things that told us more definitely than any of their predecessors that Chanda-Lung and his Yellow Jacket gang were on our trail.

"Where did you get it?" I asked at length.

Hodges regarded me through a smoke cloud of ultra-pungent fumes.

"From a newsboy in a big cap outside the station. I lost my original paper getting off the bus." He peered under both seats, removed our bags from the racks and put them back again. "No bombs or gas-cylinders here," he announced, sitting down again. His hands gripped his knees

and he burst out laughing. "Here! give me mine," he added, snatching the paper back. "I'd like to keep it, and frame it! One of these cold mornings, when Mr. Chanda-Lung has had his last big breakfast at the expense of the State, I'll wake Mrs. Hodges and show it to her. 'Alice,' I'll say, 'just observe this carefully. This is what that man had the damned sauce to send me—on the day when I thought I was supposed to be chasing *him*!'" He eased off the label carefully and stowed it away in his pocketbook.

II

CATCHING the infection of his restored good humor, I laughed too. These grim warnings of death, dropping as it were from the blue, plunged us both oddly enough into a mood of reckless hilarity. Nobody passing along the corridor of the long coach would have guessed from our manner that we were men moving in imminent peril of our lives. And yet it was no laughing matter at all. The very names inscribed on those cards assured us beyond question that our movements were being carefully watched. That extraordinary intelligence department which Chanda-Lung controlled had undoubtedly been aware that Parsons was ill and Chinese Pennington already on the spot. Those names had not been affixed haphazardly by the man who had removed Hodges's paper as he left the bus and persuaded him to purchase another. I was convinced, on the other hand, that the writing had been there already and was that of Nadia Morani, Chanda-Lung's gorgeous decoy.

Pennington met us at our destination. I saw his tall, lean figure standing out from the usual crowd as the train steamed in. From the dark lines

under those oddly Chinese eyes I guessed that he had been up all night.

He had a car outside—a long gray *Hispano*, with a chauffeur in smart uniform sitting languidly at the wheel. “Tremaine’s,” Pennington told us as we got in. “He’s waiting for us now at the Southsea Palace. He had this in his pocket when the Isis blew up.”

And he showed us the third “Sign of the Scorpion” we had seen that morning!

We met Hugo Tremaine at lunch, a grayish, aristocratic-looking figure of more than average height, with a short, neatly trimmed mustache that toned with his hair and the gold-rimmed monocle screwed into his right eye. His suit was well cut, as one would have expected, gray, like his car, with a fine pin stripe. Both his face and his hands were deeply tanned.

“Well, gentlemen,” were his first words to us, “you heard, of course, that I had a ducking last night.” His tone changed abruptly and a shadow crossed his face. “But I’m sorry about Mullings and those seven. A bad business! A bad business!”

Nothing further was said of the affair during the meal. Tremaine and Pennington did most of the talking, which dealt mainly with the current rising in Assam. Hodges, a little overawed, I fancy, by the luxury of his surroundings, became victim to a pronounced shyness, and found difficulty in coping with his knife and fork!

I remember him shooting a portion of superbly grilled steak on to the carpet and looking up hastily to see if any of us had noticed.

Coffee was served in a small private sitting room, overlooking the green and the sea. It was a bright afternoon, in patches. The tide was in when we sat down, and big crowds were on the

front watching the spray. A paddle steamer wallowed over from the island and discharged its passengers on the Clarence Pier; a destroyer stole like a gray wraith eastward.

“Hunted for my life, eh, Pennington?” said Tremaine suddenly. “It’s a new experience for me.” He lifted his cup, sipped for a moment and put it down again. “This is really excellent coffee,” he pursued, as if the quality of the coffee was of far greater importance than his original subject. “Excellent! I’ll get Bower to find out how they make it.”

A man came in just then and handed him a card. Tremaine glanced at it and handed it back.

“Mr. E. Horrocks,” he murmured, smiling at each of us in turn, “of the *Northern Saturday Tribune*. Take him round to the back somewhere, Bower, and shoot him! Oh, and find out from the kitchen how they make this coffee.”

PENNINGTON sat back in his chair, rolling a cigarette dreamily.

“You haven’t told me yet, Mr. Tremaine, what you think of my scheme,” he said. “I advise you to accept it, because if you don’t I can’t give you more than twenty-four hours to live.”

The other raised his eyebrows.

“An ultimatum, eh?” he muttered. “I hope you are not serious.”

Pennington stowed a worn oilskin pouch back in a pocket, licked a gummed edge and smoothed it down with his fingers. I watched him go through the familiar procedure of clipping stray ends of fibrous tobacco with some rusted nail scissors, a pair which, to my knowledge, had been in his possession for at least a dozen years.

"You're a marked man, Mr. Tremaine," he returned solemnly. "Hodges here will tell you I'm no alarmist. If you'll do as I suggest, you'll not only be protecting yourself, but you'll be helping *me*."

The financier smoothed his chin.

"For how long exactly is this—er—deception to continue?" he demanded.

Pennington opened the fingers of his right hand to their fullest extent and closed them again quickly.

"A week," he answered. "That's all. Just a week. I've roped in my old henchman, Rabat-Pilai, once more," he shot at me in an aside, "and things are moving."

"Rabat-Pilai!" I stammered, visualizing instantly a little dusky scarecrow who had had his mouth slit at the ends while in the service of the Borneo police, and who was minus an eye and an ear. It was news to me that this extraordinary little man was in Europe. I was on the point of questioning Pennington further when he came to his feet and strolled with our host toward the door.

"You won't mind excusing us for a few minutes," Tremaine flashed back. "If you feel like liqueurs, order them."

As the door closed Hodges stared at me across a Moorish table.

"What's in the wind?" he demanded.

I shrugged my shoulders.

"Ask me another!"

Hodges seemed peeved.

"The question is," he pursued, "what am I here for?"

"Ask Pennington when he comes back," I advised. "He'll tell you right enough. Nice chap, Tremaine," I went on, changing the subject, "and an extremely nice lunch. Didn't you think so?"

Hodges pulled at the big cigar Tremaine had given him.

"It's all very well Penn saying things are moving," he growled, "but I'd be more satisfied to see 'em move." He left his chair and sauntered to the window, remaining there with his hands on the sill and his broad back toward me.

Half an hour elapsed and the door opened again. A man came in—a grayish, aristocratic looking figure with a short, neatly trimmed mustache and a gold-rimmed monocle screwed into one eye. His face was tanned; he wore a well-cut gray suit with a fine pin stripe.

"Please don't get up, Mr. Gray," said a voice which might have been Tremaine's, but the next sentence that he uttered was in the voice of Chinese Pennington. "How's the make-up, George?" it inquired anxiously. "Any good?"

Hodges at the window whistled appreciation.

"Penn," he added, "you're a wonder!"

Pennington came over to the fireplace.

"Tremaine's gone," he announced. "I've fixed him up so that nobody's likely to recognize him. He's spending a quiet week in Paris. I've been parading outside the front of the hotel for the past ten minutes, just to satisfy any one who may be watching that Mr. Hugo Tremaine is still in residence. Bower's seen me twice, and I know he hasn't smelled a rat. You've got the idea, Hodges? For the next seven days I'm Hugo Tremaine. I'm driving up presently to my place, 'The Hatches,' Ewhurst, Surrey. I'm a doomed man, Hodges, don't forget—and I shall want efficient police protection—loads of it, if you don't mind!"

Hodges nodded grimly.

"I'll see to that," he said.

"Gray and yourself can drive up with me," resumed Pennington. "There'll be nothing suspicious in that. It's probably what would have happened in any case."

III

TOWARD three, when we went out to the *Hispano*, I noticed a man in ragged clothes by the curb, hugging a tray of shoe laces and match boxes. He thrust the tray under my nose as the chauffeur opened the door. Mainly with a view to getting rid of him, I dropped some coppers on to the boxes. A pock-faced ruffian looked up at me, grinning from ear to ear, and I recognized Pennington's priceless henchman, Rabat-Pilai!

Pennington climbed in last. I heard something behind us like the back-firing of a motorcycle, and noticed that the window glass of the door that was just closing was starred. Glancing back as we drove off, I saw the beggar's tray in the gutter—and Rabat-Pilai and a tall policeman struggling with an armed man!

Pennington's head came close to mine.

"They've got him," he said in a tone of relief. "I shan't have a nearer shave than that." He dropped back into his seat, dabbing blood from his ear with a handkerchief. "Good man, Rabat!" he commented presently. "That chap'd go through fire and water for either of us."

Hodges, who had been leaning out of a window, drew in his head and laughed.

"What a carload!" he exploded. "*Three Doomed Men!*"

A second car, bringing Bower and the baggage, drew in behind us.

"The Hatches," Ewhurst, proved to be a square Georgian residence, standing in extensive grounds, with open heathland stretching around it in all directions, a rolling countryside of bracken and heather and pleasant low hills. Part of the building was shut up, the portion now inhabited being looked after by four maidservants, apparently, and Bower. The main rooms, those in any case in which Pennington and I were particularly interested, faced south, looking out on to a broad terrace where roses bloomed, a wide sunken lawn and the belt of tall trees beyond.

The house had been modernized quite recently. Electric light had been fixed in every room and basins with a constant service of hot water, and certainly there was no dearth of bathrooms. To the left of the main entrance was an immense drawing-room; to the right a sort of slip room with the paneled dining room beyond, and Tremaine's library at the far end.

There was a feeling of space everywhere, of massiveness and comfort. I noticed oil paintings in the hall as we went through, and three or four suits of armor that I imagined had been taken over with the property.

WE sat down to dinner around eight, with Pennington arrayed in one of Tremaine's evening suits, and looking extraordinarily like him except possibly about the eyes. Hodges had been out for an hour, and come back. Bower hovered behind Pennington's chair, so excessively punctilious and correct that I fancy Hodges felt even less comfortable at dinner than he had at lunch!

When Bower said, "You will take the hock, sir?" unexpectedly, over the shoulder of that dauntless police de-

tective, something went the wrong way and Sergeant Hodges had to be patted on the back! He seemed more at his ease in the library afterward, when Bower had drawn the heavy curtains across the windows and left us in charge of three or four cut glass decanters.

"Give me Peckham for comfort and security," he sighed. "This blinking house is like a museum!"

A great wind had got up and we could hear the trees creaking and swaying outside.

Pennington spoke from the depths of a leather chair.

"No bombs or infernal machines about?" he queried languidly.

Hodges shook his head.

"Nothing. I've searched the whole building carefully. There's nothing in here." He jerked his thumb toward the grounds. "It's out there that I'm afraid of. I've men posted about, but you know what Chanda-Lung is—"

Pennington screwed up his eyes and his long fingers drummed a tune on the table at his side.

"What would you do, George," he asked, "if you were in Chanda-Lung's position now—with three tough men whom you'd promised to kill within twenty-four hours waiting for you with loaded guns? I've been puzzling it out for hours, and I'm hanged if I can see—"

He bent forward suddenly, with that queer light in his eyes that always appeared when a particular line of thought intrigued him. "Three tough men, George," he repeated, "and you've got to murder them within a specified time—or lose caste among your followers. You know that your men are warned and that there are police scattered all over the neighborhood. What would you do?"

I stared at the ceiling, running over in my mind the many extraordinary things I had known that redoubtable bandit to do before. Concealed bombs and gas-cylinders were already ruled out of court, unless Hodges had overlooked one of these in his search. In any event, to insure the result being satisfactory, anything of that nature would have to be concealed in the one room in which all three of us were likely to concentrate.

"He might," I suggested, "stage a false alarm in the grounds, at a point fairly distant from the house."

"Well?" said Pennington. "What then?"

"Profiting by the confusion, half a dozen of his picked fellows could concentrate on this room. We would normally migrate to the library for our after-dinner smoke. It's a fixed custom in all houses . . ."

"Quite," murmured my old colleague. "Go on."

"There are two lots of windows, and the door—the French windows between the bookcases over there." I indicated a spot opposite the fireplace. "And the other lot at the end. Two men could make some sound outside, attracting us to the latter. Meantime the remainder would force the French windows. While we were attempting to deal with the intruders the second bunch would burst in and we should be caught between two fires . . ."

PENNINGTON nodded.

"If anybody rattled against one of those two windows, George," he contradicted, "I shouldn't go near either of them. Two of us would slip quietly out by the door leading to the house and work our way round by the front entrance to the terrace. The third would stand in the

doorway and wait. He could pick them off from there as they came in. And we, most probably, would be outside by this time, making things hot for them at the rear."

Hodges was on his feet.

"Supposing though, Penn," he postulated, "they had an accomplice inside—and fastened *that*." He nodded toward the door. "We'd be caught nicely then . . ." Apparently with a view to assuring himself that nothing of this sort had actually happened, he tiptoed swiftly across and turned the handle. The heavy door came inward more quickly than he had anticipated. There was a muffled cry and a figure came stumbling in across his legs.

Hodges pounced on him.

"Bower!" he exclaimed excitedly. "He was listening!"

Tremaine's man wriggled from the sergeant's grasp and scrambled to his feet, regaining his habitual dignity a few seconds later.

"I beg your pardon, sir," he said, looking at Pennington, "but I was doing nothing of the kind. I was on the point of entering to see if you required anything further—when this—er—gentleman opened the door rather suddenly. Consequently, I fell." He favored Hodges with a glacial stare. "Is there anything more that you require, Mr. Tremaine?"

Hodges came up behind him as he turned and whisked up his left sleeve.

"Look!" he almost shouted. "The Sign of the Scorpion! I knew I was right." He twisted Bower's arms smartly behind his back and fastened them neatly with a pair of bracelets. "How long have you been in Mr. Tremaine's service, eh? Not so very long, I'll wager. Just long enough to know the ropes and get that bomb with the time fuse aboard, wasn't it?"

Bower drew himself very erect, and, for the first time, I noticed the Indian in his eyes.

"I'm glad I did it," he snarled. "I hate all white men. It is the English that are grinding us down!"

"I'll warn you," began Hodges in his best official manner, "that anything you may say may be taken in evidence against you."

Bower, forgetting the manners that must have taken so much trouble to acquire, spat in the sergeant's face. For a moment I feared Hodges was going to forget himself, and stepped between them. Pennington, reaching round me, took Mr. Bower firmly by the lobe of one ear and drew him toward the fireplace. Leaving him dressing our captive down in fluent Hindustani, I took a glance down the passage outside. Nothing stirred. I paused for some moments, listening, then strode to the door of the big dining room and looked in. The place was in darkness. Finding a row of inset switches, I turned them on, flooding the room with light. Somebody's ancestors—Tremaine's perhaps, although I hardly thought it likely—eyed me from the walls. A curtain over one of the long windows bellied out suddenly, and as suddenly subsided. I transferred my pistol to a side pocket and rested my hand on it, eying this peculiar phenomenon all the while.

IV

BOWER being unmasked like that might signify almost anything.

Other agents of Chanda-Lung could have been spirited into the house while we were at dinner. It astounded me, in the light of what we now knew, that the fellow hadn't made the most of his opportunities, and poisoned our food or our wine. My blood ran

cold when I thought of the risk we had run.

I tried to think why he hadn't doped us, and wondered if it was because the real object of his being in Tremaine's service was to murder Tremaine himself, not by poisoning him, because poisoners are apt to be found out and punished, but by some means more deadly perhaps.

Poisoning three people fatally at a sitting was rather difficult to arrange. There was the risk that one would get a larger dose than his neighbors and betray symptoms that would arouse their suspicions earlier than the poisoner desired. I mused on well-known Eastern methods, such as split bamboo and powdered glass, and commenced to feel uncomfortable inside!

I heard Pennington call:

"Gray! Are you there, George? Here a minute."

I went back.

Hodges was over by the bookcases. His back was resolutely turned toward Pennington, and he appeared to be occupied in studying titles on handsome leather bindings. Bower lay cowering in a chair, his face white as death, his dark eyes squinting at the discolored tip of the slender blade Chinese Pennington held over him. The illusion was extraordinary. All resemblance to Hugo Tremaine had disappeared, all resemblance even to the Peter Pennington I had known so long. His slant eyes were like slits, his cheekbones appeared to have grown more prominent.

"Speak, Bower," he hissed. And then I understood the meaning of it all, the significance of Sergeant Hodges's studied aloofness. I remembered Inspector Parsons grumbling during our last case because police regulations prohibited third degree methods. Theoretically speaking, Hodges wasn't there.

He was examining the contents of Tremaine's library while Chinese Pennington threatened the manacled Bower with a poison he knew only too well—the dope used by Chanda-Lung's thugs!

