

*Don't miss The LADY from HELL*

# DETECTIVE FICTION WEEKLY

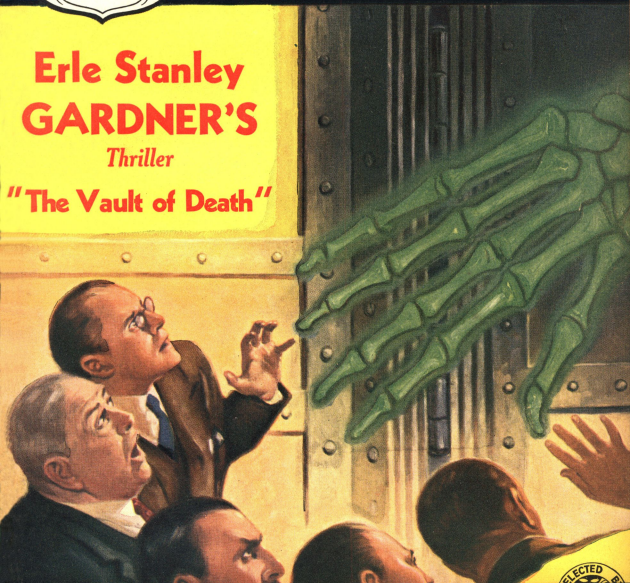


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**Erle Stanley  
GARDNER'S**

*Thriller*

**"The Vault of Death"**







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# DETECTIVE

## FICTION WEEKLY



TITLE REGISTERED U. S. PATENT OFFICE

*"The Magazine Selected by The Crime Jury"*

VOLUME XCI

Saturday, March 9, 1935

NUMBER 6

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WILLIAM T. DEWART, President THEODORE PROEHL, Treasurer RICHARD H. TITHERINGTON, Secretary

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A few of the fine stories which the March issues of ARGOSY will bring you—

## COMPLETE NOVELS

<b>Fred MacIsaac</b>	“Lone Indian”	(Mar. 9)
<b>Judson P. Philips</b>	“Flashing Blades”	(Mar. 16)
<b>Ared White</b>	“Baited Cipher”	(Mar. 23)
<b>W. C. Tuttle</b>	“With the Help of Henry”	(Mar. 23)
<b>John Wilstach</b>	“Wagon Show War”	(Mar. 30)

## NOVELETES

<b>George Bruce</b>	“Catapult”	(Mar. 9)
<b>Otis A. Kline</b>	“The Fang of Amm Jemel”	(Mar. 9)
<b>Wm. Edw. Hayes</b>	“The Steam and the Glory”	(Mar. 16)
<b>George Bruce</b>	“Tomorrow We Die”	(Mar. 30)
<b>H. Bedford-Jones</b>	“The Sphinx, U. S. A.”	(Mar. 30)

## SERIALS

<b>Robert Carse</b>	“The Drums Roar”	(3 parts)
<b>Fred MacIsaac</b>	“The Wild Man of Cape Cod”	(6 parts, beginning Mar. 23)

## SHORT STORIES

<b>Ernest Haycox</b>	“Way Up the Bozeman”	(Mar. 9)
<b>Donald Barr Chidsey</b>	“Still Dangerous”	(Mar. 23)
<b>Allan Vaughan Elston</b>	“The Lavender Lamp”	(Mar. 30)

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29x4.75-20	2.30	.90
29x5.00-19	2.65	.95
30x5.00-20	2.65	.95
28x5.25-18	2.65	1.05
29x5.25-19	2.65	1.05
30x5.25-20	2.65	1.05
31x5.25-21	2.95	1.05
28x5.50-18	3.15	1.05
29x5.50-19	3.15	1.05
30x6.00-18	3.25	1.05
31x6.00-19	3.25	1.05
32x6.00-20	3.30	1.15
33x6.00-21	3.45	1.15
31x6.50-19	3.40	1.25
32x6.00-20	3.50	1.25
34x7.00-20	4.35	1.50
34x7.00-21	4.35	1.50

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32x4	2.95	.85
33x4	2.95	.85
34x4	3.25	.85
32x4 1/2	3.35	1.15
33x4 1/2	3.45	1.15
34x4 1/2	3.45	1.15
30x5	3.65	1.35
33x5	3.75	1.45
35x5	3.95	1.55

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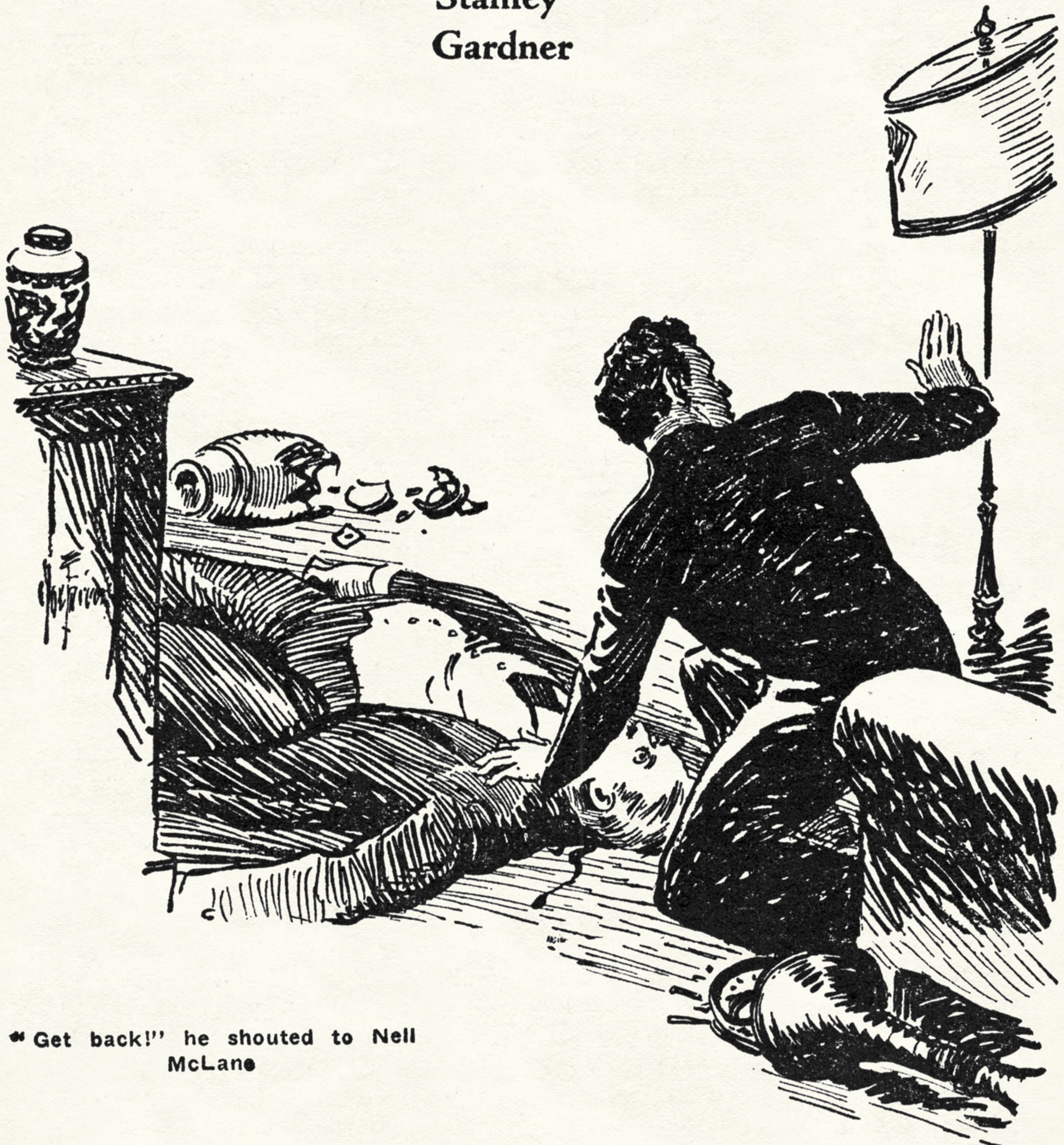
Dr. W. R. George the doctor's special prescription called Cystex (pronounced Siss-tex) which helps Kidney functions in a few hours. It starts work in 15 minutes. Gently tones, soothes, and cleans raw, sore membranes. Brings new energy and vitality in 48 hours. It is helping millions of sufferers and is guaranteed to fix you up and make you feel like new in 8 days, or money back on return of empty package. Get guaranteed Cystex from your druggist today.



# The VAULT

A Novelette

By  
Erle  
Stanley  
Gardner



"Get back!" he shouted to Nell  
McLane

*Locked Within a Vault of Steel, Five  
Millionaires Fight a Grim and Frantic  
Battle with the Murderer They Cannot See*



# of DEATH



Gale regarded the shattered window, then shuddered

## CHAPTER I

### The Besieged Millionaires

**T**HE five men sat huddled around the big directors' table over which so many dividends had been declared. George Millers, fat, ponderous and wheezy, occupied the chair at the head of the table. Harrison Gale, nervous, dyspeptic, irritable, watery-eyed, sat in the chair on Millers'

right. Pitley Simms, shrewd, selfish, grasping, miserly, was on the left. Next to Simms sat C. Wright Delamy, broad-shouldered, open-faced, clear-eyed. Across from him sat Taber Boxman, well-dressed, sophisticated, suave, but with restless, watchful eyes.

In the center of the table reposed the letter which said these five men would die unless a sum of two million dollars was placed at the disposal of the sender of the letter.

Harrison Gale cleared his throat.



"We can't call in the police," he said.

"Not the police," Millers remarked. "They would be out of the question. They would be certain to bungle it. I was referring to a good firm of detectives."

Taber Boxman's voice was high-pitched. The words came from his lips in rapid sequence.

"Not even a private detective," he said. "We can't let the insurance company get hold of this."

"Why the insurance company?" C. Wright Delamy inquired. "What have they got to do with it?"

George Millers nodded his head in ponderous acquiescence.

"Boxman is right," he said. "The five of us constitute all of the partners of the Betterbilt Investment Company. That company, as you know, has purchased some of the larger office buildings in the city, and is holding them against the time when business will pick up and the offices in the better class of structure will be at a premium."

"Virtually all of these buildings were purchased at foreclosure sales. We have secured them for the amount of bonds which represent a fraction of their original cost. It is possible for us to make billions when . . ."

"What's all that got to do with it?" Delamy said impatiently. "Get down to brass tacks, Millers. You're not making a political speech to a women's club. Good Lord, we, all of us, know the details of our business."

Millers flushed. His glassy, bulgy eyes showed resentment.

"Apparently, *you* don't know the details of the business," he said, "or you'd remember that the partnership carries business insurance upon each member. We are insured against accident, sickness and death. It's a form

of group insurance under which the companies have the right to cancel the policies, in the event it should appear that business or social conditions have made us an unsafe risk."

"Is that clause in the policies?" Delamy demanded.

"It is," Millers said, "and was put in against just such a contingency as this. The amount of insurance is too large for the companies to take chances with."

"Ridiculous," Gale snorted. "But remember they have to give us back the premiums if they cancel the policies. Those premiums amount to a pretty penny by this time."

"The insurance is more valuable," Boxman said. "We can't let some fool fanatic upset our business plans."

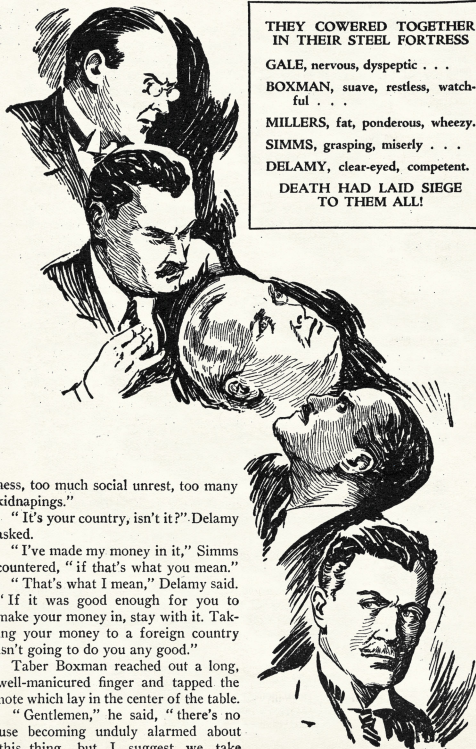
"**P**ERHAPS," Pitley Simms suggested, "some of you gentlemen would like to buy me out. I'd be willing to sell my interest at a considerable sacrifice."

"What's the idea?" Delamy asked. "Getting frightened over an anonymous letter?"

"No, I'm not frightened. But you've got to admit we've been waiting a long time for our profits. We've got a lot of obligations to meet when these liens begin to mature. We . . ."

"Oh, forget it," Delamy said. "We're all in the same boat together. The investments are just as good as they ever were. There isn't any one of us but what can afford to carry his share. Look at the list of buildings we've got—virtually every attractive business structure that could have been purchased for under thirty per cent of its original cost."

"It isn't that," Simms said quietly. "It's the fact that I want to get out of the country. There's too much lawless-



THEY COWERED TOGETHER  
IN THEIR STEEL FORTRESS

GALE, nervous, dyspeptic . . .

BOXMAN, suave, restless, watch-  
ful . . .

MILLERS, fat, ponderous, wheezy.

SIMMS, grasping, miserly . . .

DELAMY, clear-eyed, competent.

DEATH HAD LAID SIEGE  
TO THEM ALL!

ness, too much social unrest, too many kidnappings."

"It's your country, isn't it?" Delamy asked.

"I've made my money in it," Simms countered, "if that's what you mean."

"That's what I mean," Delamy said.

"If it was good enough for you to make your money in, stay with it. Taking your money to a foreign country isn't going to do you any good."

Taber Boxman reached out a long, well-manicured finger and tapped the note which lay in the center of the table.

"Gentlemen," he said, "there's no use becoming unduly alarmed about this thing, but I suggest we take reasonable precautions."

Harrison Gale laughed nervously.

"Undue alarm," he said, "is all a question of personal opinion. As far as I'm concerned, I've seen lawlessness develop from bootlegging to kidnaping. God knows what will be the next step."

MILLERS said, "Someone has suggested that we get down to brass tacks. We can't handle this situation by discussing the social conditions of the country. Gentlemen, is it your pleasure we employ the police?"

"No," they said almost in chorus.

"Shall we consult some private detective?"

There was a moment of hesitation; then Boxman leaned forward and said with quiet force: "Let's use our heads. This letter is obviously written by someone who has been misled by the extent of our operations. Because we have purchased a large number of important buildings he evidently has the idea we have a large surplus of ready cash available.

"I guess there's no question but that the five of us could scrape up a great deal of ready coin, if we were in a position where we *had* to do it. However the point I'm making is that this man picks on *all five of us*, not one of us, but all five. He is, therefore, someone who has a general idea of the partnership arrangement under which we are working. He is, therefore, someone who may be dangerous.

"We own and operate a string of high-class buildings. Among others is the Midwick. You will remember that recently, in order to cut operating expenses, we closed up the top five floors of that building—the forty-sixth to the fiftieth inclusive.

"Gentlemen, my suggestion is that we move into the top five floors of that

building. With the facilities at our command we can fix up very comfortable living and office quarters. We can arrange for proper guards. We will close up the stairs from the forty-sixth floor. We will operate only one elevator above the forty-sixth floor. We will station guards in the foyer of the building. We will see that two men are always on duty in the elevator. We will have our meals sent up, or, if you prefer, we can have them cooked on the premises. We will hold ourselves virtually in a state of siege. We will have ample office space to provide for living quarters for such personal help as we wish to employ."

Boxman looked around the table and saw, from the expressions of those about, that his words carried weight.

"Will that cause newspaper comment?" asked Millers.

"Absolutely not," Boxman said quietly. "The newspapers will be told that the Betterbilt Investment Company has taken over the top five floors for its executive offices."

"Suppose some of the reporters try to interview us?" Simms suggested.

"Anyone who wishes to come to the offices of the Betterbilt Investment Company will be welcome," Boxman said with a quiet smile. "But, when he leaves the elevator he will find himself in a reception room which is fitted up with comfortable chairs, couches, deep carpets, and a supply of the latest reading matter ready to his elbow. He will be asked to wait.

"What he will notice is that the walls of that room are of steel; that the doors are of steel and electrically controlled; that a guard, with a machine gun in a concealed cage, will be able to spray the room with lead at a moment's notice. One of the secretaries will wait upon that visitor. He will be politely

informed that the person he wishes to see is busy. That person will, however, consent to an interview over the telephone, if it is a matter of importance."

Millers looked about him.

"You, gentlemen, have heard Director Boxman's suggestion," he said. "Is it your pleasure . . ."

Four heads nodded in solemn unison. There was no necessity to put the question.

"That's settled, then," Millers said, glancing at his watch. "We will leave the construction details to Frank Menloe?"

"He can put on a force to work day and night," Gale said. "It won't be necessary to do a great deal of changing around. The main thing to do is to see that the reception room is proof against any sort of a surprise attack, and I presume we've got to watch out for a bomb. We can . . ."

A KNOCK sounded at the door, which was opened a moment later. A tall, slender individual, with a modest, self-effacing manner, extended a telegram.

"This," he said, "is important, and . . ."

George Millers pounded the table with his fist.

"Damn it, Crail," he said, "I told you that we weren't to be disturbed! This conference takes precedence over any and all individual business. A telegram, bah! What the hell do we care about telegrams?"

"I beg your pardon, sir," Ashley Crail said, "but if you'll notice the contents of this telegram, Mr. Millers, you'll see that it's vitally important to this conference."

Millers jerked the telegram out of the man's hand, read it, then let his mouth sag slowly open.

"Good heavens!" he said.

"Well," Harrison Gale demanded, "what is it?"

He reached over and snatched the telegram from Millers' hand.

"We're all interested, you know," Delamy suggested affably. "Suppose you read it."

In a high-pitched, piping voice, Gale read the telegram: "Members, Betterbilt Investment Company. Gentlemen: I am listening to your plans with a great deal of amusement. Go ahead, by all means, and adopt every precaution which your fear suggests. You have ample money at your disposal to surround yourselves with every reasonable safeguard; if my communication causes you to start spending this money, it will have put that much more coin into circulation. I am sorry to say, however, that the precautions you contemplate are woefully inadequate. In order to show you my power, I will give you forty-eight hours to prepare to avoid my demands. At the expiration of that time I will demonstrate to you the complete futility of your plans. After all, I can deal with four much more easily than with five."

The telegram was signed, "I. B. Letterman."

C. Wright Delamy spoke without the slightest trace of emotion.

"That," he said, "would not sound like a fictitious name to a telegraph company. To us, however, it would indicate that the sender had also sent us the anonymous letter."

"Observe," Boxman said, "that it is general in its terms. It doesn't say what we are planning. It merely runs a bluff by trying to make us *think* that he knows."

"Nevertheless," Harrison Gale said, clearing his throat nervously, "it does show that the man has some



knowledge of our activities. He knows that we are engaged in a conference on this thing at the present time. I don't like it."

"Hell," Delamy said with a wry grin, "we're none of us crazy about it."

Millers turned to Ashley Crail.

"Trace this telegram," he said.

"I've already done so, sir," Crail said. "It was telephoned in. The person telephoning gave a fictitious name and telephone number. That is, he gave the name and telephone number of a banker. I have communicated with the banker. He knows nothing whatever about the message. He insists that it could not have been sent from his telephone."

Boxman scraped back his chair.

"Mr. President," he said, with a droll smile, "I have a motion to make in connection with this telegram."

"What is it?" Millers inquired.

"I move you," Boxman said, "that we file the telegram with the letter."

He made a rather exaggerated bow to the other partners.

"There is," he said, "nothing else you can do about it—not one damn thing."

## CHAPTER II

### A Threat

THE broad-shouldered man stared about the room approvingly. Behind him five men filed from the elevator.

"Well," Frank Menloe said, "there it is, all ready to move in."

"It's impossible for anyone to rush through these doors?" George Millers asked.

"Absolutely impossible."

"They look frail."

"They're not. They're the toughest steel obtainable. The frosted glass is

shatter-proof. It's also reinforced with what appears to be chicken wire. It isn't—it's tough steel wire reinforcement. Back of that door is another door. They're arranged so they can only be opened by an electrical contact. That contact is controlled by the man who occupies the concealed cage back of that fresco work. That cage is steel lined. There are two machine guns in there trained on the room. You folks can't make them out, but they're there just the same."

"Our furniture is here?" Pitley Simms asked.

"The furniture, files, wardrobe, everything is all in. You, gentlemen, have your valets, your secretaries, your private files. There's a vault room on the forty-eight floor to which you have joint access. It's not exactly burglar-proof, but it's proof against anything except an expert cracksmen with proper material and a good deal of time at his command, and an expert cracksmen isn't going to get in here. You can keep whatever sums of cash you want there, and such private documents as you don't want to leave in your files. Each one of you has a separate compartment in that vault—each compartment with a separate door and a private combination."

Millers rubbed the head of the police dog at his side.

"Well," he said, "I'm going to keep Tiger Boy with me at all times. I put more reliance in him than I do in all of these other precautions."

Menloe stared at the dog appraisingly.

"I guess he's all right," he said. "Personally, I never had much use for police dogs. I think they're treacherous."

"You're thinking of Great Danes," Millers said patronizingly.

"Some of them are treacherous," Boxman announced. "Some of them aren't . . . But, gentlemen, we're wasting time here. This is just the position we don't want to be in. We're all together here in this room. If anything should happen . . ."

They nodded, moved with one accord toward the electrically controlled doors.

UNSEEN hands worked the electric connections which released the sealed doors. They swung silently open. The besieged millionaires marched through the passageway.

C. Wright Delamy spoke to Elizabeth Crail, his confidential secretary.

"I'm not particularly keen about the idea," he said. "We're virtually putting ourselves in jail in order to safeguard our wealth. Harrison Gale's got a son. That son doesn't have any normal play life whatever. He's constantly guarded as a protection against kidnapers. If our wealth means that we've got to endure this sort of an existence I'd prefer not to have wealth."

She was in the late twenties, a woman with a willowy figure, quick, alert eyes, chestnut hair, a vivacious manner, and a quick smile.

"I wondered if you wouldn't feel that way about it," she said.

George Millers stood in the center of the room.

"Sort of a club room, eh?" he asked Menloe.

Menloe nodded.

"I figured you folks could get together and talk things over here," he said. "Of course, you each have your private sitting rooms. You can entertain guests there if . . ."

"There aren't going to be any guests," Millers said determinedly. "Not until this thing is cleared up."

An electric bell sounded stridently in the steel-lined room which they had just left. Fainter reverberations were heard throughout the corridors.

"What's that?" Millers asked.

"That," Menloe said, frowning, "is the warning that someone is coming up in the elevator."

"I thought people weren't to come up in that elevator?" Millers said.

"Only those who can get past the guards on the lower floor," Menloe agreed, "but you must remember that we don't want the general public to feel that you people are in a state of siege. A reasonable attempt is made to segregate callers. People who haven't business of some importance are told to write for an appointment. And now, if you folks will go to your various rooms I'll explain the manner in which this thing works out.

"There's a loud-speaking intercommunicating telephone system between the various rooms. Then there's a special amplifier by which the person who wishes to listen to what is being said in the reception room can plug in on the conversation, hear it just as plain as though it were in the same room with him. There's also a periscope attachment, so that you can see the person who's asking for an audience."

Millers patted Menloe on the back with a chubby hand.

"Menloe," he said, "it's fine work. I don't think I've ever been better organized to live the sort of life I want to live. I think I'll stay here."

C. Wright Delamy gave a shake to his shoulders as though trying to throw away some disagreeable thought.

"Personally," he said, "I'm staying here simply because you folks feel we should all be together. I'd prefer to take my chances in the open."

Taber Boxman nodded slowly.

"I know exactly how you feel, Delamy. I'd be inclined to take my own chances in the open, only I realize that it's a question of playing the thing safe."

HARRISON GALE rubbed his hands together.

"If the cost isn't prohibitive," he said, "it's remarkably efficient."

"Well," Millers remarked, "let's go to our various rooms. We can try out our telephone system, and we can see who this first visitor is."

Delamy swung open the door to a suite of rooms.

"Why not all come in here with me," he said, "since I seem to have drawn the lower floor? We'll look this thing over together and see how it works."

Millers hesitated, but Pitley Simms nodded his head vehemently.

"Now," he said, "you're talking sense. Whenever anything happens which seems to affect us, we can all be together and see what's going on."

They sat around a big desk in the room which had been fitted up as C. Wright Delamy's private office.

"If you wish," Menloe said, "you can see what's taking place on a screen. The illumination isn't as brilliant as I would like to have it. That's due to the presence of prismatic mirrors which reduce the image in size and then enlarge it through a series of lenses. However, here it is."

He pressed a button. In a dark corner of the room light sprang into brilliance on a silver screen. Spread out before the members of the Betterbilt Investment Company was a view of the room into which the elevator opened. A messenger, in uniform, was delivering a telegram to Ashley Crail.

"Let's make a pool," Boxman said. "We'll put in a hundred dollars apiece. The man who gets the first telegram delivered here wins the pool."

They nodded their heads. Menloe pressed a switch. A vague humming sound filled the room, and then the voice of Ashley Crail, sounding greatly amplified, but, nevertheless, speaking clearly, and without distortion, said, "Who's it for?"

The image of the messenger boy on the screen moved slightly. The head came up. The men, watching the screen, could see his features clearly, could see his lips move as he spoke. Then his voice hummed in over the loud-speaking system.

"It's for the Betterbilt Investment Company," he said.

Delamy turned to Elizabeth Crail.

"Skip out there and see what it is," he said.

She nodded, left the room; a moment later they saw her image come on the screen. They could even hear the rustle of paper as her fingers ripped the envelope open. She stared at the message for a moment, and her face showed on the screen as a picture of consternation.

Delamy gave an explanation.

"Two to one," he said, "that it's a telegram from this man who signs himself I. B. Letterman."

There were no takers.

Ten seconds later the men stood in a circle staring moodily down at the telegram, which read, simply:

ELABORATE PRECAUTIONS, GENTLEMEN. THEY ARE NOT ELABORATE ENOUGH. WITHIN THE NEXT TEN HOURS I WILL DEMONSTRATE TO YOU THE FUTILITY OF ATTEMPTING ESCAPE. TOMORROW I WILL DEAL WITH BUT FOUR. BY

THE TIME I HAVE NARROWED THE FIELD TO THREE I WILL GET WHAT I WANT. IN THE MEANTIME YOU MIGHT DRAW STRAWS TO SEE WHO WILL BE NUMBER TWO ON THE LIST.

I. B. LETTERMAN.

### CHAPTER III

#### The Man Who Screamed

THE bell which announced the arrival of a visitor clanged through the steel-walled reception room. A few moments later a rather shabbily-dressed man, about thirty, with penetrating, steady eyes, stepped from the elevator into the reception room. A young woman glanced at him.

"Mr. Millers," he said.

"Your name?"

"Carl Draper."

"What did you wish to see Mr. Millers about, Mr. Draper?"

"It's rather personal," Draper said.

"I'm sorry, but you'll have to give me an outline of what it is."

"It has to do," he said slowly, "with Mr. Millers' safety. It has to do with the safety of all of the five men who are here."

She stared at him steadily, and he met her gaze without flinching.

"Can you be more specific than that?"

"You might tell him," he said, "that it is a matter of importance to him. If he wishes to know anything about me he can find out from Mr. Ashley Crail, who is, I believe, in his employ."

She nodded and pressed a button.

"Just a moment," she said.

Nell McLane, George Millers' secretary, picked up the telephone, listened for a moment, then turned to Millers.

"A man," she said, "to see you who says his business has something to do with your immediate safety."

"What's his name?" Millers demanded.

"Carl Draper."

"Never heard of him before."

"Would you like to take a look at him?"

"I think I will," Millers said.

He strode into the room which was set aside for his private use, snapped over a key, observed the image which appeared on the screen.

Slowly he shook his head.

"I not only don't know him," he said, "but I don't want to know him. He looks suspicious to me. I'm going to stretch out and smoke a cigar. You can talk with him. Get him to tell you exactly what he has in mind. I'll listen in on the amplifier."

NELL McLANE nodded, picked up notebook and pencil, and took the inter-office elevator to the forty-sixth floor. The electric doors opened at her signal. She advanced to Carl Draper.

"I'm Mr. Millers' secretary," she said. "You can tell me exactly what you have in mind."

"I've been an officer," he told her. "I've been a prize fighter; I've smuggled arms; I've been a revolutionist; I've been a bootlegger and I've been a hijacker. I happen to know that Mr. Millers is in need of a personal bodyguard. I want the job."

She shook her head slowly.

"In the first place," she said, "you've been misinformed. In the second place, Mr. Millers wouldn't hire a bodyguard who applied for the position. If he wanted a bodyguard he'd select one carefully from men who would have no idea that they were being considered for the position."

Draper's face showed disappointment.



"I'm friendly with Ashley Crail," he said. "I've been friendly with him for a long time. He can give me plenty of character references. Crail works for Mr. Millers, doesn't he?"

"He's in the employ of the Betterbilt Investment Company, of which Mr. Millers' is a member."

"Listen," Draper said. "I want to



HARPER

talk with Mr. Millers. If he listens to me for five minutes he'll give me the job. I know he will."

"But," Nell McLane pointed out, "Mr. Millers has no need for a bodyguard, none whatever."

"The other fellows have bodyguards," Draper said defiantly. "Harrison Gale has two bodyguards for his son and one for himself."

She shrugged her shoulders.

"I'm afraid, Mr. Draper, that the interview is ended. After all, I'm very busy, and there is absolutely nothing which we have to offer."

She turned toward the door.

Draper hesitated for a moment, made a quick step after her.

"Look here," he said, "I'm going to tell you something. I've had an op-

portunity to get into a racket which was *against* Mr. Millers. I could give him some information about . . ."

Miss McLane turned.

"You can give me some specific information?" she asked.

"Not to you," he said. "Only to Mr. Millers."

She hesitated a moment and said, "I'd have to ask Mr. Millers personally before I could consent to an interview."

She waited expectantly, then said, "Would you mind being seated for a few minutes? I'll see if Mr. Millers would care to talk with you."

She paused for a moment at the desk where the young lady who sat behind the sign marked "*Information*" controlled the switchboard.

This young woman knew nothing whatever of the steel walls, of the machine guns which were in a position to spray the room with lead. The members of the Betterbilt Investment Company had felt it would be better to secure some stranger who would accept the work as routine employment. In that way, prying newspaper reporters would be unable to get any information from her, for the simple reason that she wouldn't have any information to give.