Apparently it was effective, for Bower's lips moved.

"You hear that, George?" Pennington jerked at me presently. "Chanda-Lung knows that I'm not Tremaine. Bower told him just after we arrived. Pray heaven they don't find him!"

"Never mind about all that," growled Hodges, forgetting himself in his impatience. "Make him say how he was going to wipe out *us*." He shot a glance at me and turned very red. His hand slipped to his trousers pockets and he shifted his position at the shelves, humming loudly.

I took another look down the passage, removed the key from the outside and locked the door. Pennington had dropped back into Hindustani, and that ghastly expression had returned.

"He says the port's doped," he said to Hodges. "Had port, didn't you?"

"Yes," returned the other promptly, "and I'm still doing very nicely, thank you! Tell him he's a liar!"

The clock on the mantelshelf struck the half hour. I noticed Bower jump up suddenly and look at it, and a fresh sense of uneasiness crept over me. Half past ten! Why should Bower get excited over the time? Cudgelling my brains for an answer, I strolled to the big window and drew aside a curtain.

Moonlight bathed the terrace outside, throwing long shadows. Something that looked like a man stepped from behind a clipped yew hedge on to the lawn and halted. The gaunt trunk of a tree swallowed him. I wondered for a moment if I had been dreaming. I stared again, but could see nothing.

One of the police most likely, and yet I didn't think so. The man, if it had been a man at all, had seemed too agile.

I ALLOWED the curtain to fall back into place. There seemed no sense in Chanda-Lung's men haunting the garden, when they could have had the free run of the house. If they had wanted to come in, it could have been done while Pennington, Hodges and I were gassing about what we would do if we were in Chanda-Lung's shoes.

They hadn't invaded the place, and so the obvious inference was that they didn't want to. Something in my brain stirred. It told me that they didn't need to come close to us, *that they didn't dare to—because there was something terrible inside already which could accomplish their work for them!*

I approached Pennington, still apeing the Grand Inquisitor, and Bower fabricating falsehoods at the knife-point—and always with an eye on the clock. Twenty to eleven—nineteen—eighteen—I could swear that Bower was counting the seconds.

"Listen!" called Hodges suddenly. "Do you hear that?"

"Hear what?" I asked.

"That ticking noise."

"The clock," suggested Pennington, and clapped a hand over Bower's mouth to stop him jabbering. I reached up and tilted the clock, shoving the first suitable object I could find underneath. The hidden pendulum jarred on the inner side of its case once or twice and then stopped. I thought I heard what Hodges meant now—another *ticking*. It seemed to come from the book shelf to the detective's left. He located it a second before I did, pulled open a door, and began pitching rare volumes to the floor.

"Here, you brute!" sang out Pennington behind me. I glanced back to see Bower slide from the chair and scuttle toward the French windows. Pennington overtook him in a couple of strides and pitched him bodily back. Bower fell heavily, and I thought his head hit the tiled floor. He turned over once and lay where he was.

Hodges surveyed us, shaking like a jelly.

"I knew it was there," he panted. "I'd been hearing it all the evening. And now I know. It was behind those books—a bomb with a time fuse. What do we do? Chuck it in water?"

I thought of Bower watching the clock and bolting for the open when he thought it was a quarter to eleven. A quarter to was more like Chanda-Lung than the hour.

"No," I yelled, "leave it alone! Get outside! It's going off!"

I threw open the French windows. Hodges and Pennington blundered out on top of me. I climbed the balustrade and fell on my hands on the sunken court, as a deafening explosion rent the air. I lay there, hugging my head, with tiles and chunks of masonry cutting up the turf all around.

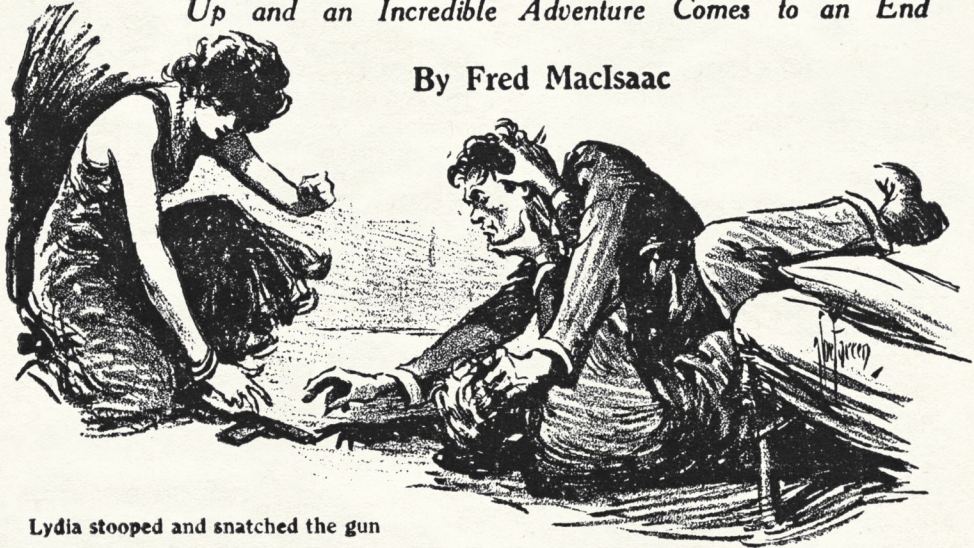
The "Hatches" looked lopsided when I got up; one end seemed completely to have disappeared. A line of figures was moving up the lawn from the bank of yews—police this time. They brought a couple of prisoners with them, two of the toughest specimens I had ever set eyes on, but neither bore the slightest resemblance to Chanda-Lung.

Hodges and I returned to town next morning. Pennington motored up overnight, and I learned afterward that he chartered a special plane to Paris and dined with Tremaine that evening.

A Passport to Perdition

In the Secret Passage of Isling Abbey a Mystery Is Cleared Up and an Incredible Adventure Comes to an End

By Fred MacIsaac



Lydia stooped and snatched the gun

WHAT HAS GONE BEFORE

DALE GOODRICH offered to help Jim Ross escape from England just for the sport of it. Ross was wanted in connection with an accident that had cost the life of a duke.

But Dale Goodrich didn't know the snake he was nurturing. Ross attacked him and left him for dead, while he went on to Paris with Goodrich's passport, leaving his own papers in Goodrich's pocket.

Patrick Dugan, spending his holidays with his wife and his daughter, Lydia, in an English castle, found Dale Goodrich unconscious and took him in, believing him to be James Ross, as papers in his pocket, left there by the real Ross, indicated. And James Ross was wanted by the police.

When Dale Goodrich recovered consciousness he discovered that he was

suffering from amnesia, utterly unable even to remember his name. Patrick Dugan was ready to surrender the man he thought was Ross to the police when he learned that Ross was a gangster wanted in America for murder. But Lydia Dugan, who believed in Goodrich's innocence, hid him from her father and the police in a secret passage of the castle.

There he was discovered and attacked by thieves. He was knocked unconscious, and came to with his memory restored. But the time he had spent in the abbey was a blank.

The thieves who had attacked him were accomplices of Lady Mary Case-Isling, who, with Samuel Dobbs, was trying to steal back a necklace her dissolute father had sold to the Dugans. Lady Mary did not reveal that to Dale. Instead she pretended to be-

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friend Dale. Jim Ross, meanwhile, having killed an English detective, was fleeing for his life.

In a hotel Dale encountered Lydia Dugan. His memory of her had been driven from his mind by that second blow, but she recognized him. She explained to him much of what had occurred, and he demanded that she take him back to the abbey. She was waiting for him at the hotel when he vanished.

CHAPTER XXVI

Extradition

DALE GOODRICH entered the lobby of the Savoy and stopped at the desk for his key. The clerk handed him, with his key, a cablegram. He tore it open eagerly and gazed at its contents with stupefaction:

In accordance with your cabled request have placed fifty thousand to your order at Bankers' Trust Company Paris office. Kindly cable ship and date of your sailing for New York to take over your late father's estate.

HARD AND SAMPSON.

Dale stared at the typewritten message, shocked and bewildered. Hard and Sampson were his father's attorneys, and the wording of the message indicated that his father was dead. That was impossible. John K. Goodrich had been enjoying robust health. But why should they make such a statement unless it was true? And why word it so crudely? Horrible! Never to see his father again, and their last messages were written in anger.

And what on earth did they mean when they said that they had cabled fifty thousand to Paris in response to his cabled request? He would not have dared to ask for fifty thousand, and he did not know that his father was dead, and he had not been in Paris.

But how did he know where he had been during those ten days? Miss Dugan had declared that he had been in Isling Abbey, yet he had to take her word for it. Of course she was speaking the truth. A girl with eyes like that could not lie.

Yet it was evident that Hard and Sampson had been in communication with him, and he had cabled them for fifty thousand dollars, and they had sent it to Paris.

The transatlantic telephone. He would call New York immediately, if they would allow him to reverse the charge, and get the thing straight. Absently he thrust the message into his pocket and moved in a daze toward the lifts. If it were true that his dad had died he would never forgive himself as long as he lived for being too stiff-necked to have reconciled himself with a parent who had loved and indulged him.

He did not observe two men who had followed him to the lifts from the desk, and he was startled when one of them tapped him on the shoulder.

"ASKIN' yer pardon, sir," said the man who had touched him, "are you Mr. Dale Goodrich, son of John K. Goodrich of New York?"

"Yes, I am. Have you heard anything about my father? Is he really dead?"

"I couldn't say, sir. You'll kindly come with us to Scotland Yard."

"What for?"

"It will be explained to you in good time."

"Well, I'll go later. I have things to do. I have an engagement in a few minutes."

"You must come, sir."

"You mean I am arrested?"

The man nodded. "Will you come

quietly? The hotel objects to scandal of any sort."

Dale shrugged hopelessly. "Of course," he said. "May I leave a message for a young lady?"

"You may not communicate with anybody until after you have been questioned at the Yard."

"But I must—"

"We'll leave by the Embankment exit and no nonsense, sir. Our orders are to fetch you dead or alive."

He submitted perforce, and wondered which of the preposterous charges that Lydia had mentioned were the cause of his arrest. All of them, most likely. The outrage at the Savoy, the robbery at the abbey, the killing of the police detective and the assault upon Mr. Dugan and the theft of his car.

Well, he would make a clean breast of his participation in the escape of Smith from the Savoy and Lady Mary could prove his alibi in regard to the other charges. Only what would Lydia think when she called for him and found him gone.

The two plain-clothes men pushed him into a taxi at the Embankment road and followed him in. They were quiet but efficient-looking fellows who treated him with the courtesy of British policemen toward a gentleman, but they were obviously upon the alert for an attempt at escape.

In a few minutes the cab rolled into the courtyard at the unpretentious building which was the office of the Metropolitan Police and which has won world-wide fame as Scotland Yard. They led him up a flight of stone steps and into a quaintly furnished room where a dignified gentleman sat at an old-fashioned desk, writing with a quill pen.

"We picked up Mr. Goodrich at the Savoy, sir," said one of Dale's captors.

"He had just received a cablegram addressed to Dale Goodrich and he admitted his identity when we questioned him."

The man at the desk turned a searching gaze upon the prisoner.

"You admit that you are Dale Goodrich, son of John K. Goodrich of New York?"

"Certainly, sir. There is no reason why I should deny it."

"Thank you."

The official scratched his signature upon an official document and addressed a uniformed policeman who was seated in a corner.

"Ask the men in the next room to step in," he said. "They may take him with them immediately."

"And where are they going to take me?" demanded Dale. "I call this pretty high-handed. What is the charge against me, anyway?"

The police official turned a pair of cold blue eyes upon him.

"I have just signed extradition papers," he said. "You are going to Paris to stand trial for a brutal murder, sir. While you are a man of great wealth, I do not think your money will enable you to cheat French justice."

Dale passed his hands across his eyes.

"Who—whom did I murder and when, if you please?" he stammered. "And, if I am a man of great wealth, I don't know it. Is my father dead?"

"I am too busy to bandy words with you, sir."

"I demand to know of what I am charged definitely and in detail," cried Dale indignantly. "Is this what you call British justice?"

The inspector picked up the extradition document.

"You are charged with killing Patrick Hogan, a new York police de-

tective, in your chamber at the Hotel Ritz upon June 14. After crushing in the man's face with a water bottle, you exchanged passports with him, first removing his passport photograph and replacing it with your own. You counted, no doubt, upon the French police taking it for granted that the disfigured body was that of Dale Goodrich.

"With your own picture in Hogan's passport you succeeded in entering England the same night. Yesterday you were traced to a lodgings in Euston and arrested by a constable, whom you overpowered and eluded."

"It's a preposterous tissue of lies. I haven't been in Paris, sir. I never heard of this man Hogan."

"You are well known at the Ritz in Paris, are you not?"

"I have been there a lot in the past, but I positively have not been there for six or eight weeks."

"You received a cablegram from your father's lawyers announcing his death upon the fourteenth. You sent one asking for fifty thousand dollars to pay your debts. You will find it waiting for you in Paris. It will defray the expenses of your trial."

"I assure you—I can prove that I was in England on the fourteenth—"

"Prove it to the French," said the inspector indifferently. "Ah, gentlemen. This is Dale Goodrich by his own admission. You may conduct him to Paris immediately."

Two small, dark men, obviously French, had entered and were contemplating Dale with satisfaction.

"I appeal to the American ambassador!" exclaimed Dale.

"You will find an American ambassador in Paris. The French request for your extradition has been O. K.'d by your ambassador in London. You

appear to forget that it was an American police official whom you killed in cold blood."

"*Venez avec nous, monsieur,*" said one of the Frenchmen. "We shall take the airplane at Croydon, *monsieur. Merci mille fois.*"

A Frenchman had hold of each of his arms. Dale, still protesting, was led out of the office and placed in an open taxicab in the courtyard.

And the French detectives drew their revolvers and held them suggestively in their laps as the cab moved out of Scotland Yard.

CHAPTER XXVII

The Slaughter on the Croydon Road

DALE sat silent and in anguish while his poor brain endeavored to make meaning of the bewildering muddle in which he found himself. This last catastrophe had crushed him utterly, but he began to recover and the mystery began to clear.

Smith had knocked him on the head on June 12 and left him for dead at the entrance to Isling Abbey. Smith had done this abominable thing to his benefactor because he wanted Dale's passport in order to escape from England. He must have gone to Paris as Dale Goodrich and put up at the Ritz. There was no coincidence in his going to the hotel where Dale always stayed, as it was the Mecca of all well-to-do Americans in Paris.

Because of his strong resemblance to Dale, he was accepted without question by the personnel of the hotel. For some reason, a New York police detective had recognized him. Most likely the fellow was wanted in New York for crimes back home. And Smith had killed him.

Realizing that he could not dispose

of the body, he had taken the dead man's passport and left Dale's upon the corpse and returned to England as Detective Hogan.

But the French had discovered the deception and applied for his extradition. Of course they assumed that it was the real Dale Goodrich who had committed the murder at the Ritz, and when Dale registered under his own name at the Savoy, they had no trouble in finding him.

This was all very well, but French courts assume an accused is guilty until he proves his innocence. Lydia Dugan and her father would testify, perhaps, that Dale had been in their home in Sussex, but the French, having what they considered a perfect case, might throw out their testimony. And they would believe in an impersonation only if Dale could produce the impersonator.

If that British stuffed shirt at Scotland Yard had given him a chance he might have avoided extradition. His chances in a British court would be much greater than before a French tribunal. No doubt the porters and garçons and clerks at the Ritz would identify him in perfect good faith as the man who had lived at the Ritz on June 14.

Although it was not a hot day, the sweat began to pour down the forehead of the unfortunate youth. The guillotine was looming. He was convinced that if they got him to France, his chance of acquittal was slight.

The cab was moving slowly through traffic, but it finally escaped the tangle in the heart of London and began to move more rapidly through the suburbs.

For ten minutes they traveled at a fair rate of speed through quiet streets toward Croydon, and then a horn

honked behind them and a cab made to pass them.

As it came abreast, a dark, savage face appeared in the open window of the closed cab, there was a flash of steel and a sharp report and a bullet tore into the open cab and struck the man on Dale's left. The other detective, whose gun had remained in his hand, immediately opened fire. The driver of the police cab brought it to a halt with a grinding of brakes, leaped to the sidewalk, and fled. The other cab halted, just as the gunman at the window fell over backward with a bullet in his head, and the chauffeur, a slim, dark young man, dropped the detective with a quick shot, to be placed *hors de combat* by Dale, who had grasped, instinctively, the weapon of the detective on his left and fired a lucky shot which toppled the chauffeur off his box.

DALE was standing up in the cab. The echoes of the fusillade were still reverberating. The quiet street was alive now. Women were screaming, people were appearing at windows and doorways.

He glanced down. The two Frenchmen had slipped to the floor of the cab and lay on top of one another, one silent, one moaning feebly. Why he had leaped to the aid of the officers who were taking him to the guillotine he could only explain by the atrociousness of the attack upon them.

Now it flashed upon him that fate had set him free. He tore open the door of the cab and leaped to the ground, dropping the detective's revolver upon his body. He looked up and down. A bobby was approaching from one side as fast as his long legs would carry him. From the other direction half a dozen men were moving

rather cautiously toward the scene of the battle.

Which way to go? He turned toward the policeman. He beckoned to him.

"Quick, officer," he called. "Where will I find a doctor?"

"There is Dr. Hibbs around the next corner, sir," panted the breathless bobby. "What happened, sir?"

"An unprovoked attack. My friends and myself were on our way to Croydon and the men in this taxicab drew up alongside of us and opened fire upon us. You take charge here and I'll fetch a doctor."

Before the policeman could get his wits together, Dale was running down the street. He turned the corner, did not pause at the doctor's office, but dodged down an alleyway which was a thoroughfare to a back street, and continued to run until he emerged upon it. A taxicab was drifting along in search of a fare and Dale hopped in.

"Waterloo Station," he told the cabby. "And I'm in a hurry."

"I'll detour round the business section, sir," said the cabman.

"Good. Don't lose time."

Meanwhile, the policeman was working upon the battlefield. He found one Frenchman dead and the other unconscious from a wound in the chest. He found one gunman lying in the bottom of the other taxi stone dead, and the chauffeur of the cab breathing his last. From the pockets of the pair whom the spectators agreed had opened fire upon the open taxi, he drew American passports. One was issued to Francisco Gano and the other to Guiseppi Molinari.

The policeman did not understand, but Gano and Molinari had seen a cab containing three men, one of whom they supposed to be James Ross,

stalled in traffic. They had taken another cab and followed it. When well out in the suburbs they had tossed the chauffeur into the street and Gano had taken the wheel. They had come upon the cab of the French police in a secluded section and followed the Chicago formula for a quick assault and get-away.

Expecting to take their quarry by surprise, they were astounded to find Ross's friends armed and quick to reply to their fusillade. The first shot was aimed at the supposed Jim Ross, and struck the detective at his left, but their other bullets were fired, in self-defense, at the Frenchmen. Their plan had been to kill and drive off at high speed, abandoning the stolen taxi at a safe distance. But fate had made them the instruments of Dale's escape from the clutches of the French police.

AND Dale was bound for Pulborough. He sat in a corner of a first-class carriage with his hat pulled down over his eyes, still shaking with excitement and quaking at the consequences to him of the terrible affray on the road to Croydon.

The British police, of course, would assume that he had been rescued by confederates, and all the resources of the British Empire would be drawn upon to apprehend him. His plan was desperate. He proposed to go to Isling Abbey and throw himself upon the mercy of Lydia Dugan and her father, his compatriots.

They were his only defense against the murder charge brought against him by the Paris police. If they backed him up they might be able to ward off extradition. On the other hand, there were the charges hanging over him in the vicinity of the abbey: robbery and the murder of the police detective. And

how could he convince the authorities that he was innocent of complicity in the atrocity on the Croydon Road?

And what manner of man was Patrick Dugan, whom he was going to ask to sit in judgment upon him? And would Lydia continue to believe in him after what had just happened?

How had it happened that an attack had been made upon the cab in which he had been riding with the French police? Those criminals certainly had had no intention of effecting a rescue, so they must have had personal animus against the French detectives. Perhaps they were French criminals. They had looked like Latins.

Dale was far from guessing that the purpose of the attack had been to assassinate himself. Uninformed of the movements and the past of James Ross, he could not know that two New York gangsters had been sent to England to take that gentleman for a ride.

CHAPTER XXVIII

Mr. Dugan Takes Charge

LYDIA DUGAN drove into the courtyard of the Cecil Hotel and drove out again. She didn't want to see and talk with Lord Harold if he was still there. She had come up to London for some shopping and he had insisted upon accompanying her. She didn't know how she could explain her flight from the grill room, and she didn't care much what he thought about it. She was filled with chagrin and her eyes were smoldering in a manner which boded ill for Dale Goodrich.

She swung into St. James Road and then decided to go back to the abbey. She drove slowly. She marveled at the fantastic behavior of the young American. Finally she came to the conclusion that he must have lost his

memory again. Being a woman, and being able to sense whether people liked her or not, she was reasonably certain that the young man who thought he was meeting her for the first time had liked her very much. Therefore, he hadn't run out on her willingly. She felt better after she had thought this out, and she drove a little faster.

The road from London ran parallel to the railroad as it approached Pulborough, and she saw a railroad train half a mile ahead of it. She stepped on the gas and set out in pursuit of it. Whenever she had an opportunity, Lydia always raced trains.

However, the train beat her to the station and the passengers were descending as she drove along by the platform. Casually she inspected them for acquaintances, and then her heart gave a little leap. She saw Dale Goodrich.

She ran her car to the platform's edge and came to a stop beside him.

"Quick, Mr. Goodrich," she called. "Jump in. You mustn't be seen about here."

As he leaped into the seat, she threw in her gears and the car darted forward.

"And why didn't you keep our engagement?" she asked tartly.

He smiled wryly. "Circumstances over which I had no control. I was dragged to Scotland Yard."

"For the murder of the detective?"

"No, for another murder I didn't commit. It seems I killed a New York policeman in the Ritz Hotel in Paris on June 14."

Lydia gasped, threw him a terrified side glance, and then recovered her composure.

"That's impossible," she said. "You were in the abbey, unconscious, on June 14."

"Nevertheless they extradited me

and I was on the way to Croydon with two French detectives when I—er—I managed to escape.”

“You had an alibi on that charge,” she said dryly. “But I can’t alibi what happened yesterday. You must call on Lady Mary Case-Isling for that.”

“If they landed me in Paris I am afraid they would have sent me to the guillotine,” he said gravely. “Miss Dugan, I seem to be a very horrible person. What kind of a man is your father?”

“A darling, and you are not a horrible person. It was that Smith who did what happened in Paris, wasn’t it?”

“I’m sure of it, but I’m afraid I could not convince the French.”

“Why did you ask about father?”

“Because he is my only hope of salvation. I’m going to throw myself on his mercy.”

“I’ll see that the quality of his mercy is not strained,” she replied.

PATRICK DUGAN was sitting in the shade on his terrace when Lydia’s car drove up. He gazed in astonishment at her companion and then, emitting a whoop of fury, came rushing toward them, swinging his pudgy fists.

“Let me at him,” he bellowed. “I’ll teach you to swat me when I’m cockeyed.”

Lydia interposed. “It wasn’t Dale—er—Mr. Goodrich who hit you. It was that Smith.”

“But this is Smith. You can’t fool me, young woman.”

“This is my friend, Mr. Dale Goodrich, father,” said Lydia.

“He looks like Smith to me,” declared Dugan dubiously.

“It seems there are two Smiths,” said Dale, smiling strainedly. “I’m not the one who hit you, sir.”

“But you’re the one who was sick in my house, eh?”

“Yes, sir.”

“The police want you and I’m going to call them up.”

Lydia threw her arms round his neck. “You’ll do nothing of the sort. You’ll hear this poor boy’s story and help him.”

“You got your memory back, eh?” demanded Dugan, sneering. “You picked a nice name for yourself, too. Dale Goodrich. Any relation to poor old John K?”

“His son, sir,” said Dale meekly.

“Upon my word. Say, you look like him, at that. We were pals, John and me.”

“Let’s all sit down, daddy,” suggested Lydia, “and Dale will tell you everything from the beginning, and then you must advise him what to do.”

“I’d better start at the beginning,” said Dale, when they were seated. “I was sitting in my room at the Hotel Savoy . . .”

Dugan listened intently until Dale reached the climax.

“You were an awful fool,” was his comment. “But I couldn’t see that the affair at the Savoy was very terrible myself.”

“In fact, daddy was sure you were Smith and tried to protect you from the police,” declared Lydia.

“Let’s not go into that,” said Dugan wryly. “Now, you don’t remember a thing about what happened while you were here? It’s all a blank, eh?”

“Yes, sir.”

“And you don’t remember holding Lydia’s hand for hours while she read to you about *Romeo and Juliet*—”

“Father, you’re terrible. I didn’t read that to him, and he didn’t hold my hand.”

“And the next thing you remember

was waking up in some cottage near here?"

"Yes, sir."

"And you were under the impression that you were just coming to after the crack with the monkey wrench?"

Dale nodded.

"Well, set your mind at rest regarding that French business. From the twelfth to the twenty-second you were in my house, as can be proved by the doctor, the nurse, my family and Lord Harold Blythe, popularly known as Dum-dum. It don't matter if your passport was found on a dead body in Paris. You were not there on that date. I'll call up our ambassador and put a stop to that extradition business."

"Thank you, sir."

"Now," said Dugan, shrewdly, "there comes the murder of this man Russell down here on the twenty-third, not to mention the theft of Lydia's birthday gift, my car, and the small matter of punching me in the jaw. We can't help you there."

"**T**HAT'S where Lady Mary Case-Isling comes in," said Lydia eagerly.

"She's the duke's daughter. I've heard of her. She sued Bill Fletcher in New York for breach of promise because he ran out on her for finding out she had a lover all the time she was pretending she was crazy about Bill."

"I'm sure you're mistaken, sir," protested Dale.

"I got the story from Bill's own lips, and I heard a lot more about her in London when some of my friends found out I was renting Isling Abbey. That dame is no good. How can she help you out?"

"She came to the cottage just after dark night before last. She knows I was there all night and didn't go out,

so I couldn't very well have killed this detective. And she motored me up to London in the morning, so I couldn't have been in Pulborough at noon when you thought you saw me."

"Where is this cottage and what was she doing there?" asked Dugan sharply.

"It's close by, on the edge of your estate, I believe. She said she was visiting."

"And who was she visiting? That yegg who kept you prisoner there?"

"What on earth has this to do with Dale's trouble?" asked Lydia impatiently.

"You can't look like the Queen of Sheba and be brainy," said Dugan, grinning. "Goodrich, I'll tell you a few things for a change. For example, how you got in that cottage. From what this cockney told you, you were set upon and put up a fight and got a crack on the head. The second crack on the head sent you back to where you were when Smith lammed you with the monkey wrench. It's my opinion the fight took place in the secret room, and they carried you through the secret passage into that cottage. I'll inspect the place presently. It's my belief there is a tunnel from the cellar of the place to the abbey."

"I'm sure I don't know," said Dale.

"Who was with Lady Mary when she came a visiting?"

"A very big Englishman named Brooks."

"Ah, ha!" exclaimed Dugan. "And Brooks brought her along to show him the way into the abbey. And he and Lady Mary swiped the Isling tiara and necklace. My boy, I'm glad you dropped in. You are making a lot of things that were obscure very clear."

"I assure you, sir, that Lady Mary could not possibly be a thief. She is

the daughter of the Duke of Isling and—"

"Whoa. You listen to me, both of you. These were the Isling family jewels. If the old duke had behaved himself this girl would have inherited them and would be living in the abbey. She probably reasons that she was only recovering her property. If you were in your right senses, you would have considered it suspicious that a duke's daughter would be paling around with the kind of people who were holding you in that cottage. By Jove—"

"What?" demanded Lydia.

"That Scotland Yard man was moseying around looking for you, Goodrich, because he was convinced you were Smith. He became suspicious of the crowd in the cottage, investigated, caught them with the goods and they bumped him off."

"They were holding me to be questioned by a man they called 'Himself,'" said Dale thoughtfully. "The chap who came with Mary and who she introduced as Brooks seemed to be the boss. Mr. Dugan, I hate to think that Mary could have been in cahoots with criminals."

"I won't prosecute her if she returns the jewels," said Dugan. "Young fellow, we're only guessing, but we apparently have disposed of all the charges against you."

"Except one you don't know about," Dale confessed. "And the most terrible of all."

WHILE they listened breathlessly he told them of the battle on the Croydon Road and the manner of his escape.

Lydia turned very pale and clenched her hands tightly as he talked.

Dugan drew a deep breath. "Whew!" he ejaculated. "That tops it all and it

can't be explained away. The police of two nations will be crazy with the heat. They won't listen to reason and there is nothing to be gained by arguing with them. If they lay hands on you they'll try and convict you before you can say Jack Robinson."

"The American ambassador, father—"

"He won't lift a finger under the circumstances. Do you know any reason in the world, Goodrich, why an attempt should be made to rescue you?"

Dale shook his head.

"They'll track you down here," said Patrick ruefully. "The London police are smarter than ours. We might explain away one or two of the crimes laid to your door, but they've got you on too many counts."

"But you know that Dale is innocent, father."

Dugan shrugged his shoulders. "I guess so, but he's damn unlucky. Goodrich, your only chance in the world is to have them catch this criminal who looks so much like you. And he's at large in England in my roadster, though he has probably abandoned it by now."

"But it was I and not Smith who was in the taxicab."

"My boy, aside from Lydia and me, nobody knows that there are two of you. Liddy, sneak him up to your room and put him back in that secret chamber. Don't let the servants see him. I'll tell the police that Smith is lurking in the vicinity, in case he actually is somewhere around."

"But—" protested Dale.

"You do as I say and be glad some competent person is going to do your thinking for you from now on."

"Don't you remember this at all?" asked Lydia wistfully as she conducted Dale into her chamber.

"I feel as if I had known you for ages," he said ardently, "but this room is strange to me."

"And this?" demanded Lydia, as, with the skill of much practice, she revealed the opening behind the fireplace.

He shook his head dolefully. "I'm afraid that ten days will remain a closed book to me unless I get another crack on the head—"

"See that you don't," she said earnestly.

"Lydia," he asked, hesitatingly. "Were we—that is—had you and I—had I asked you something?"

"We were upon exactly the same footing upon which we are at present," she said firmly, but she grew crimson.

"If I ever get out from under this load—" he threatened.

"Come on," she commanded, and vanished through the opening. She led the way to the cell, which he should have remembered, but did not, and left him to his reflections while she returned for bedding and books and candles. She was back in five minutes and solicitously arranged a bed upon the ancient cot.

"Might just as well be in prison as here," he said with a sigh.

"Except that I don't have to get official permission to come to see you."

"Will you come often?"

"As often as I can," she agreed.

"Will I ever get out of it?"

"Leave it to father," she consoled.

"He's queer, but he is very clever."

CHAPTER XXIX

Find Ross

THE clever Mr. Dugan, by the way, was in a state of profound perplexity. He did not doubt Dale's story, but he did not see how he could make anybody believe it. If

Lady Mary Case-Isling were actually concerned in the theft of the jewels from the abbey she would be a poor witness for the defense in the case of the killing of Detective Russell. It would be easy enough to establish the identity of Dale Goodrich and to prove that he could not possibly be James Ross, alias John J. Smith, the New York gangster, but it was Goodrich, not Ross, for whom the French had secured extradition papers, and it was Dale, not Ross, who had been turned over by Scotland Yard to the Paris police detectives.

And no explanation that he could think of would persuade the British authorities that Dale was not privy to the attack upon his captors on the road to Croydon, and therefore not responsible for wholesale killing.

Yet, if he could sit down with the right people and make them go with him step by step over the weird series of events he might be able to convince them, if he could produce James Ross in person.

Dugan drew toward him a sheet of paper and a pencil and set down the various shifts of personality as he had learned them from Dale, or deduced them.

Number One. With Dale's consent Ross had escaped from the Hotel Savoy after the affair of the grill room by impersonating Goodrich.

Number Two. Ross had attacked the unsuspecting youth, stolen his passport, planted that of "John J. Smith" upon the body, and escaped to Paris.

Number Three. Having registered at the Hotel Ritz as Goodrich, Ross was identified by a New York detective, who probably had attempted to arrest him. Ross had killed him, and, assuming that he would be accepted as Dale Goodrich, had planted Dale's

passport on him and assumed the identity of Patrick Hogan, the detective.

Number Four. Ross had appeared at Pulborough station, had been accosted by Dugan, who supposed him to be his recent guest, Dale Goodrich, had assaulted Dugan and escaped in the Irishman's car.

Number Five. Dale, conscious of no wrongdoing, had returned to the Savoy after recovering from amnesia and had been taken into custody for the crime committed by his impersonator in Paris.