WHEN no call was received from Millers, Nell McLane moved toward the electrically controlled doors. They swung open, one at a time, changed shut behind her. She got to the inter-office elevator which ran only between the forty-sixth and the fiftieth floor, nodded to the uniformed attendant, entered the cage, and was just leaving the elevator at the fiftieth floor when it happened.

There could be no mistaking the sound.

It was Millers who had screamed. The booming, vibrant quality of his utterances was sufficiently distinctive to stamp even a scream with his individuality.

Above the scream was a roaring sound—a peculiar harsh, snarling undertone of vicious noise.

Something crashed to the floor. Millers screamed again, gave a shouted cry which was inarticulate. The cry terminated in a second jarring thud. A half second later glass crashed outward.

Silence seemed even more sinister than the noise which had preceded it.

Nell McLane stared at the uniformed elevator man.

"Get help," she said.

She ran toward the door, flung her weight against it, twisting the knob. The uniformed elevator man shoved with his own shoulder against the door.

"No, no," she gasped, "get help!"

"Not until we find out what's happening," he said. "I won't leave you here alone."

"The door's locked. We couldn't smash it down in a hundred years. Get the others. Get Mr. Menloe; he'll know how to get in."

She pounded on the door with futile knuckles, shouting, "Are you all right, Mr. Millers? Tell me if you're all right!"

There was a faint noise from inside—a noise which was audible through the ventilating cracks in the door, but it was not a definite sound—nothing upon which the ears could focus, merely a vague rustling of motion.

The elevator man ran for his cage. Nell McLane continued to stand at the door, rattling the knob, twisting it in her fingers, pushing her slender shoulder against the massive door.

Menloe came up the steps on the run.

"What happened?" he asked.

"We don't know."

"Millers' police dog," he said, "was thrown out of the window. He fell fifty stories to the sidewalk."

"Good God!" she said.

Menloe ran to a closet.

"It's going to take a crowbar," he said, "to get that door open; even then we're going to lose about five minutes."

He found a bar, started work on the door, wrenching, twisting and hammering.

There was no sound from the room now, nothing but silence.

TABER BOXMAN came up the stairs, his face white, his eyes wide. A short distance behind him Harrison Gale appeared, puffing from his unaccustomed exercise.

"What is it?" he asked.

"We don't know yet," Menloe told them, straining his shoulder against the crowbar. "I'm afraid we've got to get a torch and burn through this steel door. There's only one chance in a hundred that I can . . ."

He gave one final lunge against the bar. The door lifted, remained still for a moment; then, with a sound of metal pulling from metal, the lock let loose and the door shivered inward.

Millers was lying on his face in the center of a great, welling, red pool. He was motionless.

Menloe ran to him, turned the figure on its back, then gave a startled exclamation.

"Get back!" he shouted to Nell McLane. "His throat's gone!"

"Cut?" asked Taber Boxman.

"I said it's gone!" Menloe cried in a voice which was high-pitched with hysterical excitement.

Harrison Gale walked across the room, carefully skirting the pool of

sinister red. He regarded the shattered glass of the window.

"Someone," he said, "threw the dog out of the window."

He leaned forward and looked down, then shuddered.

"Fifty stories," he said.

Menloe wiped his face with a handkerchief.

"I saw it," he said, "after it hit the sidewalk . . . the dog . . . that is, all that was left. It was like a big red pancake smeared all over the sidewalk."

Nell McLane indicated the door and the windows.

"No one," she said, "could possibly have got in here. No one could possibly have left."

Menloe grunted, stared at the sprawled figure.

"Are you," he asked, "telling me? I designed the damn place."

"We'll have to telephone to the police, Miss McLane," Boxman said.

Menloe stood with his hands clenched, staring down at the corpse.

"But, he said that no matter what happened we were to keep it out of the newspapers," Nell McLane remarked.

Boxman's hand rested lightly, and in a kindly manner, on her shoulder.

"Poor kid," he said, "I'm afraid you don't understand. All that's been changed now."

It was Harrison Gale who, with watery-eyed cynicism, crashed the idea home to her consciousness.

"He'd want it that way," he said. "He'd want a big obituary."

#### CHAPTER IV

##### The Man Who Couldn't Forget

FOUR millionaires sat in the conference room. Four millionaires who talked in low voices, and who kept their heads close together, as

though by huddling they could, in some way, shut out the menace of that which had happened, and that which threatened.

"You can't tell me," Boxman said, with quiet finality, "that the fellow who came in to see Millers didn't have something to do with it."

"But he couldn't have gone into the room," Gale protested. "He was sitting right there in the reception room all the time."

Boxman shrugged his shoulders, a gesture of suave finality.

"No one," he said, "could have entered that room. At any rate, that's what Menloe says."

"I'm not so sure about Menloe," Pitley Simms remarked.

"Nonsense," Boxman said. "If there's anyone who's under suspicion, it's that man Draper."

"What happened? How long did he wait?" Delamy inquired.

"He didn't wait," Boxman said. "Nell McLane went to ask Millers whether he wanted to pump this chap personally. The chap seemed to have some information, or else he was running a pretty good bluff. Nell thought that Millers might want to talk with him personally, and then, perhaps, turn him over to the police."

"We've got to keep the police out of this just as much as we can," Boxman announced.

"The cat's out of the bag now," Delamy said.

"Then, we've got to work fast and get this straightened out before the insurance company changes the classification of us as business risks."

Delamy said slowly, "I wonder if you fellows have seen 'The Man Who Couldn't Forget'?"

"I have," Harrison Gale said.

Boxman raised his eyebrows.

"It was a revelation to me," Delamy told them quietly. "I went to the show because I felt like vaudeville. I didn't know what was on the bill at the time.

"Most men try to remember. This man tries to forget and can't do it. Anything that he sees once he remembers indefinitely. He can go through the audience, pick out faces, and tell where he last saw them—in different cities, riding on trains, whizzing by in automobiles, pounding the sidewalks."

"Incredible," Pitley Simms said.

"It may be incredible," Delamy told him, "but the man does it. He sees everything and forgets nothing."

Harrison Gale said slowly, "I can tell you fellows something. It's not supposed to be known, but I got it through Edward Brent, the lawyer. It was this Man Who Couldn't Forget that cleared up the Skyscraper Murder cases last month."

Boxman turned inquiring eyes to Delamy.

"You were contemplating consulting this vaudeville actor?" he asked, in a voice which showed polite incredulity.

"Yes," said Delamy shortly.

PITLEY SIMMS lowered his voice. "Look here," he said. "Here's an angle that we haven't gone into. Miss McLane tells me that Carl Draper said he was friendly to Ashley Crail. Now, Ashley Crail is a brother of your secretary, Delamy. In fact, it was through Elizabeth Crail that you gave him a position with us."

"What about it?" Delamy asked.

"Just this," Simms said. "I think Draper had something to do with that murder, and I think that Crail is mixed up in it somehow."

"How?" Delamy inquired in an uncordial tone.

"I don't know," Simms said irritably. "If I knew how the murder had been committed I'd know enough to make my suspicions sound convincing."

"They certainly don't carry conviction now," Delamy told him shortly.

Taber Boxman met C. Wright Delamy's eyes.

"They do to me, Delamy," he said. "You're prejudiced. You think anything Elizabeth Crail does is all right."

Delamy flushed.

"I think," Simms said, glancing at Boxman, "we understand each other perfectly. I think we owe it to ourselves to have a complete investigation made."

Delamy pushed back his chair.

"Gentlemen," he said, "let's not have any misunderstanding about this thing. As far as I am concerned, you can all go to hell."

BEN HARPER, peering through the windshield of his automobile, saw his name blazoned in electric lights over the Palace Theater, yet he received no thrill of satisfaction from the sight. The truth of the matter was, Harper was getting fed up with his vaudeville career.

Three times a day Ben Harper put on his act. Three times a day audiences sat spellbound. Men who tried in vain to remember names, dates, figures, faces, things, stared with open-mouthed wonder at the man who could forget nothing.

There was a traffic snarl ahead. Ben Harper knew that he had several minutes to spare, so he kicked out his clutch to let the motor idle, and closed his eyes.

Whenever possible Harper kept his eyes closed. The things that he saw he remembered — not in the laborious manner in which most people try to



cultivate memories, by association of ideas, by trying to figure out some sequence, but effortlessly and endlessly.

Ben Harper's mind was as thoroughly receptive as an unexposed film. His eyes stamped images upon his brain. Those images were, in turn, seared into his consciousness. He could recall the scenes, just as a motion picture can be run backwards, and he did this without conscious effort.

The traffic officer blew his whistle. Slowly the traffic crawled into motion. Harper opened his eyes, but kept them raised above the level of the string of traffic. He knew, from sad experience, that if he glanced down at license numbers his memory would seize upon the figure, as a magnet grabs iron filings. Sometimes in the small hours of the night, when he wanted to sleep, a stream of automobiles would slide through his memory, each car decorated with its proper license plate, and with such distinguishing marks as tire covers, dented fenders, wire wheels, and particular makes of tires.

Harper eased the clutch into place. His car crawled forward. He sensed action on his right, felt the car sway over as someone jumped to his runningboard. A woman's voice said, "Please forgive me, Mr. Harper, but I must see you at once."

Harper kept his face straight ahead. The traffic officer blew his whistle once more. Traffic came to a halt. The young woman leaned across the open door of the roadster.

"Please," she said, "look at me. I know you. You're Ben Harper, The Man Who Couldn't Forget. I've seen you in the theater. You describe faces of people in the audience. You can stare at the spectators in the first five rows, then close your eyes, and let anyone call

out an aisle and seat number and you can describe the person who's sitting there. You can . . ."

Ber Harper reached out and slipped down the catch on the door.

"Don't stand there on the running-board," he said, "or you'll get brushed off."

The traffic officer blew his whistle again. Harper slid the car into low gear, stepped on the throttle, and shifted to second. The young woman crawled inside of the car and pulled the door shut.

HARPER negotiated the street intersection, snapped the car into high, and made the turn into the parking lot back of the theater.

"What is it you want?" he asked.

"I want you to solve a murder."

"I'm not a detective."

"This is a duty you owe an innocent man."

"Who's the innocent man?"

"My brother."

He turned then to stare at her, saw a pleasing profile with an upturned nose, a saucy mouth which seemed designed, by nature, for quick, vivacious smiles, but which was now held into grim, purposeful lines at the corners. A brown hat was tilted to one side of the head.

Underneath the upturned brim on the high side, chestnut hair fluffed out in soft curls.

"What's your name?" he asked.

"Elizabeth Crail."

Suddenly Harper laughed.

"You're too late," he said.

"Too late?" she asked.

"Yes," he said. "C. Wright Delamy, your boss, telephoned me more than half an hour ago. I promised him I'd come in immediately after the theater."

"I don't understand," she said.

"He told me," Harper went on, "that some of his business associates were trying to fix the blame of a murder on a man named Ashley Crail, the brother of his secretary. He said he wasn't satisfied with the way his associates were handling the thing, and wanted me to look in."

"You promised him you would?"

Ben Harper's hand dropped down upon hers. His fingers gave her a reassuring squeeze.

"I promised him," he said, "that I would."

## CHAPTER V

### Death on the Pillow

C. WRIGHT DELAMY performed the introductions. One by one the millionaires grasped Ben Harper by the hand.

One at a time, they encountered the gaze of those diamond-hard eyes with the needle-pointed pupils—eyes that seemed like the twin lenses of a camera.

Harper closed his eyes, leaned against the wall, and said almost meditatively, "The muzzles of those machine guns, gentlemen, are just a little bit bluer than the ornamentations which surround them. It's just a detail, but it might be well to have it changed, particularly if some observant newspaper reporter happens on the scene."

Gale gasped, looked at the others, and sputtered, "Someone's been tipping him off! Which one of you?"

Delamy shook his head, and placed his finger to his lips in a warning gesture.

"We might," said Harper, "take a look at the room that Millers occupied. It might help."

"The police have gone through it.

They've looked for finger-prints and all that sort of stuff," Delamy said.

Harper nodded wearily, and remarked, "I wasn't going to look for finger-prints."

"What you've got to look for, and find," Pitley Simms said, "is the man who wrote those letters. I've made arrangements with the telegraph company so that any more telegrams sent in by Letterman will be handled in a special manner. The call will be traced while the man is on the line. Police will be notified. They'll pick him up—not for threatening us, but for obtaining telegraphic service under false representations."

Harper yawned.

"We will," said Delamy, "go take a look at the room."

They went through the electrically controlled doors, up the elevator, and Delamy indicated the splintered door jamb.

"That's where Menloe pried it open with a bar," he said.

The Man Who Couldn't Forget stepped into the room, closed his eyes, and took three steps toward the center of the room. Then he opened his eyes, slowly pivoted about until he had completed a circle.

There was a slow deliberation in his motions, as though he had been actuated by some clockwork mechanism, as the lens of a panorama kodak will swing in a circle on its tripod mounting.

When he had finished, he closed his eyes again, and stood for a matter of several seconds. Then he said, "Very well, gentlemen, let us look around at some of the other rooms. I'd like to see the entire lay-out."

They took him through the palatial suites, and in each room The Man Who Couldn't Forget went through substantially the same procedure.

BOXMAN went to the window of the lounging room, looked down at the street.

"It's inconceivable," he said, "that the dog could have been thrown through that window. It would have taken a man who possessed terrific strength. I wonder if the dog could have jumped."

"The police think the dog attacked Millers?" Harper asked.

"That's their theory now. The wound in the throat looks as though it had been done by some animal. My theory is that in some way an animal was introduced into the room—an animal which attacked Millers. The dog, in turn, attacked the animal, and when he found he was overpowered, jumped through the window. Or, the animal may have jumped through the window and the dog may have gone after him."

"In that case," Harper remarked, "the question naturally arises: what was the nature of this animal, and what became of it?"

Boxman shrugged his shoulders.

"Gentlemen," Harper said, "you have called me in on this case because I possess certain peculiar powers, or gifts, if you desire to call them that, which are not possessed by the average man."

"I do not need to mention these particular powers. Such as they are, they are well known. Therefore, you will pardon me if I seem to digress."

"Three months ago, in Cranston, I saw something which impressed me as peculiar. A dog was attacking a dummy figure. His manner was most peculiar. He showed every evidence of rage. He was literally tearing the dummy figure to pieces."

"At first I thought it was merely a part of a training for a motion picture stunt, and that the animal was being

trained to demolish dummies. But, suddenly, the dog dropped to the ground, stared at the dummy, started to whine, then turned tail and ran as hard as he could run.

"A man's voice said, 'That's enough. Lie down!' and the dog dropped to the ground. He was quivering in every muscle. The man who had given the order hadn't seen me. He was concealed behind some shrubbery, watching the dog from such a position that the dog couldn't see him."

"Now, then, gentlemen, we come to the peculiar part of the entire affair. The man snapped his fingers, the dog got up and started running away—not as he had been running before—but as a dog trots away upon some casual canine mission of no importance."

BOXMAN'S tone showed impatience.

"What the devil has all this got to do with it?" he asked.

"Simply this," Ben Harper said. "I am satisfied the man behind the hedge wasn't the owner of that dog. I am satisfied he was merely someone who had picked up a strange dog for an experiment."

Boxman said, impatiently, "Who was this fellow, anyway?"

"I don't know," Harper said. "I never did see his face. He saw me through the hedge then, and turned and took to his heels, just as the dog had done. But this much I do know about him—he was expensively tailored."

"What," asked Pitley Simms, "has all this got to do with the death of Mr. Millers?"

Ben Harper said, slowly, "It may have a lot to do with it. You gentlemen will notice that there's an inter-office communicating system, with a loud-speaking device.

"What of it?"

"Millers was throwing a switch on that device," Harper said slowly, "when the dog attacked him."

"What makes you think so?"

"You can see a dent on one of the keys. It's a dent that was freshly made. There's a similar dent on the other side of it. Those dents were caused by teeth. The animal clamped his jaws on either side of the key."

Gale snorted.

"Bosh and nonsense," he said. "I happen to know enough about hypnotism to know that it's impossible to hypnotize an animal. Even if it were possible, the explanation, if it is an explanation, is altogether too bizarre. Personally, I think we're wasting time—a lot of time."

Boxman nodded his head. Delamy turned to Harper and said, quietly, "What is it that you suggest?"

"I suggest," Harper said, "that you send trained investigators to the city of Cranston, find out everything you can about a man who lived there three months ago who practiced hypnotism. See if there were, perhaps, an excessive number of mad dog complaints. Doubtless the demolished dummy was found where the man had left it when the dog got through with it. It was in the East Side Park. Talk with the park authorities, find out whether they are still holding the dummy, or what was done with it, and whether an attempt was made to trace the clothes that it wore. Do everything possible to locate this individual."

"You think it would have something to do with the murder?" Delamy asked.

Harper shrugged his shoulders, closed his eyes.

"Do you think animals can be hypnotized?" Delamy asked.

"I know they can," Harper told him. "It's simply a question of finding an animal intellect that can hold a certain idea. For instance, put a chicken down on a table with its beak touching the table. Restrain it there by force. Take a piece of chalk and draw a straight line out from the chicken's beak along the surface of the table. Use a fairly rough surface so that the chalk will make a brilliant line. What happens? The chicken finds itself incapable of raising its head from the table, but stares in steady concentration at that line."

"Dogs are far more intelligent than chickens. I'm satisfied they can be hypnotized. I don't know how far a person can go in implanting an idea in a dog's mind while the animal is under the influence of hypnotism."

"Then," Delamy said slowly, "you're of the opinion that Millers' dog was hypnotized so that it attacked its master. Is that your theory?"

HARPER opened his eyes and said, wearily, "I have no theories. I am only asking that you collect certain data. If you wish to work with me, gentlemen, it will be necessary for you to collect such data as I suggest from time to time."

Coming next week—

**Jimmie Dale**

in "The Missing Hour," by Frank L. Packard



Delamy whipped out a notebook. "That," he said, "will be taken care of."

"Look here," Boxman said, "if your contention is correct, Harper, this Draper, who called in the office, must have been the one who hypnotized the dog."

"Well," Harper asked, "what of it?"

"We know," Boxman said, "that Millers was switching in on the lower office, because this man had asked for him. Now, that brings up the fact that this man, Draper, was a friend of Ashley Crail. Crail got his job largely because of Delamy's insistence. He's a brother of Delamy's secretary. Aside from that, we don't know a single thing about him."

"That's all you need to know," Delamy said, with dignity. "The fact that he's Elizabeth Crail's brother shows that he's above suspicion."

"Bosh," Boxman said, irritably.

Pitley Simms nodded.

"Yes," he said, "we should have some investigation about this Crail business. After all, it may be that you're right about the dog. In that event, this Draper knew that Millers would be listening to him. He knew that the dog could hear his voice."

"But," Delamy pointed out, "Draper couldn't have said anything in particular. It must have been only the sound of his voice that started the dog attacking Millers. You fellows forget that there was an attendant in that room all the time. It was impossible for Draper to have said anything which could have been construed as a signal for the dog."

Harper was on the point of saying something, but checked himself as Elizabeth Crail entered the room. She was white-faced. Her glance shifted to

Ben Harper, The Man Who Couldn't Forget, for a brief flicker of grateful recognition — then she handed C. Wright Delamy a letter.

"This," she said, "was picked up in the lobby by the guard. He hasn't any idea how it got there. He simply saw it lying on the floor. It was folded just as you see it now. He opened it, read it, and sent for me immediately."

Delamy unfolded the letter, read it casually, and nodded.

"A letter," he said, "from our friend Mr. Letterman. He says that I am the next on the list. That, after all, he can deal with three as easily as he can with four."

Boxman reached for the letter. Harrison Gale heaved a sigh.

"That settles it, Delamy," he said. "If anything happens to you I'm going to insist that the two million dollars be paid."

Boxman nodded thoughtfully.

"Yes," Simms said, "if that devil can contrive to get past the precautions we're taking and do anything to Delamy I'm going to see that the money is paid."

Delamy laughed, and, while there was a strained note about his laughter, as though his throat muscles were slightly constricted, his voice was hearty.

"Well," he said, "I seem to be the human guinea pig. All right, go ahead."

**B**EN HARPER, standing in the middle of the room, sighed and closed his eyes in thought. After a moment he said, "You lock yourself in your room at night, Delamy?"

"And put a bolt on the door," Delamy said, "after I've first searched the room. I'm not a coward, but I don't believe in taking any chances."

Harper consulted his watch. "You'll be turning in shortly?"

"Very shortly after you leave—yes."

Harper said, slowly, "I think it might be a good plan for me to take a look at your room, Delamy."

"But you've already seen it."

"Something he's forgotten," said Pitley Simms, and snickered.

Delamy led the way toward the room.

"It's just around the corner," he said. "You remember that you looked at it, then went through the bathroom into the adjoining room, and came back."

"No," Harper said, "we didn't go back. We moved over to the window of the communicating room to look down along the fire escape. We started to go back to the other room. In fact, one or two of the party had actually gone into your bedroom when you suggested that there was another door which led to the corridor and I might like to look at that."

"That's right," Delamy said, "I remember now."

"But the room hasn't changed any since you've seen it," Harrison Gale protested.

Harper said nothing, but followed Gale's broad shoulders down the corridor. Delamy took a key from his pocket, unlocked and opened the door. Harper stepped inside, looked about the room with that slow, deliberate scrutiny of his, then nodded his head slowly.

"Just as I thought," he said.

"What's just as you thought?" Boxman asked, irritably.

"The room," Harper said, "is not the same."

"What the devil do you mean?"

"When we were here before," Har-

per said, "the pillow on that bed was turned so that the opening of the pillow slip was toward the window. Now, you'll notice that it's toward the door."

"Well, what if it is?" Harrison Gale demanded. "There's a valet who enters the room whenever he wants to. There's Delamy's secretary. She was looking for him with that letter. She may well have looked for him in his room."

"She has the key?" Harper asked.

Delamy nodded.

"How many other keys?"

"Three or four," Delamy said, "but understand, Harper, whenever I'm in this room I don't rely on the keys. I turn that bolt on the inside of the door."

HARPER nodded, strode to the bed, picked up the pillow by its two corners, raised it and shook the case violently.

The pillow dropped out of the case, and, as the pillow struck the bed, something separated itself from the pillow.

Delamy gave an exclamation, and lunged forward. Harper grabbed his hand.

"Don't touch it," he said, "until we find out what it is."

He took a pencil from his pocket, turned the object slowly on the bed, nodded his head thoughtfully.

"A rubber sac filled with some deadly poison. You notice there are half a dozen hollow needles attached to the sac. When you put your head down on the pillow, at least one of these needles would have penetrated your cheek. You can imagine what would have happened after that."

Delamy stared, wide-eyed.

Harrison Gale coughed nervously, clutched at his throat.

"I've seen enough," he said. "My

life is worth more than two million dollars. I don't know how you fellows feel, but . . ."

Taber Boxman nodded.

"Yes," he said, "I believe in giving the man the money. We'll try to find out who he is afterwards and let the police arrest him, but let's give him the money first."

Ben Harper shook his head slowly.

"Gentlemen," he said, "if you'll go to your rooms and stay in them, I think I can promise you that you will be safe. It is only necessary for you to promise me that you will go to your rooms, bolt the doors, and not open them to anyone for twelve hours."

"Bosh," Boxman said explosively. "You and your stunts! I'll admit that your photographic memory came in handy just now, but if someone is going to guarantee my safety I want it to be someone who has more claim to distinction than merely being a unique vaudeville performer. Moreover, I don't intend to have anyone keep me a prisoner in my room."

Pitley Simms nodded his head in nervous acquiescence.

"Pay the money," he said. "Pay the money. That's the only way. Pay the money and get it over with."

Harper bowed his head.

"If," he said, "you gentlemen feel that way, I would suggest, by all means, that you pay the money. In the meantime I trust you will pardon me, as I'm rather tired. You certainly have no further need of my services."

"But, wait a minute," Gale said, "we want you to use your peculiar talents to find out just who it is that's at the bottom of this."

"I thought," Harper told him, "that you were going to delegate that to the police."

"The police are all right in their

way, but they can't do anything with this kind of a man," Simms said.

"On the contrary," Boxman drawled, "I think they can. But I think you'll find that when the man with whom we are dealing lays down the conditions under which money is to be paid he'll specify that nothing is to be said to the police for a period of time that he will specify. Otherwise I would say he wasn't very intelligent."

Harper nodded his head slowly.

"Yes," he said, "I think you'll find that such a condition is a part of the tribute which is to be levied. And, gentlemen, remember that you're dealing with a *very* intelligent man."

## CHAPTER VI

### A Dead Man in an Alley

BEN HARPER was conscious of the car which followed him, almost from the moment when that car took up its pursuit.

One moment his glance in the rear view mirror had shown him a city street, with half a dozen pairs of headlights coming in his direction. The next glance had shown seven pairs of these headlights, and the seventh pair of headlights had kept the same relative distance from his car over a period of half a dozen blocks.

An ordinary eye would merely have seen a tangle of traffic, snarling along the boulevard, but Ben Harper's mind was so constituted that he could never see a tangle of anything. His photographic memory etched every individual unit upon his consciousness.

At the end of fifteen blocks the car was still there.

The car made no attempt to lessen the distance, but kept in an advantageous position, where it could keep the tail lights of Harper's machine in sight.

The Man Who Couldn't Forget did not vary his speed. When he reached the block in which his apartment house was situated, however he did not follow his usual custom of parking his car in front of his house and letting his Japanese valet take the car to the garage.

Instead, he turned the car into an alley, drove to a vacant lot, back of a billboard display, switched off the lights and the ignition, and jumped from the car to the protecting shadows of a doorway, waiting to see what would happen.

Nothing happened.

There was no trace of the other car. Harper heard a car slide to a stop in the street, but could not be certain whether it was the car which had followed him.

He waited some ten minutes; then, still hugging the shadows, he followed the alley to its intersection with the street beyond.

When Harper had left the Midwick Building, he had worn a distinctive fur coat and a gray velour hat. When he had left his automobile, he left both coat and hat in the machine, and wore on his head a dark cap which he kept in the glove compartment of the car.

HE was within some twenty feet of the door of his apartment house when there was the flurry of motion near the door, and a man stepped out from the shadows.

Harper braced himself, prepared to lunge forward in the event the man should raise a weapon, but the man's hands were at his sides as he stepped into the light.

"Mr. Harper," he said in a low voice, "I must see you at once."

Harper glanced at him swiftly.

"Your features," he said, "are

familiar. I have never seen you before in my life, but I have seen features similar to yours . . . You must be the brother of Elizabeth Crail."

"I am," Ashley Crail said. "And I guess by this time you know why I'm here."

"What," asked Harper, "do you want me to do?"

"I want your help. They all suspect me."

"I can't clear you. You must do that yourself."

"Can you advise me?"

"Yes," Harper said. "But let's go to my apartment."

Harper fitted his latch-key to the door of the apartment.

"That your car parked over across the street?" he asked.

"No," the young man said.

Harper's eyes bored into Crail's face.

"Look here," he said. "Do you mean to tell me that you didn't follow me here in that car which is now parked across the street?"

"Absolutely not."

"How did you come here?"

"In a taxicab."

"Why did you leave before I did?"

"I knew that you were coming here, and I wanted to see you."

"Why did you hide in the doorway?"

"I didn't want anyone to know I was here. I was afraid that some of those men might have been following you, to see whether you went directly to your apartment."

"Why should they follow me?"

"They wouldn't follow you, but they'd have you followed. They'd have someone like Menloe follow you."

"Why?"

"Because they're suspicious of everything, everyone."



HARPER said nothing as they rode up in the elevator. Not until he had seated his visitor in his apartment and had Koshioto bring highballs, did he encourage further conversation.

"Are you certain," he asked, "that Mr. Gale or some of the others didn't tell you to come out here and talk with me?"

"Absolutely not. I'm here on my own behalf, because I'm under suspicion. I'd quit in a minute, but I don't want to quit that way. The way it is now, everything that goes wrong they blame onto me."

"How about Draper?" Harper asked, closing his eyes.

"I'd known Draper when he was a traffic officer. Then he got involved in a bit of a scandal and had to leave the force. As a matter of fact, he changed his name. He was looking for an opportunity to begin all over again, but he couldn't seem to get started. He'd been a gun runner and a rum runner. He'd gone in for bootlegging, hijacking, and a little bit of everything."

"Go ahead," Harper invited, his eyes still closed.

"I knew that these millionaires were hiring bodyguards. I thought it would be an excellent opportunity for Draper. I gave Draper a letter to Millers—a letter which Draper never presented."

"Where's Draper now?" Harper asked.

"That's just the point," Crail said, fidgeting uneasily. "Draper knew that something serious had gone wrong. It didn't take him long to find out what it was. He knew at once that he would be held by the police for questioning. He didn't give a damn about anything in connection with Millers' death, because he could

prove that he couldn't have had anything to do with it; but there were one or two other things that he didn't want to have the police inquiring about, and he knew they'd make a searching investigation. So he slipped out."

Harper nodded slowly.

THERE followed an interval of silence, which was shattered by the ringing of the doorbell, the shuffle of Koshioto's feet, and then the sound of a feminine voice. A moment later, Koshioto opened the door.

Before he could speak Harper nodded.

"Show her in, Koshioto," he said.

Skirts rustled in the corridor. There was the quick click of high-heeled shoes, and then Elizabeth Crail stood staring accusingly at her brother.

"I thought you'd do this," she said.

She turned blazing eyes to Harper.

"I want you to understand," she said, "that my brother is absolutely innocent of any wrongdoing. He's as honest as the day is long, but he doesn't know much about human nature. He makes all sorts of foolish friendships. This man, Draper, is a shining example. Draper is no good."

"I wanted to intercede with you on behalf of my brother, but I don't want my brother to intercede with you on behalf of Draper. As far as Draper is concerned, I want you to find out what he knows about this thing. Draper would sell his soul for money."

"Now, Elizabeth," her brother protested, "don't . . ."

"Shut up!" she said. "I know what I'm talking about. Draper is absolutely no good. He's imposed upon you for years."

Harper raised his hand for silence, then said to Elizabeth Crail, "How did you come out here?"

"I drove out."

"Was there," he asked, "a car parked on the opposite side of the street, about twenty yards to the north, when you came up?"

"No, there wasn't any car parked in the entire block."

"It was a Buick," Harper said, "with a license 9J8496. The tire on the left rear wheel was a Goodyear; the one on the right rear wheel was a Miller. The left rear fender had been dented and straightened."