Dugan lighted a cigar and gazed dubiously at what he had placed on paper. It wouldn't wash.

Yet it could be proved that Dale and Ross were not one and the same person. Ross had landed only recently in London, and Dale had been at the Savoy for months. Ross was a notorious New York gangster, and Dale was the son of John K. Goodrich, probably his heir. Lady Mary Case-Isling and other well-known Londoners could identify him. It was only necessary to produce Ross, alias Smith, and prove that he looked enough like Dale so that he could impersonate him.

This resemblance must be proved. By George, if he could lay hands on Ross and turn him over to the police they would jump to the conclusion that he was still continuing his impersonation of Goodrich and that it was he, and not Dale, who had been turned over to the French police and who had escaped after the death battle on the Croydon Road.

Mr. Dugan chuckled. That would be poetic justice. Let the scoundrel take the responsibility for what he hadn't done as well as of what he was guilty. There was no reason in the world why John K. Goodrich's son should kill a

New York detective, but every reason why the gangster Ross should have done so. And his recent presence in Pulborough, to which Dugan could swear, would make it apparent that he, also, had killed Detective Russell.

All Dugan had to do was to keep Goodrich tucked away in the secret room until the police landed Ross. Let them assume that the gangster had put Dale out of the way. Most likely they would jump to that conclusion.

HIS meditations were interrupted by the return of his daughter.

"You're a trump, dad," she said enthusiastically. "I told Dale we could depend upon you."

"What beats me," he said with a twinkle in his eye, "is how you have succeeded in getting so chummy with the fellow for the second time. As I understand it, he had forgotten your existence completely."

She smiled complacently. "Subconsciously he had not forgotten me. What is to be done, father?"

"Keep him hidden until the police nab Ross. It's the only possible chance. Did you encounter a servant when you took him through the house?"

"Fortunately they were all in the servants' dining room. I'm sure he wasn't seen."

"How would you like to go to jail, Cleopatra?" he demanded.

"I—jail? What do you mean?"

"This last exploit of our young friend must have set the Kingdom of Great Britain on its ear. The first one of these twins they lay hands on will be hung with neatness and dispatch, and they'll send up for a long term anybody they find giving him aid."

"They can't find him where we have hidden him," she said confidently.

"Others know those passages. You don't want to forget that the crooks who stole your birthday jewels came through them."

"I don't think they are likely to talk," said Lydia shrewdly. "Let the old jewels go. We have Dale to think of."

He nodded. "Queer. I liked the boy when I first set eyes on him. He didn't look like a criminal to me. And of course the only charge against him then was the affair at the Savoy. It wasn't till that cablegram seemed to identify him as Jim Ross that I turned against him. And he turns out to be John K. Goodrich's son. If the old man left him his fortune the boy has more money than I've got. On the other hand—" He paused.

"Yes?"

"This fellow may be Jim Ross impersonating Dale Goodrich. How do we know?"

"Father!" she cried indignantly.

He laughed. "Well, well, I don't think so either. Now I'm going to call up the London police, tell them that I have learned that James Ross, the New York gangster, looks exactly like the son of my old friend, James Goodrich, that I took him in thinking he was Dale, that he vanished, stole my jewels, and probably killed Detective Russell, and that you think you saw him this afternoon in Pulborough."

"But that will bring them down here. They may find him."

"I'll offer a reward of five thousand pounds for the capture of this murderer. And the police will instantly jump to the conclusion that the man they captured and turned over to the French was Ross, still impersonating Goodrich. So when they get him they'll pin the affair of the Croydon Road onto him."

Lydia gazed at him spellbound.

"Napoleonic, eh?"

The girl escaped from the spell.

"You forget," she said, "that everybody knows we took Smith in on the twelfth and he was here until the twenty-second. The murder in Paris took place between those dates. So if our Smith was Ross it must have been Dale who killed the man in Paris and they'll arrest him and send him to the guil-guillotine." She broke into sobs.

Dugan looked sunk. "And I thought you didn't have any brains," he muttered. "You're dead right, Liddy. We've got to sit tight, keep our mouths shut, and let them run down Ross without any assistance from us. And I can't do a darn thing about the robbery without advertising our secret passages. We can't do anything at all."

"I can pray," said Lydia gravely. "I'm going to my room now."

CHAPTER XXX

In the Secret Passage

DALE lay upon the bed in the cell in which Lydia had placed him for the second time and wished she would come back, though she had only left him half an hour before.

The place was dimly lighted by means of the slit high up in the wall. As a result of stewing over his appalling predicament, he had become mentally numbed and he was ready to throw his burden upon the competent shoulders of Patrick Dugan and consider himself fortunate to engage the friendship and solicitude of the loveliest girl in the world.

The more he thought about Lydia, the less he bothered about the load of capital crimes that was likely to drop upon him and crush him at any minute. And, after all, he hadn't com-

mitted any of them and heaven wouldn't permit him to be punished for the atrocities of the fiend John J. Smith.

He lay back with his eyes closed. Suddenly he was aware of a slight rumbling sound and the hissing intake of the breath of a human being. He sat up instantly and stared, stupefied, into the eyes of the last person he expected to meet in the world.

And the other person's eyes were as astonished as his own.

"The kid!" exclaimed James Ross. "Stick 'em up, Goodrich."

Before Dale stood the cause of all his anguish, and his rage lifted him from his couch in spite of the menace of the automatic in the hands of the gangster.

Ross stepped back.

"This time I'll finish the job," Ross snarled. "Back up, feller, back up."

"Where did you come from?" muttered Dale, who realized the hopelessness of attacking an armed man.

"Where the hell am I?" questioned Ross.

"In Isling Abbey."

"What are you doing here?"

"I'm hiding from the police, who are after me for your crimes," Dale said bitterly.

Ross sat down on the couch with his weapon ready.

"I ain't got nothin' against you, kid," he said. "I hated to slough you that other time, but I had to get out of England. Don't start nothin' because I'm desperate. I'll kill you now if you wink an eyelash."

"As you killed the man in Paris," said Dale scornfully.

"Hogan had it comin' to him. How did you know? They ain't been nothin' about it in the papers."

"I was arrested in London this morning for that crime and turned over

to French police, who had extradition papers."

"Yeah? That was tough. How did you get away?"

"Two men in another taxi came up beside us and opened fire on us. There was a battle and I made my escape."

"A rescue, eh? How did you fix that?"

"I didn't fix it. I don't know why they attacked us."

"Couple of Italians, were they?" asked Ross.

"They looked like it."

ROSS chuckled. "Gano and Molinari, that's who it was. Feller, you can thank me for that, but it wasn't any rescue. They thought you was me and they were out to get me. Vanini sent them over from New York to lay me."

"You're safe from them in that case," said Dale quietly. "They are either dead or badly wounded. The detectives put up a fight."

"That's good news," remarked Ross. "I see somebody brought you a lunch. I'm starvin', old man."

"Don't 'old man' me. I'm your mortal enemy, Smith."

"Well, get out of the way while I eat. I haven't had a bite for twenty-four hours."

"I am rather interested to know how you happen to be acquainted with the secret passages of the abbey."

"Don't mind tellin' you," said Ross, as he picked up a sandwich in his left hand and used his right to keep Dale at a distance with the weapon. "I had a narrow squeak in London yesterday morning. It seems the French cops weren't fooled by my leaving your passport on Hogan's corpse. They kept it quiet and traced me to London by Hogan's passport and sent a boob

cop to pinch me at my lodgings. I knocked him out and made for a railroad station. I hopped a train that was going out and bought a ticket for the end of the line.

"It was this town near here. I was standing on the platform when an old geezer that was getting into an automobile called me Smith and tried to grab me. I pasted him and got away in his car. There was a chase and I swung into a side road just out of town, ditched the bus, and hot-footed it. I came to a cottage in the woods that didn't have any tenants and I hid in it.

"It seems that there were people living in it recently, and, having nothin' to do, I poked round and come across a plan all torn up in a wastebasket. It was marked 'Ingress to the Abbey from the Lodge.' It looked like a tunnel from that very cottage, see, and, thinking it might come in handy if the cops rushed the place, I investigated. I found the entrance in the cellar of the cottage, and I poked my way along. Finally I come to a blank wall, but there was a lever sticking out of the wall at one side. I pushed it and come right in on my old pal."

"I'm not your pal," cried Dale furiously. "You damned murderer—"

He broke off because the entrance from Lydia's quarters suddenly yawned, and Lydia stepped into the cell.

"Holy cats!" gasped Ross. His mouth opened and his eyes almost popped out of his head.

It was an opportunity. Dale hurled himself upon him and grabbed for the gun. Ross recovered, a fraction of a second too late, but Dale did not get the automatic, which was knocked from the gangster's hand and fell upon the floor. Ross dived for it, but was caught by a wrestler's grip and hurled across

the cell. Dale stooped, to have the gunman instantly upon his back.

And then there began a sharp, vicious, desperate struggle between two men of equal size and strength fighting for life, while the girl stood stricken by astonishment and terror. They rolled over and over, pummeling, kicking and snarling.

A lucky kick by Dale's left foot struck the automatic and sent it whirling across the room and between Lydia's feet. She gazed at it for a few seconds stupidly, and then realized that it gave her command of the contest. She stooped and picked it up a second before Ross's right hand swept toward it. She drew back and pointed it unsteadily. But the two men looked so much alike in the dim light, and they were whirling with such rapidity that she dared not shoot. Never in her life had Lydia pulled a gun trigger, and she knew that her bullet was as apt to end her lover's life as that of his enemy.

Ross was swearing steadily, emitting filthy oaths which, at another time, would have appalled Lydia. But his words fell upon her ears without meaning. She thought of running for help, but before she climbed the stairs and passed through her chamber to alarm the house the beast might kill Dale Goodrich.

Ross broke loose and half rose. Dale plunged at him and hurled him backward. They narrowly escaped striking Lydia. They rolled over and over. Dale was still weak from his illness, but he was mad with hatred of this scoundrel and insane energy served him well.

Ross tried to gouge out one of his eyes with a brutal thumb, but a blow on the Adam's apple from Dale's hard left fist put a stop to that. Ross tried the

knee in the groin with better effect, but he would have had to kill Dale to put him out of the fight. And at the moment when Ross fought free, fortune came to the assistance of Dale Goodrich. Ross swung himself swiftly away from a wild right and his head came into violent contact with the iron leg of the cot bed. It struck with such force that the gangster went out thoroughly and completely.

GOODRICH pummeled him for several seconds before he realized that the battle was over, and then he staggered to his feet and his bleeding lips parted in a smile.

"Give me the gun, darling," he panted. "And fetch your father and about six servants. He said we had to have Smith, and I've got him."

"Are you hurt, dear?" she demanded anxiously.

"A little bit battered. Hurry."

Lydia fled, and Dale sat down on the cot and looked down upon his fallen enemy. Ross was unconscious only half a minute. He opened his eyes, groaned, and sat up on the floor.

"You didn't knock me out. I bumped my head against somethin'," he growled. He made to rise, and Dale covered him with his own weapon.

"Stay where you are," he commanded. "You're just about as useful to me dead as alive. Don't think I won't shoot."

"What are you going to do with me?" demanded the gangster.

"Turn you over to the police," Dale informed him.

"Oh, my head!" moaned Ross.

"I expect it feels about as mine did when you hit me with a monkey wrench."

The gangster stretched out his arms appealingly.

"They'll hang me, kid," he wailed. "We're both Americans and you don't want to have me hanged."

"Why not? I'd like to have hold of the rope that hangs you."

Ross felt of his injured head. "I always liked you, Goodrich," he whined. "It was me or you. That's why I knocked you out that night."

"And it's you or I just at present," Dale asserted. "Come right in, Mr. Dugan, and meet the real John J. Smith."

Dugan entered the cell and gazed with astonishment at the spectacle. He saw two men, cut, bruised, and bleeding, who in their battered condition, looked enough alike to be twins.

"To think it was Liddy that had the privilege of watching this scrap instead of me that would have appreciated it," Dugan mourned. "So this is the cause of all the trouble. Come on in, Jeeves, and you footmen. Handle the lad on the floor with care because he's dynamite."

"It seems there were two Mr. Smiths," observed Blake, who had ceased to protest against being addressed as Jeeves.

"Only two so far as I know," replied Dugan. "Goodrich, you come with me and Lydia and we'll try to patch you up. You fellows better rope that one on the floor. We need him."

Aside from a cut over his left eye, a bleeding nose and a badly scratched lip, Dale had no important injuries, but he submitted to be laid in Lydia's bed while she fussed over him and Dugan walked up and down the floor puffing violently on a cigar.

"It would have been simpler, young fellow, if you had murdered him while you had the chance," he observed. "In that case we could have blamed everything on the dead man and all would

have been hunky-dory. As things are, we have to proceed very carefully or they'll rush the pair of you to the gal-lows.

"Before I turn James Ross, alias Smith, over to the police, I'm going to get old Gordon, our ambassador, on the phone and tell him the whole story. He'll have to go to bat for John K. Goodrich's son. It's up to him to convince the British police that you have a cast steel alibi in the Paris murder case. I think that will be all right."

"It seems to me, sir, that producing Smith makes everything clear."

"It doesn't. We can't explain the attack upon the French detectives."

"But I can now," declared Dale triumphantly. "The gunmen were two American gangsters who were sent to England by an enemy of Smith named Vanini to bump off Smith, who claims to be a big shot in New York."

"And he is. His real name is Jim Ross."

"Well I had quite a talk with Smith, or Ross, before Lydia's entrance precipitated the battle. He says they must have seen me in the taxicab with the Frenchmen and mistaken me for him. And instead of it being an attempt at rescue, their intention was to murder me."

DUGAN sighed with deep relief. "If that can be proved it takes that murder charge off your neck. There remains only the killing of Detective Russell down here."

"And Lady Mary will be glad to testify that I was in her company at the cottage, that I was in bed and hardly able to move when Russell was killed."

"If we're not very careful, Lady Mary won't be found to testify to anything," Dugan replied. "And kindly

tell me how Ross happened to be in my house at all."

"That's the strange part of it. He was hiding in a cottage and he found the plan of the secret passage in pieces in a wastebasket. He found the entrance to a tunnel in the cellar of the cottage, and he followed it into the abbey."

"Ha!" exclaimed Dugan. "And it was without a doubt the same cottage where you and your precious Lady Mary were sojourning upon the night Russell was killed and Lydia's jewels taken. Don't you see, Liddy? Lady Mary can't testify for Goodrich without incriminating herself."

Dugan made a grimace "Can you travel, Dale?"

"Yes, sir. I'm all right."

"You and I will go right up to London and I'll put you in sanctuary at the American Legation. Before we start I'll phone the Pulborough police to come and get Smith. He'll try to involve you, of course."

"I'm going with you," Lydia declared.

"You'll have to stay with your mother. If she finds there is a murderer in the house she'll have a connip-tion fit."

"You'll bring him back?" she demanded.

"Just as soon as it's safe, my dear. I think Goodrich ought to stay with us a couple of weeks and really make your acquaintance. He only met you to-day, you know."

"Don't be absurd, father," she said.

Dale rose a little unsteadily. "I'll never be able to repay you, sir—" he began. Because he felt so weak his eyes filled with tears.

"Shucks, I was bored to death down here until you busted in. And if you hadn't captured Ross all by yourself I

wouldn't be able to do anything for you."

Dale turned to Lydia and took both her hands.

"I just want to say to you," he said, "that everything comes back to me. I remember how I lay in bed here and how you read to me. I remember what great friends we were."

"That would be the result of the last fight. Probably bumped your head on the floor," said Dugan dryly. "Come with me and get a hat and coat. That girl will be here when you come back. By the way, Liddy, what happened to Dum-dum?"

"Good heavens, poor Harold!" she exclaimed. "I had forgotten him completely."

"Because he phoned down to have his things sent to London. He said that after your treatment of him he would not set foot in this place again."

"Has his aunt gone?" asked Lydia indifferently.

"She's packing. Come on, Goodrich."

CHAPTER XXXI

The American Ambassador

THEY arrived in London at dinner time and dined in an obscure restaurant, from which Dugan phoned the ambassador and received permission to bring his friend immediately to the legation.

When they left the place newsboys were crying an extra which announced the capture of the perpetrator of the outrage at the Savoy in Isling Abbey.

Ambassador Robert Gordon, grave, white-haired and statesmanlike, listened in shocked silence while Dale told his astonishing tale.

"What do you think?" asked Dugan when the boy had finished.

"It's very fortunate you brought him here. I'll have one of the big men at the Yard come over and hear Mr. Goodrich's story in my presence. He will have to accept your statement and that of your family regarding the young man's presence in your house at the time of the murder at the Hotel Ritz. The arrest of James Ross should persuade him to go easy on Goodrich for his complicity in the man's escape from the Savoy, and I have already been informed that the two gunmen who attacked the French detectives were American citizens recently landed. We can check up by cable to New York, and, most likely, can confirm Ross's statement to you that they were well-known New York gangsters. It's all in the way things are put, gentlemen, and who puts them."

"I certainly appreciate your interest, sir."

The ambassador regarded him sternly. "You were exceedingly indiscreet in aiding Ross to escape from the Savoy. If the police want to be nasty they can send you to jail for a long term on that count. However, I've been pretty liberal with favors to Scotland Yard, and I'll do everything I can for the heir of John K. Goodrich."

Half an hour later the high police official arrived. He was a blond, distinguished-looking person in evening dress who seemed to Dale more like a member of the House of Lords than a policeman. As a matter of fact, he was a baronet and superintendent of criminal investigation. Mr. Gordon was closeted with him for fifteen minutes before he summoned Goodrich and Mr. Dugan.

"This is Sir Arthur Grey," he said. "Mr. Dugan is a friend of long standing, sir, whose word is accepted without question by me. Despite the

slightly battered appearance of Mr. Goodrich, I don't think you would size him up as a criminal."

Sir Arthur pulled at his blond mustache and regarded Dale quizzically.

"My attitude toward you, sir," he said, "has been modified by the information that you captured this desperado, Ross, single-handed. Let me remind you, however, that if it had not been for your folly in aiding the fellow at the time of the Savoy affair several persons who are dead would be still alive."

"I admit my folly and my guilt, sir," said Dale, greatly cast down.

Sir Arthur seated himself. "I wish to hear a full account of your experiences from your own lips," he said. "Omit no detail."

When Goodrich had concluded, the police official frowned and was silent for a moment.

"This man who accompanied Lady Mary Case-Isling," he said, "will you please describe him as completely as possible?"

DALE did his best, and Sir Arthur nodded with satisfaction.

"That was Sam Dobbs," he declared. "He is a man of good family who lives by his wits. We have had him under suspicion of swindling and other criminal activities for some time, but have never pinned anything on him. Now, Mr. Dugan, there is a tunnel from this cottage to the abbey. Ross told Goodrich, here, that he found a chart of the secret passages in a waste paper basket in the cottage, and we have this young man's testimony that he found himself in that cottage."

"At the time he was affected by the second blow on the head, but he now remembers being surprised in the secret room by an armed intruder and

overpowered. Samuel Dobbs, referred to by the scoundrel who was holding Goodrich a prisoner as 'Himself,' appeared with Lady Mary Case-Isling. Next morning the Isling jewels purchased recently by Mr. Dugan were stolen from his room at the abbey. It is very evident to me that Dobbs and his gang entered the abbey by means of the passages and that Lady Mary supplied him with the chart which enabled him to make use of them."

"I doubt that, sir," said Dale stoutly. "Because they were very kind to me, apologized for my detention, and Lady Mary personally brought me to town."

Sir Arthur smiled. "You would be surprised how well informed we are at the Yard regarding what people in London consider their private affairs. You were engaged to Lady Mary, Mr. Goodrich. You cabled the fact to your father, who threatened to disinherit you."

Dale colored. "That's true," he admitted.

"And, no doubt she broke off the engagement when she learned you had no prospects."

"Yes, but she admitted she liked me."

"While you were temporarily out of your mind at the abbey, your father died and left you his entire fortune. I suspect that Lady Mary was aware of that and was anxious to renew the engagement. Am I right?"

"I—I guess you are."

"Which explains why you were not knocked on the head by these rascals, who undoubtedly murdered Detective Russell."

Dale was stricken into silence.

"The problem of members of very noble families impoverished by the war who have gone wrong," said Sir Arthur, "is one of our most perplexing.

Was Lady Mary in the cottage all that evening?"

"Yes, sir."

"Then she had nothing to do with the murder of Russell, probably is unaware of it. Confidentially, she has been infatuated with Samuel Dobbs for several years. I'll round up Dobbs and his men. I recognize the cockney who kept you a prisoner, from your description. We'll squeeze a confession out of him and in all probability will recover the jewels for Mr. Dugan. The Islings are a fine old family fallen on evil days. We will request Lady Mary to keep out of England. His majesty would dislike the scandal which her prosecution would invoke. May I rely upon your discretion, Mr. Dugan?"

Dugan grinned. "Absolutely," he replied. "Let this boy off. After all, the death of the Duke of March was really due to an accident. That was Dale's opinion and it's mine."

"I do not agree with you," replied Sir Arthur. "However, in view of the great service performed in finally capturing this brutal murderer, we will not press that charge against him. I suggest that you keep Mr. Goodrich in the Legation until morning, Mr. Gordon. It is remarkable that he managed to reach here as every constable in the kingdom is looking for him."

"How about the French extradition demand?" asked Gordon.

Sir Arthur smiled. "I think we may give them Mr. Ross, as it seems unlikely that he had anything to do with the killing of Detective Sergeant Russell and it is possible that some of the jurors might feel with Mr. Dugan that the death of the Duke of March was only a lamentable accident. They want the murderer of the Ritz, and since Goodrich has a perfect alibi, there is no question of Ross's guilt."

"Then Goodrich goes scot free," demanded Patrick Dugan.

Sir Arthur laughed. "If he should be picked up to-night and brought in, we might have to take a different attitude. By morning, when the newspapers are out, public indignation will be concentrated entirely upon James Ross, alias Dale Goodrich, alias Patrick Hogan, alias John J. Smith. Even then I suggest you take him by the most direct route to Isling Abbey."

He offered his hand to Dale. "This is not an order," he said, "but a suggestion. Go back to New York."

"I'll sail as quickly as I can get the fifty thousand dollars which Ross cabled for in my name transferred from Paris to London."

"I'll be glad to expedite that," said the police official. "Good night, gentlemen."

CHAPTER XXXII

Conclusion

LYDIA DUGAN and Dale Goodrich were sitting on the terrace of Isling Abbey. They had dined. The moon was up. The air was fragrant with the perfume from the acres of rose trees. Inside Patrick Dugan was sitting with Mrs. Dugan listening to a radio upon which a gypsy band in Budapest was playing a Strauss waltz.

"Darling," said Lydia, "it's a terrible risk, marrying you. Any time you bump your head you are likely to mistake me for a stranger and eject me from house and home."

Dale chuckled. "All you have to do is pick up the rolling pin and hit me again on the same place."

"And don't think I wouldn't do it," said Lydia with sparkling eyes. "Dear, I think ours is the most fantastic romance in the history of the world."

"That's what *Romeo* and *Juliet* thought, I suppose."

"Oh, theirs was very commonplace. Do you realize that I am probably the only girl who had a man fall completely in love with her twice?"

"Three times. When I recalled our first ten days after the battle with Jim Ross, I fell in love all over again."

"I almost died that day. Wouldn't it have been terrible if I had shot off that pistol and hit the wrong man?"

"You wouldn't have hit me unless you aimed at him. Lydia, your father said you wanted to be a marchioness."

"I didn't, not really. I wanted to get rid of the name of Dugan, chiefly. And not having met you and learned what love is, I thought a title would be nice."

"I like your father. He has the most wonderful sense of humor I ever encountered."

"On the contrary, it is idiotic. Now I have a wonderful sense of humor—what are you laughing at?"

"Never mind, darling. I'm sailing to-morrow. You're coming the following week. Can we be married in a month?"

"I think I had better marry you as quickly as possible because you might forget—"

He placed an arm over her shoulder and drew her toward him.

"Do you really think that?" he asked. His lips were very near hers and his eyes looked into her wondrous black orbs.

"Well, no," said Lydia Dugan.

The tableau was disturbed by the ap-

pearance of Patrick Dugan, who was considerate enough to cough as he came out on the terrace.

"News from London, kids," he said. "Sir Arthur just phoned me that they nabbed Sam Dobbs in Amsterdam on information supplied by a crook named Stowe, whom they picked up and sweated at Scotland Yard. He had the Isling jewels and I'm going to get them back."

"That's great," declared Dale. "How about Lady Mary?"

"She was with Dobbs when he was arrested, but, as he declared that she knew nothing about the affair, they let her go. She has been tipped off to stay on the continent. It seems this fellow Stowe was recognized by Sergeant Russell near the gamekeeper's cottage as a man wanted upon a burglary charge. When he tried to make an arrest, Stowe shot him."

"Poor man," sighed Lydia.

"And Sir Arthur says that the French have a perfect case against Ross in the Hogan matter."

"They claimed to have a perfect case against me," commented Dale.

"Well he gets the guillotine and you get matrimony," retorted Mr. Dugan. "And there are folks that claim—"

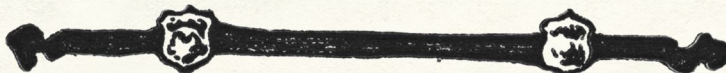
"Father," said Lydia severely. "I'm sure mother wants you."

"Oh, I was going anyway," replied the frivolous father. "Did I tell you, Dale, that the Queen of Sheba has a nasty disposition?"

"You can't tell me anything about Lydia," the lover said fondly.

"Huh!" replied Mr. Dugan.

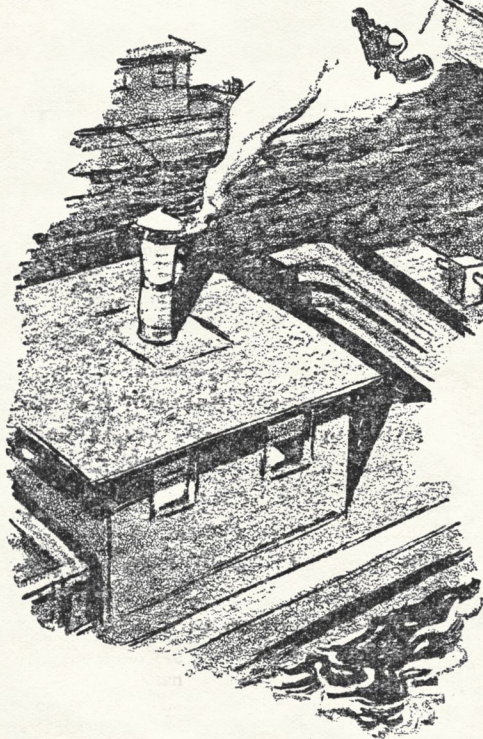
THE END



Doctor Jordan's Alibi

Lance Knew Dr. Jordan Shot Schmaltz, but the Doctor Could Prove He Was Hundreds of Miles Away

By Lew Allen Bird



The murder gun landed on a barge

DR. JORDAN had set his mind upon committing a murder. He was a grave, courteous man, of a high order of intelligence, so this decision had been a long time in the making. But, once formed, nothing

could shake it. In fact, it had become an obsession that occupied him to the exclusion of everything else. Therefore, as the prospective victim didn't know him from Adam, the doctor, when the opportunity arose, moved into an apartment next door to "Dutch" Schmaltz and gave himself over to consideration of the next step that he must make.

Any hasty, thoughtless action was out of the question. Dr. Jordan, to begin with, wasn't built that way, and, even if he had been, he had no desire to suffer the consequences of his deed—certainly not because of any inadequacy in his preparations, or in the commission of the crime itself. One jury might agree that he had been more than justified, but another might not. He

considered the matter exhaustively, but even his really fine brain could devise no plan that seemed safe enough.

His practice having been abandoned, he devoted his time largely to reading every book and magazine he could find that dealt at all with the art of murder. But, to his precise mind, there was always a flaw. Bums, clerks, Napoleons of industry—most of them tripped somewhere, and came to their last stand in the little room near the dynamo.

Complicated devices of fiction, considered seriously, all presented one drawback or another, so he finally threw the books aside and devoted himself to the creation of something new, a truly gigantic task. Nothing, the doctor finally concluded, would protect him better than an alibi. No matter how thoroughly the murder might be accomplished, some unforeseen finger would always point to him. Of this he was quite sure, for he had no delusions about the supposed stupidity of the police.

But an alibi—ah!

This, of course, was the main obstacle, but, once on the right track, Dr. Jordan was not to be deterred by even such a feat as being in two places at once.

He bent his capacities to the solution of this problem, and finally he had it—the perfect alibi. True, it might not work, but if it didn't, he need not proceed with the Schmaltz matter: if it did work, he was safe in going through with it.

He arranged the alibi, and it worked. Then, one evening, knowing from long observation that Schmaltz would be home and alone at ten fifteen, the doctor walked in, shot him between the eyes after some preliminary conversation, and walked out again.

He was sure that he had not been observed, either entering the apartment or leaving it. He knew that the walls were reasonably soundproof, and that if a shot were heard it would probably be mistaken for a backfire. Fourth Avenue was a busy thoroughfare, and a noisy one.

The doctor strolled out to the sidewalk. There was no sign of alarm anywhere. On the third floor, a woman was leaning idly on her window sill, watching the passing stream of automobiles. The body, most likely, would not be found until the scrubwoman came the next morning, unless Schmaltz were to have visitors later that night. This was possible, but it made no difference. The doctor, so far, felt that things had turned out very well.

He walked briskly away. Around the corner, where the woman on the third floor couldn't see him, he hailed a taxi. He threw the gun in the Gowanus Canal as they went over the bridge. Then he went on over to New York to put the finishing touches on his alibi.

He arrived back at the Bay Ridge apartment the next morning, June 5, suitcase in hand, to find the ground floor in charge of the police. This, of course, he had expected. The doctor explained to several official-looking men that he had just returned from Pittsburgh. He was very much shocked, and so forth, but would they kindly let him in? He lived there.

His dignity and poise, accentuated by a well trimmed Vandyke that gave him a quite substantial appearance, paved the way for him through the police cordon. In passing, he even glanced into the room where a number of plain-clothes men were fussing around, and saw that Dutch Schmaltz

still sprawled back in the chair in which he had died. The doctor's grim smile was hidden in his beard.

Later on, a big pantherish man with heavy black eyebrows came into his sitting room and asked him a lot of questions. Dr. Jordan answered them all calmly and collectedly. Some were foolish, and some were sensible. Apparently the big man was satisfied. He introduced himself as Inspector McQuade, and departed. No small time detectives for the likes of Dutch Schmaltz.

Much to the doctor's relief, the woman on the third floor had not appeared in the investigation. Not that he was unduly worried about her, but she might have caused him serious inconvenience if she had recognized him. He was to learn that the police obtained their information in easy stages, after patient and thorough effort.

In the early afternoon the medical examiner came, and shortly afterward Dutch Schmaltz left the Harbor Arms forever.

Dr. Jordan, at the time, was immersed in a pathological treatise.

II

A GREAT amount of press comment was devoted to the case in the next few days. The doctor, carefully studying these garbled accounts, almost felt that he had done a rather competent job. He had no real hope of entirely escaping implication in the affair, but it was beginning to look as if he might.

Dutch Schmaltz, according to the papers, had met his death in several ways. He had been thinking of muscling in on Vannie Higgins, for instance, and had been put on the spot in the interests of harmony in general and the

Bay Ridge beer trade in particular. Again, a jealous woman had shot him. Al Capone was mentioned several times, and so was Legs Diamond, although the latter gentleman was still convalescing from one of his periodic doses of buckshot.

Then, one day, just when things looked the brightest for Dr. Jordan, the storm broke.

The murder gun had been found! Instead of plunking safely into the water, it had landed on a barge and the captain had turned it in.

The doctor knew well enough what this meant—this break of all breaks. The police ballistics experts, according to the accounts, had determined that the bullet taken from Schmaltz's brain had been fired from that gun. Its ownership, eventually, could be traced to him. It now became apparent just how wise he had been in providing against some such slip.

He waited resignedly for the blow, and was ready for them when they came to take him away.

"Sorry, doc," boomed Inspector McQuade, who nevertheless acted quite jovial about it all. "You sure had us guessing for a while."

"I haven't the faintest idea what you're talking about," replied Dr. Jordan coldly.

III

WHENEVER Inspector McQuade got far enough off his course, which was not often, he had fallen into the habit of sending for Warner Lance. Lance was a popular novelist who knew the commissioner by his first name, and whose ideas had on more than one occasion been of considerable value to the department. McQuade sometimes did not know whether to be grateful for this occa-

sional assistance, or to resent it as coming from a civilian and an amateur.