She shook her head and said, "No car there."

"Then," Harper told her, "I think I had better retrieve my own car."

He nodded to Koshioto.

"Koshioto, my car is up the alley by the signboard. Here's the key to the ignition. My overcoat and hat are in the car. Put the car in the garage and bring me my coat and hat."

Koshioto knew his master too well to show surprise. His teeth flashed in a smile. He said, "Yes, sir," and vanished.

HARPER stared at the girl.

"Did Delamy know that you were coming here?" he asked.

"No one."

"Where do they think you are?"

"They don't know."

"You're allowed the opportunity of coming and going as you please?"

"So far I have been, but I don't know just what's going to happen. They may put themselves in a state of siege."

Her brother spoke viciously:

"Damned bunch of money-grabbers!" he said. "All except Delamy. I wouldn't care if someone shook them down for all of their money. They're capitalizing on the misfortune of others and . . ."

"That's not getting you anywhere," she said. "Don't you realize how foolish you are to voice sentiments like that? If you don't respect those men, don't work for them."

"I give them plenty of value for every dollar they pay me," he told her.

Harper glanced over at the girl.

"Have they locked themselves in their rooms?" he asked.

"No, they were having a terrific argument when I left."

"Know what it was about?" he asked her.

She smiled and said, "After all, Mr. Harper, I'm an employee, you know."

He nodded his head, said slowly, "Yes, and a loyal one."

"And what does it get you?" her brother asked bitterly.

She kept her eyes fastened on Harper.

"Will you," she asked, "please tell my brother that he's got to turn Draper up? If they talk with Draper they'll find out that Draper couldn't have been guilty of Millers' murder. In the first place, Draper couldn't have the brains. But Draper is a bad egg. I don't like him. If Millers had given him the job I'd have gone to Mr. Delamy and asked to have Draper discharged."

"One of these self-righteous, nasty-nice individuals, aren't you?" sneered her brother.

"You know I'm not!" she flared. "I'm trying to protect you from yourself, that's all."

"Thank you," he told her. "I don't need any protection from you."

Harper kept his eyes closed.

"If you wish to brawl," he said, "you'd confer a favor on me by doing it somewhere else. Personally, I'd like to think."

"I beg your pardon," she said with quick contrition.

Her brother said nothing.

Harper sat for several minutes, his eyes closed, his face tranquil, his forehead unfurrowed. But he gave the impression, nevertheless, of a concentration which considered carefully every angle of the problem he was turning over in his mind.

Abruptly, he opened his eyes and smiled.

"I think," he said, "I have a plan of campaign . . ."

The door opened. Koshioto appeared in the room, bowing and smiling.

"Master," he said, "a dead man in the alley."

"A DEAD man?" Harper asked.

Koshioto nodded, sucked in his breath. He laughed nervously.

"Dead man," he said, "wears your overcoat and hat. He is very dead."

"In the alley?" Harper asked.

"In the vacant lot between alley and car."

"What did he die of?" Harper asked.

"Little hole in back of neck."

"Bullet hole?" Harper asked.

"Very little hole," the Japanese said.

"Does not go through."

Harper frowned for a moment, then got to his feet.

"Why," asked Ashley Crail, "should a dead man wear your coat and hat?"

Harper said slowly, "No, you've got that wrong. Why should a man who wears my coat and hat be killed?"

"Good heavens!" Elizabeth Crail said. "Do you think that was it?"

"I'm virtually certain of it," he told her. "I would suggest that you two youngsters call a taxicab. The less you know about this, the better."

"Can I help you?" Elizabeth Crail inquired.

"No," he said, "but you might look through the books of the Betterbilt Investment Company and see if the company owns a nineteen thirty-two Buick."

She nodded her head.

"And should I say anything to Mr. Delamy," she asked, "about the dead man?"

He shook his head.

"You're not notifying the police?"

"Probably not."

"But," she said, "murder is serious."

"I am," he told her, "going to try and prevent more murders."

"Whose?" she asked.

His lips tightened into a grim line.

"My own—among others," he told her.

THE body lay some twenty feet from the paved alley. It was lying face down, the arms sprawled out above the head.

Ben Harper did not leave the paved alley, but stood on the edge of the pavement. The beam of his flashlight circled slowly about the body of the dead man.

"You took my hat and coat, Koshioto?" he asked.

"I took the hat and coat," Koshioto told him. "Not well for hat and coat of mastah to be found upon dead man."

Harper stood staring at the body.

"Koshioto," he said, "the ground is muddy from rain this afternoon. Your footprints show in the ground. The footprints of the dead man show in the ground. There are no others."

"One footprints when I came," he said.

Harper, standing on the paved alleyway where his feet would leave no prints, said slowly, "It will make trouble, Koshioto, with the police."

"Police do not know Koshioto's

footprints," the Japanese pointed out. "Be certain that they don't," Harper said.

"Koshioto's shoes go in furnace at once," the servant remarked, bowing and sucking in his breath with a hissing noise.

"The police," Harper pointed out, "seeing the tracks of only one man near the dead body, will be convinced that those tracks are the tracks of the murderer."

"Police cannot arrest tracks," Koshioto said.

"They can arrest the man who made the tracks."

"Excuse, please, but must first find man who make tracks."

Harper went on almost musingly, "That will be the logical deduction for the police, but what is the logical deduction for us?"

"Deduction," Koshioto asked, "is when two is taken from five, leaving three?"

Harper shook his head and said, "No. A deduction of one fact from another fact. If this man is dead, who killed him?"

"Hole in the back of neck."

"But how did the hole get there?"

Koshioto shrugged his shoulders.

"There is," said Harper, "the track of no human being within twenty feet of the dead man. You can see his tracks coming from the automobile. He walked steadily until he got within some ten or fifteen feet of the place where his body lies. Then he staggered, took two lurching steps and fell."

The Japanese nodded.

"Can't see steps," he said. "Man is a thief. His clothes are very poor. His face grows whiskers. Shirt is very dirty. Pockets have no money."

Ben Harper turned to stare at the Japanese.

"Do you mean to say you searched his pockets, Koshioto?"

The white teeth flashed in a grin.

"Koshioto," he announced, "always searches pockets of dead men."

Harper smiled, stared thoughtfully down at the corpse.

"It is," he said, "a good time for us to get out of here. I will not be home again tonight. If anyone wants to see me, you don't know where I am. And—remember about those shoes, Koshioto."

"The furnace," Koshioto said, "awaits shoes with fiery impatience."

## CHAPTER VII

And Then They Were Three . . .

ELIZABETH CRAIL drew the silken robe about her, saw that the chain catch was on the door, and opened it to stare at her visitor.

"You," she said when she saw Ben Harper's face.

"Yes," he told her. "I think this affair is coming to a showdown. I want you to go with me to the Midwick Building. I want to talk with Mr. Delamy. I think I prefer to talk with him alone."

She unhooked the chain.

"Come in," she said. "You'll have to wait while I dress. Make yourself comfortable."

She slipped into a bedroom, leaving the door half open. He could hear her quick steps on the floor, the running fire of questions which she asked him.

"Was that anything significant," she inquired, "the thing you found?"

"I think so," he told her.

"Was it, perhaps, someone who was mistaken for you?"

"It looks very much like it."

"But why should anyone want to kill you?"



"To keep from being discovered, of course."

"Then you must know something that is particularly important."

"Perhaps I do."

"Is that what you want to tell Mr. Delamy?"

He laughed and said, "Go on with your dressing, young lady. You know that curiosity killed a cat."

She finished her dressing in silence, appeared within less than a minute, ready for the street, her hand on the light switch.

"What did you do with your brother?" he asked.

"I sent him to find Draper."

"He was going to make Draper surrender?"

"He was going to try to."

"Do you think he'll be successful?"

"No."

"Then what is he going to do?"

"I *want* him to tell the authorities where Draper is. That is what I told him to tell Draper—that if Draper didn't surrender voluntarily, Ashley would tell the police where to find him."

Harper frowned.

"Your brother," he said, "may not be upon a very safe errand."

"Ashley can take care of himself on anything like that. It's when someone starts imposing on him that he's helpless."

"Well," Harper said, "we'll try to get this damned thing cleaned up, if possible, in time to prevent any more murders."

"Do you think there's danger?"

"Great danger."

HE escorted her to the sidewalk, into a taxicab, refused to answer any more questions until they had reached the Midwick Build-

ing, where Elizabeth Crail secured admittance for him. They rode in the elevator to the steel-walled reception room.

The elevator door clanged behind them. Elizabeth Crail moved with assurance toward the electrically controlled doors.

A man's voice said, "Stick them up—both of you. Keep 'em frozen. Stay where you are!"

From the inside corridor came the piercing scream of a woman. A man's voice was raised in a shout. Feet pounded upon the floor.

"You heard what I said," shouted the belligerent voice of the guard in the secret cage. "Get your hands up until we get this thing straightened out. Pitley Simms has been killed."

Slowly, Elizabeth Crail raised her hands. Harper's hands were already in the air.

Someone pounded on the electrically controlled door. The guard in the steel-lined cage shouted, "Stay where you are. No one goes in or out until this thing has been cleared up. Those are orders!"

"Will you," asked Elizabeth Crail, "kindly tell Mr. Delamy that Mr. Harper is here, and that I'm here?"

"Don't worry, sister," said the man's voice, "I'm taking care of those things. That information went in over the telephone as soon as you hit the place."

A moment later he said, in a somewhat less truculent tone, "You can take your hands down, you folks, and go in. But you're to stick close to Delamy. He's taking the responsibility."

The electrical doors clicked open. A half hysterical woman tried to push her way out. The guard worked the switch which slammed the door behind the in-

coming pair and said, "No you don't, sister. People can go in, but no one's going out any more."

Harper tried to quiet her, but the woman was beating on the panels of the door with her bare hands.

They entered a long corridor. A door opened. Delamy appeared in the doorway of the reception room. His face was grave.

"Come in," he said. "Poor old Simms just got his."

"How did it happen?" Harper asked.

"He was in the vault room, looking at some papers," Delamy said. "We found him there, lying on the floor."

"Was there," asked Harper, "a small hole in the back of his neck?"

Delamy gave an obvious start.

"How the devil did you know that?" he demanded. "There hasn't been a bit of information go out of this place."

"The reason I asked," Harper said, "is that someone tried to murder me by that same method about two hours ago . . . However, that can wait. I want to see the body."

Delamy said, slowly, "Harper, I've got confidence in you, but the others are inclined to feel that you . . ."

"Had you done exactly as I instructed," Harper said, "gone to your rooms, bolted the doors and stayed there for twelve hours you would have been out of danger."

"But Pitley Simms had to go messing through some documents for some reason or other. I don't know what caused him to be in such a hurry, but that haste cost him his life. If you folks refuse to follow instructions, I don't see why you should blame me if things go wrong."

Delamy shrugged his shoulders and said, "You don't need to convince me of the logic of that statement. I'm

simply telling you how the others feel. This way, please."

He opened a door.

SEVERAL people were moving about a room, in haste and obvious confusion.

Harrison Gale stared at Ben Harper with his watery eyes. He cleared his throat nervously.

"A lot of protection you turned out to be," he said.

"Shut up!" Delamy told him. "If we'd followed instructions there would not have been any trouble."

"We don't have to take instructions from a vaudeville artist," Boxman said, his face twisting savagely.

"You didn't have to employ a vaudeville artist, in the first place," Ben Harper told him. "Having employed one, you should have followed instructions."

He glanced inquiringly at Delamy.

Delamy nodded, pushed forward through the group of people and opened a door.

Harper stood in the doorway, looking about the room with slow, steady gaze. His eyes swung from the man who lay face down on the floor, half in and half out of a vault, to the various windows.

Delamy, at his shoulder, offered explanations in a low voice:

"You can see," he said, "the way the room was laid out. It was a vault. Each of us has his private safe inside of a private, locked compartment. We have joint access to the vault. All of us have the combination to it. The private safes, on the other hand, have individual combinations. These are possessed only by the individuals who own the respective safes."

"And Simms wanted to open his safe?" Harper asked.

"Apparently."

"Had it been opened?"

"No."

"What had he done?"

"Just opened the vault."

"Then what happened?"

"We don't know. This much we do know — the lights in the room went off."

"What caused that?"

"Some sort of a short circuit, which apparently had been ingeniously arranged. You can see where the door, swinging open, struck a bit of copper wire. That wire is connected with the lighting system. It blew out the fuse."

HARPER stared moodily at the prostrate figure.

"You're going to notify the police?"

"Yes, we've got to."

"You think, then, that electricity has something to do with the thing?"

"How do you mean?"

"You think the electrical short had something to do with the manner in which this man died?"

"I don't know, Harper, I'm sure," Delamy said. "It's too complicated to figure out hurriedly. The thing is utterly incredible. There simply couldn't have been anyone in this room. I know that for a fact. Simms stepped in the room. I happened to be near the door when he entered. He said something about getting some papers out of his safe. It wasn't until after he had been in there some twenty or twenty-five minutes that I thought I'd better look in on him."

"Just when did you discover him?"

"Just a few minutes before you came in."

"What did you do?"

"I got in touch with Harrison Gale; the first one that I met. He suggested

that we keep it quiet until we could work out some plan of campaign, but the help got wise to it. There was quite a commotion."

"Yes, I heard it," Harper said.

He stood for a moment, staring about the room, then said slowly, "Look here, Delamy, this is the second mysterious death in this building. If the police are called in now they're going to smell a very big rat. They're going to tip off the newspaper reporters. There's going to be a big story released about how you fellows are up here in a state of siege, about the mysterious death which strikes so mysteriously it can't be located, and all that sort of rot.

"Now get your gang together. I've got a proposition to make them. It's probably not strictly legal, but I'm willing to take a chance on it."

Delamy nodded. He stepped back a few paces and said to someone, "Get Mr. Gale and Mr. Boxman here immediately."

When the other two men stood at Delamy's side, Harper spoke to them briefly:

"You chaps are on a spot. There's some peculiar form of death that strikes here and you don't know what it is. It isn't uniform. It's in one form one time, another form another time. That's what makes it so deadly. It's obvious that we can't keep the facts from becoming public now.

"I've got a proposition. I want to have the murders solved before we call the police. Now, I'm satisfied that the dog attacked Millers. I'm satisfied that he received orders while in a hypnotized condition. Those orders must have come in over the telephone . . ."

"And," Boxman interrupted, "this man, Draper, was the one whose voice was coming over the telephone."

"No," Harper said, "I don't think so. You see, there wasn't anything that Draper could say that would interest Millers over a long period of time. Millers listened just long enough to find out what it was that Draper wanted, and then switched off the telephone. That's proven, because, when Millers' secretary asked a question and then waited, thinking that Millers would telephone down the answer, there was silence. She had to go up, in order to see what Millers wanted to do.

"Then, again, there's this death of Simms. It's a weird form of murder, and . . ."

"Wait a minute," Boxman said. "Do you understand the implication you are making when you talk about that telephone conversation?"

Harper stared at him.

"What?" he asked.

"Ashley Crail," Boxman said simply. "He could have rung the telephone. He could have deliberately planted Draper in the visitors' room in order to make certain that Millers would be sitting by his telephone."

HARPER nodded slowly.  
"Right at the present time," he said, "I'm not interested so much in the identity of the murderer as I am in catching the murderer red-handed. Now, I have an idea that the possibilities of this chamber of death are not exhausted. I think that Simms set off some diabolically clever mechanism which brought about his death. I propose to enter the room in just the manner that Simms did. We'll move the body so the vault door will close. We'll close and lock the vault. We'll put a new fuse in, but leave the wire so that when the vault door is open it will make a short circuit which will blow out the fuse and plunge the room in

darkness. You fellows can give me the combination of the vault. I'll go in and turn the dial, just as Simms must have. I'll stand in exactly the same position. I'll open the door, just as he must have, and I'll stay in there for twenty-five minutes if necessary, if I can't discover anything before that time has elapsed."

"But what do you think you can find?" asked Delamy.

"Frankly, I don't know."

"We should notify the police at once. We'll have an awful job squaring things if we don't notify them at once."

Harper said, "I am not attempting to minimize that responsibility. However gentlemen, I think it is of greater importance to ascertain something about the method of murder than to call in the police and confront them with a baffling enigma."

Boxman said slowly, "I'm in favor of doing as you suggest, Harper, providing you wait ten minutes, during which time we open all the windows and air the place out. After all, there may be something in the atmosphere—some poison gas or something which should be eliminated from the room."

"What the devil has gas got to do with it?" asked Delamy. "You . . ."

"Perhaps a lot more than you think," Harper said seriously. "I don't know just where you got that gas idea from, Boxman. It may have been telepathy, but I was on the point of making such a suggestion myself."

Delamy looked from one to the other, shrugged his shoulders.

"It's all foolishness," Gale said. "A lot of damn foolishness. There's nothing in that room that had anything to do with Simms' death."

Harper stared at him, eyes cold and hard.

"Then, just how *did* Simms die?" he inquired.



Gale cleared his throat and was silent. Boxman said quietly, "I take it, then, that it's settled. I'm going to assume personal responsibility for seeing that you run no unnecessary risks, and I'm going to make just one more suggestion. That is that you talk with Ashley Crail before you go in there."

"Why?" Harper asked.

"If he's got a guilty conscience, I think you can tell it. You've got uncanny powers of observation."

Harper said, "Thanks, I will," and moved away.

HE found Ashley Crail in the corridor leading to the reception room. Crail was white-faced and shaking.

"Snap out of it," Harper said. "You look positively guilty."

Crail gave a quick start, tried to say something, but his tongue refused to function. Then he got control of his organs of speech and said, "Don't you make any accusations like that, or, by God, you'll regret it!"

"I wasn't making an accusation," Harper said. "I was merely telling you that you should snap out of it."

"How the hell can I snap out of it when we're locked up here with some unseen death? I came back here after I saw you, to get some things, and they wouldn't let me leave. Did you see Draper after you left me?"

"No."

Crail shook his head slowly.

"Don't lie," Harper said. "You know that you saw him."

"Well, what if I did?"

"Are you going to tell us where he is?"

"No."

"Why not?"

"Because if I did I'd be killed. I'm not going to turn rat."

"Do you know who killed Simms?" Harper asked.

"Good God, no! Of course not!"

"Do you know who killed Millers?"

"His dog."

"I know, but do you know who incited the dog to the attack?"

"No," Crail said, and lowered his eyes.

There was a moment of silence, then Crail went on, "Damn it, I wish you wouldn't stand there and third degree me like that! I know what you have in mind, and it makes me nervous. It makes me act guilty. I can't help it. I'm not a smooth actor."

Harper stared at him for a moment, then abruptly turned on his heel and walked away.

"You had," he said, "better be very, very careful during the next hour. Stay close to some one all the time."

"Good heavens, why?" Crail asked.

But Harper had already moved away.

Harper caught Delamy's eye.

"Everything's ready," Delamy told him, "if you're going to follow out this crazy scheme. Here's the combination of the vault."

"The vault is closed?"

"Yes."

"No one is in the room?"

"No one except . . . the body."

Harper nodded, stepped to the door of the room, opened it and turned to smile at Delamy.

"I'll be seeing you," he said casually, and closed the door.

## CHAPTER VIII

### The Secret of the Vault

HE stepped over the body of Pit-ley Simms, went at once to the windows, closed every one of them. He stood for a moment, listen-

ing. Everything was quiet. He stepped to the door of the vault, put a handkerchief over his fingers so that he wouldn't leave finger-prints on the nicked dial and slowly spun the combination through the series of figures which Delamy had given him.

When the dial had swung over to the right until it stopped, Harper placed a handkerchief over the handle in the door and tugged with his weight against it. He heard the bars click back as the handle swung over to the left.

Harper did not immediately open the door of the vault, however.

He crossed the room once more to a door which led to a hallway. That door was locked, bolted from the inside, as it had been when Simms was in the room. But now Harper quietly slipped the bolt so that he could noiselessly open the door. When he had done that he took a coil of light, strong twine from his pocket, looped one end around the knob on the door of the vault. He unwound the cord so that he still held an end in his hand as he reached the door which led to the connecting room—the door which he had previously unlocked.

Harper pulled on the cord. The door of the vault swung slowly open. As it opened the edge of the steel door came in contact with the copper wire. There was a sputtering flash of greenish light, then the room was in darkness.

Harper slackened on the cord. The loop slid down the polished handle of the vault to the carpet. Harper jerked open the door to the connecting room, stepped into the second room and pushed the door shut behind him.

FROM his previous inspection of the place, Ben Harper had familiarized himself with every detail of his surroundings, and his mind

never overlooked even the smallest detail which he had once observed. He was, therefore, able to move soundlessly through the darkened room until he came to another door which led to a corridor. He opened this door a crack, placed his ear against it, and listened.

He could hear voices in the corridor. Apparently, several of the employees had clustered there in an expectant group.

" . . . wouldn't do it for a million dollars. I don't think his life is worth a snap of my fingers."

"Bosh and nonsense!" another one said. "I'd do it in a minute. That electricity business is all hokey. How could an electrical connection with a vault door make a hole in a man's neck?"

"Well, we'll find out pretty soon," the first voice said. "The fuse blew out two or three minutes ago. That shows he opened the door."

"How long are they going to wait?"

"Twenty-five minutes, I think," the other said, "unless he opens the door sooner."

Steps sounded in the corridor. Then Delamy's voice said importantly, "All right, you folks, just keep away from the doors, if you will. I think you'd better go down to the room at the end of the corridor and wait down there."

"Yes, sir," said one of the voices.

There was the sound of more footsteps, then the sound of Harrison Gale's voice as he said, "I suppose we've got to wait the twenty-five minutes out."

"Unless Harper calls before that, yes," Delamy answered.

Suddenly, from the far end of the corridor, there sounded a woman's voice raised in shrill expostulation:

" . . . can't let him do it! You've got no right to! Your lives aren't worth that much. He's taking chances that

you wouldn't take. I'm going in there with him."

There was the sound of a scuffle, a masculine voice that boomed authoritative protest, then the slamming of a door.

Several seconds elapsed. Then there were feet once more in the corridor, and a woman's voice, shrill with excitement, said, "That was Elizabeth Crail. She insisted she was going in there with him."

Harper stiffened to attention.

"She's gone in there?" Delamy asked.

"Yes," said the woman's voice. "We couldn't stop her, and . . ."

Harper waited to hear no more. He turned and rushed back across the dark room, his hand groping for the knob of the door which led to the chamber of death.

HE found the knob, wrenched the door open.

From the inner room all was darkness and silence.

"Miss Crail," he called softly.

He heard the sound of a startled gasp.

"Are you all right?" he called.

"Y-y-y-yes," she said, and her voice was choked with sobs.

"Where are you?"

"Over here. I thought this was your body. I thought you were dead."

"No," he said, "that's Simms. Walk toward the sound of my voice. Keep beating your hands in the air."

"B-b-b-beating my hands in the air?" she sobbed.

"Yes," he said, "and that's important. That's important as the very devil. Come toward me at once."

He stepped into the room and started flailing his own arms up and down, brushing himself with his hands.

Suddenly he heard her give a choked scream, and, a moment later, she said, "I t-t-t-touched something. Something was trying to get to me. There's something else here in the room."

"That's all right," he told her. "Hurry! Come toward me."

He heard her stumble once. Then she lurched forward and fell into his arms.

"It's all right," he told her. "Just keep your hands moving and . . ."

He broke off as the door of the room behind them opened and then closed. Steps hurried across the room. A flashlight stabbed its way through the darkness. Then the beam was extinguished.

"Hush!" Harper whispered, and threw his arm around her shoulders.

A figure glided across the room.

Suddenly the beam of the flashlight stabbed up toward the ceiling, and, across the beam of the flashlight flitted a huge silent shadow, a black ominous something which left a vague, indistinct impression of a silent menace, a death which flitted through the air, casting grotesque shadows but making no sound.

The beam of the flashlight swung in a half circle, came to rest upon Elizabeth Crail.

A man's voice said, "You damned little she-devil! You *would* have to interfere."

Harper caught the glint of blued steel in the light which sprayed out from the flashlight.

"Look out!" he shouted, and lunged forward.

The gun spurted flame. The roar of the explosion filled the room.

HARPER, unarmed, flung himself upon the man who had fired the shot. He heard Elizabeth Crail scream and drop to the floor.

"Keep up beating about you with your arms!" Harper shouted.

A second shot singed his hair with its flame as the man swung the gun and fired.

Harper lashed out with his left. The flashlight was flung upward, slipped from the man's hand, pinwheeled up into the air, throwing its beam in a twisting circle, and then crashed to the floor and went out. The room was in darkness.

There were steps in the corridor. A voice screamed some inarticulate warning.

Arms encircled Harper. He sensed that his adversary was trying to swing the gun so that he could use it to advantage. But Harper was close to the man's own body. He slammed his heel down on the man's instep, swung his arm around so that he could grab the gun wrist.

"Damn you!" the man screamed, and struck with the gun. The barrel crashed down on Harper's temple. He felt the floor rock and sway beneath him, felt great waves of black nausea engulfing his consciousness. He tried to hang on, but felt the strength ooze from his arms. He realized that he was slipping, and then felt fingers at his throat. He crashed to the floor. The other was on top of him. The fingers pressed against his windpipe.

Harper was conscious of men storming at the door. He tried to shout to the men to go around the other way, through the communicating door, but he could make no sound.

He tried to push off his assailant, but there was no strength in his arms. He felt his wind was being shut off. Then, suddenly, the grip relaxed. The man above him swayed, gave a low moan and pitched forward.

Harper sucked welcome air into his

lungs, kicked off the inert body, screamed to Elizabeth Crail, "Get that door open!"

But she needed no instruction on that score. She had already thrown the bolt on the door. Now she flung it open. Light streamed into the room. Spectators stood in a startled circle in the doorway.

A police whistle sounded from somewhere in the corridor. Steps pounded along the floor. The door of the connecting room was pushed violently open.

Lights blazed in the adjoining room, and the illumination through the two doors was sufficient to show some circling body flitting about the ceiling of the room—a great winged creature which flitted silently in a hysteria of circular motion.

It dropped toward Harper. Harper, on one knee, struck at it with his arm, smashed his fist against the creature, sent it hurtling across the room, where it crashed into the door of the vault and dropped to the floor.

Three uniformed policemen and two plainclothes men came pushing through the door of the connecting room.

"What the hell's going on here?" one of the men demanded.

Harper turned his face to the circle of white, frightened faces which had clustered in the doorway.

Taber Boxman lay inert on the floor. A small hole in the back of his neck was the only visible wound.

"IT stood to reason," Harper said, "that the five men in this company were being preyed upon by one of their own number. Everything indicated it. Millers was killed by the attack of a dog. The dog was incited to that attack by the voice of some man who was not in the room. It was, there-



fore, a voice which came over the loud-speaking telephone. An attempt was made to blame that voice on Carl Draper. That was merely a stall. Millers wasn't listening to the conversation which was taking place in the reception room at the time of his death. The testimony of his own secretary indicates that. Therefore, he must have been called by someone who had access to that telephone. That *might* have been an employee. It was more probable that it was one of the members of the partnership.

"When we consider that the partnership was so arranged that, by a system of insurance, the assets virtually vested in the survivors, we can appreciate what a clever scheme was perpetrated. Boxman made demands for two million dollars. Otherwise he threatened to kill off the members of the partnership. He stood to win either way. As a matter of fact, the other two were about ready to pay off the money. Boxman would have written another letter, in which he would have been designated as the man to make the contact. The other two would have turned over two-thirds of two million dollars. Boxman would have pocketed it.

"Boxman had studied hypnotism. He had been able to hypnotize the dog which Millers owned. Perhaps some people would consider that it was merely a clever act of animal training. I prefer to consider it hypnotism. At any rate, Boxman knew that I was on his trail as soon as I mentioned the fact that I had seen a dog similarly trained in Cranston. Therefore, he wanted to get rid of me.

"HIS next campaign was rather clever. The vampire bats are well known in various tropical countries. In South America there are

species of the Javelin Bats. These are known as *Phyllóstoma Hastátum*.

"These are true vampire bats. They live on the blood of animals and men. They particularly attack men when asleep, by biting a small round hole with very sharp teeth, either in the tip of the nose or at the end of the big toe. However, when the bats are starving and do not have an opportunity to attack sleeping men, they have been known to fasten upon the back of the shoulders and bite in the back of the neck.

"A peculiar thing about these bats is that they have a species of local anæsthetic which prevents the victim from feeling pain. The wounds which they make are usually clean and seldom become infected, although the victim will become very weak from loss of blood. What Boxman did was merely to keep these bats in a starving condition, so that they were in a veritable frenzy for food. Then he put a peculiar active poison, probably one of the type that is used by the natives in blow guns, on the outer gums of these bats. As soon as they bit a victim and the blood started to flow the poison from the outer lip of the bat was picked up by the blood stream of the victim and resulted in almost an instantaneous death.

"He tried to kill me by liberating a bat which would have access to me as its first victim. He was foiled in this attempt merely because someone had stolen my hat and overcoat, and because I had my suspicions aroused by the fact that a car was following me.

"He put one of these bats in the vault and left the windows of the room open. He knew that, sooner or later, one of his associates would enter the vault. When that was done, he had a switch arranged so that the light would

become short-circuited. As soon as Simms opened the door of that vault of death the lights went out. Therefore he couldn't see the bat. The bat fastened on the back of his neck. The man died almost instantly. The bat flew out of the window."

"A potential source of death to to others?" asked Delamy.

"I think not," Harper said. "The poison on his lips would have been dissolved in the blood of the first wound."

"**H**OW did it happen you suspected Boxman?" Delamy inquired.

"I didn't at first," Harper said. "I only knew that the guilty person must have been one of you five. I knew that person would realize I was getting close to a solution, and would try to kill me, inasmuch as he had already made one abortive attempt. Therefore, I decided to close the windows, shut myself in the room under conditions identical with those which Simms had encountered, only I protected myself by opening the door of the safe with a cord."

"But," Delamy asked, "why did you desire to wait for twenty-five minutes?"

Harper hesitated.

"Was it," Delamy asked, "that you expected the man who had set the trap would be the first one to look in the door? He'd look in to see whether the bat had escaped before letting the others in. Then, when Miss Crail entered the room, it forced your hand. You rushed in to rescue her. Boxman ran in to make certain she didn't discover the bat, or, if she did, he could kill her and then escape before he could be apprehended."

Harper shrugged his shoulders and looked away.

"That," he said, "is merely your inference, Delamy."