When the Jordan case got completely out of hand, which was shortly, the burly inspector saw a chance to kill two birds with one stone. Either Warner Lance would have some bright and helpful suggestions to make, or else he would be as stumped as the police most certainly were. Either way, McQuade would win. In one event he would get considerable credit, and in the other a lot of malicious satisfaction. In fact, he was puzzled as to which outcome he really preferred. Not that he disliked Lance personally, but—

"Ah!" he rumbled, greeting a trim young man who sauntered into the office and helped himself to the inspector's most comfortable chair. "On the dot, eh? Well, you footloose chaps find it pretty easy, I guess. How's the idea factory to-day?"

"Rotten," said Lance shortly. He lit a cigarette and tossed the dead match toward the cuspidor. It fell short, and lay in blatant isolation on the red carpet. Lance shrugged, and glanced at McQuade. "Why? What's up, Mac?"

"Another one for your pet character to solve," the inspector grunted, shuffling through a stack of large cards. He extracted one and frowned over its edge at the indolent figure across the desk. "If he staggers through this, he's good."

"If you mean Trasker Throckmorton, you're out of luck," grinned Lance. "He couldn't find a German band in a barn, and you know it. But the dear public likes him. What's on your chest?"

McQuade's manner grew grim and businesslike. "I'll tell you," he agreed briskly. "This card is our record on the Dutch Schmaltz bump-off. What-

ever you've read in the papers is all bunk, so forget it. Are you set?"

Warner Lance carefully flicked an ash from his well creased trousers. Then he nodded, and stared at a portrait of Grover Whalen on the wall. McQuade recognized this air of assumed abstraction, which meant that every word he uttered would register clearly in the other's mind. Nevertheless, the mannerism never failed to irritate him.

"Here's the case against this Jordan," the inspector resumed, scowling blackly at the card. "We had no idea he was mixed up in it until we matched the bullet up with the gun. Then we—"

"Some luck, stumbling over the gun!" Lance interrupted reflectively. "I read about that."

"Luck!" snorted McQuade resentfully. "Whaddye mean—luck? System and efficiency was what it was."

"You *could* say it was efficient," Lance admitted agreeably. "The distinction is a fine one, but you certainly weren't asleep on the job. By the way, Mac, what does the doc say about the gun?"

"He says he forgot about it for years, and didn't run across it until about a month ago," sneered McQuade. "Then he said he didn't want it any more, not having a permit in New York, so he heaved it in an ashcan. Some one else must have found it and burned Dutch with it."

"H-m-m-m. Any finger-prints?"

"No."

"Well, that's a point for him, isn't it?"

"No!" barked McQuade. "It ain't. Any slob can wear gloves, or wipe the thing off."

"I was only thinking of the balance of probability, Mac," murmured Lance. "A man that can't think of

any safer way to dispose of a gun might be expected to slip up somewhere else."

"Not *this* bird," said McQuade forcefully. "He's plenty smart, and don't you think he ain't. Wait until you hear the rest of it." He tapped a thick finger on the desk to emphasize the ensuing points. "Now, we traced the gun to this medic. We found that he and Dutch both lived in Pittsburgh years ago, although so far we can't trace any connection between them there. Anyway, Dutch came to New York, and the doc followed later. He finds Dutch, somehow or other, and moves right next door to him, where he can size things up and take his time about the killing. Either Schmaltz doesn't recognize him, maybe on account of the whiskers, or else he doesn't know what's in the wind. Then the doc pull it off, and—"

Here McQuade paused, and let his voice sink to a portentous stage whisper: "We have a witness!"

"Ah, a witness!" said Lance, raising his brows slightly. "Dear me! Looks bad for our friend. What kind of a witness?"

"A woman!" McQuade revealed triumphantly. "She heard the shot, but thought, at the time, that it was a backfire. Then, a moment later, she saw this Jordan come out and walk off. How does that strike you?"

"Is she positive in her identification?"

"Absolutely."

"Uh huh. Anything else?"

"If you want more, we've got it," the inspector confessed. "Schmaltz had sprinkled some insect powder around in his room. No one else in the house had any, but we found traces of it on one of Dr. Jordan's shoes."

"Careless, wasn't it?" observed

Lance. "What does he say about all of this?"

McQuade laughed hollowly. "He chucked the gun away, and some one else found it," he summarized mockingly. "He just happened to come to New York, and just happened to wind up next door to Schmaltz. He says he never saw him before. He says the woman is mistaken, and that the powder on his shoe got there because our men tracked it out into the hall while they were running around the dump. What do you think of *that*?"

Lance grinned. "Quite an alibi artist!" he remarked.

"Humph!" grunted McQuade. "You haven't heard the half of his yarns yet. But what's your slant, so far?"

"Oh, the doc did it, all right," Lance decided without much hesitation. "You may not even need a motive to hang it on him. I mean, you ought to figure one out easily enough."

"And if we get the motive, would you say it's open and shut?" asked McQuade intently.

"No question about it," replied Lance easily. "You know what I've always maintained—on a given set of facts you can build only one correct solution. If you leave out a fact here, or a fact there, you can get a different answer, but the one that takes them all in is the one that wins. There are too many coincidences here, if we exonerate our medical friend."

"All right," said McQuade, sinking back in his chair with a satisfied grin that was almost a smirk. "Motive or no motive, coincidences or no coincidences, Jordan didn't do it because he couldn't have done it. He was in Pittsburgh, and he proved it."

"Ah!" exclaimed Lance, with obviously awakened interest. "An alibi, eh? Well, well! Our friend isn't such

a slouch, after all. I suppose it was a good one?"

"Damn good!" said McQuade grimly. "So good that the district attorney wouldn't even ask for an indictment. They've been running him ragged about all these half-baked cases of his, so he won't even look at this one until we've got it sewed up for him."

"And where is our scientific suspect now?"

"Where is he? How the devil should I know? We had to let him go."

Lance's expression conveyed his disapproval.

"Well, what else could we do?" asked the inspector belligerently. "Every one in the department from the Old Man down has had a crack at the alibi. It's armor-plated, welded, air-tight, and fool-proof."

"Tommyrot!" snapped Lance. "He faked it. He must have. You should have been able to tip it over. What one man can build up, another can tear down. It's easier."

"Oh, I see!" nodded McQuade, with what he considered scathing irony. "Well, we're not so bright around here. Suppose you do it."

This, then, was where McQuade was to get his reward, win or lose. Now that the details were all clear in his mind, fresh from repetition, he could see nothing for this cocky amateur but the same defeat that the department's experts had finally confessed. The alibi, as McQuade knew very well, really was fool-proof.

IV

"I'LL take a crack at it," Lance said curtly. "Let's have it."

"Done," agreed McQuade, with obvious relish. "I will. But there are

some things that you'll have to take our word for. The doctor's witnesses are all one hundred per cent honest, and none of them admit any chance of error. You'll have to accept this at the outset."

Lance nodded impatiently.

"Well," resumed McQuade, "We first got wise to all this when we had Dr. Jordan up before Judge Dix to be held for the grand jury. Defense counsel asked for an adjournment on the grounds of an alibi that would require some investigation to establish. That made the district attorney's office nervous, so they agreed, and even offered to help run it down. The whole thing ended in the doc's lawyer, an assistant district attorney, and one of our own men all traipsing out to Pittsburgh together.

"They looked into the whole mess from start to finish, and came back unanimous. Here's what they found, and what they proved.

"Dr. Jordan had been in Pittsburgh all day June 4. Schmaltz, as you know, was shot some time between ten and eleven that same night. The doc, we found, spent practically the whole day with an invalid minister he used to know.

"As a matter of fact, he supports him—sends him money every so often. The old reverend's mind is clear, and he remembered the doctor perfectly. It was only a couple of weeks ago, anyway.

"Well, the question of the exact date came up. They asked him if he were positive on that point. He was. He said he wouldn't ordinarily have been so sure, but it happened that the doctor gave him some more money, and even went down to the bank to deposit it for him. He showed our men the bank book. There it was—one

hundred dollars deposited on June 4. All clear, so far?"

"Of course," said Lance.

"I wanted to be sure. Well, they thanked the old chap for his trouble, and dusted right down to the bank. The teller readily identified a photograph of Dr. Jordan, and also verified the entry in the book. This satisfied the committee that there was no question of forgery. Besides, it was apparent that no erasures or alterations had been made. So much for the bank.

"Now, as had been previously established, the doc, after depositing the century, went back to his friend's boarding house and stayed there until a little after ten. Then he left to catch the ten thirty train for New York. What do you think of *that*?"

McQuade's inquiry was particularly jubilant, as he could see that Lance was puzzled. For several moments there was a silence broken only by the creaking of the inspector's chair as he teetered complacently back and forth.

"Bad!" said Lance finally. "The boys don't seem to have overlooked anything. As long as they're sure, why—" He let the sentence trail off expressively.

McQuade chuckled, an act consisting of guttural sounds that zoomed up from the depths of his barrel-like chest. "Licked already, eh?" he remarked, and chuckled again. "Why, not even the poor cops gave up that early. We were only slowed down. Well! Well!"

"What?" snapped Lance, alert again. "Is there something else?"

"I'll say there is," McQuade grinned. "And what you've heard ain't even in it with the rest."

"Let's have it, man! Don't sit there getting your face all creased up."

"Charmed!" obliged the inspector ponderously. "The conductor of the Limited was next. After the train was well out of Pittsburgh, he made the rounds to take up those who had got on there. Dr. Jordan was in lower nine. He said he had had to run to the train from the gate, and had lost his train ticket somewhere along the dash. You have to show 'em at the gate, you know.

"Well, he paid his fare in cash, and received one of those redemption tickets that are issued in such cases. Conductor Porter distinctly remembers talking about it the next morning in the dining car, because the doc asked him when the redemption value expired. Somehow or other, this conversation fixed the date pretty firmly in his mind, as he won't budge an inch from his statement that it occurred on the morning of June 5, and the doc's mug is as familiar to him as his own brother's. Then the train pulled into New York, the doc came home, and there you are!"

"You don't say! And did he save the redemption ticket?"

"Hell, yes!" snorted McQuade.

Lance considered all these data. The gray eyes that stared up at Grover Whalen gave no hint of whatever was passing through the brain that animated them.

"And you make nothing out of all this?" he asked, in his clipped, incisive manner.

"We make a lot," contradicted McQuade sharply. "The doc might have shoved Dutch off on the night of June 4, but he proved he was in Pittsburgh when the gun went off. Didn't he?"

"It seems so," Lance conceded. "I'd like to think it over, though." He reached for his hat.

"Don't get a headache," counselled McQuade gruffly.

V

WARNER LANCE'S way of thinking it over was peculiar in all respects. He went directly to his apartment, and took an automatic and a shoulder holster from a bureau drawer. When this armament was adjusted to his satisfaction, there was no bulge or any other sign of it.

Then he took his car and drove over to Bay Ridge, where he was fortunate in finding the redoubtable Dr. Jordan at home. The doctor answered the doorbell in his shirt sleeves, with a book in his hand.

"I'm from the police," Lance explained briefly.

Dr. Jordan's austere features remained expressionless.

"I see," he replied evenly. "Will you step in while I get ready?"

"I'll step in," said Lance, "but we're not going anywhere. I just want to talk over the case with you."

"I see," reiterated the doctor. "Certainly." He ushered Lance into an expensively furnished study. He put on his coat, and they both sat down, the doctor at his desk and Lance across from it.

"Wouldn't you be more comfortable on the sofa?" the novelist asked casually.

"The drawers are empty," replied Dr. Jordan impassively. "I am unarmed."

Lance smiled.

Dr. Jordan looked searchingly at the clean-cut face and the eyes with the hint of steel somewhere. He inclined his head gravely, and sat still.

"While I'm from the police, as I said," Lance began coolly, "I'm not of them. I'm just a friend of McQuade's.

He likes to get my opinion of little problems that come up, feeling that he'll trip me sooner or later. This will make him happy, I won't mind, and every one will be satisfied."

"An ideal arrangement," admitted the doctor politely. "What can I do for you, Mr. Lance?"

The visitor was momentarily surprised at this ready recognition, but his eye caught the title of a book on the far side of the desk. It was one of his latest works, with his portrait on the title page.

"I don't know," said Lance. "Maybe nothing. I came here to find out why you shot Schmaltz."

Closely as he watched, Lance could see no flicker in those steady brown eyes. Not a muscle quivered.

"I have gone into the matter exhaustively with the police," the doctor said patiently. "I know nothing about it."

Lance tipped back in his chair, and looked meditatively out the window. This job, evidently, was going to be both entertaining and instructive.

"Look here!" he said suddenly, allowing the chair to clump back on all fours. "I want to be completely fair with you in this matter. If you mislead me, I may fail. My connection with this case is entirely unofficial, and I can do what I please with my knowledge. The police cannot. Do you follow me?"

"No," answered Dr. Jordan, with the calm assurance that appeared characteristic of him.

Lance sighed. "To put it bluntly," he continued, "nothing in the world but your alibi stands between you and a jury. The alibi is one of the best that I have heard, but it's a fake. You made a bad slip."

Dr. Jordan recoiled slightly, the only outward sign of the shock these calm

words had brought. A slip! His mind raced back over the details, which he knew by heart through countless rehearsals. There was a momentary hope that this was just a trick to trip him up, but he abandoned it. Something in the other's manner made it futile.

"Your error was one that is invariably made by the intelligent type," Lance was saying, in words that cut sharply into the doctor's teeming thoughts. "You made your alibi just a little bit *too* good. It was entirely too complete. An innocent man would have only one chance in a million of establishing such a minute check on his every movement. If you had stopped with the bank book, everything might have been all right, but you went on to improve the already perfect. It was a fatal mistake."

Dr. Jordan's knuckles showed white. He noticed this, and put his hands in his lap.

"You are merely guessing," he said, with an admirable air of bored detachment. "It is unfair to assume things you cannot prove."

"I do not guess," Lance replied shortly. "Once my suspicions were aroused, I set out to see if there were not some way in which I could create the same effect you did. If I succeeded, I would know how you did it, for such a remarkable illusion could hardly be built up in more than one way. Dr. Jordan, I did succeed. I, myself, can duplicate your alibi at any time!"

Dr. Jordan could control his voice, his manner, even his expression; but he could not shade the startled gleam in his eyes. "Impossible!" he muttered. "Impossible!"

"I can see you want details," Lance observed resignedly. He began to ex-

perience a distaste for this harrying of a dignified man, but there was nothing else to do now. "This is the way I went about it, in my reconstruction. I would be in Pittsburgh on June 3. I would deposit the hundred dollars after 3 P.M., knowing that many banks enter such receipts as of the following business day, and that my deposit would thus be dated June 4. Not all banks are so strict in this respect, but I had previously noticed that this one was.

"In fact, that was probably what gave me my idea. A cute little point, and one that would be almost certain to pass unquestioned.

"I then show the bank book to my aged friend, and am satisfied that he doesn't question the date of entry. Most people are hazy about dates, and I had previously established that this elderly invalid was no exception. I then catch the ten thirty train and am back in New York the morning of June 4, leaving me free to commit my—er—murder that night. I have only to keep out of sight all day, and to gain my own apartment under cover of darkness.

"Am I not right, Dr. Jordan?"

Lance realized that the doctor must be fighting for self-possession, although he still gave no sign—merely sat there in tight-lipped and uncompromising silence.

"I suppose I'll have to go through with it," said Lance wryly. "We left off at the killing, seeing you insist on having it so. It is the night of June 4, and I am supposed to be leaving Pittsburgh at almost that very moment. As I cannot be, and as some one certainly did, it must be my confederate. This gentleman, taking great care to keep in the shadows of his berth, during the purchase of the ticket from the con-

ductor, could easily be mistaken for me the following morning provided no one got a good look at him in the meantime.

"When the train pulls into Philadelphia the next morning, he sneaks off, meets me in the station, and I contrive to return unnoticed to the berth he has just vacated. From then on, until we reach New York, I take pains to be as conspicuous as my friend had been retiring. The conductor has no reason to suspect that I am not the same man who handed him the cash from the darkness the night before. I even manage to mention the episode to him in the diner, and take the further opportunity of referring to the date, June 5, in such a way that he will be sure to remember it.

"And so I arrive in New York on the morning of June 5 with a smile, a suitcase, and an alibi. What do you think the police would say to all this, Dr. Jordan?"

VI

THE doctor did not answer at first. He was staring down toward the floor, and only the top of his head was visible. Then he looked up. His face was haggard. He seemed to have aged years in a few brief moments, but his voice was as low and steady as before.