"But," Delamy said, "isn't it the way you planned to play the game—to have the murderer come in to see that the coast was clear and then have the starved bat attack him?"

Harper, looking at him, said a strange thing:

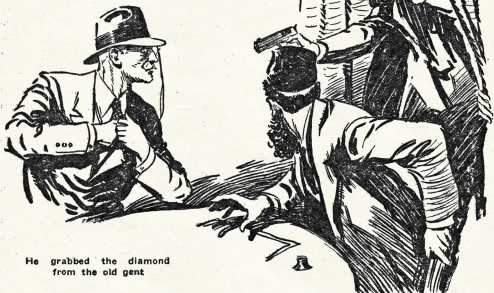
"Gentleman," he said, "that is something I can't remember."

## THE END

<p><b>HERE'S THE AID TO FEWER COLDS... VICKS VA-TRO-NOL</b> • A FEW DROPS UP EACH NOSTRIL •</p> 	<p><b>HERE'S THE AID TO SHORTER COLDS ...VICKS VAPORUB</b> • JUST RUB ON THROAT AND CHEST •</p> 
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# The Mute One



He grabbed the diamond  
from the old gent

## *The Clue of the Four Headless Snakes Lures Daffy Dill into the Room of Purple Death*

A Novelette

By Richard B. Sale

**F**EBRUARY in New York is like July at the South Pole. They're both frigid. From the forward deck of the dirty little tugboat we could see the S.S. San Pedro down the bay, disappearing now and then amidst the thick white mist that came up from the waters. The ship was at anchor, waiting to come through Quarantine.

They were all on the tug—all the laddies who cover the water front for their respective newsrags. There was

Browne of the *Tribune*, MacLain of the *Sun*, and four or five others including myself, Daffy Dill, of the *Chronicle*. I was pinch-hitting for Solly Hanson, the regular water front reporter on the *Chronicle*. A bad cold had flopped him on his back in bed, and feeling one of my peculiar hunches, I volunteered to the Old Man to take the job for the day.

I was regretting it, too . . .

The name of the tug was the Aloha, and with a hula-hula handle like that, it was having a tough time trying to get through the cakes of ice that floated on the surface of the upper bay.

Being one of those guys who can't ski or ice-skate, but who's a whizz when it comes to riding a surf board across the briny deep, I wrapped my,

overcoat tightly around me, shivered at the bite of the river wind through the thin part of it at the seat, and murmured lustily:

"Hi-ho, hi-ho, it must be simply beautiful in Florida!"

Browne, of the *Tribune*, a nice enough little guy with specs, laughed and called to the others:

"Listen to Daffy Dill bemoaning Sol's sparsity! One day and he complains about the cold. Daffy, if you had to do it day out and day in for years—"

"I wouldn't last years, friend. Not with my weak heart and tender constitution," I said.

"Where's Solly Hanson?" MacLain asked.

"Sick," I said. "Listen, do you guys always take this tug out to meet incoming steamers? Why don't you wait until they land?"

"Because we wouldn't get a story then," said Browne. "Ship news is ship news, Daffy. And the home edition waits for no man's colyum. If we didn't take the tug, we'd be late for deadline."

"Yea, verily," I sighed, shivering. The S.S. San Pedro loomed up close to us. I pointed a shaking finger.

"Thar she blows, mates!" I nudged Browne. "Who's on board, anyway? I can't figure why we're all going down to a little tub like the San Pedro when the Berengaria gets in this morning. Don't tell me some one important is coming up from Panama!"

Browne ogled. "Do you mean to say you don't know who's coming in today?"

"You heard me, friend," I replied.

Browne shook his head. He said dryly, "Did you ever hear of Dr. Emmerus Sheldon?"

"Why not?" I said. "Curator of

mammals and reptiles at the Municipal Zoölogical Gardens."

"Right the first time. Two months ago, Dr. Sheldon sailed for Panama to try and bring back the first captive bushmaster to be exhibited in America. He's been trying to get one for years."

I shrugged. "So what?"

Browne sighed. "So if you read your own newspaper once in awhile, you'd know that Dr. Sheldon caught his bushmaster two weeks ago. He's bringing it in today on the San Pedro. And along with it, he's got a cargo of fer-de-lance snakes and a couple of vampire bats, that's all."

"What?" I exclaimed. "No movie stars? Solly is always telling about the pretty legs of the pretty movie stars who pose for his camera. I'll be mighty disappointed if I don't meet one of them during my one day on the water front. Solly was telling me he loaned two bits to Kay Francis when she came back from Europe last year. What a pleasure!"

"Listen," Browne said, "this is one of the most important herpetological captures of our time. We are going to have a live bushmaster on exhibition in the Municipal Zoo. Dr. Sheldon captured. And you talk about movie stars! Don't you want to see the snake?"

"What for — an interview?" I grinned. "I'll bet you one fish he won't talk for publication."

Which remark brought on a despondent silence and the tug came alongside the ship. We all got up into the prow and waited for the deckhands to toss down the Jacob's ladder.

IT rattled over the side in a few minutes. We climbed it with the wind whistling through our scanties and when we reached the deck, the cruise



director was standing there, a little short bird in a blue uniform and lots of brass buttons.

"Good morning, gentlemen," he said importantly. "I have a list of prominent passengers right here in my hand. If you will wait a moment, I'll read it to you and you can take your pick of whom you want to see."

"Nerts, my dear fellow, nerts," Browne said. "We know the passenger we want to see. His name is Dr. Emerus Sheldon and he bunks with a genuine bushmaster from the tropics and a bald-headed assistant with the antiquated handle of Amos Benefield. Where's his cabin?"

"'A' deck," said the cruise director. "Cabin 4-E."

"Eureka!" Browne said, grinning. He slapped MacLain on the back and roared, "Lead on, MacDuff!" The whole mob of pencil-pushers retreated into the lounge like Napoleon's army emigrating from Moscow in the good ole days. It looked like Dr. Sheldon was holding an old home week.

I didn't go.

It was just one of those things. You know—a hunch. I looked at the cruise director's face and one hit me. He had that kind of a pan. It was lined with trenches which spelled one thing to me—worry. And worry in any man is the cause of a menace. And to a scribbler, menace is a story and just another reason why editors pay so much per week for their inane copy.

I tugged at his sleeve, trying to look sinister, and I said in my best basso profundo, "Well, friend?"

He stared at me. "Yes?"

I said softly but importantly, "My name's Holmes. Homicide bureau." I flashed a tin badge I once picked up in a pawn shop and which I carry on the back of my lapel for emergencies.

The cruise director looked stunned. "Then — but I thought you were one of those reporters!"

"Naw," I said in my best flatfoot manner. "Deteckatiff! That's me." He nodded with surprise and I knew that my hunch was right. Something had gone radically wrong on the trip



DAFFY DILL

up from Panama, and he was doing his best to keep it quiet and away from the news-hounds. I felt warm again, despite the trip on the ice-bound tug-boat.

"Come along," he said, and I came.

He took me to his office off the main salon. He sat down behind his desk and we both lighted cigs.

He said cautiously: "I didn't expect the police until we docked at eleven. In the cable from Centre Street they said—"

I waved my hand and wondered how in hell I could break him down and find out what it was all about, without him getting wise. I said blandly:

"You know how it is! The chief thought I ought to come down on the tug and look things over before you

docked. He wanted you to give me the dope first hand on this"—I took a chance and held my breath, "—this murder."

The cruise director looked horrified and leaped to his feet. I could see that my guess was wrong and that I'd put my foot in it—which same I can always be relied upon to do.

"No, no! Mr. Randall didn't die! His head was badly bruised from the blow when he was knocked out, but he recovered all right, even though the thief got away."

"Say, friend," I said, "I'm sorry. I'm sort of mixed up with another ship case coming in today. The *Atlantica* had some trouble. A shooting, I think. Suppose you give me the details straight."

It worked. He nodded and sat down.

"It happened two nights ago off the Carolina capes," he said. "We were all at dinner. Mr. Randall suddenly remembered that he'd forgotten his glasses. He got up and went back to his cabin, 4-E, 'A' deck."

"Which Randall is that?" I asked.

"Burton Randall," he said. "You know—the private banker. Twelfth richest man in the world."

"Oh, yeah," I said thoughtfully. "Keep talking."

"When he got to his cabin, there was a man in it. The man was masked. He was ransacking the stateroom. He held Randall up and threatened to shoot him unless Randall told him where the Canary was."

"The—Canary?" I probed, figuring out the streamer which would blanket the *Chronicle's* page one.

"Yes," said the cruise director. "You've heard of the Canary, surely. The big yellow diamond? It's worth a small fortune. Five hundred thousand dollars, I believe."

I whistled. "Five hundred grand! Why in hell didn't he put it in the purser's safe?"

"He was afraid to," the cruise director replied. "He hid it in his own cabin. Then, of course, when this man threatened to kill him, he divulged the hide-out. The thief took it, struck him over the head and made his escape."

"Where'd he buy this Canary in the first place?"

"Private seller," said the cruise director. "Some Spanish mogul in Havana. That's where Randall and his wife joined the ship. He bought it for her." He sighed. "He didn't keep it long. You can see, of course, how this publicity would hurt us. It must not reach the newspapers."

"Of course it mustn't," I lied, conscienceless. "Lemme see a list of your passengers, friend."

## CHAPTER II

### The Snake Man

HE handed over the list and I went through it. There were about one hundred and fifty passengers. It was only a small tub. In the "H's" I nearly dropped dead. I came across the name "Jeremiah Hogan." If it was the same Jerry Hogan I knew, he'd been in the police line-up since he was a twelve-year-old. I checked the moniker mentally and went on to see what I could see. In the "L's," I solved the case as far as I had to. There was the well-known name, "Damon LaSalle."

Even a shamus could have figured the whole thing right then. Damon LaSalle was the slickest, most polite jewel thief going. He was about sixty-five. He must have been. My pappy used to tell me stories about the slick LaSalle when I wore bunting baby



blue. Either Damon LaSalle had lifted the Canary, or Jeremiah Hogan, alias "Snip" Hogan, had lifted it. Or maybe both of them had.

However, that was none of my business especially. I have always looked forward to a long and healthy life, so I decided I had enough dope to write a bang-up heist yarn of the high seas. Sure I knew those two yeggs had the stone. By my job was writing, not arresting. So I ankled tactfully out of the cruise director's office and went back to the deck, just as Browne and the rest came by.

Browne grabbed me and pulled me along. "Sap, where have you been?" he hissed. "Your chief'll be sore as hell if you don't cover Dr. Sheldon. Come on! He's taking us down into the hold to show us the bushmaster and his vampire bats and stuff."

I shrugged. "What've I got to lose? I'll come."

Browne was a nice guy. He took me up to Dr. Sheldon himself. Then he introduced me. Sheldon was tall and had gray-white hair. He was smoking a pipe, a droopy bowl type like Sherlock Holmes used to sport, and he had the kindest face I ever saw. He looked so gentle, it was hard to imagine him handling a tough viper like the bushmaster at close range.

Then I met his assistant, Amos Benefield. Like Browne had said, Benefield was as bald as a billiard ball, a squat little man with an overhanging stomach. He looked sour and he only nodded to me curtly and kept walking, cutting me nicely.

I winked at Browne and glanced at the floating icebergs in the bay. I said:

"It gets cold this time of year."

"Don't mind him," said Browne. "Nobody does." Which same seemed

logical enough to me, so I didn't mind him, and finally we left the deck once again and descended stairs and stairs and stairs until we came to the hold where the wild cargo survived.

The hold was locked, of course, but we had a ship's high mucky-muck along and he saw to it that the door was instantly opened. We all trekked in, jabbering so loud it sounded like the ladies' tea circle on Tuesday afternoons.

Dr. Sheldon was in the lead, with Amos Benefield right behind him. Dr. Sheldon led us around a lot of boxes and crates and things until we reached the spot where his snakes and bats had been stored for the voyage. We all drew around in a circle as the curator stepped forward to pull out the crate with the bushmaster and open it to give us a look.

Suddenly, Dr. Sheldon stopped. He gasped sharply, as though some one had stuck him with a knife. I got the chills a second. I thought the damn snake had gotten out and bitten him in the leg or something.

But it wasn't that.

One of the crates, with Dr. Sheldon's name on it, was pulled away from the wall. On the top slat in bold letters were the words:

*Stay Away. Caution. Contents  
Deadly. Fer-de-lance Snakes En-  
closed.*

But they weren't enclosed. The whole side of the box had been ripped out with a chisel. And on the floor beside it reposed the twisted lengths of four fer-de-lances.

They were as dead as yesterday's news. Their heads were smashed to bits, apparently each by a bullet.

The queer thing, though, wasn't the smashed heads. It was the bodies of

the snakes. Each one was cut in three pieces, and the belly of each one had been slit from the end of the tail to the curve of the throat, throwing organs and blood all over the floor.

Dr. Sheldon was speechless. Amos Benefield got so white with astonishment, I thought he was going to faint. Browne croaked:

"Well, what do you know about that?"

"Nothing," I said, baffled, "except that those poor little tykes did *not* perish from seasickness."

WHEN the San Pedro docked I lammed right away, going through the customs with my press card. I was going down in the elevator of the pier when I bumped into Sergeant Bill Hanley, my pal, and Inspector Halloran, my Nemesis. Halloran grunted to me and walked away. Hanley nudged me and said:

"Stick around, Daffy. There may be a yarn."

"There *is* a yarn. A couple of them," I said, "only I've gotten them already. I'm that way. And listen, Poppa, give me a buzz at the office when you arrest Hogan and LaSalle."

Hanley stared. "What?"

"Sure," I said. "Hogan and LaSalle lifted the Canary diamond. They're on board. If Halloran arrests them, give me the tip."

"Yeah, yeah," Sergeant Hanley grunted, "but how in hell did you find out?"

"Shh," I whispered. "I read it in the stars last night through my little telescope."

"Huh?"

"Positively, I cannot tell a lie. So long, Poppa."

I left him there, all agog, and looking very much unlike an astute detec-

tive about to investigate a missing stone worth five hundred grand.

I caught a cab and rode until I came to the *Chronicle* building, an elegant edifice, built from the circulation of exclusive yarns by Daffy Dill, and a little work on the part of the rest of the staff.

When I hied buoyantly through the swinging doors into the outer corridor of the rag, I felt the sudden flash of beauty which radiated from the face that had launched a thousand tips—none other than Dinah Mason, receptionist for the newspaper, who gives me hot and cold flashes when I'm weak, and makes me propose to her every day, just to ease my blood pressure.

"Hi, sailor," she said. "And how did you like the Old World museums on Staten Island?"

"Hello, Angel-Eyes," I said, "will you marry me?"

"Did you get that seasick, landlubber?" she quipped.

"Scared-cat," I chirped. "You're evading!"

"The answer," she said, "is no—as usual. So run along and write your exclusive. I can tell by the gleam in your eyes that you've run into piracy on the high seas. Scram, lunatic."

"Them harsh words," I said, "cut me to the quick. I hereby serve notice that there'll be no more proposals."

"Until tomorrow," Dinah finished. She laughed. "Go ahead and write it, Daffy, and keep it calm and collected. Remember Solly Hanson has a staid and sober colyum. You're only pinch-hitting."

What can you do with a gel like that? I left her and breezed into the city room. The boys and girls were all working hard trying to get out the home edition, which is usually a leftover from the morning papers. But



not today. I went to the Old Man's office and went in without knocking. He looked at my shining face and grabbed his telephone and called the make-up room.

"Hold the front page," he said. "Big story coming." He hung up and asked me, "What is it, Daffy?"

"How can you tell?" I marveled.

The Old Man grinned. "You would have knocked timidly before you came in." He sighed. "I suppose an enemy submarine sank the Leviathan in the lower bay?"

"Piffle," I said. "Burton Randall—the Burton Randall—was held up on board the San Pedro, knocked out, and robbed. The heisters lifted a five hundred grand stone—the Canary."

The Old Man closed his eyes. "Who else has it?"

"It's exclusive, but you'll have to cover me. I posed as a dick and got it out of the cruise director. Halloran and Hanley are covering from the police department."

The Old Man nodded. "Halloran won't say anything. Who did it?"

I shrugged. "You couldn't print it yet," I said, "but if I were editor, I'd get out all the dope I had in the morgue on Damon LaSalle and Snip Hogan. They're both on board. I told Hanley to buzz when the arrest was made."

The Old Man snorted. "Arrest?" He shook his head. "With Damon LaSalle in it? Don't be funny. There won't be any arrest. LaSalle will walk off that boat a free man."

"But the Canary—"

"Won't be on him," said the Old Man. "He's figured a way to smuggle it off. Go ahead and write the yarn. Better yet, give it to a rewrite. You're a lousy typist. How about Sheldon?"

"Doc Sheldon was in good spirits," I said, "until he took us down to the hold and we found some one had busted in and killed four of his new fer-de-lances."

"On the level?"

"You know me, boss."

The Old Man frowned. "Regular mystery ship, eh? Well, write the snake story, but don't play it up too much. Doc Sheldon's a regular guy and he doesn't want much publicity."

I lammed. I tuned in with Bradley, who's the best rewrite in the business and can turn copy out at sixty words a minute. I gave him both stories and it was about eleven-twenty when we finished. The stories went down below and I crawled back to my own desk and smoked a cigarette, waiting for some word from Bill Hanley concerning LaSalle and Hogan.

## CHAPTER III

### The Mute One

ABOUT twelve o'clock, just when I was getting ready to partake of some java and a hot canine, my telephone rang. It was Dinah.

She said: "Call for you, maniac. Sounds like Poppa."

"I am always at home," I said, "to our sterling police force." She clicked me in.

"Listen, Daffy," Hanley said, "I've got something hot for you. In the first place—"

"Wait a minute," I said, "how about that heist?"

"No go," he said. "We searched Hogan and LaSalle and all their luggage. No sign of the Canary. And Randall couldn't identify either of them as the bird who slugged him."

"What'd you do?"

"We had to let them go. What else

could we do? And boy, was that cruise director sore when he found out about your fast one?"

"Was the inspector burning?" I asked.

"Naw," Hanley laughed. "He didn't like the cruise director much anyhow. He thought it was a hot one. But listen, Daffy, this is a new yarn. Did you see Doc Sheldon this morning?"

"Yeah."

"Did you see the four dead snakes?"

"Yeah."

"Well, someone busted into Sheldon's apartment not fifteen minutes after he arrived home. He brought the bushmaster's crate with him, y'know. He wanted to make sure that snake was safe and sound before it went to the Zoo for exhibition."

"So what?" I said.

"So this bird who busted in, slugged Sheldon, and stole the bushmaster! I'm phoning from Sheldon's place. And I picked up a warm clue on the floor of the hold where the dead snakes were stretched. Come on over and I'll show you it."

"Open the door," I snapped, "I'll come through it in three minutes!"

It took me ten, really, and the poor hack-driver nearly got two tickets in the mad dash across the city. It cost me a fin to get him out of one of them, and I knew the cop for the other. At twelve-fifteen, we pulled up in front of Dr. Sheldon's hotel-apartment on East 53rd Street and I paid off.

Hanley was waiting in the upper hall outside Sheldon's door when I came up. He nodded to me and we went in. Dr. Sheldon shook hands with me. He was sitting in a chair and his head was bandaged.

"Sorry as hell, Doc," I said, "but what happened?"

The curator sighed and he must've felt pain in his head, because he winced before he spoke. "I can't explain it. I came in with the porter. Amos was with me. The porter set the crate with the bushmaster on the floor and he left after I tipped him. Amos—"

"Benefield, the assistant?"

"Yes, yes. Amos went into the bathroom to wash up and clean before we went out to the Zoo. While he was in there, a man came out of my bedroom. He had a gun. He told me to keep quiet. I started to argue with him when he struck me over the head with the gun. I couldn't have been out more than a few minutes. When I came to, Amos was holding me and saying:

"The crate is gone! The crate is gone!"

"You mean the crate with the bushmaster was gone?"

Dr. Sheldon nodded wearily. "It still is."

"And then Benefield called me," Hanley put in.

"Where's he now?" I said.

"Home," said Hanley. "At least, he said he was going home. Anything else you want to know from the Doc?"

I saw the cue. He wanted to get me alone. I shook my head and patted Dr. Sheldon on the shoulder. "No," I said. "Thanks, Doc. And don't worry. We'll get that snake back for you, dead or alive."

The curator smiled sadly. "That's what I'm afraid of," he said. "Thank you, gentlemen, and good day."

When we got out into the hall, I said to Hanley, "Can he identify the bird who hit him?"

"He said it was a short man, that's all. With big feet. He noticed the feet."

I nodded, deducing. "And what

about this clue you picked up in the hold?"

Hanley passed a slip of paper me. "Take a glam at this."

I took the paper and unfolded it. It was just a thin strip, torn out of a scratch pad. There was some scribbling on it in pencil. Just a short sentence. It read: *The Canary is in the mute one.*

I looked up and frowned.

"Whadda you make of it?" Hanley asked.

"Plentee," I said. "Yea, verily. Unless my canny mind has gone back on me, you and I are in for a bit of a reward."

"A reward? From who?"

"From whom," I corrected, wagging my finger. "From the company who insured the Canary for Randall. And at the same time, I think we can clean up the mess about the dead snakes and the missing bushmaster."

"You mean," Hanley said, "that they're both tied up?"

I crooked my fingers. "Like that," I said. "Know where Snip Hogan is parking the carcass?"

"The Grenada Hotel, at least that's the address he gave Inspector Halloran."

"Good," I said. "Let's go. We're going to bring in two snakes. One is the bushmaster of Sheldon's. And the other is Snip Hogan."

THE Grenada Hotel was down on West 43rd Street, just off Broadway. It started to drizzle a little when we left Sheldon's spot, so we hopped a cab. We got into a wad of traffic on Seventh Avenue, and down near the Astor Theater, another cab hooked a complacent pedestrian and the accident held us up for nearly twenty minutes. When we finally

reached the Grenada, the fare looked like the war debt and my watch said one-thirty.

We went in and stopped at the desk. Hanley knew the desk clerk. He said: "Hogan's the name I want, mister. Where's his layout?"

"Eighth floor," said the desk clerk. "Just a second and I'll ring him."

"Never mind that," said Hanley. "Is he in?"

The desk clerk nodded vigorously. "Oh, yes, he's in. He came in some time ago. There was another gentleman to see him."

"There was?" I chortled. "Do you remember what he looked like?"

The desk clerk grinned. "To tell the truth, I don't. He came to the desk and asked if Mr. Hogan was in. I said yes and this other fellow took the elevator right up."

"Did you see him leave?"

"No."

"And you don't remember what he looked like?"

"I see so many guys—"

"Okay. Okay," Hanley grunted. "Never mind that. Come on, Daffy. What's the room number?"

"Fifty-five," said the clerk.

We took the elevator up to the eighth and got out. We located Room 55 just like that and we knocked loudly on the door.

No one answered.

Hanley got out his service revolver. "He's in there all right," he said. "Just laying low, that's all." He tried the knob of the door. He looked a little surprised when it turned and he realized that the door wasn't locked.

We opened it and skipped over the sill.

It was a single room with a bureau, four chairs, a telephone table and a double bed.



Snip Hogan was lying on the double bed, but he wasn't going to answer any questions. He was dead.

Hanley gasped and breathed, "Murdered, by God!"

"No," I said. "I don't think so."

We went over to the bed and looked at him. He was lying in a fixed position, as though some one had picked him up from the floor and put him there. Both his arms were folded neatly on his chest.

He wasn't pretty. He was covered with an awful lot of blood. There was a film of it over his open eyes, glazed now, and there was some which had trickled down from the corner of his closed mouth, and from his ears too. His left arm was swollen twice its size, until it looked as though it would burst the arm of his coat. The left hand was discolored in the loudest deep purple I ever saw.

Hanley was ogling. "What in hell—happened—to him?"

"That," I said, and pointed to the dorsum of the left hand, where there were two flaming red dots, about three-quarters of an inch apart. "That's what happened to him. And when it happens, there isn't much you can do about it. It doesn't kill you as quickly as a slug, but it works within five minutes, injected intravenously."

"What are you talking about?" Hanley said.

"The snake bite," I said.

"Snake bite?" He gasped. "But how—you mean—"

"Dr. Sheldon's bushmaster," I said, "bit Hogan in the back of the hand and killed him."

Hanley said nothing, but he looked a bit pale. He walked away from the bed, sticking his gun in his pocket, and he stared out of the window. "Then you mean Hogan was the guy who

slugged Sheldon and stole the snake?"

"Yea, verily, Pappa," I said.

Hanley asked tersely, "Why?"

I sighed and sat down in one of the chairs. "The time has come," I said, "to explain to you the whole business. The note you found explains it. That thing about: *The Canary is in the mute one.*"

"What about it?"

"In herpetology," I replied, "the mute one means the species *Lachesis muta*, which is the scientific handle of the bushmaster. Catch on? The mute one is the bushmaster, so called because it doesn't have rattles."

Hanley stared. "How'd a pencil-pusher like you know that?"

"Why," I said, "I did go to col-litch once."

"Hurry up and go on."

## CHAPTER IV

### Death's Double-Cross

"**L**ASALLE and Hogan," I said, "pulled the job on board the San Pedro. Hogan did the slugging and the actual heist of the Canary diamond. Damon LaSalle engineered the thing. He's much too slick to indulge in violence himself. After they got the Canary, one of them must have fed it to the bushmaster. Get that? The bushmaster was forced to swallow the stone. That's one way of getting stolen property through the customs and police. Whoever did the feeding job wrote that note for the guy who was supposed to pick the stone up."

"Then that's why the four fer-de-lances were dead and sliced!" Hanley exclaimed. "Some one was pulling double-cross, was trying to get the Canary for himself! He went into the hold, knowing the stone was in one of

the snakes, and killed them, but he missed the right snake."

"Precisely," I said. "And our friend Hogan is the culprit. No knowledge of snakedom was his, so he didn't know what 'the mute one' meant. He should have realized that the bushmaster was the only snake in the cargo large enough to swallow the stone. The fer-de-lance is too small. But Hogan, double-crossing LaSalle, didn't know that until it was too late."

"Too late?"

"Yeah," I said. "After they left you and the boat, LaSalle must have told Hogan to steal the bushmaster from Sheldon. Hogan went up to Sheldon's, grabbed the crate with the snake, and brought it back here. He was supposed to wait for LaSalle before he opened it, but he was greedy and he still had the idea of a double-x. He opened the crate. He didn't know how to handle the snake. It bit him."

"And where is the diamond now?"

"With Damon LaSalle, probably," I said. "He took it with him after he called on Hogan a few minutes ago, put Hogan in the bed there, and departed unseen with the snake and the Canary."

Hanley bit his lip and frowned. "So far so good, Daffy," he said. "But there's something doesn't fit. How would Damon LaSalle know enough about snakes to feed the stone to a bushmaster? That's out of proportion. There's another angle to this."

"Ertsnay," I said. "I've given them all."

"I think you're wrong," Hanley said. He went to the phone and called the Waldorf-Astoria. In a few seconds, I could hear the clicks of a connection. He went on: "Lemme speak with Damon LaSalle . . . Huh? Oh, I see. Thanks." He hung up.

"Well?"

"He's out," Hanley said. "Now what do we do?"

"We can knit," I said dryly. "Or we can figure out whether a man would walk up and down eight flights of stairs."

"Meaning?"

I chuckled and got to my feet. "Friend," I said, "follow me. When in doubt, always ask the elevator man."

We left the room, closing the door. We had a good wait before the fresh kid who ran the high-low cage came to our floor. We got in and I flashed the tin badge on my lapel.

I said, "We're deteckatiffs, kid. We want some dope."

"Yeah?" he said, wide-eyed.

"You took us up to the eighth floor a few minutes ago, right? Never mind answering. Just listen. Do you remember taking someone else to the eighth floor within the half hour before we made the trip?"

"Sure, sure," he said. "Molly Sanders and Josey Hunt came up."

"Who are they?"

"Show girls. They live on the eighth."

"How about a man?" I said. "Didn't a man come up?"

"Oh," he nodded. "You mean the little guy with the sour pan and the bald head?"

"The—bald—head!"

"Yeah. He was nervous, too. He walked down. Least, I didn't take him down again in the cage."

We hit the main floor and the doors opened. "O k a y, s o n," I said. "Thanks." We got out of the car and walked across the lobby. Hanley nudged me into a corner and said, "Well, genius?"

"You're right, I'm wrong," I ad-

mitted. "There's another angle. But who would have thought that Amos Benefield was in on this thing?"

"I would have," Hanley said sourly. "It took a man who knew snakes to feed the bushmaster that diamond."

"You stay here," I said. "Cover Hogan's room in case LaSalle comes in. He may not know that Hogan's dead. I'll cover the Zoo and see Amos Benefield. That all right with you?" Hanley nodded and sat down. "That's all right with me," he said."

## CHAPTER V

### The Two-Dollar Gun

WHEN I left the Grenada, I headed towards Eighth Avenue to catch the subway. It was the fastest way to get out to the Municipal Zoo, which is at the end of Fordham Road.

On the way over I figured that it was a pretty long trek out there and would waste a lot of time if Benefield wasn't there. I decided to telephone. It's the lazybones in me. I popped into a drug store, squeezing a thin nickel out of my jeans and dropped it in a coin box, growling the number of the Zoo's administration building.

I got the place quickly. I said, "May I speak with Amos Benefield?"

A girl answered: "Just a second." She plugged me through to Benefield's office. I heard the receiver go up and a man with the voice of an elephant said, "Yeah?"

"This is—" I paused and then continued gruffly—"this is Holmes of the homicide bureau. I want to speak to Amos Benefield."

"Yeah?" said the elephant. "Well, this is Inspector Halloran, Daffy. So you can cut out that Sherlock Holmes stuff or I'll arrest you for imperson-

ating a newspaper reporter. What's on your mind?"

"My, my," I said. "You *do* get around, don't you? I wanted to speak to Benefield. Is he there?"

"He's here," said the inspector. "But you're too late. He ain't speaking to no one, Daffy, least of all a pencil-pusher."

"What's the matter?"

"He's dead, Daffy. Shot through the skull with a .32. And that ain't all, either. Did you see Bill?"

"He's with me," I said. "We're covering Hogan's place. So what?"

"Did he tell you about Sheldon's snake disappearing?"

"Yeah, the bushmaster. Have you got it?"

"Benefield had it," said Halloran. "It's in the office here. It's all sliced to pieces."

"Do tell," I murmured, not so chipper now. "Do you want Hanley?"