"What do you wish me to do?" he asked. No pleas, no cringing, no demonstration; just a stoical acceptance of what must have been a crushing blow.

"Why did you shoot him?" persisted Lance, somewhat uncomfortably. This stripping of souls could be a damnable business at times.

"I see no objection now," shrugged the doctor. "I will tell you. I'm surprised that you didn't reconstruct that,

too. Schmaltz was a skunk. Years ago, my son was working his way through medical school. I had plenty of money, but he insisted on standing on his own legs. We lived in Pittsburgh. He spent his last vacation working as a messenger in a bank. There was a holdup that day. He was shot down like a dog, with not even a chance to raise his hands. The killers escaped. Do you question any of this, Mr. Lance?"

"Certainly not!" the other said hastily.

"I see. Well, nothing was ever done about it. Years passed. Much of my practice, during this period, was in the poorer sections of the city. One of my patients was dying from a gunshot wound. He fancied himself under some obligation to me, and he whispered the name of my boy's murderer. It was Schmaltz. The police, having nothing but my word for it, and my informant having died, there seemed to be nothing that could be done at so late a date. I then abandoned my practice, and set out to run this rat to earth.

"I found him here, five years later. I watched his every move. He was a thief and a dope runner, contaminating everything and every one he touched. I swept him aside, and am glad. That is all."

Lance met the doctor's burning gaze for several tense seconds. Then he arose.

"Oh, there's just one other thing," he said. "Who was your accomplice in the alibi?"

"I will never tell," replied the doctor flatly.

Lance nodded understandingly. "I don't suppose it makes much difference to McQuade," he mused. "Well, I'll be going now. They're waiting for me. Thanks for the interview."

Dr. Jordan inclined his head gravely. He made no attempt to arise. "I suppose I am to wait here for the inspector?" he inquired.

Lance turned at the door. The doctor noticed that he had been mistaken about the eyes. They were not steel-gray, just gray.

"I really don't think he's coming," Lance advised, with a faint smile. "You see, I intend merely to tell him that I left here knowing no more about your alibi than I did before I came. And that, my dear doctor, will be the exact truth.

"Good day."



Stumping the Governor

GOVERNOR JAMES ROLPH, of California, is noted for his stump speeches, but a letter from one J. W. Birke stumped him. Birke, who happens to be No. 42932 in San Quentin prison, thus addressed the Golden State's chief executive.

"I crashed this joint four and a half years ago on the heel of a beef. All I did was prowl a gee's shovel and broom and they R. R. me into the Big House. I never got my dukes on a lousy fin on that caper. I had a trey and a few moons when the bug cops a sneak on me and lays me in the pokey as flat as a mat. I been on my hammer and tack in the kip now for a year and a half and I'm unimproving quick. When I hit the bricks, I'm moping back to the Canadian sticks. Give a poor, sick gee a break, will you, Gov?"

The Governor admitted to being puzzled until the letter was thus translated for him, apparently by a Harvard graduate.

"I was incarcerated in this bastille four years and six months ago as a result of falsified accusations. My sole offense was to be found in the room of a stranger, but I was cast into the penitentiary by means of fabricated testimony. I did not abstract a nickel from the apartment in question. I had been in durance vile for three years and a few months when I was unexpectedly stricken with tuberculosis, which sent me bedridden to the hospital. I have been on my back in bed for a year and a half, and I am rapidly getting worse. If liberated, I contemplate an immediate return to Canada. I humbly request, Mr. Governor, your aid in behalf of a poor, unfortunate invalid."

Governor Rolph is still undecided, though it has been hinted that he may "fly a kite" to Mr. Birke with a pardon.

DO YOU READ THE ARGOSY?

*She was being dragged
toward that unbe-
lievable lake*



Cave of the Blue Scorpion

Was he myth or man, this Mr. Lu of the jade brain whose palace an American adventurer sought at the bottom of a Chinese mountain lake?

By LORING BRENT

Novelette—Complete

CHAPTER I.

A LAKE OF MYSTERY.

DAWN, on a cold, thin little wind, crept into this mountain fastness of Inner China. The light of approaching day sent dark and mysterious flashes into the small egg-shaped lake which, almost a mile below, lay like a puddle of purple water at the

bottom of a well. The sharp-eyed American girl who had climbed alone to this vantage point stared in fascination as two figures poised, dived into the lake, and did not come up. What lay at the bottom of that lake, and into what thrilling adventure was this girl about to be plunged?

Read this gripping story in next week's ARGOSY.

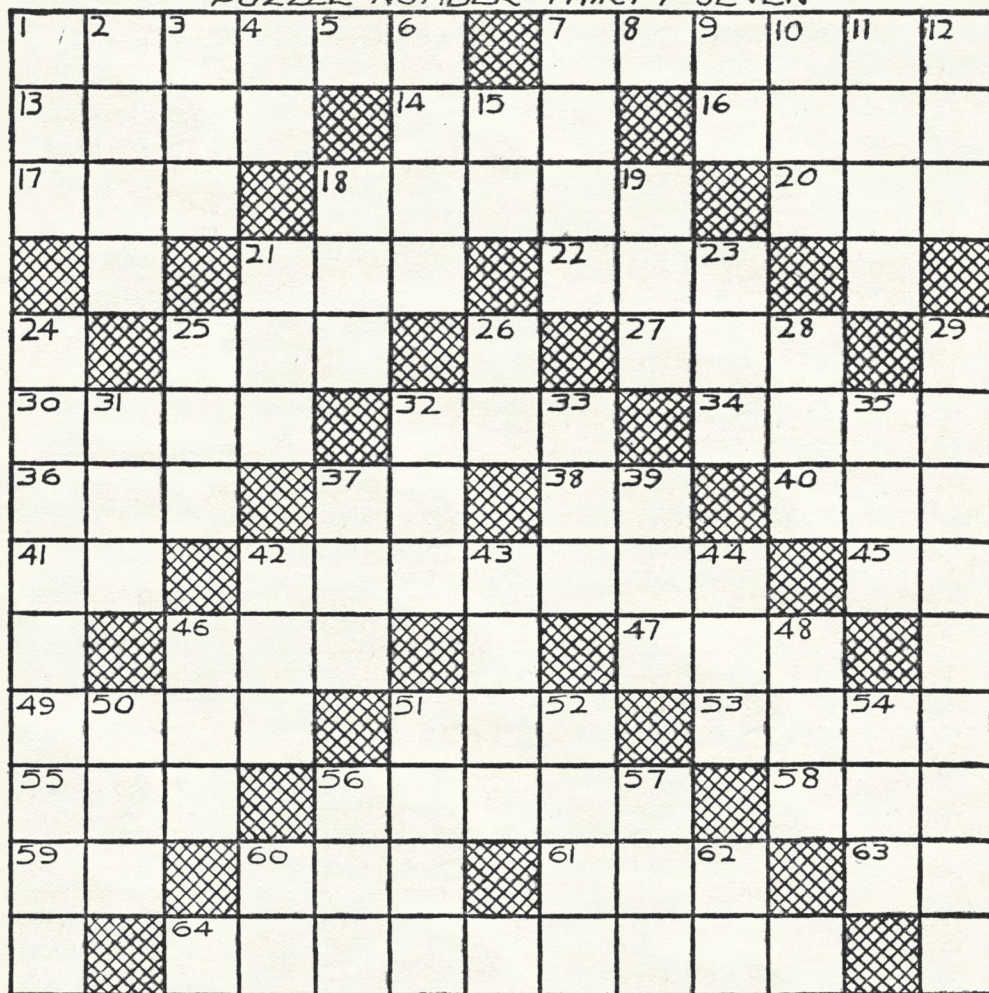
ARGOSY—THE GREAT ADVENTURE WEEKLY—10c

Narrative Cross-Word Puzzle

A BANK ADOPTS SPEAKEASY PRECAUTIONS

By Richard Hoadley Tingley

PUZZLE NUMBER THIRTY-SEVEN



A ACROSS

D-DOWN

Try This New Puzzle! Correct Answer Next Week

D 6 The I am to relate
A 42 concerns the Savings
Bank of Cactusville, and its
D 29 D 60 It was told
D 62 and several others as
sat in a smoking car, by a former
resident of that city,
A 61 now of Hartford, and
D 5 have his that it is
A 53 true.

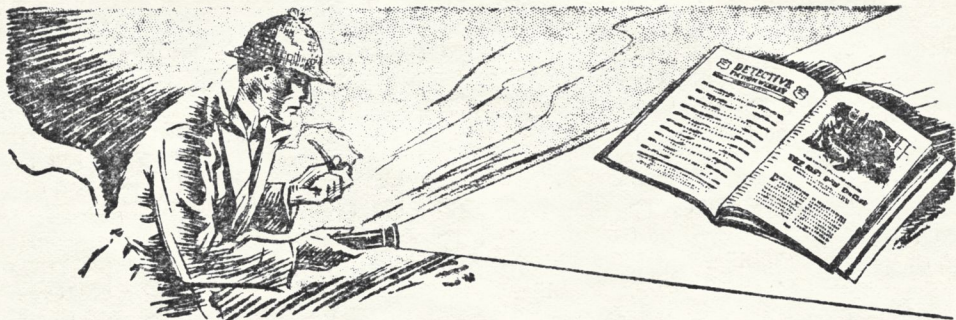
D 57 Like other towns that
the Mexican frontier, Cactus-
ville swarms with objectionable
people from over the
D 54 Grande who have in
A 64 making things for
D 31 D 25 abiding citizens from one
A 55 of the town to the other who
A 17 seem not to have the to
rid themselves of the annoyance.

This bank, our informant said,
D 12 is as as the city itself.
D 50 Its capital stock is
hundred thousand dollars, a sum
D 56 A 30 smaller that
of other Cactusville banks. It
D 43 serves a section of the
D 3 city, and its deposits
D 52 amount to several of
thousands of dollars.
D 48 Years ago Mr.
Kaplan, a man then about fifty
A 14 years of, arrived in Cac-
D 2 tusville. When he from
D 44 the train he at once
that this was the place he had
been looking for. In his home
city he had been a manufacturer
A 13 A 32 of; had been a
notcher in his line, and had
A 56 A 36 well, but he had
A 36 after with his partner,
A 7 a testy old These con-
D 51 stant finally got on his
D 37 nerves and he a price
A 63 his interest in the busi-
ness and sold out. It had long
D 42 been a idea of his to
D 15 into the banking busi-
D 28 ness, but he had never
D 19 had the opportunity to
D 46 at it. With a big of
money in his pocket he bought a
A 41 bankrupt bank Cactus-
D 7 ville from an old who
had run it into the ground, and
A 59(prefix) opened it with him-
A 45 self its chief officer.
Kaplan had his own ideas, and
A 51 caring not a what other
D 4 institutions might, he
D 11 conducted his to suit
himself, with a view to giving as
D 18 D 26 much as possible
the poor people in the section.
He had been a great traveler
and had accumulated many a
A 27 strange and unique
from foreign lands, and had
decorated his bank from front
to with rare and
A 34 curious things; platinum trinkets
and rubies from the
A 16 Mountains in Russia; an enor-
D 1 mous and arrows from
A 21 Borneo; a tattling
from South America; an image
D 9 of, the Babylonian
D 23 storm god. were these
all; there were many more.
But the banker received a
shock one day when a Mexican

A 1 D 33 and his entered
A 20 the bank, with drawn
guns, walked off with two thou-
A 22 sand dollars, all in
D 8 dollar bills. Within
week the same thing happened
again. This got the president's
A 49 D 32 It was much
D 10 to stand even in this of
A 46 holdups. Mad as a
hen, Kaplan decided on an un-
D 26 usual remedy protect
himself after the manner of
speakeasies. In the front door,
A 47 which always kept
A 38 locked, he had opening
cut; just a little peep-hole. No
D 24 were permitted to enter
unless identified. This ruse
A 25 to the capture of the
thugs, who did not know about
D 39 this arrangement.
One policeman was instructed
A 58 by the chief to in am-
bush under cover of the shrubs
D 35 in the that surrounded
the bank grounds, and another
A 40 was told to stand behind
peep-hole ready for action.
A 18 came the bandits.
Through the peep-hole the cop
A 37 filled his man full of
lead that he will never again
A 60 the peace of honest folk.
The outside policeman easily
captured the second thug and
marched him away to the
D 21

ANSWER TO LAST WEEK'S PUZZLE

M	A	I	D	E	N		M	O	N	I	E	S
I		F	O	R	S		T	O	O		H	
D	O		T	R	A	N	S	I	T		H	E
I	D	A		S	P	O	T	S		P	A	L
R	O	D	S		T	R	Y		W	A	I	T
O	R	D	E	R		T		W	H	I	L	E
N		S	N	I	P		S	E	E	N		R
	S		S	O	L		H	E	R		S	
G	O	N	E		A	G	O		E	M	I	T
O	H	O		S	T	O	R	E		A	L	A
L	O		A	T	E		E	L	M		O	F
F		O	N	E		S		S	E	T		T
	I	N		W	H	O	S	E		O	R	



FLASHES FROM READERS

*Where Readers and Editor Get Together to Gossip
and Argue, and Everyone Speaks Up His Mind*

HERE is a good morsel of news just as we go to press.

Two national broadcast programs have selected DETECTIVE FICTION WEEKLY and ARGOSY as the leading magazines in detective and adventure fields to draw upon for radio story features.

Over the Columbia national network of WABC and twenty other stations, the Scott and Bowne "Sea Romances" Hour and the Eno "Crime Club" Hour will present these stories with special casts of actors.

On November 10, at 9.30 P.M., Eastern Standard Time, "Sea Romances" will present "Mettle" from ARGOSY, a Down-East fisherman story written by Ralph R. Perry, who will be remembered by DETECTIVE FICTION WEEKLY readers for his stirring novellette, "Marked Men."

On November 11, also at 9.30 P.M., Eastern Standard Time, the "Crime Club" Hour will give Robert H. Rohde's mystifying novelette, "Follow the Green Line!" which all of you read in these pages recently. Truly a rare treat!

Tune in!

Victor Maxwell's story of William Gohl, which appeared in DETECTIVE FICTION WEEKLY September 19, brought him the following interesting letter from a man who helped bring the murderous Gohl to justice.

MY DEAR MR. MAXWELL:

Anent your most interesting story, in DETECTIVE FICTION WEEKLY, the "Floater Fleet," the writer was one of those who lived through that hectic period in Aberdeen when it was almost a daily occurrence for a "floater" to be picked up either in the Chehalis or Wishkah rivers. Also as a city official, president of the city council, I was directly concerned in a solution of the mystery. I knew Billy Gohl personally; in fact, he lived on Broadway Hill in my ward, called the "Silk Stocking Fifth." His home was a bungalow, where his very boldness more or less cloaked his nefarious deeds. It was only after his home had been thoroughly searched, bringing to light an enormous amount of loot, that his dual existence was exposed.

Gohl was an arch-murderer of the very worst type—cold, merciless and utterly without a redeeming trait. His office in the Sailors Union Hall was directly above Paddy McHugh's saloon. It was in Paddy's saloon that much of the evidence was secured which convinced the authorities of Gohl's wholesale guilt. And incidentally, the period of "patient waiting" in the case, to which you refer, was in reality a period of intense and exceedingly strenuous undercover activity.

Mayor Ed Benn worked indefatigably to get the evidence to convict Gohl. The writer worked with Chief George Dean, Sheriff Payette, De-

tective Ken Church, and Policeman Thomas Kelly—all tireless workers on the case.

Paddy McHugh at first simply would not talk. Fear of the assassin had sealed his lips. So Mayor Benn engineered a coterie of prominent citizens who secretly purchased Paddy McHugh's saloon and installed there in charge an undercover operative from Seattle—a courageous young man named Templeman, who stood a shift as bartender, principally at night. And it was largely through this arrangement that we got "the goods" on Gohl. Here it was that the Klingenberg angle developed. And after he had moved to another city, Paddy McHugh broke his silence.

It was said, and afterward proved, that Gohl had a "black list" upon which appeared the names of the mayor, police officials and other prominent citizens most active in running him down, all marked to be murdered. Possibly the list was designed more to intimidate than anything else, but in the light of subsequent events when the cold-blooded brutality of the individual was disclosed, it was given greater credence, and many a person in Aberdeen and on Grays Harbor sighed with sincere relief when the trial was over and Gohl was put away for good. There was, however, considerable disappointment at the verdict. Anyhow, as of course you know, the "Floater Fleet" stopped and the whole community was greatly relieved.