"Tell him to keep covering Hogan," Halloran replied, and hung up.

I hung up too, sort of slowly. There wasn't any sense in my going back to the Grenada and telling Poppa Hanley to do something he was already doing. My play was at the Waldorf-Astoria, and that's where I headed.

I passed a pawnshop on the way and I walked a couple of rods beyond it before the ole hunch sense got me and sent me back to the spot. I went in and up to the counter. I'd had a vision of Damon LaSalle—and of Amos Benefield shot through the head. I didn't hanker for a burial with me so young.

Only having two bucks on my person, I was cramped for style. Every gun the pawnbroker had cost from five bucks up. And he didn't know me, so he wouldn't trust me.

I finally got out of there with a



nickel in my jeans and a realistic-looking pistol in my pocket. There was only one thing about that pistol that gave me the willies. It didn't fire bullets. Get it? It had a crooked barrel and could only be used for firing blank cartridges—with which same, incidentally, it was fully loaded.

Still and all, it was better than nothing, and it gave me leeway for a sandy in case LaSalle got rough.

When I reached LaSalle's hotel, I went to the desk and said, "What floor and room does Damon LaSalle have?"

The desk clerk looked it up. "Seventh floor. Room 76. Who is calling, please?" He picked up the telephone.

"Ixnay, friend," I said. "Never mind buzzing the culprit. I was just asking, that's all. Just asking."

He looked at me as though I were Dillinger's ghost. I smiled at him and went over to the public booths. I dropped my last buffalo head in the coin slot and called the office. Dinah Mason hit the other end of the line with:

"New York *Chronicle* editorial offices!"

"This is your Nemesis," I said.

"You again!" she said. "I thought it was important. Well, what's happened to you this time? I can't always play hero when you get in a jam. Spill, friend."

"I am," I said, "about to engage Damon LaSalle in a breezy bit of repartee. Purpose to locate the missing Canary diamond and try to pin the murder of Amos Benefield on him."

"Daffy," she said—her voice trembled anxiously and warmed my aching heart—"you'll be careful? He might try to—"

"Don't I know it!" I sighed. "I just wanted you to know that I'm here

and going up. In case you see my fragile body at the morgue, inform Comrade Hanley who did it and tell him to slip a couple of slugs into LaSalle just on general principles. He might get out on a trial."

"Daffy—I!"

"There is also the possibility," I said, "that LaSalle will trip up. In that case, inform the Old Man that the front page will need a thorough overhauling. Keep it open. I'll be seeing you, Gilded Lily."

I hung up. I didn't feel as chipper as I sounded and I thought what a damn fool I was to risk my life for a headline. Then I stopped kidding myself. It wasn't the headline. It wasn't Benefield's murder, either. It was just that LaSalle had tried a slick crime and that I'd opened up part of it, and would be bothered for the next two weeks if I didn't open up the rest of it.

I TOOK the elevator up to the seventh. I was the only one in the car. I got out, feeling light at the pit of my stomach and as the gates closed after me, my legs began to feel stiff. I went down the hall until I came to Room 76. I knocked.

In a few seconds, a smooth, refined voice called, "Ye-as? Who's there, please?"

"Daffy Dill," I said. "I'm a reporter. I want an interview."

The door opened. Damon LaSalle stood there, fully dressed. He glanced at me with a half-smile and fixed a monocle over his left eye. "Howja do, Mr. Dill?" he said. "I've really nothing to say, don'cha know. But if you insist—"

"Well," I said, marveling at the perfect English accent he had, "my boss sent me up to see you. That's my job."

"Of course, of course, old top," he

smiled. "Do step in, then. I'll do my rugged best to help you out."

I stepped in.

Damon LaSalle was as slick a gentleman as you ever saw. He was about sixty years old and he had snow-white hair and a snow-white mustache on his upper lip. He was devilishly handsome and had a merry twinkle in his blue eyes. He was dressed in a rough tweed suit which made him look very tall.

He didn't look a thief at all. And what's more, he certainly didn't look like a killer.

He motioned me to a chair and walked to a table where there was a bottle of whisky and some seltzer. "Will you have a spot?" he asked. "Do join me!"

"No, thanks," I said. I wanted a cigarette, but I didn't light one. I kept my hands free and held my right in my coat pocket.

"I would appreciate it greatly, old fellow," LaSalle drawled in kindly tones, "if you would keep your hand away from that gun in your pocket. Guns make me nervous, don'cha know?"

I took my hand out of my pocket, flushing. "I—ah—"

"Oh, no!" he said. "Don't explain. Possibly you were frightened of my—er—shall we say—reputation? Be that as it may. I cannot help but feel the hostility of your weapon. May I ask that we conclude this interview as rapidly as possible?"

"I—ah—"

I faltered, the wind out of my sails.

"I wanted to know your reaction to the theft of the Canary on board the—"

"My deah fellow," he smiled at me benignly, "last year I made public the fact that I had retired from my career of jewel collecting. The theft was quite unfortunate, and I hope the thief will be caught. As for myself—" his eyes twinkled with something grimmer than merriment—"I am still and will be permanently in retirement. And now good day."

Before I knew it, he had me up and out of the door. I stood there, feeling like a damned fool. For one of the few times in my young life, I'd been thrown off. I hadn't said what I came to say. I hadn't done what I planned to do. The way he'd treated me, I was just a little boy asking too many questions. The way he spotted my gun!

It made me mad.

I went downstairs in the elevator and loitered for a few seconds in the main lobby. I got madder and madder with myself until I felt all hopped up from my own emotion. I went back to the elevator bank and stood in a corner behind a lot of palm trees. I stood there perfectly still and just waited until I began to see red.

I'd been taken in properly—and at my age!

It must have been nearly an hour later—quarter of four as I remember—when the elevator came down to the main floor opened its doors, and emitted Damon LaSalle in all his splendor and looking every inch a duke.

Coming next week—

## Jimmie Dale

in "The Missing Hour," by Frank L. Packard

I'd been watching the arrow of the elevator hitting the different floors for so long that I was groggy. But I was still mad.

He went out the Park Avenue entrance without a glance around him. He was a cool boy all right. I hiked out of the palms and tailed him.

He took a cab at the entrance and went off to the next corner of Park Avenue, where a light held him up. It gave me a chance. I grabbed the next cab, climbed in and suddenly realized I was broke.

"Where to?" asked the driver.

I screwed my mouth into a snarl, flashed my tin badge as neatly as I could, and said:

"Homicide Bureau. Follow that hack right there. The red one on the corner, and don't lose him."

"Okay," the driver said. We moved up behind the other cab. While we were waiting for the light to change, the driver said softly, "What are you after, mister?"

"Killer," I said. "Are you on?"

He grinned. "I'm on. It's been a dull day. But you ain't foolin' me none. You're no dick. You're Daffy Dill, the reporter."

"How'd you know?" I ogled.

"Hell," he said, "don't you remember me? I drove you up to the Ritz Towers the night you got Mike Cantrey for the snatch of that heiress, Clare Gordon. I read all about it in the papers next day. You shouldn't have let me in on it."

I grinned. "I just pulled the dick gag because I'm broke at the moment," I said. "But if you know me, you know I'm good for the fare so let's go."

The light had changed. The red cab ahead of us moved off and we moved after it. My driver was hot. He knew

how to keep off away from the other, so as not to be suspicious.

## CHAPTER VI

### Powder and Lead

LaSALLE'S cab turned left over to Madison Avenue, and then went uptown. At 98th Street LaSalle looked around suspiciously. I thought for a minute he was on, but my driver was up to the mark. He shot ahead of the red cab and then stayed ahead of it.

"We'll tail him from in front," he said. "You just keep an eye on him and tell me if he stops or turns off."

It worked. It was queer, following some one by being in front of them. LaSalle's hack made no turns. It kept on Madison Avenue and finally it passed us and took the lead. I kept down on the floor and made it look as though my cab was empty.

"He took a look," my driver said. "He's satisfied now, I guess. Thinks I'm empty. Oops! He's stopping. Corner of 102nd Street."

We went by and turned right. We pulled into the curb immediately, out of sight of LaSalle. I got out.

"Wait for me," I said.

"You bet," said my driver.

I ran up to the corner building and peered around it onto Madison Avenue. LaSalle was just getting his change. He tipped the driver and the hack moved away. LaSalle stood there a second without moving and looked around.

That twinkle was gone from his eyes now. And his face was harsh and tight, and not the gentle pan of a gentleman of sixty with an English accent.

He was standing in front of the inn of the three golden balls. You know—a pawnshop. And in this district, which wasn't any bed of roses,



that pawnshop could only mean one thing if it were to bring a well-dressed heister like LaSalle into it.

It was his fence. The spot where he cashed in his stolen stuff.

Apparently he was satisfied. He turned quickly and went into the store. I waited about five seconds and then walked slowly down Madison Avenue to the store front. I pecked in the window. LaSalle was having a whispered conversation with the store owner, a bearded old gent with avaricious eyes. The owner listened in rapt awe and kept washing his hands as though they were wet.

Then the owner pushed aside a curtain disclosing a tiny little room with no exit. They both disappeared into it and drew the curtain, while a young punk came out behind the counter and tried to look tough.

"Hi-ho," I murmured. "Brody lived; why not me?"

I opened the door and went in, shutting it softly after me. The young punk frowned at my caution and started to bellow a summons at me, but I pulled out the blank cartridge pistol and let him look down the pretty barrel. I hissed:

"Shut up or I'll give it to you!"

He turned white and nearly fainted. He thought it was a stickup. In the curtained room, they never heard me. I tiptoed across the store to the curtain and listened.

The bearded old gent was gasping. He said:

"*Himmel!* Never have I seen anything like it! But how can I—"

"You'll have to break it up," LaSalle whispered. "Cut it into smaller stones. It's worth five hundred grand, do you understand?"

"Ach," groaned the old gent. "Never could I pay you that!"

"I don't expect you to," LaSalle whispered. "You cut it up and then get rid of the smaller stones. Your take is ten per cent. We'll get the cash as we sell each stone. That'll kill chances of recognizing the—"

"The Canary," I said, yanking the curtain aside.

Damon LaSalle acted before he looked to see who I was. He grabbed the diamond from the hand of the old gent and jammed it into an inside pocket of his vest. I had a flashing glimpse of the flashing fire of the stone and my blood ran warm when I thought that I'd just seen half a million dollars at that close range.

Before LaSalle could do anything else, I snapped:

"You're covered, Damon. Both hands up high right away, or you get one in the head."

He was smart. He knew I had the drop on him at a distance of three feet, and he was sitting down. He couldn't move fast sitting down. He looked up at me and smiled.

"Oh, ye-as," he said, drawling. "It's you, old fellow, the reporter with the gun."

I said to the old gent, "Get up and get out of here and take the punk behind the counter with you unless you like slugs."

He lammed, muttering in terror under his breath. The young punk ran after him into the back of the store. I looked right at LaSalle who had his hands up and I backed away.

"Rise and shine," I said.

He got to his feet and advanced out of the curtained room until I motioned him to stop. His eyes were glittering now, and there was no monocle to cover the left one up. He smiled coldly and said:

"Dill, old chap, you're a deuced

clevah fellow. Deuced clevah! I suppose you're declaring yourself in for a cut?"

"Yeah?" I said. "No, thanks. Hogan didn't live to get his cut. Benefield didn't live to get his cut. I think I'm saving the old gent's life. He probably wouldn't live to get his cut."

LaSalle's face went taut. "Hogan was a fool. I didn't kill him. He tried to double-cross Benefield and myself. He took the snake—"

He stopped, catching himself.

"I know," I said evenly. "He took the snake to kill it and get the diamond in its belly. I know all that, Damon, old top, and it bit him because he didn't know how to handle it."

"Right," he said.

"But Benefield was bit by a bullet."

LaSalle shrugged. "The fortunes of war, poor chap." His voice went cold again. "If you don't want a cut, what do you want?"

"Just—the Canary," I said. "The whole stone, if you please."

He stared and waited a long time and his face twitched terribly as it darkened with fury. It took an effort for him to shrug. He said, "Oh, well." And he reached into his vest with his left hand.

I tightened my finger on the trigger.

"Easy does it, friend," I warned.

"That hand had better come out with the stone, or—"

He brought out the stone and extended it to me with his left hand. I moved in closer to him and reached for it. It flashed so brilliantly I simply had to take my eyes off his and glance at it. I couldn't help myself.

**L**ASALLE counted on that. He knew the stone would draw my eyes and give him a split second to work on me. His right hand was

free. It flicked into his left shoulder under the coat and came out with a .32 Colt revolver so quickly I couldn't even see the action.

Before I could move, I saw the flash of flame, heard the snarling little crack of the gun and felt a red hot crowbar jammed into my left side, down low.

One thing I knew when the slug hit me. I had the Canary diamond in my left hand and my fingers were closed on it.

I held the blank cartridge pistol out at arm's length directly in his face as he fired again.

Another slug hit me, a little higher under the lung. I couldn't feel that one at all. A white cloud misted me and the only sensation I had was of my trigger finger working like hell and of the six bangs of my gun before the hammer clicked on metal. I fell to the floor on my back, dimly realizing that LaSalle had not fired again. Then a numbness gripped everything and I went out.

When I came to, I was a pretty sick laddy. I found myself in a hospital with two nurses and four doctors at my bedside. I got one faint glimpse of them, and of Dinah Mason next to them, and I went out again.

The second time I came to, I felt stronger. It was daylight and I could breathe again without any pain. I didn't feel hot, either. I talked. The nurse said I'd been seriously wounded. Two slugs in the groin. They hadn't thought I'd live. But she said it was all okey-doke now.

In the afternoon, Dinah Mason and Inspector Halloran came in. The sawbones let me talk for a little while.

"What did he do?" I asked.

"Better let me spiel," Halloran grinned. "Your cab driver heard the shots and called the ambulance. We found the stone in your hand at the

hospital. We nearly had to cut your paw off to get it, you were holding it so tight."

"Did LaSalle get away?" I said.

"Get away?" Halloran said. "Hell, no! You may have had blanks in that gun, Daffy, but at half a foot, blanks are damn dangerous things. No, LaSalle didn't get away. And he'll never lift another stone, either. We got him and he talked. Here's how it happened. He and Hogan and Benefield worked together. LaSalle planned it, Hogan stole the Canary, and Benefield fed it to the snake. Hogan double-crossed and killed the fer-de-lances when Benefield gave him that note for LaSalle. Hogan didn't know what 'the mute one' meant."

"I know," I said.

"Hogan took the bushmaster from Dr. Sheldon and tried another cross, but the snake killed him. Benefield went to Hogan's and took the snake to the zoo, where it was supposed to have been brought in the first place. LaSalle

was there, too. They killed the snake, got the stone, and then LaSalle shot Benefield. That's all."

"What happened to LaSalle?" I said.

"He's blind," said Halloran. "You gave him six blanks in the eyes. The grains of burning powder blinded him."

"God!" I said. I sighed. I felt tired. "How long have I been here in this corpse-crypt?"

"Two days," Dinah Mason said. She held my hand. "I missed your daily proposal, lunatic."

I grinned and asked, "Will you marry me, gel?"

She didn't say yes and she didn't say no—for a change. She leaned down and kissed me on the cheek and she said, "Well, my chickadee, you never can tell—"

And just when my chances were good, the sawbones looked at his watch and said curtly, "Time's up, please. He must rest now."

And there I was.

## Cipher Solvers' Club for December

*Celebrating the Tenth Anniversary Month of "Solving Cipher Secrets," cryptogram fans submitted 6,300 answers to our cipher department last December, breaking all previous records for that month, also establishing a new high yearly record in the grand total of 63,767 answers submitted during 1934! Fans who sent us their answers to one or more of the December puzzles Nos. 283-312, inclusive, will find their names properly credited in the following list. The asterisks mark Inner Circle solvers. Congratulations, fans! Here's looking forward to still higher records in 1935! The January Solvers' Club will be published soon. Watch for it!*

*Thirty Answers*—Aachen,\* Hollywood, Calif.; Jay Abey,\* Los Angeles, Calif.; Amanovlettus,\* Franklin, N. H.; William C. Avery,\* Los Angeles, Calif.; Herbert E. Batho,\* Avalon, Calif.; See Bee Bee,\* Hamilton, Kans.; A Has-Been,\* Union Grove, Wis.; Betty,\* Hillsdale, N. J.; Alfred E. A. Bronson,\* Hulmeville, Pa.; Ben Brownie,\* New York, N. Y.; Gold Bug,\* Newburgh, N. Y.; Bunny,\* Roxbury Station, Conn.; T. F. B.,\* Vancouver, B. C., Can.; Mrs. C. G. Burroughs,\* Madison, Wis.; E. M. Camp,\* Albany, N. Y.; Blue Hen Chick,\* Middletown, Del.; Ciphermit,\*

Houlton, Me.; A. B. C.,\* Rochester, N. Y.; Cliff (II),\* Nashville, Mich.; Comrade,\* Baltimore, Md.; Joseph E. Conklin,\* Riverhead, N. Y.; I. R. C.,\* Port Washington, L. I., N. Y.; Corundum,\* Denver, Colo.; W. E. Dalton, Marion, Ind.; Gunga Din,\* Dallas, Tex.; Edward J. Drumm,\* Eagle Rock, Calif.; M. E.,\* Scranton, Pa.; A. Ellett,\* Waltham, Mass.; Arty Ess,\* Scranton, Pa.; Ezymarc,\* Franklin, N. H.; H. C. Fetterolf,\* Palmyra, Pa.; Fiddle,\* South Langhorne, Pa.; Ten-Fifteen,\* Bayonne, N. J.; Mrs. King Fish,\* Perrysburg, Ohio.

(Continued Next Week)



# 15 Years in the Underworld

A True Story

By  
'Frisco Jimmy  
Harrington



The punishment boss  
turned on the water

*The Barbarian of the "O. P."  
Inflicts the Fiendish Torture on  
the Water-Cross When 'Frisco  
Jimmy Refuses to Turn Stool  
Pigeon*

DON'T MISS THIS STORY—BEGIN HERE

**B**EHIND the red and black curtain that hid him from the killers of the Hua Cha Tong, Jimmy Harrington began his career as a yeggman and jewel thief. He was the son of a respectable Irish family in Hell's Kitchen, on New York's West Side. With a companion, Joe Tularey, he broke into a Chinese laundry to crack the safe. And while he was strug-

gling to open the iron doors, two hatchet-men entered to ambush the proprietor. Breathlessly Jimmy and Joe crouched behind the thin curtain which was all that concealed them from the killers. They heard the victim, Wong Lee, enter his laundry. They watched bloody hatchets cut him to bits. When the killers left they fled. The safe was unopened—but the police found their finger-prints on the window frame!

Jimmy was arrested for murder in the first degree. By turning state's evidence he beat that rap, but was sent to Sing Sing for three years for unlawful entry. Here he met Bible Back Slim, a famous jewel thief, who trained him, rather reluctantly, in crooking. Jimmy made a skeleton key

This story began in DETECTIVE FICTION WEEKLY for March 2

that would unlock his cell door, under the very eyes of the Sing Sing keepers. A stool pigeon squealed, and he and Slim were given three and a half years for attempted escape.

When they were released, the two pulled off a jewel robbery that netted them \$120,000. Jimmy wanted to blow his money, but Slim, a wise old thief, insisted that he keep a large part intact for "fall money" to use when he was arrested. Jimmy bought his mother an expensive country estate, and invested \$10,000 in the musical career of a young girl, Marion Connelly. She did not know that Jimmy was a burglar, nor even that he was underwriting her career. Slim and Jimmy head South, and are casing the office of the county treasurer at Johnsonville when they encounter a posse seeking other criminals. Jimmy takes refuge in a box car.

"Search those box cars!" the sheriff orders.

Jimmy draws his gat. He has his burglar tools with him—and if he is caught the possession of tools in that state means a ten year sentence for burglary.

## CHAPTER VII

### The Bum Beef

I HAD a hunch that the posse might pass up the box car in which I was hiding after they had searched the others on the side track and failed to find anybody. It was a cheering thought—for a fleeting moment. I heard them leaving the car next to me, and from the fall of their feet on the cinders I judged that there were at least fifty men in the mob. I wouldn't have a Chinaman's chance with a mob of fifty manhunters.

A gun play would be futile, suicidal. They'd riddle my Irish carcass with bullets. But if I surrendered I would get ten years for having that bag of burglar's tools in my possession. Ten years behind the walls of a stir would drive me nuts. No, I couldn't surrender. I'd take a chance. To hell with those yaps!

They were at the door of the box car now. I could hear them babbling like a gang of maniacs and swearing like a gang of drunken sailors. Then they threw open the door. Their flashlights discovered me in the corner of the car, whereupon some fifteen or twenty shotguns and Winchesters were trained on me.

"Up with your hands, damn you! Come out with them high over your head or we'll blow you to pieces."

"All right, gentlemen," I said. "I was only sleeping here. I didn't know it was against the law to sleep in a box car."

I raised my hands over my head as I struggled to my feet and started, very slowly, toward the door. I hesitated at the door to reiterate that I didn't know it was against the law for a hobo to sleep in a box car—and then I jumped, kangaroo-like, clean over their heads.

Immediately their guns began to bark. They were barking before I hit the ground. Some guy plugged me in the right shoulder. Another plugged me in my right leg. I decided that I was in a spot where discretion would be the better part of valor, so I shouted that I was surrendering. Another savage, thinking perhaps that it would be a good idea to let me have another shot, raised his gun and took aim at me. A big guy, the sheriff, told the savage that he shouldn't shoot.

The blood was spurting out of the wounds in my leg and my shoulder when the mob surrounded me and picked me up and carried me into the railroad station. I passed out of the picture soon after, and when I regained consciousness in old Dr. Bimonte's office that fine Italian gentleman told me that he had taken the bullets out of my leg and shoulder.

It was the county jail for me when

the good Dr. Bimonte fixed me up. Not until I arrived at the jail did the sheriff, Bob Wenjer, a swell fellow by the way, inform me why the boys had been doing the shooting and shouting and why I had been shot and arrested. Some gang had beaten Bible Back and me to the Johnsonville county treasurer's office. They had blown the safe and vault, but before they could gather up the coin the posse had descended on them. The gang had escaped, and I was nailed for their crime.

I protested my innocence, but to no avail. They had me right, they said. The finger-prints that were found on the vault door and on one of the courthouse windows would prove that I had been a member of the gang that had tried to loot the county treasurer's office.

"Okay," I said. "Hurry up and compare my finger-prints with the prints that you found."

There was utterly no resemblance. Still the authorities insisted that I was guilty. Perhaps I was the outside man, they said. No other conclusion was possible, they said. How come that I had that bag of burglar's tools with me in the box car if I were only a hobo looking for a job? I couldn't answer that one to save my life.

A day or two later they got hep to the fact, via my finger-prints, that I had served two terms in Sing Sing, one for the Wong Lee affair and one for making those damn skeleton keys. The newspapers of the county lost no time in burning me up after the sheriff produced my record. I knew my goose was cooked. My dreams of that future which I had planned were shot to smithereens.

Two ugly fade-outs faced me—a ten year stretch for the burglar tools, and perhaps a rap later on for the Balti-

more jewelry store robbery. If George Dougherty and the Pinkertons ever got wise that I was Bible Back Slim's side-kicker on that big haul I was good for at least twenty years behind the bars. I admit here and now that I was sick. There was the cheering probability, however, that Bible Back would come to my aid. If he did all would be well.

Within forty-eight hours after my arrest I was indicted. The day after the indictment was returned I was called into court to plead to it. I plead "Not guilty" in loud and stirring tones. When I tried to make a statement the judge ruled that I was out of order and told the sheriff to take me back to the hoosegow.

ON the way back to the hoosegow I saw my old pal Bible Back in the crowd that was congregated outside of the courthouse. He smiled and raised his hat. I caught the signal—he would be seeing me soon. I knew that I was going to the Big House after I got that signal from the loyal and courageous Bible Back. I didn't know when he was coming to see me, or how he was coming, but I was confident of that fact that he *was* coming.

But when I got back to the jail that evening the entire complexion of the situation changed. The sheriff stuck a guard in the jail corridor to watch me. There was precious little chance of Bible Back getting to me while that hatchet-faced guard was keeping tabs on me, I concluded. It looked as if I were doomed to go to the Big House. Came at last the day of my trial. I saw Bible Back in the crowded court room. My heart gave a leap, a leap of joy when he smiled at me.

But what was he going to do? I asked myself. How was he going to get to me while that hatchet-faced



guard was prowling the jail corridor from nine in the evening till six in the morning?

My trial was short and very, very sour. I took the stand and admitted that I was a criminal with a record. I admitted that I was on my way to Johnsonville to burglarize the county treasurer's office when I was shot and arrested. I told the truth simply because I thought it would create a favorable impression in the minds of the jurors. But it didn't. They convicted me without leaving the box, and then the judge ordered me to my feet. Had I anything to say, he asked, before he pronounced sentence? I had a lot to say. "I'm innocent of this charge," I began. The judge interrupted me.

"You have had a fair and impartial trial by a jury of your peers," he said.

"I have had nothing of the kind," I replied. "I have been convicted on my record. There has not been one piece of evidence produced to prove that I was ever in Johnsonville before I was arrested a mile and a half out of town and carried here to be given medical attention. I'm a criminal, your honor," I cried at the top of my voice, "but I'm as innocent of this robbery as you are!"

He stroked his beard and smiled.

"How can you convict a man of a robbery," I went on, "when you haven't produced any witnesses who could swear that I was ever seen in this town before the officers of the law brought me here?"

"Young man," the judge glared at me over his cheaters, "I'm disposed to entertain the idea that you might not have participated in the robbery of our treasurer's office, but on the charge of having burglar's tools in your possession there cannot be the slightest doubt, and it is on that charge that I'm sen-

tencing you to serve a term of ten years at hard labor in state's prison."

Again Bible Back smiled and raised his hat as I passed out of the court room with the sheriff. That night a little after eleven o'clock I heard the sheriff open the door which separated his office from the jail. A moment later I heard two fellows, drunks apparent-



"FRISCO JIMMY HARRINGTON

ly, shouting and cursing. Presently I heard the sheriff unlocking the door of the cage in which I was confined with some thirty or forty other prisoners. My guard, the big, cold-eyed, inarticulate mountaineer, went to the door to help the sheriff.

"Just a couple o' drunken hoboes, Sam," the sheriff chuckled. "Lock 'em in Number Three cell."

Hell broke loose then.

"Stick them up, Sheriff!"

I recognized Bible Back's voice.

"And you git 'em up, too!" Slim's associate barked at my guard.

In a moment the jail was a chaos. The prisoners, realizing that a jail delivery was about to occur, began to hoot and howl and beat the bars of their cells with water buckets, tin cups



and chairs. Every man in the joint wanted Bible Back to unlock his cell when they saw him unlocking mine. But Slim ignored their pleas. Mine was the only cell that was unlocked, and since time was most precious we beat it out of the jail hell-bent-for-election. What the boys yelled after us cannot be quoted.

Oregon Billy was the good friend who helped Slim stick up the can. Poor Billy! We made a cross-country getaway that night. Our objective, forty miles across the back woods roads, was Singleton, on the main line of the Baltimore and Ohio Southwestern Railroad. The cops and troopers always look for crooks along the railroad or along the well-traveled highways, and the crooks always go in the opposite direction. We made our objective the following night, and a day or two later we were in Chicago and getting ready for another job.

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## CHAPTER VIII

### Shot in the Back

THE Star Cotton Mill Bank was the next job that Oregon Billy, Slim and I planned to pull off. This job, I should add, had been looked over by many competent burglars, but all of them had labeled it "a tough mark," and so had given it the cold shoulder. The caliber of the equipment, the vigilance of three night watchmen, its location, and the severity of the laws of the Palmetto State (they gave cracksmen life terms down there) were the things that made the cracksmen leave the bank alone.

Personally, I didn't like the job; but Slim, an ever-consistent philosopher, said that big hauls could only be made on jobs that everybody feared.

We selected a blustery February night for the attack. A northwester

was blowing a gale. An ideal night for a bank burglary. At twelve-thirty we tailed the town watchman to his home, and then we returned to the bank and made an entrance with a skeleton key and went right to work on the big time lock vault.

We worked only about fifteen minute when the watchman of the mill, a hundred yards away, came down the street to try the bank door. The gentleman carried a lantern, therefore we were able to keep in touch with him. He was stupid. We laid low until we saw him go back to the mill.

The first shot of dynamite was exploded on the vault door when we saw him ascending the stairs of the mill, and before he got to the fifth floor we made the first shot on the "burglar-proof" safe. We made the second shot on the safe while he was ringing the hour, one o'clock, in the belfry on the seventh floor of the mill.

Immediately thereafter we saw the gentleman descending the stairs, so we laid low again until he came out of the mill and crossed the street and tried the front door of the bank again. That lantern, I repeat, enabled us to keep tabs on the gentleman until we had finished the job, which netted us around sixty-five thousand dollars in cash and forty thousand in negotiable securities. That was swell. But it was only the first act.

The town watchman made an unexpected appearance just as we came out of the bank. I say it was an unexpected appearance simply because we had tabbed that fellow for a week before tackling the job, and we had learned that he invariably remained in his home from twelve-thirty to three-thirty.

But on this night of nights he didn't nap until three-thirty. It was two-thirty when we finished the job and there he



was, coming down the street toward us loaded for bear. That he had seen us come out of the bank we had not the slightest doubt, for the huge incandescent was burning in front of the bank. He must have seen us. And so he came, as I have said, loaded for bear. I was loaded for bear too, after that Johnsonville fiasco. I didn't intend to kill the big fellow, nor did I intend to let him pinch me. I was pretty well fed up on that pinching business. A guy who permitted country cops to pinch him should give up burgling, I decided, and go to work.

"Hands up, brother!" Slim greeted him.

I got on one side of the big bull and Oregon Billy slipped around in the back of him and took his gun out of his hip pocket.

"Tie him up."

Slim handed me a coil of wire and a gag.

"May I say something to you, boys?" the bull asked.

"Sure," said Slim. "Whataya got to say?"

"Well, boys," he went on, "I wish you-all wouldn't hold me up this way, because when the town folks find me in the mornin' they'll laugh themselves to death at me and then the mayor'll sure as fate dismiss me from the force. I can't afford to lose the job right now with all the sickness that I got in my family."

"Sickness in your family?" Slim said. "Who's sick in your family, brother?"