I am told that George Dean is still chief of the Aberdeen police department and crime there is at an exceedingly low minimum. Ed Payette is living in the city of Glendale, near Los Angeles. Finch Archer is now warden of the "Big House" at McNeill's Island. Billy Seaman is now connected with the Los Angeles police department and Ed Benn is at present State Senator from his district. Incidentally, one of our Aberdeen boys, Homer Cross, is now deputy chief of police here in Los Angeles.

I thought I would write and congratulate you on the story, as it was very interesting. Times have changed since the old days "on the Harbor" and many of those prominent in the life of the three towns have passed on to the great beyond, but it is always interesting to me to relive the scenes of those hectic days when the logger was king and "the Hemlocks bowed down to him," as Bill Corkery, a typical woodsman, used to say, or rather roar. And Bill always added: "When I speak, the clams sink six feet in the sand."

Cordially yours,

C. C. QUACKENBUSH,
Venice, Calif.

SHE'S QUITE CORRECT

DEAR SIR:

Although I often read your magazine and always enjoy it, I haven't written to say so, being shy about doing such things. Last evening I read the current issue and knew I must send a line about

the newspaper reporter, *Hackett*, created by Louis Weadock. This character is so lifelike that I wonder if *Hackett* is a creation of fiction or a biographical—maybe an autobiographical—character. I feel that Louis Weadock must be—or has been—a newspaper man and one of a great deal of experience. I seem to "get" that between the lines. If I am correct, then he has seen and gone through many an experience which he could weave into a clever lifelike story around *Hackett*.

I trust you will get him to do this, so that I may have the pleasure of reading more of Mr. Weadock's stories in your live wire magazine. I am grateful for the corking mystery serials by M. S. Buchanan. She is one of the cleverest mystery story writers in the game.

Yours truly,

MRS. ANNETTE LINSEY,
New York City.

Send us coupon from ten different issues of DETECTIVE FICTION WEEKLY and get an artist's illustration.

Send only ten coupons, because only one picture can be given to any reader at one time. Then save for another.

"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 February 13.)
(Only one picture given at a time.)

11-14

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. OHAYER

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.

THIS week's novelty puzzle, submitted by L. W. Legerts, has come all the way from Mexico. Phonetics play an important part, but to say more would spoil the fun. Try it! Look for the answer next week.

No. 263—The Cryptic Sash.

DEAR SIR:

While making a recent visit, I took along a copy of your magazine and we had quite a time solving, or rather trying to solve, the ciphers. The Grandma of the house told us that when she was in school her schoolmates got hold of a note written her by a boy friend and ragged her about it, so she asked him to try to figure out some way they could communicate secretly. He agreed to do so. And at Christmas time, which occurred shortly after, he sent her a sash (they then being in fashion), with a cipher message embroidered thereon. She showed me the sash, and the message is as I have written it.

U. O. A. O. I. O. T. H. E. E. O. O.
N. O. O. B. U. T. O. O. M. E. & O.
M. A. Y. M. Y. O. T. H. Y. O. B. &
G. I. V. E. O. O. I. O. T. H. E. E.

I could not solve it in the short time I was there, so she took pity on me when I was leaving and gave me the solution. She called it a "cryptogram." Perhaps it would interest the fans.

Very truly yours,

L. W. LEGERTS,
Tampico, Tamps., Mexico.

In resolving Jacy's No. 262, last week's "Inner Circle" cipher, the an-

swer to which appears on page 287, advantage could be taken of the 5-letter pattern words. Thus, in words 4 and 16, combinations of the high-frequency symbols P and H with infrequent A and G indicate the former as vowels, with H probably *o* from doubling and in not being used as a final.

Trying C as *s*, because of doubling and finality, and K as *e*, from high frequency and use in the two last positions, ZHCCK, (*osse*), would then suggest *posse*. PAHHJ, (*--oo--*), with an initial *i* or *u* improbable in a word of this pattern, and duly noting the frequency of A, would follow as *afoot*. ZPJLHOC (*pat-o-s*) would then become *patrols* by its context with *posse*.

The dictionary could now be consulted, if necessary, for COPRWS-JKL (*sla---ter*). Running through the *sla*'s for a word of 9 letters, all different, would soon reveal *slaughter*. WPLDCSOM (*gar-shl-*) would then obviously be *garishly*. Words 6 and 7, with only the symbol E unknown in both, would follow as *regional fauna*; and so on with the rest of the message.

This week's crypts open with a snappy contribution from Andrew S. Martin. Guess the short words XRQ and RQEQ, noting the repeated Q in

the latter. Continue with RPW and SW. Then supply the third letter in word 15, to check. Next, complete words 7 and 5, 9 and 19; and so on. Leave SEBYXWB until last, when the unkeyed B may be found by trial.

Mama provides KSS and SKH for comparison in his cryptogram. Note also the symbol M set off by an apostrophe in word 15. Next, fill in MPHOKDMBZ, following up with words 5 and 6. Affixes break the ice in Mrs. A. M. Ganser's crypt. Compare the prefix JD- and the suffix -JDE. Then supply the first three letters of GTBDE, with an eye to BCO LTGFF.

Symbol T, used mostly as a final, MT, and the endings -ET and -WMEY should give you a lift with Fogarhill's crypt. Word 11 should break next, noting the use of symbol D in word 2; then word 10, by context. Mrs. W. D. Gray contributes an exceptionally interesting entry for "Inner Circle" fans. A solution of this cipher will be given next week.

No. 264—Metropolis. By Andrew S. Martin.

SEBYXWB SW DRSQG DSXZ SF ZQFS-
WQS APWSF, PFI JFQ JG XRQ CPEHQWX
DSXSQW SF WSAQESP. WKQCXSFH JG
HJCI JEQW RPW AQDJKQ PF SKVJE-
XPFX SFIYWXEZ RQEQ.

No. 265—A Matter of Choice. By Mama.

FDMOG-BKNOQA FROL MPHOKDMBZ
GKQMOLPHM SHRVHOGOLP RM WHK-
VJPH VDHQM KSS VMGJROXKEMXZ
OQ FOL-QKVP SKH "FRHFRLDXP
FDAEDFU'M FRL FPBKLRQM."

No. 266—Through Glass Darkly. By Mrs. A. M. Ganser.

ABCDE FGHJKL JDHCFEJDE MCN-
NKDO PKGMQ-RGSGTG MNGUK JDM-
JOK DKG N NBJO GTBDE GTJLQ
VGNTKNL GO RCPFJM TGNWKO.

LQBMWKH BPLKNXKN VJOL BCO
LTGFF LBD YJOQ LTBWKH LRKMO-
GMFKL.

No. 267—Paying the Piper. By Fogarhill.

RLFZHT TDLFZKVVH NYODLHK LFH-
AGY PHLAV, XWLKAFZ WMDCAFW-
MEY WMNDCAFWE GWAFK. XWKVDH
DAE, JLAXBET WNCAFAKVYHYN MT
GWHYFV, XLHYK XDCGEVYVET.

No. 268—Who, Which, What. By Mrs. W. D. Gray.

DUDS: XUR NKRU GPUZ LHVDJUE
DVXR BTC BKFUR SYUE ATZF RVJ,
DKXSZ DUZN XRVFFS LSERTFS;
KXFUERKTZ RSRKH UCLUZXU.

LAST WEEK'S ANSWERS

257—Key: 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 0
FOUR AND SIX

258—An apple a day assists in appeasing the appetite and avoids excess avoidupois; also, according to ancient adage, keeps doctor away!

259—The day of Crypts has come once more,

The gayest of the week,
When at the stationery store
This magazine we seek.
The Cross-Word Puzzle Narrative
We tackle with delight;
The Long Division Problems give
Our wits a polish bright.

260—Faulty judgment of symmetry displayed by "Ham and Eggs" sign in restaurant window. Passing tourist shows spacings between "Ham" and "and," and "and" and "Eggs," are not equal.

261—Local bulb factory gang found dead pup yesterday thrown onto pulp pile near high test gasoline tank.

262—Garishly garbed enigma, afoot among regional fauna, dumfounds township. Posse patrols byway while hypochondriac brethren await slaughter.

Enroll in the November Solvers' Club by sending us one or more answers to this week's puzzles. Answers will appear in next week's issue.

COMING NEXT WEEK!

SHE was very different from what Guy Kerrick had expected. Her hair was black as a raven's wing, drawn tightly back. Her face was white—dead white, relieved only by the crimson line of her lips. Her eyes were the palest blue eyes that Kerrick had ever seen.

Kerrick remembered what Regan had said of her.

"She's beautiful, exotic—even to some strange, maddening perfume that she uses. For six months she nearly drove me mad. She's like a drug, and unless Tommy Day shakes himself out of it, he's done for. He's acting like a madman now, insane with jealousy, hypnotized by her beauty . . ."

And that same night, an hour after midnight, Guy Kerrick listened to Tommy Day sob out an incoherent sentence, "The studio—oh, my God, the studio—oh, my God!" and hurried to the little studio on the Day estate, and found Janice Barrow, dead.

She wore a red evening gown. On the floor beside her were four brass candlesticks, two at her head and two at her feet, and in them burned four flickering candles. She had been brutally and ruthlessly strangled to death.

Here's a gripping story of love and hate and mystery. Five men might have murdered Janice Barrow—her husband, a multi-millionaire; Dr. Muir, dour recluse and nerve expert; Tommy Day; Carl Regan, artist; and Joe Streega, a gangster strangely intruding into this drama of the socially elect.

It was Kerrick's job to find the man, but before he did death stalked through the night and found other victims.

Don't miss the first installment of

The Strangler in the Night

By Judson P. Philips



In the same issue, stories by ERLE STANLEY GARDNER, SIDNEY HERSHEY, SMALL, J. ALLAN DUNN, CHARLES SOMERVILLE, BARRY PEROWNE, and others.

DETECTIVE FICTION WEEKLY—November 21

DANCER ON WAY TO STARDOM •

• WANTS A NEW NAME!

★ (NEWS ITEM)

On the very threshold of international fame and fortune, Jeanne Williams wants a new "Stage Name." Young—graceful—talented; her beautiful body is vibrant with the magnetic glow of youthful personality. Critics say her performances are "Sensational", "Exotic", and that she is at the door of stardom. . . . Now, because her name is similar to that of another star of Broadway, she wants a NEW name by which she will be featured and which she hopes to carry to fame.

We Will Pay
\$500.00
Just for a Girl's Name

COSTS NOTHING TO WIN

Nothing to Buy—Nothing to Sell—No Entrance Fees—No
"Number Paths" nor "Guessing" to Win This Cash Prize

JUST SUGGEST A GIRL'S NAME

What an amazing opportunity! You may win this big cash prize in only a moment's time. Simply send us a name for this graceful young dancer—*nothing more to do. Sound easy? It is easy!* The first name that comes to your mind this minute may be the very one to win \$500.00 cash. It does not have to be a "fancy" name—just some simple name that is easy to say and easy to remember—a name that will look well in blazing electric lights in front of the nation's finest theatres. Think of a name—send it Today—Win \$500.00 Cash—qualify for \$5,000.00 opportunity.

NO WAY YOU CAN LOSE

Simply suggest the winning name—that is all you have to do to get the \$500.00. We are giving the prize to advertise our marvelous Foot Balm that is even now used by many professional dancers. Because a famous name is valuable in advertising, the new name chosen for this rising young dancer will also be used as the name for our Foot Balm—her fame will bring us big advertising. . . . It is your opportunity of a life-time. Maybe your own name, or the name of a friend may be the very name we want. Nothing for you to lose—a fortune for you to win.

JUST SENDING A NAME QUALIFIES YOU FOR OPPORTUNITY TO

Win \$3,000.00

OR BUICK 8 CYLINDER SEDAN AND \$1,500.00 IN CASH BESIDES

This money is entirely *separate and in addition* to the prize for the Dancer's Name. Over 50 huge cash prizes—3 fine automobiles. Think of it! You may win over \$3,000.00 cash or a new Buick 8 Cylinder Sedan and \$1,500.00 Cash besides! What a magnificent fortune! Some one is going to get it—why not you? You have just as good an opportunity to win as anyone. Suggest a name for the Dancer. Do it now—it may mean a fortune for you.

\$1,000.00 CASH CERTIFICATE

Will Be Sent to You At Once—BE PROMPT

One thousand dollars EXTRA if you are PROMPT and win first prize. So don't delay! Send your name suggested *promptly*—nothing more to do now or ever toward getting the Name Prize and to qualify for the opportunity to win the other huge prizes. *You can't lose anything—EVERY PERSON WHO TAKES AN ACTIVE PART WILL BE REWARDED IN CASH. I will send you a \$1,000.00 Cash Certificate as soon as your name is received—I will tell you just how you stand in the distribution of over \$5,000.00 in cash prizes and fine new automobiles.*

Hundreds Have Won

Viola Lauder, Oregon, was destitute—her home burned down. She suggested a name for our toilet soap and won a big cash prize of \$900.00! H. L. Adams, Pa., won over \$2000.00. Hundreds of others made happy by

big prizes and rewards. Now, some yet unknown person is going to win \$3,000.00 cash; many others are going to be made happy with scores of prizes as high as \$750.00. Three fine cars will be given.

Read These Simple Rules

Contest open to all except employees of our company. Only one name may be submitted—sending more than one name will cause all names sent by you to be thrown out. Suggest a first and last name for the dancer. Contest closing date given in my first letter to you. In case of duplicate winning names, duplicate prizes will be given. Every person submitting a name qualifies for opportunity to win \$3,000.00 cash or Buick 8 Cylinder Sedan and \$1,500.00 in cash. Use the coupon or write a letter to submit name and receive all details.

WALTER BRENT, Mgr.

906 Sycamore Street Dept. 915-MM Cincinnati, Ohio



The Delight of Dancing Feet . . . Do your feet ache, itch, perspire or burn? Then try this famous Foot Balm that has brought delight to the over-worked feet of professional dancers.



Winning Name Coupon

WALTER BRENT, Mgr.,
906 Sycamore St., Dept. 915-MM, Cincinnati, Ohio.

The Name I suggest for the Dancer is:.....

Name.....

Address.....

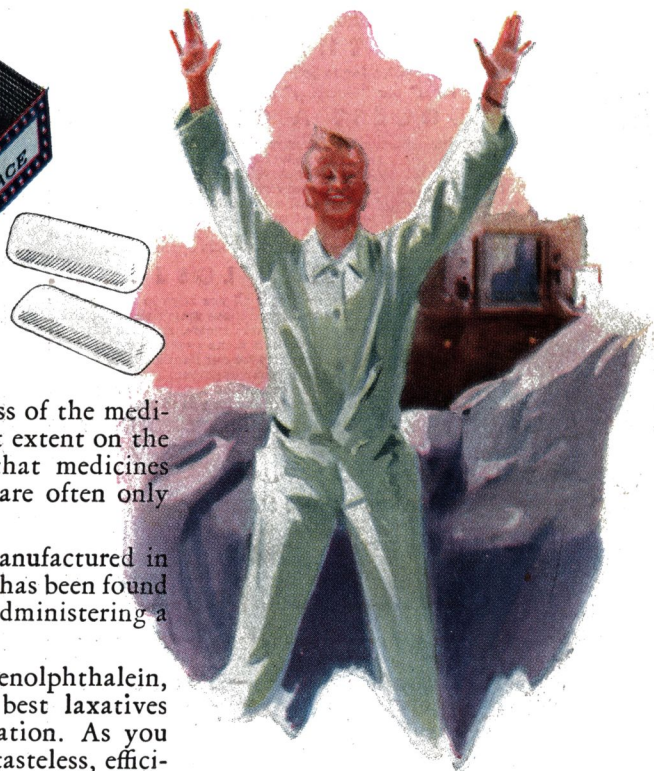
City.....State.....

Rush me the \$1,000.00 Cash Certificate for Promptness and tell me how I stand for Winning \$3,000.00 cash.

Half the *secret* is

YOU

CHEW IT



DO you know that the effectiveness of the medicines you use depends to a great extent on the manner in which they are taken, that medicines which enter the system undissolved are often only partly or irregularly effective?

Do you know that Feen-a-mint is manufactured in the form of chewing gum because this has been found to be the most effective method of administering a laxative?

The medicine in Feen-a-mint is phenolphthalein, universally accepted as one of the best laxatives known for the treatment of constipation. As you chew the delicious tasting gum, this tasteless, efficient laxative is slowly released and, mixed with the saliva, is carried to the intestinal tract smoothly, evenly, without shock to the system.

Feen-a-mint is pleasant, mild, efficient, and non-habit-forming. More economical, too. Buy a package today and you will know why it has become America's most popular laxative.

Feen-a-mint