"Right now it's my oldest boy who's sick," the cop said, "and only last week I buried my wife, who was about the best wife that any man in this world ever had. I'm up against it mighty bad, boys," he added with a sob in his voice, "and I sure wish you-all wouldn't bind

me and gag me, because if you do I know I'll lose my job."

The poor slob's plea got under my skin, and when Slim called Billy and me to the curb to ask us what we thought about him I suggested that we give him a break.

"I think he's crooked," Slim said. "Maybe he'll take dough."

"You mean he'll take dough and say nothing about our plundering the bank?" Billy asked.

"Yes," Slim replied. "He looks like a right copper to me, the poor devil."

"Well," said Billy, "so far as I'm concerned there's only one right copper, and he's dead. I wouldn't trust no guy who wears a badge."

"He may be the exception," Slim said. "Let's try him."

"Brother"—Slim turned to the bull—"could you use a little dough?"

"Yeah, I could use a lot of dough," said the bull, "because the doctor told me tonight before I left home that if I didn't get my boy outa this climate and send him out to Arizona he'd be dead in six months."

"Well," said Slim, "if we give you a couple o' hundred dollars and don't bind and gag you, will you give us your word that you won't say nothing about the bank?"

"I'll appreciate the money, boys," the big bull said, "and so far as the bank is concerned, I ain't interested in that, because the man who owns this town and this bank is a slave-driver. It is right here in his mill that my boy got consumption in his lungs. I seen you boys come out of that bank, and if I had wanted to do it I could have shot you all dead as a door nail. You boys go on about your business and leave a little money with me and I won't say nothin' to nobody. It ain't none of my business nohow, because



Ben Mardenson has his own watchman to watch his bank."

If ever a copper looked "right" and talked "right" and acted "right," Joe Simpson did. He won us all and so we dug in our jeans and handed him five hundred bucks and told him to send his tubercular kid out to Arizona. We also handed him back his gun. How he thanked us! He was the personification of deep and fervent gratitude. He could never forget us, and he hoped that we would meet again sometime.

"You boys may be burglars," he said, "but you're the finest white men I've ever run across in all my days."

"Okay, brother," Slim said. "Good luck to you and good-by."

WE turned away and started down the street. Our grateful friend immediately jumped behind a tree and began to pump lead at us, killing Oregon Billy and wounding Slim. Slim was so badly wounded that he couldn't travel. He was shot in the middle of his back between his lungs. I tried to carry him away with me, but when I realized that he might bleed to death I left him, knowing that the natives would call in a doctor.

I got away with the sixty-five thousand bucks. I planted the money in a patch of woods on the outskirts of the town. I knew that the natives would be beating the bush for me, so I wanted to travel light. Liberty was more desirable to me that night than money.

My only regret was that I hadn't got a shot at that double-crossing, treacherous John Law. I believe that a cop should protect the property of the citizens who employ him at all hazards, but I—well, I'll leave it to your judgment. How about that copper? Was he justified in doing what he did? Perhaps he was. I don't know.

The natives of Enoreta thought he had pulled off "a magnificently courageous stunt." The business men of the burg paid him a reward of five hundred dollars for killing Oregon Billy and wounding Bible Back. The newspapers said he was a great guy. He did not, however, tell the story precisely as it happened. He said that he had come on us while we were in the bank.

"I ordered them to throw up their hands," he said, "but they refused to obey my commands, so I opened fire on them. I would have got the third member of the gang if he hadn't gone out through the back window of the bank."

Bible Back hovered between life and death for ten days in the hospital of a nearby town. During those ten days the authorities had put the rap on him via his finger-prints, I learned from the newspapers. The Pinkerton Agency sent George S. Dougherty, its ace sleuth, to Selma to file a charge against Slim for the Baltimore jewel robbery and safe job.

Slim was good for at least fifteen years in Maryland on that rap and thirty years in South Carolina on the bank rap if I didn't rescue him. I, of course, intended to rescue him. He had come to my side when I was in the Johnsonville "boob," and I was going to save him regardless of what happened.

But I couldn't pull the stunt that Bible Back had pulled at Johnsonville. The newspapers of the country had given that drunken hobo ruse a big play, with the result that every small town sheriff and jailer in the United States was hep to it. I had to adopt different tactics.

I decided, finally, that it would be better to smuggle a gun and a set of "briars," saws, into the jail and let Slim carve his way out. If that didn't



work there would be time enough for a real, desperate, Wild West play. I have never resorted to desperate deeds except as a last resort when everything else has failed.

So I called in 'Frisco Crip to help me. Crip was legless. I rate him one of the noblemen of the underworld. He had lost his legs in a train wreck at Bakersfield, California. He himself was responsible for that wreck—unintentionally responsible. It happened this way: 'Frisco Fatty and he boarded the train, which was a freight, carrying a quart of nitro-glycerine in a bottle.

If the "grease" had been in a rubber bottle there wouldn't have been an explosion, and Crip wouldn't have lost his legs. Carrying "grease" in a glass bottle is a hazardous business, hazardous because nitro explodes by concussion, and when the bottle breaks it explodes the glycerine. Just that little shock of breaking glass is enough to cause the explosion.

Crip and Fatty were on their way to Sacramento to rob the bank that night. Twenty miles out of Bakersfield the engineer, in an effort to avoid hitting an interurban bus loaded with passengers, applied his air brakes quite suddenly. The train came to a dead sudden stop, throwing Crip from one end of the car to the other and breaking the bottle of "soup" that he had in his inside coat pocket. The explosion wrecked the box car and destroyed Crip's legs.

No longer able to stick up trains and blow safes, Crip found compensating thrills breaking into jails and prisons to help old comrades. He and Bible Back Slim had been friends for many years, and when I propositioned him on the crush-out of the South Carolina jail he was tickled to death. He was ready to go the limit for Bible Back.

The story of that crash-out can be told in a few words. After secreting a gun and a half dozen good "briars" in his peg-legs Crip got himself committed to the jail by the simple expedient of stealing a pair of trousers in a store. Once in the jail he lost no time in getting the gun and the saws to Bible Back. And Bible Back lost no time in sawing his way to liberty. Crip remained behind to take the rap, a petty larceny charge, which called for a ten-day term.

We met him in Charleston after he had served his term and gave him Oregon Billy's share of the robbery, twenty odd thousand dollars. The story of that bank robbery doesn't end with Slim's escape and Crip's reward, however. News travels fast in the underworld. I may be in the East, for example, and yet I'll know who robbed certain banks and who held up certain banks in the Far West. The dope comes to me via the old undergorld grapevine system. And so the news that Patrolman Joe Simpson had killed Oregon Billy went all over the United States, until it finally reached the ears of his brother, Oregon Sammy, who operated in southern Colorado, Texas and Arizona.

A year or two later Sammy drifted East with his mob of safe blowers. And then they headed South, landing in Enoreta, South Carolina, to make a shot at the Farmers and Merchants National Bank. This is what happened:

First, they met Patrolman Joe Simpson on the Main Street of the town, a block or two away from the Farmers and Merchants National Bank. Sammy always believed in sticking up night cops and putting them away in a nice quiet place before he robbed a bank.

On this night Patrolman Simpson pulled the old line on Sammy and his

mob that he had pulled on Bible Back, Oregon Billy and me a year or two before. With us it was his good wife who had died, but with Sammy it was the son who had turned up his toes and the wife who was on the verge of death from tuberculosis. He pleaded with Sammy to give him a break.

While he was making his treacherous plea Sammy was breaking down and emptying his gun behind his back. He thought the gun was still loaded when Sammy handed it back to him. He accepted their money, as he had accepted our dough; and he promised them, as he had promised us, that he wouldn't arouse the town after they left him. He shook hands with Sammy, and when they turned away from him he jumped behind a tree.

He pulled the trigger of the empty gun, and when Sammy heard the *click, click, click* of the gat he doubled on his tracks to the tree behind which the terror-stricken copper stood and gave him the contents of his gat. I wonder if one could call that a cold-blooded murder? I don't know. I only know that I could never shed any tears over Patrolman Joe Simpson's death. He certainly was a damn poor sport.

## CHAPTER IX

### The Right Turn

**B**IBLE BACK and I had a run of good luck for two years after the Enoreta affair. Everything that we went up against turned out as we had planned it. We had no trouble with coppers. We made money and we banked it as fast as we got our mitts on it.

I was definitely planning for that future when I quit crookdom. Marion Connely was always in the picture. There would have been no future if I

hadn't met her. On one of my trips to New York, Carlo Hemingway told me of the great improvement in her voice. She was coming along like a house afire, he said. There was no doubt but that she would be a great artist some day, as great, if not greater, than Geraldine Farrar or Bori or Sembrich—three of the finest opera singers that ever lived.

Carlo was beginning to get inquisitive about me and my life. How come that I kept away from Marion? Didn't I know that she liked me very much? I was a funny fellow. I put up money to fit a nice girl for a career in grand opera and then I give the lady a wide berth.

"I don't get you at all, Jimmy," Carlo laughed. "You're a very mysterious fellow."

Later I had a letter from him informing me that Marion was leaving for Italy on a certain date. She had been studying the leading coloratura soprano rôles and now he felt that she was ready for the minor opera houses of Italy, where she would gain stage experience. She had been wondering, he wrote me, where I was; and whether she would see me before she departed for Italy.

I wanted to see her before she went to Italy, and so I grabbed a rattler for New York. But before I landed at the Pennsylvania the old history was boomeranging me. It would be an awful break for her, I thought, if there should be a newspaper scandal on the eve of her departure for Italy.

I fought against seeing her off. I hadn't seen her in two years and it seemed to me that I could go two more without seeing her. Sentiment, however, triumphed over reason, and I decided to take a chance.

There were only a few Central Office



coppers who knew me and I was certain that none of them would be hanging around steamship piers at midnight. I phoned Carlo that I would meet him and Marion on the boat. I shall never forget that night! Her sweetness and charm whipped my love to ecstasy. The cadences in her lovely voice thrilled me as of old. She had grown more beautiful in those two years, too, and a little taller, I thought.

But what gave me the thrill of thrills was the free and intimate manner with which she greeted me. It was Jimmy this and Jimmy that. Where had I been? Why hadn't I dropped her a line, and hadn't I heard that she had been studying with Carlo for two years? And didn't I know that Carlo was her manager? She was deeply grateful for what I had done for her. I had given her the great opportunity, and if I hadn't introduced her at the Metropolitan she might not ever have had that opportunity.

I have heard it said that all women possess a remarkable intuition where men and the affairs of the heart are concerned. They know, so goes the old bromide, when a man likes them. Men, I think, are equally discerning. If they are transparent, so are women. At least that has been my experience. If Marion Connely knew that I liked her, I also knew that she liked me. I read love's confession in her eyes that night in the stateroom of the Italian liner, and I'm sure that she read it in mine.

Yet not a word of love was spoken by either one of us. I would have been the happiest guy in the world if I had been clean, but since I was crooked, I—well, when that big liner backed away from her pier and headed out into the river and the open sea I felt like crying. The one girl in the world for whom I could gladly go to hell with

a smile on my face was on her way to another world. Had I been clean I would have gone with her!

I made a turn to the right that night. I decided to quit the underworld and find a place in society and build up a reputation so that when Marion came back to America I would have something to offer her. Bible Back talked to me like a father when I told him how I felt about Marion. He was glad to hear that I was going to square it and he was dead certain that I could get along on the straight and narrow. It was the only life. He, too, would make a turn to the right if he were as young as I, he said.

I had around forty thousand bucks planted in different "jugs." That was an ace in the hole. Perhaps I could start in some business with all that dough. Bible Back volunteered to give me what he had, some fifty or sixty grand.

"I don't need it," he said, "and if it'll do you any good, Jimmy, you're welcome to it."

I didn't need it. Forty grand was enough, I thought. I could get by on that, I told him. Indecision racked me. I didn't know where to start the new life or how to start it. After eleven years in crookdom a guy finds it difficult to get his bearings when he turns to the right. It is like settling, I imagine, in a new world with new people who talk a strange language, a language that one cannot understand.

I decided, finally, that the first thing I had to do was to bury myself. I had to settle in some community where my past was unknown. I couldn't make a go of the new life in a community where my record was known to the dogs on the street. I didn't know in those days that a guy never gets away from his record. It boomerangs him sooner or later.

Some folks attribute their successes and failures in life to good or bad luck. This is especially true of crooks. If a crook runs along for a few years robbing this man and that one without a "fall" he thinks he's lucky. And when he "falls" he thinks he's unlucky. Luck, in my opinion, played no part in either his success or failure. He evaded the cops simply because he outwitted them for the time being.

It never occurred to him, however, that he couldn't go on outwitting cops indefinitely. It never occurred to him that arrest and punishment were as inevitable as death. The law of averages made arrest and punishment certain.

I don't believe in luck. I believe in cause and effect. I believe that we get out of life just what we put into it. No guy can get away with murder indefinitely. But in those years I hadn't learned all this. Never for a moment did I think that I would have to pay for every crime that I committed. I came within an ace of resorting to murder when—well, let me tell the story precisely as it happened.

I HAD settled in a certain Western city where I had obtained a position with a manufacturing concern. I was not earning enough money in that job to pay for my keep. I took it because I saw an opportunity to learn the business from the ground up and thus fit myself for a career later on. Besides, I had forty grand in the bank. That was my ace in the hole. I wasn't worrying about those proverbial wolves.

I was quite happy in the new life, happier than I had ever been. Every spare moment of my time was profitably spent. I opened a lot of books and I attended a technological school three nights a week. Meanwhile I was corresponding with Marion in Italy. She was still studying.

Came then the rat of rats, Mr. Sandy Phillips of Sing Sing, to put me on the toboggan. Mr. Phillips, you will recall, was the gent who tipped me off to the warden of Sing Sing on those skeleton keys and subsequently obtained a pardon for his perfidy after testifying against me in court.

I bumped into the rat one night as I was leaving a motion picture theater. I recognized him instantly, and he, of course, rapped to me right off the reel. If I had been a smart fellow I would have played the diplomat. But I was not a smart fellow. I have never been a smart fellow—nor a tactful one. Was there ever an Irishman in the world who was tactful? I have never met one.

If I had been smart I'd passed up the rat and said nothing about those three years and six months that I had to serve in Sing Sing when he ratted on me about the skeleton screws. Being extremely dumb, I brought one up from the sidewalk and knocked him kicking. He didn't fight back. Rats never do. They only squeal.

Mr. Sandy Phillips squealed his head off that night in the lobby of the theater when I put the slug on him. A detective happened to hear him squealing that I was a cracksman and an ex-convict, so Mr. Detective nailed me and took me down to police headquarters, where I was interrogated, mugged and finger-printed. I knew what was coming when they took my prints. And it came. The chief of detectives brought the news to me.

"Welly, Jimmy, old boy," he said, "I guess those natives down in Johnsonville will be tickled to death to see you. That was some crush-out that you and Bible Back Slim and Oregon Billy staged down there."

I didn't know how he had got hep to the fact that Billy and Slim were in



on that break, and I didn't care. I was too sick to worry about such things when I was on my way back to a ten-specker. My only regret was that I hadn't killed that rat, Sandy Phillips!

"There's a couple of other raps against you, Jimmy," the chief went on. "They want you for murder and robbery at Enoreta, South Carolina, and I hear that Maryland also wants you for that big jewel job."

"Maryland wants me for robbery and South Carolina wants me for murder?" I gasped.

"Yeah, that's what the circulars say, Jim," the chief chuckled.

"Well, Chief," I said, looking him in the eyes, "I've never been in Maryland or South Carolina, so they are bum raps."

"Oh, yeah?" he smiled.

"That's on the level, Chief," I said.

I had a hunch that I had reached the end of the trail when I got that dope on the Maryland and South Carolina raps. I was dead innocent of the Enoreta rap. Oregon Sammy and his mob had knocked off that double-crossing copper, Joe Simpson. But I was guilty, of course, of the Maryland jewel job. It was tough enough to be nailed on the right rap and settled for it, but to be nailed on a wrong rap and settled for it was still tougher. And I was wondering how in the name of the Lord they ever connected me with that Enoreta murder? Patrolman Joe Simpson certainly couldn't have rapped to me on the robbery, because I was masked that night. Billy Burns and Billy Pinkerton cleared up the mystery when they paid me a visit in the St. Louis jail.

"Two and two make four, do they not?" Billy smiled and twirled his lovely brown mustache. "We know that you and Bible Back were pals in

Sing Sing, and so when Bible Back was shot down there on the Enoreta job we figured that you were in on the job and that you arranged that escape for your old pal."

"And you are now figuring," I smiled, "that I went back to Enoreta and killed the cop who killed Oregon Billy, are you, Mr. Burns?"

"That's right," said Billy.

"We know you did," said Billy Pinkerton. "We've got a good case against you on that rap, Jimmy."

"But we've got a better one against you, Jim," said Mr. Burns, "on that Baltimore jewel robbery where you talked one of Mr. Pinkerton's night watchmen dizzy. That was a swell trick, Jim."

There I was in the middle, between two of the greatest detectives in the world. Naturally I had to watch my step, for these birds could almost read your thoughts. And yet they were the kind of detectives to whom you could turn yourself inside out in confidence. You knew that they wouldn't violate your confidence if they said that they wouldn't.

"Jimmy," said Mr. Pinkerton, "I'd like to make a dicker with you if you're open for dickers?"

"It's a good one," Billy Burns cut in, "and if you don't eat it up, Jimmy, you're a sucker."

"All right," I said. "Tell me what it is and I'll eat it up if it looks good."

"You don't want to swing for that Enoreta murder, do you?" Mr. Pinkerton smiled.

"No," I said, "I wouldn't like to swing for a murder of which I am dead innocent."

"Never mind that," Pinkerton said. "Here's what I'll do with you, Jim. If you tell me where you sold the swag that came out of the Baltimore job I'll

promise you that the rap will be squared."

"And we'll go to bat for you on the murder rap," Billy Burns added.

The proposition sounded rather screwy to me. I didn't like it at all, and I let the two great sleuths know that I didn't like it.

"I had nothing to do with the Baltimore robbery," I said, "and even if I did I wouldn't rat on anybody."

## CHAPTER X

### The Empress's Necklace

THE manhunters beamed on me knowingly. They knew, I thought, that I was stalling with them. Mr. Pinkerton began to nibble on the ends of his mustache as he shook his head from side to side. And then he knocked me dizzy.

"Jim," he said, "I know why you tried to quit the underworld. It was because of your great love for a certain very personable lady, was it not? A lady who is now in Italy. What's her name, Billy?" he turned to Brother Burns.

"Well, now, let's see," Brother Burns smiled. "It's—"

"Oh, I've got it! I've got it!" Pinkerton chuckled. "It's Connely, Marion Connely. Yeah, that's it, Marion Connely. A very, very nice young lady, I hear. Raised in a convent up in New York State somewhere, wasn't she, Bill?"

"Yes, I think she was, Billy," said Mr. Burns.

I saw that the manhunters had me. That was their ace in the hole, their way of saying that if I didn't come across with the dope on the disposition of the jewels that came out of the Baltimore job they would tip me off to Marion.

"We're not very much concerned about sending you or anybody else to prison for that Baltimore trick," Mr. Burns said, "but there were certain pieces of swag in that job that are priceless and cannot be duplicated, and we would like to recover them. If you could help us, Jimmy, naturally we would appreciate it very much."

"Yeah, we would," said Mr. Pinkerton. "We'd particularly like to recover those seven black pearls and that emerald necklace."

"How old was that necklace, Bill?" Mr. Burns asked Mr. Pinkerton.

"A couple o' centuries," Mr. Burns said. "The Empress Alexandra, consort of Nicholas the First, wore it before it fell into the hands of the Grand Duke Konstantine Pavalowich, who sold it to Mrs. Dubrille, who owned it when it was stolen."

"And it was worth about a hundred and fifty thousand, wasn't it, Bill?" Mr. Pinkerton asked.

"That's right," Billy Burns said, "and the black pearls were worth around a hundred thousand dollars."

I saw at once that Percentage Sam had given Bible Back and me a fine trimming—if the sleuths were telling the truth about the value of the necklace and the pearls. I decided to keep quiet until they had convinced me that the necklace and pearls were as valuable as they said they were.

They convinced me. And, in addition to that, they convinced me that the diamonds and precious stones we had got in the robbery were worth over a hundred and fifty thousand dollars. So the foxy Percentage Sam had paid us \$45,000 for a load of "slum" that was valued at \$400,000. In other words, the fence had given us a swell harpooning on the deal.

I'll tell the world that I was sore at



that chisler. I was sore and I wanted revenge, but I didn't feel like turning copper on Sam.

I asked Billy Burns and Billy Pinkerton to give me twenty-four hours in which to deliberate over their proposition.

"Think it over very carefully," Brother Burns said, "and I hope you come on over to the side of law and order. But if you don't," he added, "you're liable to spend the rest of your life in prison."

"We want to help you, Jimmy," Mr. Pinkerton said, "and if you're a smart fellow you'll accept our proposition."

I assured him that I'd do what I thought was right. I spent the night thinking about their proposition. There were but two angles to it, I concluded. It was a case of ditching the double-crossing Percentage Sam or ditching Marion Connely. I decided to ditch Sam.

The sleuths were elated when I gave them my decision. I was ready to go through with them to the finish on the recovery of the pearls and the necklace. They were ready to go through for me. The six months that I had spent on the straight and narrow in St. Louis convinced them that I was really on the level about reforming. I never for a moment questioned their sincerity. They said they would go to bat for me on all the raps that were hanging over my head and I believed them. If they double-crossed me, why then it would be curtains for me. My future was in the hands of Burns and Pinkerton.

Immediately Billy Burns arranged with the governor of Missouri and the district attorney of St. Louis for my removal to Maryland. I was not "removed," as a prisoner. The two sleuths put me on my honor. I had promised them that I would play fair and they

knew that my word was as good as gold. And when I arrived in Baltimore they didn't take me to jail. They went their way and I went mine, with the understanding that when I wanted to see them I could telephone their offices.

Things began to happen—happen to me, I mean, as soon as I left the sleuths. First of all, two of Pinkerton's men nailed me on North Gay Street. I tried to explain that I had just arrived in the city with their boss, but they wouldn't listen to me.

"Do you think we're that dumb?" the big guy snarled.

"And what would the boss be doin' wid you?" said the other Pink.

I couldn't tell them what the boss "would be doin' wid" me because coppers, very frequently, are like old women—they talk too damn much.

So an argument ensued and then there was a battle and then, almost before you could say Jack Robinson, several Baltimore bulls joined the party to help the Pinks subdue me with their feet and fists.

THE Baltimore newspapers front-paged this altercation with the police and the Pinks. Percentage Sam, of course, read the papers, and when I called on the double-crosser to buzz about the seven black pearls and the sixty-three carat emerald necklace he tried to give me the air. If the coppers saw me around his place they'd start razzle-dazzling him.

That stuff went in one ear and out the other. I went to work on the gent pronto. He was not a double-crosser, I learned, much to my surprise. He was all sympathy when I informed him that I had come to get those seven black pearls and the emerald necklace.

"I can save myself a long jolt in the Big House," I said, "if I can recover

that slum, Sam, on which you gave Bible Back and me an awful harpooning."

"I give you a harpooning, Jimmy?" he cried. "How do you figure that I give you a harpooning, pal?"

"Well," I said, "I have heard that the necklace alone was worth a hundred and fifty grand, and—"

"You're crazy," Sam said.

"And the pearls were worth a hundred grand," I said.

"Listen, Jimmy," Sam cried, "are you up against the pipe or the white stuff? Where do you get the idea that a sixty-three karat emerald necklace is worth a hundred and fifty grand? If it was worth that much jack would I sell it for twenty-seven grand? And if them poils were worth a hundred grand, would I sell them for three grand each? I give you and Slim forty-five grand for the load and I sell it for eighty grand, makin' thoity-five on the deal, so tell me where I harpoon you parties?"

"The necklace," I said, "had been worn by several empresses of Russia, and—"

"An empress wore it?" Sam cried. "I wish I had known that. Well, well, that's different. If I had known its pedigree I could 'a' got seventy-five grand for it, Jimmy. Why in the hell didn't you tell me about that?"

I explained that I knew nothing about the necklace's pedigree when Sim and I copped it. Sam told me that he had sold it to Spot McGlinchey, a well-known racetrack man and racketeer and bookmaker. But Mrs. McGlinchey had been knocked off for it a few months later. Sam didn't know who had knocked off the bookmaker's wife, and nobody in the underworld had seen or heard of the necklace since Mrs. McGlinchey had been trimmed.

The pearls, however, could be re-

covered provided I was willing to pay the parties what they had paid Sam—twenty-one thousand dollars. I was dead willing to pay them. I did, and I had the pearls in my pocket within forty-eight hours after I had arrived in Baltimore.

Billy Burns was just a little bit disappointed when I gave him the low-down on the necklace. He was sure that Sam was giving me the needle.

I didn't think so. Sam knew that I was due for a long jolt in the Big House and that I might get sore and turn copper on him if he didn't help me. He was okay. I had to duck into the underworld and find out who knocked off Mrs. McGlinchey for that necklace and where it went.

The information had to come to me in the natural course of events. I mean this: crooks love to exchange reminiscences with each other. They love to boast about their triumphs, how they outwitted this copper and that copper. I never knew a crook who wasn't inordinately vain.

After getting the details of the manner in which Mrs. McGlinchey had been knocked off for the necklace I decided that the job had been staged by somebody who was familiar with the ex-moll's movements. Anna McGlinchey, by the way, had been a badger-game gal before she married Sport McGlinchey. I also had a hunch that it might have been a grudge job.

Anna was knocked off for the necklace while she was in the bathtub one morning around eleven o'clock, just a few minutes after Sport had left the apartment for his office in the White Building on Calvert Street. The necklace, she told the Baltimore bulls, was in her jewel case under her pillow when she entered the bathroom, and when she came out of the bathroom



the jewel case had been lifted.

Neither she nor her husband told the coppers where they had bought the necklace, I learned. I also learned later on that Sport McGlinchey had done a stretch in the Maryland State Penitentiary some eight or ten years back for a bank job. It was said around Baltimore that as a crook Sport had not been a hundred percent on the level.

He had never betrayed any of his associates, but it was rumored that he had short-changed quite a few of them. If he dickered a load of swag he would tell the boys that he had got a thousand or two for it, when as a matter of fact he had got perhaps several thousand more. In other words, Sport always looked out for himself.

That reputation had followed him to the racetracks and the various rackets in which he was active. When I heard all these things about the gentleman I began to look around for grifters who disliked him. Shorty Miller, a burglar and a sneak thief, was the first guy with whom I buzzed about Brother McGlinchey. Shorty was in the Maryland pen when Sport was there. He told me plenty about Sport.

Through Shorty I met Nigger Paddy Shanahan, an ex-crook who ran a night club in Baltimore where all the big shots and little shots of the underworld congregated. Paddy had known Sport for many years. He said Sport was smart, but very tricky.

"I don't mean to say that he'd copper on anybody," Paddy declared, "but I have always believed that he is the kind of a guy who would short-change his mother."

"So I've heard," I said. "I have an idea that some of his enemies knocked Anna off for that necklace."

"Yeah, I know they did," Paddy smiled. "Anna is one swell broad,

Jimmy, and I hated to see her lose that slang. But," he added, "she ain't got nobody to blame but herself, because every rat in the underworld had heard about that slang, which cost Sporty sixty grand."

"Sixty grand?" I cried, thinking of Percentage Sam's statement.

"Yeah, that's what Sport paid for it, I hear," Paddy said.

"Well, well," I mused, "so old Percentage Sam got sixty grand for the empress' necklace instead of twenty-seven grand."

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## CHAPTER XI

### A Double-Cross in the Underworld

RIGHT away I wanted to take a shot at Sammy. Funny people, we crooks. It's all right for us to plunder banks and trains and homes and business houses, but when anybody gives us the hooks, why that's something else. I wanted to go after the sharpshooter and fire a few bullets into his dirty hide.

Only one thing stopped me—I thought perhaps that Mrs. McGlinchey, womanlike, was romancing on the price of the necklace. In a talk with Percentage Sam some time later he reiterated that he had sold the necklace to Sport McGlinchey for twenty-seven bucks. I believed him until I met Sport and learned from his lips that he had paid the fence sixty thousand.

Moreover, Sport told me that Sam had informed him that the necklace was worth a hundred and fifty grand, and that it had been worn by a Russian empress. At last I had the finger on the double-crossing fence. He knew the value of the necklace when Bible Slim and I sold it to him.

Things began to break for me after I got the lowdown on Percentage Sam.

One night I was sitting in Nigger Paddy's night club when an unusually good-looking moll came strolling into the joint. She was known as 'Frisco Nell. Paddy introduced me to her. Her boy-friend, Blinkey Morgan, a first-rate stickup man, was doing four years in the Maryland pen. Nell was trying to raise some money to spring him. She thought she could get Blinkey a parole for ten grand. I had never met Blinkey, but I knew him by reputation and had a speaking acquaintance with some very good grifters who had worked with him.

Nigger Paddy took up a collection for Blinkey Morgan that night in his club. I contributed a thousand bucks. Nell was deeply grateful for my "generous contribution." I said I was glad to help her boy-friend. If all the people who were indebted to Blinkey for this good turn and that one, she said, had been as generous as I, a perfect stranger, Blinkey would have been paroled long ago. Among the phonies who had deserted Blinkey when he landed behind the walls of the Maryland pen was Percentage Sam.

"Blinkey was a good friend to that rat," she said, "and if Blinkey gets paroled he will have something to say about Percentage Sam which will burn him up."

I was all ears when 'Frisco Nell began to denounce Sam. I edged her on to talk further about the punk.

"I have heard of his double-crossing activities," I said, "and I've wondered why somebody didn't put him on the spot."

"Blinkey'll put him on the spot when he's sprung out of the Big House," Nell went on, "if he doesn't come across with a bundle of dough that he owes us."

There was another phony that Nell

put the finger on that night. He was Sport McGlinchey. Sport was a phony, she said, and his wife, Anna, was a phony. Nell and Anna had worked together in the badger racket.

"She's never been a right moll," Nell said, "and since she married Sport her head has swelled like God only knows what."

I fell to wondering what Percentage Sam had done to Blinkey and Nell that caused them to label him a phony? Could it be possible, I wondered, that Blinkey had stuck up Anna McGlinchey for that necklace? The motive was there—neither Blinkey nor his gal had any use for Anna or her husband.

And why did they dislike Sam? I wondered. And what was the deal that Sam and Blinkey had pulled off in which Sam had left Blinkey holding the bag? I tried to talk Nell into giving me the lowdown on that question, but to no avail. She wouldn't yell copper on anybody, but she would put a double-crossing cheater on the spot.

Well, if she wouldn't give me the inside I had a plan which would enable me to get it from Blinkey. I'd try to spring Blinkey out of the Big House with the help of Burns and Pinkerton, and if I succeeded I felt sure that he'd do anything that I asked him to do. Crooks never forget the guy who stands by them when they are in the toils. Blinkey had served two years of his four-year bit, and it would be a cinch to spring him on a parole if Burns and Pinkerton would go to bat for him before the parole board.

But it had to be done on the quiet. Blinkey might object to being sprung by two noted coppers. I had to make it appear that I had certain swell political connections who could spring him. I talked to his gal about my political connections, and I assured her



that I could spring her boy-friend for less than ten grand. She was delighted, and so I went out to the Big House with her the next day to see Blinkey.

He knew me by reputation. He knew Bible Back personally. He knew Oregon Billy and Oregon Sammy. We talked like old pals, and he was all gratitude when I told him that I thought I could have him paroled. A week later he was paroled. Billy Burns and Pinkerton got to the governor and the parole board. Blinkey thought that I had put over the deal alone. Not once during all the preliminaries did I crack to him about Percentage Sam. I was sure that he would crack to me eventually, and he did.

He spilled the beans on the night of the day that he was paroled. Nell and I were sitting in Nigger Paddy's joint waiting for him to join us in a midnight welcome-home supper which Paddy was giving to Blinkey and his friends. Every noted burglar and dip and stickup man in the city had been invited to that dinner. Blinkey showed up around one in the morning, an hour late. Nell took him to task for his tardiness, whereupon the young man proceeded to give me the thrill of thrills.

He had been out looking for Percentage Sam, he told Nell.

"Well," said Nell, "did you get the dough?"

"No," said Blinkey. "He still claims that the guy that he sold the slang to hasn't paid him yet. The guy still owes him thirty grand and he can't pay me until the guy pays him. I could only get five hundred bucks outa him."

"You make me sick," Nell snapped. "You're supposed to be a smart fellow and you let that rat kid you out of what belongs to you. Why don't you make him pay you? You did the job for him, didn't you? And ain't people supposed

to be paid when they do jobs for fences?"

My heart gave a leap when Nell cracked about his "having done a job" for Percentage Sam. That job, I told myself, was trimming Sport McGlinchey's wife for the necklace. Before I left the gentleman and his gal in the early hours of the morning I had the story. Sam had hired Blinkey to put Anna McGlinchey on the spot for the slang. He promised to pay the gunman twenty grand for the job, but neither Blinkey nor his girl knew the history of the necklace. Nor did they know what Sam had done with it after it had been turned over to him.

THERE was but one way to ascertain what the rat had done with the necklace, I decided, and that was to put a gun to his belly and make him talk. I went to his office that night and put said gun to his belly and made him talk. The necklace had been altered. The gold settings in which the sixty-three emeralds and thirty-five diamonds had reposed had been removed and platinum settings had been substituted. Pearls had been substituted for the diamonds and the shape of the emeralds had been changed from hexagonal to octagonal.

Sam's pal, Bruno Meyer, a lapidary, had done the job for him. And Bruno, who was employed by a reputable firm, also found a customer for the necklace after it had been altered. That customer, a New York City fence, Shang Schwartz, paid forty-five grand for the necklace.

Mr. Schwartz refused to talk to me when I called on him and demanded the necklace. He knew nothing about it, he said. Moreover, he didn't know Percentage Sam. Did I think he was crazy? He was a reputable jeweler and he had

never been mixed up in any sort of crooked business. I didn't argue with the sharpshooter. I simply telephoned Billy Burns and Billy Pinkerton that Sam had told me that he had sold the necklace to Schwartz for forty-five grand, and that Schwartz had refused to talk.

"Okay," said the sleuths, "we'll take care of him."

And they did. Brother Schwartz squealed like a stuck pig when the sleuths cornered him. He had sold the necklace to a prominent Broadway actress for seventy grand. The lady surrendered the necklace. The sleuths made Schwartz return the seventy grand to the lady. My work as a detective was finished.

I had recovered the seven black pearls and the necklace and now I was ready to face the courts on all those raps—the bank job at Enoreta, the escape from the ten-year stretch at Johnsonville and the murder charge at Enoreta. Brothers Burns and Pinkerton had promised to go to bat for me on all those raps. I had delivered the goods for them. Would they deliver the goods for me?

It developed, much to my surprise, that Burns and Pinkerton had absolutely nothing on me for the murder of the double-crossing cop at Enoreta. Wise guys that they were, they had simply used those raps as a hammer to intimidate me into going after the pearls and the necklace.

Billy Pinkerton did not show up at Johnsonville. He and Burns decided that it was not necessary for the both of them to appear. One would be sufficient, they concluded, since they both would have the same story to tell regarding the "invaluable service" that I had rendered society.

If I had only known what was be-

fore me! Well, let me tell the sad story as it happened:

Immediately after I had beaten the Johnsonville jail the district attorney, a hard-boiled geezer who hated all crooks for the very good reason that his father had been killed by a crook, had had me indicted for breaking jail.

I pleaded guilty to the charge and begged for mercy, after which Brother Burns took the stand and made an eloquent plea for me. He ended his spiel with a crack or two about the "personable young lady" with whom I was in love. The lady, Billy added, was not an underworld moll.

His honor smiled and turned to the hard-boiled district attorney. That gent jumped to his feet and began to rap Mr. Burns.

Strange indeed it was, said the prosecutor, to see a noted detective pleading for a noted lawbreaker. He hoped the court would disregard the plea and impose the maximum penalty. I had been a criminal all my life, and hardened criminals like me seldom, if ever, reformed. Maryland had rewarded me for recovering those jewels for Mr. Burns when it didn't indict me for the robbery. There was no reason why the court should reward me again for what I had done for another state.

The judge smiled and slapped five years on me for jail-breaking, and when I denounced the prosecutor the judge imposed another year for contempt of court.

So, after having spent six months on the straight and narrow in a sincere effort to reform I was doomed to sixteen years' imprisonment. Was I sick? I was both sick and desperate. All my dreams about that future with the young lady in Italy were shattered. I hadn't any more future. I was licked.



## CHAPTER XII

## The Hard-Boiled Warden

**B**ILLY BURNS tried to console me. It was always the darkest hour before the dawn. I should go to the Ohio State Prison with an optimistic heart and he would not forget me. Some day he'd get me out if I behaved myself and was a model prisoner and didn't try to escape.

I promised him that I'd behave myself, and I went to the "O. P.," as crooks called the Ohio stir, determined to keep my slate clean so that Billy would be able to spring me after I had, as he said, served a year or two.

I had utterly no doubt about his being able to live up to his promise, for he was well-known in the Buckeye State.

I'd go out and make good, as many other inmates of the "O.P." had done. Some great guys had done stretches in the "O.P." None other than the immortal O. Henry had served a term there.

But, I hasten to add, humane, sensible wardens directed the destinies of the Ohio prison in the days of O. Henry and the other boys who had made good after they quit the ancient stir. What it is like now I don't know. When I arrived there I found a barbarian in charge of the institution, a barbarian with a remorseless, egocentric brain and the heart of a savage. He was a tall, skinny, anemic-looking mug with one of those bony, hatchet-like faces. He swung the blackjack

night and day on the cons' heads for the most trivial offenses. He was later removed on charges, but he put plenty of cons through hell first.

There was but one way to get along with him. You had to be a stool pigeon. He would tell you that behaving yourself was not enough. You had to stool; and if you refused, as I did, you were subjected to persecution.

For relatively unimportant breaches of discipline that went unnoticed in most prisons he would send you to the dungeon for ten days on bread and water—if he didn't give you a dose of the water-cross. I'll tell you about the water-cross later on. The thumbscrews and the racks of the Inquisition were pretty tame doings compared to the water-cross. He invented the torture.

Twenty-four hours after I arrived at the "O. P." the warden and I had an argument. He always framed an argument with new prisoners. His motto was, "Treat 'em rough, the rougher the better."

He framed the argument with me hoping that he'd get a chance to knock me silly with his blackjack. How I ever refrained from sticking a knife in his stomach I don't know. I was on my way to the hospital to see the doctor when he hailed me to inquire where I was going and whether or not I had a pass from the deputy warden. I handed him my pass, after telling him I was bound for the hospital.

"What the hell!" he roared. "You just come in yesterday and you're sick already?"

Coming next week—

**Jimmie Dale**

in "The Missing Hour," by Frank L. Packard

"Yes, sir," I said.

"Well, come on with me," he said, "and I'll give you something that'll cure you. I know what you criminals need. It's work that you all need, not medicine. You ain't never sick when you're outside robbing folks, but at soon as the law lands you in prison you all get sick as hell."

I followed him in silence across the yard to the power house, outside of which stood a huge pile of coal. He blew his whistle, summoning the power house guard.

"Sam," he shouted at the guard, "here's a sick criminal. Will you please get him a shovel and put him to work so as he can work that sickness outa his system?"

"Aye, aye, Captain," said Sam, "I'll find him a shovel. Will I bring him in to you if he don't shovel enough of this here coal into the bunkers?"

"Yeah, bring him in to me, Sam," said the barbarian, "and I'll give him a little dose of the water-cross."

I had never had a dose of the water-cross, but I knew what it was. I knew that it had crippled many convicts and killed many more. Whenever a crook met another crook who was minus his front teeth, upper and lower, he'd say, "That guy's been in the 'O.P.' " The rep of that warden and the water-cross of the "O.P." was nationwide in those days.

**K**NOWING, therefore, that the water-cross had maimed and killed convicts, I shoveled coal and said nothing even though I was sick.

That afternoon around three o'clock the power house guard, Sam, put the slug on me when I stopped shoveling to rest for a brief moment. He banged me in the mouth with his fist and then

swung his heavy, lead-filled cane at me when I jumped to my feet and grabbed the shovel.

I started to brain him with the shovel, but reason intervened to stay my hand. That was the breaking point for me. I couldn't do two weeks under such treatment, let alone two years, I decided. I had to make a break. I had to get away from the warden of the "O.P." and his subordinates before I committed murder. The future that I had planned could go to hell. I didn't want anything but liberty. I could stand being kicked around if I had done anything to warrant it, but I couldn't stand being kicked around just because a gang of screws wanted to break me.

I saw what I thought was a good chance to make a getaway. Guard Sam never looked under the empty gondolas when the switch engine entered the yard to drag them out. There was a space under the cars in which I could hide. It would be a cinch getaway if Sam didn't look under the car, and so I copped a sneak, the morning after Sam had slugged me, and crawled up into the space under the gondola. A brakeman saw me and tipped me off to Sam.

I got the water-cross for that attempt. The warden supervised the torture. He strapped me into the fiendish instrument. Iron clasps held my ankles together, while two other iron clasps helds my arms and wrists in place on the crosspiece.

There I hung, stark naked, for five or ten minutes while the warden delivered a sermon on the way of the transgressor. Then he gave the punishment boss the signal to turn on the water. A second or two later the water, from a half-inch nozzle on the four-inch hose, was beating my body from head to foot.



When I uttered a cry of pain the punishment boss shot the stream into my mouth. I don't know how long I stood up under the ordeal before I collapsed, but when I regained consciousness I was in the dungeon.

I had lost three teeth and my body was bruised from head to foot. I don't know how other unfortunate convicts reacted to the warden's water-cross. I have heard that it broke most of them, broke their hearts and broke their spirits. I don't know. I'm only telling what I have heard.

I know, however, what it did to me. It turned me into a real tough guy. I had never been a real tough guy until I got a dose of the warden's water-cross, and the only reason why I didn't carve the barbarian into ribbons when I was released from the dungeon was that he kept out of my way. I had the knife in my bosom and I would have used it if I had met him in the cell house or the yard.

I required medical treatment after the dungeon and the water-cross. Every convict does. In the hospital reception room that day, while waiting my turn to be called into the doctor's office, I met Eddie Carney, a cracksman, who was "doing it all," a life term. Eddie had just had a dose of the water-cross and the dungeon. Eddie gave me the "office," a signal to move close to him, and in the silent lip-language of prisons he told me that he had a getaway planned and would be glad to have me join him if I could arrange to be trans-

ferred to his cell on the top tier in the cell house.

"I'm leaving tomorrow night," he whispered, "so make the switch today if you can. See the cell house screw, Johnson. He takes dough, and I think you can put it over for a hundred bucks."

My heart exulted in a mighty paean of joy. I forgot all about my aches and pains. When I returned to the cell house I proceeded to apply for a switch from my cell on the third tier to Eddie Carney's cell on the top tier. Keeper Johnson didn't know whether he could make the switch.

"I'd appreciate it very much, sir," I said, "because Eddie and I are old friends."

"You'll appreciate it?" He beamed on me knowingly and winked his eye.

"Yes, sir," I smiled, "if you let me move up to Eddie's cell I'll make it worth your while."

"And what do you call making it worth my while?" the hungry guy asked.

"Well," I said, "how about a hundred dollars?"

"Now, Jimmy," he said, "you know that us officers ain't allowed to accept presents from prisoners, don't you?"

"But suppose you should find a hundred dollars in the cell that I vacate?" I said.

"Well, son," he chuckled, "there ain't no law, so far as I know, against a keeper finding something, so I guess I can move you up to Carney's cell."

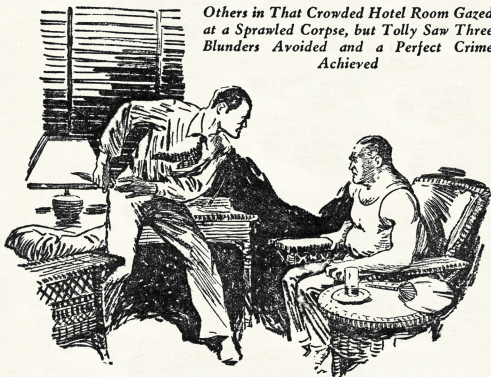
CONTINUE THIS STORY NEXT WEEK.



# The Note on the Dead Man

By Ray Cummings

*Others in That Crowded Hotel Room Gazed at a Sprawled Corpse, but Tolly Saw Three Blunders Avoided and a Perfect Crime Achieved*



Blake had seen the naked blade of the knife

**D**ELIVERED into his hands! Tolly Martin sat contemplating the trick of fate which, after all these years, had brought him and Allen Blake to be guests at this same Bermuda hotel. Blake had arrived on the boat from New York just this morning. He hadn't seen Tolly yet; he'd probably even forgotten all about Tolly years ago.

But Tolly hadn't forgotten. Tolly had searched vainly for Blake, with the desire to kill him like a rat. And now at last the opportunity had come. Blake's look at the beautiful islands of Bermuda would be his last. He had

seen the sun set this evening for the last time. Tonight he would die. Confronted by Tolly, he would beg for mercy; then Tolly would kill him like a rat.

Tolly had himself been here in St. George only three days. He was an "American tourist" like Blake. How simple this would be! Blake the American visitor would be found murdered. By no chance could it be connected with Tolly. In all Bermuda no one knew either of them. Or knew that they were acquainted with each other. Blake wasn't even traveling under his own name. Tolly had seen the hotel register.



Arthur J. Sampson. Blake would die with that name and his past history would never be discovered. So simple for Tolly. He would be nothing but an interested spectator—one of the crowd of hotel guests, horrified at a murder.

All day Tolly had been planning how he would do it. He sat now at a window of his bedroom in the hotel. It was 9 P.M. The window was open. The soft air of the winter's night was redolent with the perfume of flowers and the aromatic smell of the little stunted cedar trees. Tolly's window was one flight above the ground. The brilliant moonlight shafted down through the trees of the hotel gardens. In the distance, far down from this eminence upon which the hotel was set, the whitewashed walls and roofs of the town were visible; and beyond them Tolly could see the blue waters of the harbor where the moonlight was a great glistening silver path.

A paradise here. Tolly chuckled grimly. Blake had had his glimpse of Paradise today; tonight he was going to Hell!

The New York newspaper lay on the table behind Tolly. He got up and glanced again at a small news item which had attracted his attention this afternoon. The famous American crook known as the "Pencil-note Burglar" was thought by police to have left the country.

This mysterious criminal had always interested Tolly—an ironical sort of fellow, he must be, who had committed a very clever series of burglaries and each time had left a penciled note jibing at the police. So he was out of the United States, they thought now? Good enough! Tolly had conceived the idea of leaving a similar note on Blake's body. It would give these Bermuda police something to theorize

about. They'd think this pencil-note fellow was here in Bermuda. He'd get the blame for the murder of "Arthur J. Sampson." And it would certainly be a mystery which could never be solved.

There came a knock on Tolly's bedroom door. He laid the newspaper aside. At the door stood one of the hotel bellboys.

"Your package from Gosling's, sir."

He proffered a paper-wrapped parcel. Tolly had phoned half an hour ago for a bottle of gin.

"Oh, sure," he said. "Thanks. How much is it?"

"The desk paid for it, sir." The bellboy stood lingering. "Would you mind signing the delivery receipt?"

"Sure," said Tolly. "How much did the hotel pay?"

"Six and six, sir."

"Huh?"

"Six shillings, sixpence, sir."

"Oh," said Tolly. "In regular money how much would that be?"

"About one dollar and seventy-five cents, sir."

"Cheap at half the price," said Tolly. He was in a jovially expansive mood. Why not, with Blake delivered into his hands after all these years? He drew an American dollar bill from his pocket for a tip. "You take American money?"

The bellboy grinned. "We live on it, sir. Much obliged, sir."

He handed Tolly a flimsy oblong of paper. Tolly tossed it to his bedroom desk, drew a lead pencil from his jacket pocket and signed the receipt with a flourish. And stripped the wrappings from the bottle.

"Have a drink, young fellow?"

The bellboy was used to American tourists. He grinned. "Thank you very much, sir."

They drank together. The bellboy might have been drinking the silent toast to his girl friend; but Tolly was drinking to Blake, who would rot in Hell.

"Thank you very much, sir."

"Right you are, young fellow. Good stuff you have here. Come back tomorrow night. We'll have another."

THE bellboy departed. Tolly reached for the bottle, but checked himself. No more now. He had things to do. Blake's bedroom was near the end of a long corridor on the ground floor. Tolly had the whole layout firmly fixed in his mind. This big whitewashed stone building was totally different from a hotel in the States. Tolly could get downstairs from his own bedroom and out of the building very easily without being seen. He could also get from the gardens into the ends of every one of the hotel ground-floor corridors. One of those garden doors was within a few feet of Blake's bedroom. He wondered if Blake had come in yet . . .

Tolly had a long clasp-knife in his trunk. It could never be identified as belonging to him. He locked the bedroom door, got the knife out of the trunk and dropped it in the jacket pocket of his white linen suit. Then he sat at the wicker bedroom desk to write the "pencil-note" criminal's message. He wanted everything ready, because after the killing he would be a sucker to stay in Blake's bedroom an extra second.

On his desk lay a neat little pile of the hotel notepaper. All right to use a sheet of it—every bedroom, Blake's included, would have the same notepaper. He must be careful not to get fingerprints on this sheet. A lead pencil lay on his desk. He picked it up, was ready

to print the note, when suddenly he paused.

Good Lord! His heart was pounding. What a little thing could trap a fellow in a job like this! The lead pencil he held was the same one with which he had signed the hotel C. O. D. receipt just a few minutes ago! He had had it in his coat pocket; had signed the receipt here on the desk and tossed the pencil here. It was marked, he saw now, No. 3—Very Hard. An unusually hard lead. Easy to identify. These Bermuda policemen probably were dumb, but then again, maybe not. What an error that would have been!

He searched his pockets, found a little pencil stub. This one was marked No. 1—Very Soft. Good enough! He carefully printed the note. Just two words, and a dash:

*Killed by —*

The "pencil-note" fellow always printed something like this. Tolly surveyed it. Very nice! This would give quiet little Bermuda something to talk about for all the rest of the year.

Tolly put on his jacket. In his side pocket he had the note, the little stub of pencil and the clasp-knife. He opened his bedroom door. The corridor was empty. He locked the door after him, went down the back stairs, and in a moment was in the garden. A few tourists were strolling the garden paths, but nobody noticed him. He tossed the little stub of lead pencil into a clump of shrubs. On the terrace at the front of the hotel where colored lights were strung a small orchestra was playing American jazz, and twenty or more couples were dancing.

Blake was in his bedroom! Tolly saw the opened bedroom window. It was only a few feet above the ground. The shade was pulled all the way down,



with a light behind it; and as Tolly stared he saw a brief moving silhouette of Blake's thick, paunchy figure. It looked as though Blake were undressing.

Within a minute Tolly was into the lower corridor. No one was in sight. He rapped gently on Blake's door.

Blake's voice—how well Tolly remembered it!

"Wait a minute."

The lock turned, the door opened an inch or two. Tolly shoved his foot into the crack. Tolly was a small, slim fellow. He had been a bantamweight fighter, and then a jockey, in the days when he knew Blake. A muscular fellow, lithe as a cat. He shoved the door which the suddenly startled Blake was trying to hold.

"Hullo, Blake. Tolliver Martin. Remember me, don't you?"

Tolly wedged himself through the widening door-opening as he spoke. He turned, closed the door, and locked it.

"Why—hello, Tolly—"

Blake had stepped backward. He was partially undressed. He stood in an undershirt, white linen trousers and bare feet. His heavy-jowled, flabby face had gone white, but he tried to smile.

"Remember me, don't you?" Tolly said grimly.

"Why—why of course I remember you, Tolly. How've you been? What you doin' here?"

Delivered into his hands! It seemed to Tolly that the grim joy of this was far greater than he had thought it would be. The damned rat was frightened. He'd be worse than that in a minute. He always had been a coward. No fight in him.

"Thought you might have forgotten me," Tolly said. "But you remember it

all, don't you? Remember how you sent me up so you could buy freedom for yourself? Me—who only took your orders when we fixed that horse an' that race? Remember it?"

"Why—why Tolly, you're crazy! Sit down an' let's discuss this—"

Blake was backing toward the window. He mustn't do that; the shadow of him might show on the shade. And they must talk softly; their voices might carry outside.

Tolly said, with lowered voice, "You sit down. We'll discuss it."

## II

HE slid a wicker arm chair forward and shoved Blake into it.

Blake's eyes roved the room as though he were trapped. Oh, he was frightened all right! He said:

"You're crazy, Tolly. I didn't—"

"Not so loud," Tolly warned. This was dangerous, toying with Blake like this. If somebody came, or heard them—

"Sure," Tolly added. "Crazy like a fox, that's me. I did my stretch. I waited. Then I got out, an' went after you like I warned you I would. But I couldn't find you. You've changed your name—"

"Oh, that." Blake still was trying to smile placatingly. His hands gripped the arms of his chair; his gaze roved Tolly, who stood in front of him. "That—that was necessary. A little jam I got into—"

"I thought maybe it was so I wouldn't find you."

"That's silly, Tolly. Especially after all these years. Why shouldn't I want you to find me? Why shouldn't I be glad to see you? I—I am. It gives me a chance to explain how wrong you were about me. Take off your coat—hot in here. Let's have a—"

"Sure," said Tolly. He stripped off his jacket; tossed it to a chair. His hand was behind him as he whirled back on Blake.

"Ain't afraid of me, Blake? Not a damn bit, are you?"

"Afraid? Why, Tolly— Oh! God, Tolly! Don't!"

He had seen the naked blade of the knife, as Tolly brought it from behind him. Damned rat, he was frightened now all right. He knew this was his end . . . But he might scream! Kill him now! Too dangerous to wait even a second . . .

A rush of instant thoughts, for certainly Tolly produced the knife and plunged it all in that second. Blake was half out of the chair. His scream seemed to die with a gurgle in his throat. He lurched upward and met the knife full in his chest. His arms went wildly up—and Tolly, nimble as a cat, sank the knife, stepped backward; pulling out the knife so that he was clear of Blake, who fell forward on his face.

Dead? No, he was twitching, with a ghastly rattle in his throat. Tolly stooped, more calmly now, and plunged the knife again; left it sticking up between the shoulder blades. Got him that time! A motionless dead thing sprawled there now.

For a moment Tolly stood panting, with the wild fear that someone might have heard the noise. But there was only the distant strains of the dance orchestra. No alarm. Was there any blood on him? He looked carefully. Then he stood there in front of the mirror and looked. No blood. Nothing wrong with his appearance. He had been clever not to get tangled up with Blake's body when it fell.

Everything was all right, but he must get out of here in a rush now. From his jacket pocket where it lay on

the chair he took the penciled note. Still handling it gingerly, he laid it on the dead man. He saw that on the desk in Blake's room there was a pile of exactly the same hotel notepaper.

The handle of the knife might have his finger-prints. He wiped it off with his handkerchief . . . Hurry, get out of here. He went to the door. Unlocked it; opened it an inch or two. Voices! Footsteps! A man and a woman approaching!

Tolly closed the door very softly and stood waiting. The voices went past. He breathed again. What an escape! Beyond everything, he mustn't be seen getting out of here.

He tried again. The corridor was empty now . . . Good God, what he had almost done wrong! He was leaving his white linen jacket in Blake's bedroom!

Panic swept him with the realization that he was rattled. He seized his jacket. Put it swiftly on. It sagged. It felt queer. It was too big for him . . . Good Lord, this wasn't his coat! This was Blake's, which had been hanging on the same chair. He stripped it off; flung it to the floor. Took his own and put it on as he moved again for the door.

But he bumped something. He was close to the wall, walking and lifting an arm as he put on the coat. His arm bumped something. There was a click and a sharp thump.

Tolly stood frozen. Staring. The bedroom had a wall telephone. He had knocked the receiver off the hook. It hung swaying at the end of its cord, gently bumping the wall. The line was open! At the hotel switchboard, not more than a hundred feet away on this same floor, the girl would see the signal.

Even now in the silence Tolly



could hear her voice coming from the instrument.

Should he slam up the receiver? He had the confused thought that he'd get his finger-prints on it. Get out of here! He'd be caught now like a rat in a trap. He jerked the door open, listened, peered cautiously with a fervent hope that the corridor would be empty. It was. He darted into it; ducked out the nearby outer door.

**I**N the garden, the panic suddenly left him. He was sure no one had seen him come out. He walked calmly on one of the garden paths—got into another door and back up to his bedroom. Still unseen. He was sure of it. He had just entered the bedroom, when from downstairs came the sounds of a commotion. The murder discovered already. That was it, of course.

Across the hall, a door opened. A man's voice said:

"What the devil's going on down there?"

Tolly went out and joined him. Then in a moment as the commotion grew louder, they rushed downstairs and were on the scene of the murder.

It seemed at first that there was only a complete confusion. When Tolly and his companion arrived at Blake's bedroom door there were hardly more than five or six other hotel guests, the hotel manager, and a few of his employees, one of whom Tolly made out to be the hotel detective. But more people were hurrying every moment so that presently the terrace orchestra abruptly stopped and the people outside began milling into the garden for a look at Blake's window.

The bedroom door was open now. Tolly and the man with him found themselves shoved forward into the

room by the people arriving behind them. Tolly caught a glimpse of the dead thing sprawled face down on the straw matting of the floor, with the wicker armchair askew behind it and the knife sticking up . . . Gruesome thing. There was more blood on the undershirt now.

The room was a milling confusion—a babble of voices and shoving people all craning to get a look at the horror. At the window somebody outside raised the shade. It went up with a snap, disclosing the group of faces out there in the moonlit garden.

The hotel manager's voice was trying to be heard above the noise.

"I say, everyone, do not touch anything! Will you please leave this room? The proper authorities will be here presently. Go out—please—"

But nobody moved. Tolly's companion murmured, "We'd better keep back—we'll get put out of here."

"Right you are," Tolly responded.

They moved over to an unobtrusive corner and stood watching. The room was jammed with men now. At the corridor door a woman took a look, screamed hysterically and was shoved away by the men around her.

"The telephone receiver is off the hook," somebody said over the babble. It was the big stolid hotel detective.

"That's where the alarm came from. Somebody in here was at the telephone," somebody said.

More people were jamming into the room. Somebody called from outside:

"Here come the police."

The hotel detective sprang into action.

"If you please, everyone—outside, please. I must ask you to leave, gentlemen."

Amusing to Tolly. This British courtesy. Apologetically the guests were

being herded from the room. The manager drew down the shade, with a murmur of protest from the garden. Tolly and his companion were moved into the corridor. The police shoved past them—four or five uniformed men. And the voices of others were audible maintaining order out in the garden.

Tolly lost his companion amid the press of people in the corridor. The bedroom door at first stayed ajar, with a policeman guarding it. Then the door was closed. Tolly stood nearby in the shadow of a staircase. Interesting, all this. No one noticed him, of course. He was just one of all these horrified guests. Nobody knew anything of what was going on now. Everybody was talking wild. Theorizing. Tolly chuckled to himself. If they only knew what he knew of this murder of "Arthur J. Sampson!"

The door occasionally opened. There was always a press of onlookers; and afterward a babble of new rumors. It was murder all right. How could a man stab himself in the middle of the back?

"He couldn't," somebody said. "Say, you know he was stabbed in the chest, too?"

"Still it's got to be murder. You can't stick yourself in the chest and then turn around and stick yourself in the back. I say now, can you?"

Tolly suddenly was aware that the query was addressed to him.

"Oh—why, sure not," he said. "Murder all right. Wonder where the fellow got to?"

Escaped by the window, somebody said . . . No, by this corridor door . . . Somebody had lifted or knocked the telephone receiver off the hook. Wonder if the telephone girl heard anything? Maybe it was the murdered man

calling for help. But somebody else asserted that was idiotic. The doctor was inside now. A man had said that the doctor had said that Sampson died almost instantly. He couldn't go to the telephone and then go back and fall in the middle of the room. It must have been the murderer; he must have been right here only a few minutes ago.

"That's right," another man said. "Sampson's only been dead five or ten minutes. There's the door opening again—let's hear—"

Amusing all this! So utterly simple for Tolly! Not even a question to answer. Not a single policeman even to look at him. He wondered what they were making out of the note on the dead man . . .

### III

THE man who had just come out of the room was a hotel clerk. He seemed willing to talk, and the guests jammed around him. Amusing to Tolly. They were all talking of the note now. These Bermuda police—not so dumb! They had spotted the note for the work of the "lead pencil" criminal. Tolly was sorry that he couldn't be inside to hear all the interesting details.

God, what was this! The bedroom door had opened again. A voice was saying:

"Tolliver Martin? A guest—"

And another voice:

"Over there by the staircase. Oh, Mr. Martin, sir!"

Tolliver Martin! Tolliver Martin! Tolliver Martin! What was this? The hot crowded corridor swam before Tolly's gaze. It seemed that all the world suddenly was babbling and echoing "Tolliver Martin . . . Tolliver Martin!" But why? Who had ever thought of him?"



"Mr. Martin, sir. If you please."

This damnable British courtesy! Was this voice ironic? Tolly found one of the hotel employees plucking at the sleeve of his white linen jacket. "They want you inside there, Mr. Martin, sir."

"Huh? Why—why sure." He stumbled forward. This was all wrong. What could they want of him?

The bedroom door closed behind Tolly with a click—like the click of a cell-block grating. Before him Tolly found the towering bulk of a man.

"I am Captain Tucker. Are you Tolliver Martin?"

"Yes, sir," Tolly said.

"Your room is No. 22?"

"Yes, sir. That's right."

But he needn't say sir! No need to be humble—he was a guest here.

"Afraid I can't help you much, Captain Tucker. But anything—"

"You were in your bedroom all the evening, Mr. Martin?"

"Well, just about all the time, I guess." Clever, not to be too sure of past movements. An innocent man wouldn't remember everything he did.

"At about 9 P.M. you were in your bedroom?"

"Sure I was."

"You received a package in your bedroom this evening at about nine o'clock?" the Captain said.

"Sure I did."

The Captain was saying: "This hotel receipt which you signed—"

In spite of himself it made Tolly's heart start pounding. The Captain was holding the C. O. D. receipt for Tolly to see.

"Sure," said Tolly. "I ordered a bottle of gin to come in from a store. A bellboy—"

"This bellboy?"

Tolly turned and grinned at the bell-

boy. "Hullo, young fellow. Sure—him."

"This is your signature, then?" The Captain held the receipt closer.

"Yes, that's my signature," Tolly said. "What about it?"

"NO one ever signs his name quite the same on two occasions," said the Captain. He handed the receipt to the policeman beside him. "The scroll of that flourish never would be duplicated—by you, or any forging murderer."

"I don't get you," Tolly said.

The Captain said quietly, "Well, now, suppose you look at this."

The murder note. He held it for Tolly. He drew Tolly aside so that the table electrolier would shine directly on the note. Tolly saw the two words he had printed,

*Killed by —*

God, what was this! The captain was holding the sheet of paper so that the light fell on it slantwise.

"The bellboy tells me you laid the receipt on your desk when you signed it. You happened to use a very hard lead pencil—"

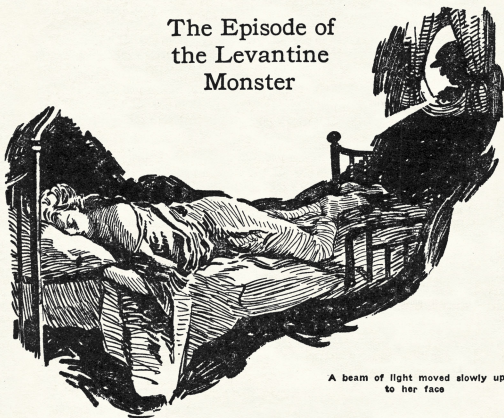
Was that the captain's voice? Tolly hardly heard it. Damnable mischance that he had tossed the receipt on top of the little pile of hotel stationery on his desk, signed the receipt, and then afterward used the top sheet for the murder note! A tracery of two words, hidden there on that top sheet! He had not noticed them. But now as the captain held the note slantwise under the bright light of the electrolier he saw them clearly. Two words, a dash, and two words more. Half in pencil, half marked deeply into the paper.

The murder note read:

*Killed by—Tolliver Martin.*

# The LADY from HELL

## The Episode of the Levantine Monster



A beam of light moved slowly up  
to her face

*The Devilish Guile of Vivian  
Legrand Forces the Monster  
of the Turkish Underworld to  
Sell His Own Accomplice into  
the Harem*

A True Story

By Eugene Thomas

VIVIAN LEGRAND watched the disappearing lights of Monte Carlo with something akin to relief. Each turn of the ship's propeller was taking her further away from police officials who might, if the occasion arose, become exceedingly in-

quisitive about the large sum of money she had blackmailed out of Monte Carlo's leading banker. Then, too, there would undoubtedly be a disturbance over the death of Paul Samnard, the junior partner of the banking firm, and it was undoubtedly wiser to be on the way to Constantinople than in Monte Carlo when the storm broke.

Standing by the rail she gave the appearance of some great lady of the world. There was nothing about her to indicate that she was as deadly as a striking snake. And, as more than one of her victims could testify, she was as merciless, as utterly devoid of the usual human emotions as a statue. The



weak rays from the deck light caught her red hair and caused it to take on something of the nature of a quivering flame above the exquisitely modeled, exotic face.

Suddenly, warned by some inner sense of the presence of another person, she turned with that catlike grace that always characterized her every movement and saw, directly behind her, the slim silhouette of a man—so close to her, in fact, that she instinctively threw out her elbow to avoid collision, while the other hand automatically dropped into the pocket of her light tweed coat to grasp the revolver she carried there.

The man halted abruptly.

"Pardon, *mademoiselle*," he said in French that was strongly accented, and moved the fraction of a step nearer. "In the dim light I mistook *mademoiselle* for a friend."

Then he stepped back as the deck steward came around the corner of the deckhouse and started folding up the deck chairs for the night. Without another word the stranger made a slight bow and moved on down the deck. But not before Vivian Legrand had noticed that one of his hands was deep in the pocket of the coat he wore, much in the manner of her own hand clutching the revolver in her pocket.

Nor had the man's accent escaped her. It was of the East. Perhaps Greek, perhaps Turkish.

Her eyes went back speculatively to the rail of the ship against which she had been standing. How easy it would have been to stun her with a blow from behind, and then consign her body to the waters over which she had been leaning.

But why? She could assign no reason. Certainly not the police. Agents of the French *Sûreté* certainly would not adopt such methods.

She moved on down the deck in a shimmer of light-struck silk, still turning the affair over in her mind, made her way down to her cabin and threw



VIVIAN LEGRAND

open the door—to stop in amazement upon the threshold.

THE cabin had been searched, searched thoroughly and carefully.

Her dressing case was empty and the bottom had been slit with a sharp knife to make sure that it held no secret pocket. Dresses had been ripped from their hangers in the little clothes closet and tossed onto the floor until it looked as though a dozen birds of paradise had moulted there. The handle on her hand mirror had been snapped, perhaps on the assumption that it might be hollow. Not a thing in the room had been left untouched.

"So," she said softly, "that was *not* a mistake up there on the deck."

Sudden consternation flooded her. Swiftly she stepped inside the cabin,

locked the door. Upon the wall hung a little drawing. Hurriedly taking it down she turned it over. The purser's receipt for the valuables she had deposited with him was still fastened to the back of the picture with the two pins she had used.

Satisfied on this point, she replaced the picture and set about righting the damage that had been done. And all the time her brain was working swiftly, with smooth precision. Now she knew the reason for the attempt on her life, there on the deck, and the reason for the search of her cabin.

Thoughtfully she poured out a glass of water from the carafe and put the glass to her lips. Then she put the glass down without drinking and rang for her room steward.

When he answered she handed him the glass of water.

"Drink this," she ordered curtly.

The steward, puzzled, took the glass and raised it to his lips. But before he could swallow Vivian Legrand struck the glass from his hand. It crashed on the carpet of her cabin and splashed his white coat with water.

The man recoiled and looked at her with amazement.

"When did you fill the water bottle?" she demanded.

"This afternoon, *madame*," he replied. "You were here at the time, if you remember."

"I remember now. I'm sorry," she said slowly. "I had forgotten, and the water seemed stale."

"Shall I bring you fresh water, *madame*?" he asked.

"No," Vivian told him. "That is all."

But she had not forgotten and her eyes were deadly as the door closed behind the man. The water was poisoned. It had been poisoned during the time

that she had been absent. The faintly bitter odor of almonds that rose from it was unmistakable. Whoever her enemy was, he meant to leave no stone unturned to kill her. It was evident that the steward was not concerned in the affair. He would have swallowed the water if she had not knocked the glass from his lips.

Quietly she went out into the corridor and, glancing about to make sure that no one was in sight, made her way to the cabin occupied by Adrian Wylie, her companion in crime.

The moment she entered the room he sensed that something was amiss and dropped the book he was reading. Swiftly she outlined to him the two attempts upon her life.

"Somebody," she finished succinctly, "knows that we have close to a million francs in bank notes and jewels—and that somebody means to have them."

"Valente," Wylie said thoughtfully.

## II

VALENTE was a French criminal, a leader of the underworld in Monte Carlo, whom Vivian Legrand had outwitted and outshot in a struggle for the stolen funds of Paul Samnard, the banker. She had broken the man's wrist with a shot as a parting souvenir.

She shook her head emphatically at the mention of the name.

"Not enough brains. A shooting affair in a dark alley—a knife thrust into my back from the shadows—a body robbed and quietly disposed of—yes. That much he is capable of. But not this. This is big-time stuff."

"Who else knows that we have that much money?" Wylie said. "That is the crux. Whoever it is isn't taking a shot in the dark. *They know*."

"Right," Vivian Legrand said



thoughtfully. "Whoever it is knows."

She stopped and a slightly startled look flashed in her eyes.

"There is only one person who knows that we have that money. Camilla."

Wylie's eyes narrowed in thought for a moment, and he nodded slowly. "Camilla. Yes, it might be that Camilla is mixed up in this."

"That means," Vivian Legrand said, "that Camilla bargained with someone for a share of the money we took from Samnard, in return for the tip on who had it. That someone is on board, of course; and Camilla, being no fool, is undoubtedly waiting at our first port of call for her cut. Tomorrow night we are in Naples. That was why he tried tonight, in the hope of being able to go ashore tomorrow with the money."

"Whoever it is may not be playing a lone hand," Wylie warned her. "There may be others here on board."

"One or a dozen," Vivian said recklessly. "If they want war, we'll fight."

"They have the advantage of us," Wylie pointed out. "We are fighting in the dark. They are not. We don't know who they are."

"We will tomorrow," she said grimly. With a curt "Good night!" she went out and made her way to her own cabin.

TWO hours later Vivian Legrand was lying in her berth, wakeful, the lights off, unable to sleep because of the heat, which pressed down upon the steamer like a giant hand. And suddenly she had become conscious of a round hole in the center of the copper screening that covered the porthole — a hole that had not been there a moment before, perhaps an inch across, which looked like it had been carefully cut with a sharp knife.

She lay very still, listening like a cat, her eyes glued upon the porthole. And, while she looked, the black silhouette of a man's head loomed against the light outside.

It moved as she stared at it. A deck hand, perhaps. Again, perhaps not. She glanced at the luminous dial of her wrist watch. Eight minutes after two.

The glow outside the porthole gave birth to a hand, stamped momentarily in relief upon the lighted circle, and withdrew into the shadows that had yielded it. Vivian waited, motionless, barely breathing. Then she became cognizant of the fact that a face was peering in upon her. No light was cast upon it. The silhouette might have been cut out of black paper and suspended there. And she knew that invisible eyes in that black outline were staring into the cabin.

Never had she felt more keenly that death was stealing toward her soundlessly and unseen. Narrowing her eyes to mere slits, even though the room was in darkness, she watched breathlessly. The dull beat of the ship's engines, the slap of the waves, the whisper of wind, came clear and distinct.

Suddenly a beam of light flashed across the bed. Her eyes were closed. She seemed in deep repose. It darted across the tumbled cover, moved slowly up to her face and rested there for a short moment. For perhaps ten seconds it played upon her, as if that silent and sinister watcher outside the window were assuring himself that it was indeed Vivian Legrand lying there asleep in the bed.

Then the light flashed off.

She was out of bed and upon her feet, soundlessly, as soon as it vanished.

Slipping across the room to the doorway she threw on a dressing gown and picked up the revolver lying upon

the table. Then she quietly unlocked the cabin door and crouched, eyes upon the porthole, and waited.

She had only a moment to wait. The black silhouette moved, and a slender rod of metal slid through the hole in the center of the screen. To it was attached a larger cylinder—a silencer.

The barrel of the gun with the silencer attached came slowly through the hole and pointed directly at the place where, but a moment before, she had been lying. Smiling grimly to herself Vivian Legrand picked up her own gun and cautiously eased the cabin door open, her eyes fastened upon that black silhouette at the porthole.

Then six sharp daggers of orange flame stabbed the darkness, and the sharp, acrid smell of burned powder invaded the cabin. The reports made no more noise than the clapping of hands together. A score of feet away the sound would have been inaudible, mingled with the noises of the ship and the wash of waves against the hull.

Scarcely had the last of the daggers of flame pierced the darkness of the cabin when Vivian Legrand threw open the door, ran down the short corridor, and onto the deck. A tall, slender man was just turning the corner of the deckhouse aft, the pistol still in his hand. Throwing a glance to right and left, Vivian began to run, her bare feet padding on the damp planking. At the corner of the deckhouse she paused a moment. A few yards away a companionway light illuminated a door. Into this the man dived. When Vivian Legrand reached the opening he was nowhere in sight. He had disappeared into one of the cabins that lined the corridor, or had vanished down one of the corridors that branched off. Useless to look further.

She felt convinced that it was the

same man she had encountered on deck earlier in the evening, but to identify him would be impossible. There was nothing characteristic about his walk, and the description "tall and slim" might apply to any of a dozen men on board.

### III

VIVIAN LEGRAND made an early appearance in the shabby little dining saloon of the steamer the next morning. The ship was ploughing through a calm sea and it was more than probable that all of the passengers aboard would put in an appearance.

Although supposedly strangers to each other, Adrian Wylie and Vivian occupied the same table through Wylie's maneuvers with the table steward. Tall, lean and impressive, Wylie gave far more the impression of a man of affairs, a banker, perhaps; than the whimsical, yet prudent and incalculably gifted criminal that he was.

The two sat there at their table, talking casually as steamer acquaintances will, but shrewdly sizing up every passenger who entered the saloon.

It was the two men and the woman at a table across the room who held Vivian's eyes longest. The girl was not particularly striking. She was probably French, and pretty in a superficial way. The younger of the two men Vivian Legrand had seen on deck several times since the ship sailed, and his appearance now struck a chord in her memory.

His name, she had learned, was Jacob Arbajian.

His companion was Vedova Bey, a Levantine turned Moslem to further his career. Vivian Legrand was not an impressionable woman. She had lived much and swiftly among many kinds of people, and it took something remarkable in the way of a man to sur-



prise her. At first sight of Vedova Bey she had nicknamed him the Levantine Monster.

It was not the size of the man that had prompted the nickname, and neither was it the terrible physical power which surrounded him like an aura. It was the calm, ghastly brutality with which he fairly reeked, the complete brutality of an animal, dominated by a human intelligence far above the average. Levantine Monster fitted him well.

On first seeing him on board Wylie had made discreet inquiries and had learned a little of the history of Vedova Bey. With his notorious brother (who was later hanged by the Germans during the war as a spy) he did a brisk trade in girls in Turkey.

There, prior to the World War, it was not unusual for parents to sell their daughters into the harems of wealthy men. Not always were the girls sold by their parents, either. There was many a girl who vanished from villages in France or Italy who later showed up as a slave girl in a Turkish harem.

Of his companion she knew nothing, save that he was traveling in company with Vedova Bey. What she suspected, however, was that he was the bodyguard of the Levantine Monster.

She had almost finished her breakfast when Jacob Arbajian, the Monster's companion, caught sight of her for the first time. His face went white and he stared at her as though he were gazing at a ghost. He leaned across the table and spoke to Vedova Bey. An angry scowl crossed the latter's face as he shot a swift look at Vivian.

Satisfied, she finished her breakfast. Later she went on deck. These two, the foppish young man and the Levantine Monster, were the only ones who seemed plausible suspects, and the

fright of the younger of the two on seeing her added confirmation to her belief. Already her agile mind was working out a plan whereby she might prove the correctness of her theories.

DUSK was falling over Naples when Vedova Bey and his companion disembarked from the tender at the wharf and hailed a taxi. Neither of them noted the two shadows



DOC WYLIE

that detached themselves from the shadow of a building and stealthily moved in their wake—two shadows that had been watching and waiting for their appearance for more than an hour.

And if they had noticed the shadows, neither of the two men would have recognized in them Vivian Legrand and Adrian Wylie. Vivian's flaming hair was hidden beneath a black wig, drawn back and curled over the ears. Her skirt had a pleated flare and her black silk stockings glistened. She gave the impression of a parlor maid who had just doffed her lace cap and lacy apron for

a night out. A deft line or two of make-up about the eyes, a change in the curve of the eyebrows, had altogether altered the contour of her face.

Wylie was no longer the debonair, suave, well-dressed gentleman. His graying hair had been darkened with a temporary preparation. A cap was pulled down over one eye. A sweater and a pair of old trousers completed the transformation that was as complete as that of Vivian.

Keeping a cautious distance from the pair they trailed, the taxi occupied by Vivian and Wylie wandered half-way across Naples, it seemed, before turning into a black little street. Just ahead of them the other car was drawn up before a building where light gleamed through a door of painted green glass. As they watched, Vedova Bey and Joseph Arbajian passed through the door.

Waiting a few moments, Vivian and Wylie followed. The ceiling of the room they entered was low, the room narrow and not well lighted. The walls were askew, as if the house, growing old, had decided to fall down, but on second thought decided to wait awhile. One or two of the patrons looked up indifferently. There was no sign of the two men they had been following.

A man with a big mustache, dark eyes, pale face and short, stout body came on a trot to make them welcome.

Wylie asked for a private room.

The man's hands went up in a gesture of disappointment. There was only one private room and that had been engaged, not five minutes before. But he would give them a table in a corner where they would be secluded. He pointed to a table in a little alcove near the door.

Wylie shook his head and indicated a table at the far end of the long room—

a table only a few feet from the door where the proprietor had emerged—most likely the private room that held the two men they sought.

For nearly fifteen minutes they sat, talking in low tones, giving a perfect impersonation of what they were supposed to be.

Vivian faced the doorway. At last she stiffened and broke off in the midst of a sentence. Her glance, with startled intensity, struck on Wylie's face.

"Camilla," she breathed through half-closed lips. Her eyes were hard, as emeralds are hard, as she furtively watched the girl.

#### IV

CAMILLA came into the room with an assurance that betokened familiarity with it, and the greeting of the proprietor gave evidence that she was known to him. A single word passed between them, and then Camilla made straight for the door beside Vivian and Wylie. Her glance swept them indifferently as she passed, but there was no recognition in it as she opened the door and went in.

Wylie looked up, a wordless question in his eyes. A furtive gesture of Vivian's hand bade him wait. For a moment or two they sat there until the stout proprietor passed out of the room into the kitchen in the rear. Then, with a swift movement, Vivian Le-grand was on her feet. Noiselessly she opened the door and slipped through, followed by Wylie. So swift, so noiseless were their movements that none of the other patrons of the place had noted what they were doing.

They found themselves in a narrow corridor which ended in a curtain-masked doorway at the far end. Light filtered around its edges, and from behind came the voice of Camilla,



mingled with that of Vedova Bey.

The two spies crept to the curtain on noiseless feet and peered through. The three were seated around a table, and with them was a fourth person, Raoul Valente, Monte Carlo underworld leader, his right hand still bandaged.

"You are late," Vedova Bey was saying to Camilla.

"I know," the woman answered.

"Did you get the money?"

"Not yet," Vedova Bey told her.

"We will get it between Naples and Constantinople, and you shall have your share in Constantinople."

Camilla's evilly passionate eyes were suspicious as she fixed them on the Levantine Monster.

"Have you tried?" she queried.

Vedova Bey nodded. "Tried—and failed. But there will be no failure next time."

"But I do not understand how you could fail," Raoul Valente put in.

"Jacob was a fool last night," snarled Vedova Bey, his yellowish, cat-like eyes gleaming. "If he had been more careful the money would be in our hands now. Three attempts, and all three failures."

"It was not my fault," protested Jacob. "The first time was too public, too dangerous. You said yourself that it must be done without the knowledge of anyone. Then, I could not know that she would not drink the poisoned water. Not my fault. And the third time you could have done no more yourself. The woman was in her berth. I fired six shots at her. Is it my fault if she is a witch woman bullets cannot kill?"

"Witch?" snarled Vedova Bey. His voice spat venom as he turned to Camilla and her companion.

"The fool fired at a shadow, a fold of the bed clothes—anything except

the woman. But tonight will be different. I will take charge myself, and she will be killed without a trace and her body tossed into the sea. Then we may walk ashore in Constantinople with the money in safety."

Vivian Legrand turned to Wylie and whispered hurried instructions in his ear. He nodded, but demurred



VEDOVA BEY

at leaving her there alone. She overruled him and turned back to the curtain as Wylie, after peering through a crack in the door, slipped out without being seen.

"There is bound to be a stir when she is found missing," Camilla was saying doubtfully. Even if your influence with the Turkish authorities is great enough to prevent anything more than a perfunctory inquiry, her consul will make trouble. There will be questions, a search."

The Levantine Monster chuckled. "Not for a suicide," he said. "The lady has been very disconsolate. So she leaps overboard."

"Disconsolate?" began Camilla.

"It will all be explained in the note

she leaves behind," the Monster told her. "You are not aware that the little Suzette who travels with me has other uses besides that of being beautiful? There is no handwriting she cannot imitate. The French police know that even better than I do."

A DOOR that Vivian Legrand had not previously noticed on the other side of the room opened and the stout proprietor of the tavern entered. He was obviously agitated, and she watched in silence as he made his way to Vedova Bey and whispered. Somewhere inside her that little warning bell of intuition rang a sharp alarm.

Vedova Bey turned his head slightly and smiled.

"*Won't you come out and join us, there behind the curtain?*" he said smoothly. "You might as well, since the other end of the passage is guarded."

The man's words seemed to hang there in the air while the eyes of the four in the room converged on the curtains behind which Vivian Legrand lurked.

The shock of being discovered for a moment took her breath away. She wheeled to look behind her. The door which Wylie had closed when he left was slightly ajar, and silhouetted in the opening she could see the figure of a man with a gun.

She was in a trap, and a desperate one.

Hardly more than ten seconds had passed before she thrust the curtains aside and stepped into the room. With a cool smile on her lips she approached the table. Close to it she halted, her narrowed eyes flitting to each of them in turn.

Vedova Bey peered at her intently, with outthrust head. His yellow eyes

were unwinking. Vivian Legrand met their stare steadily and calmly. Her brain was clicking with machinelike precision. Five of them to deal with, one in the passage behind her, and no telling how many cutthroats in the tavern outside. And there were six cartridges in the gun in the hand concealed by the folds of her wide skirt. In that she had the advantage. They did not know she was armed.

"And to what do I owe the pleasure of this—visit?" Vedova Bey inquired with sinister menace.

"You smiled at me out there," Vivian Legrand said. She nodded her head toward the other room. She was gay. Her eyes were sparkling, her mouth quirked in a mocking smile. "You did not come back—so I came in."

She took a step forward. Sharp apprehension flashed in the deep yellow eyes, but before Vedova Bey could divine her intent, she brought the butt of her gun down in a smashing blow upon his temple. It was a terrific blow, and he dropped almost as if he were dead.

A cry went up from Camilla—a cry like the merciless "Au-rr-ugh" of a wolf calling the pack to the kill.

Even as Vivian Legrand straightened up from the blow a thrown knife grazed her shoulder. She realized that Valente, now on his feet, could throw a knife with his left hand almost as well as with his right. A quick glance over her shoulder showed her the fifth man, his mouth open in astonishment, just pushing aside the curtains that masked the doorway through which she had come.

Valente was the only one who had made a move toward her. The others seemed, somehow, to think themselves unfairly tricked by seeing a gun in the



hand of a woman they had thought unarmed.

Before they could recover from their astonishment, Vivian Legrand spun about and her gun spat flame at the man in the doorway. He dropped, and without pausing to see whether he actually was out of the fight or not, she wheeled around and put a bullet into Valente—who, too late, was attempting to rush her.

Long in the telling but short in the doing. Almost before Valente's body had crumpled to the floor and while Camilla's scream was still hanging in the air, Vivian Legrand was at the curtain-masked doorway through which she had entered, was down the passage and in the tavern itself. It was empty.

As she opened the door there was the noiseless tiptoe of a foot and the door to the kitchen opened. The stout proprietor peered into the long room.

He gave Vivian Legrand one long stare, caught sight of the gun in her hand, turned with a yell of fright and bolted. A moment later there was the sound of a heavy object being pushed against the door. Silence followed, silence so complete and abrupt as to give the uneasy sensation that the sound had been only a fantastic trick of the mind.

# V

VIVIAN LEGRAND did not stop. At any moment Jacob or Camilla might burst out of the passage behind her with spitting gun. She wasted no thoughts upon the two men she had shot down. That was like her.

So now she fled down the long, empty room, jerked open the door and found herself in the dark street. At the corner a taxi waited, with the driver asleep on the seat. He woke to the prod

of her gun and in another moment the car was bumping over the cobbled street.

A block from her destination she stopped the taxi and got out. It was a dark little side street, with an uneven narrow sidewalk and cobbled street. In the shadowy alcove of a huddle of buildings she found Wylie waiting as arranged.

Swiftly she gave him a résumé of what had happened, and then asked a single question herself:

"Is it arranged?"

Wylie nodded. "No trouble at all. We deliver the goods and collect the cash."

There was little said after this. Vivian was keenly aware of the difficulty of the thing she had set out to do. Her brain was working coolly, methodically; and in her half-closed eyes was something more deadly and remorseless than is ordinarily found in the eyes of any woman.

Camilla Tomasino would fight her, would she? Fight Vivian Legrand? All right. But she would fight back. And Camilla, if she lived long enough to regret it, would rue to her last day the impulse that made her fight.

Cloaked in the shadows Vivian and Wylie waited until a car drove up and Camilla disembarked. Vivian did not move, but her hand tightened on Wylie's arm.

The car drove off and she whispered a single terse word to Wylie. With swift, noiseless tread he was at the side of the black-haired girl. Before Camilla could utter a word his arm had tightened about her neck and Vivian Legrand had pressed a handkerchief, soaked in chloroform, to her mouth and nostrils.

A few moments more and a man and a woman, supporting between them

the limp form of a woman who had evidently had too much liquor, made their way down the street. Fifteen minutes more and the taxi they had picked up deposited Vivian, Wylie and their limp burden before a tumble-down shack at the corner of a smelly alley. An old woman opened the door at their knock, a woman whose gray, lank hair fell about her face.

The old woman looked at Camilla's still white face in the yellow rays of the lamp on the table and nodded her head.

"She will do," she croaked. "One thousand liras, you say?"

"Five thousand," Vivian snapped.

"I can never get that for her," whined the old woman. "Girls are cheap now."

"Not this kind," Vivian Legrand retorted calmly.

"Ai," whined the old woman, "but you are hard! However, there is a man in Salonica who wants just such a one as she—Gregor Vedova, with whom I have done business in the past. I will be hard with him as you are with me."

Irony lurked in the depths of Vivian Legrand's greenish eyes as the old woman pulled a roll of bills from beneath her filthy dress and began to count them out. It appealed to her sense of humor that Camilla should be sold to the brother of Vedova Bey, the Levantine Monster.

"There," the old woman said as she paid over the last bill. "You have your five thousand. And if you ever have another like her, Old Mother Salina will take her off your hands. But not at this price. Not at this price!"

She was still cackling and rubbing her hands when Vivian and Wylie closed the door and stepped into the street again.

"I think," Vivian Legrand said

calmly, as they started for the ship, "that Camilla will regret for a very long time that she did not remain in Monte Carlo and mind her own business."

THEY boarded the ship separately, and her face was thoughtful as she hurriedly removed her disguise. The affair was not ended by any means.

Discreet inquiries of her room steward had elicited the information that Vedova Bey and Jacob had come aboard more than an hour before. Vedova Bey had been in an accident, the man informed her, and was wearing a bandage upon his head. Vivian Legrand smiled grimly at the information. The man was lucky that he was not lying in his coffin.

She was still thoughtful when she met Wylie a few minutes later. They were passing the purser's office when that worthy himself called to her:

"I am desolated, Madame Legrand, to have been absent this afternoon," he told her, "but my assistant conveyed your message to me. You may be quite sure that we shall say nothing of you having withdrawn your valuables. But are you sure, *madame*, that it is quite safe?"

Vivian stared at him incredulously for a moment. This was the one thing her agile brain had not expected, had not prepared for. And then into her mind flashed a sentence that the Levantine Monster had uttered an hour or so before:

"The little Suzette has other uses besides being beautiful. There is no handwriting she cannot imitate . . ."

A flash of inward lightning seemed to quiver across her face.

"You still have my receipt?" she asked abruptly, and at the purser's, "But, of course, *madame*!" she went on.



"Would you permit me to see it? I am not quite sure that I signed it as I did my deposit slip, and I should like the transaction to be quite in order, of course."

"It is the same, *madame*," he assured her, as he opened a drawer in the safe and took out a printed form. "Had it not been the same you would not have obtained the envelope with your valuables, even though we knew you to be the owner."

Vivian Legrand glanced at the slip he laid before her. For a moment Wylie's eyes were caught by a glinting stare. Those green eyes seemed to flame with an emotion which did not appear on the carved ivory mask of the face. The signature *was* the same. It was one of the most beautiful forgeries she had ever seen.

Every nerve in her body was tense with the effort of maintaining a careless smile as she handed the slip of paper back to the purser.

"It is the same," she said quietly.

So that was why her room had been searched. They were clever, this Levantine Monster and his gunman. They had found the purser's deposit slip in its hiding place, the girl had copied it, and then it had been cunningly replaced so that her suspicions might not be aroused.

Then the girl, disguising herself to look as much as possible like Vivian, had presented a forged deposit slip and received the envelope containing her jewels and nearly a million francs in currency.

That was why the girl had studied her so steadily that morning at breakfast . . . why, all through the day she had found the girl watching her furtively on deck . . .

They planned now to kill her and to walk off the ship in complete posses-

sion of the money and the situation.

Vivian Legrand smiled grimly. That was their plan. But she had another.

## VI

WITH a furtive look to make sure that she was not observed, Vivian Legrand closed the door of the Levantine Monster's cabin behind her and stepped into the corridor. Her search had been thorough. Secure in the knowledge that neither Vedova Bey or his pretty companion would leave the deck, where Wylie was entertaining them, she had ransacked every available hiding place. Her missing money was not in the cabin.

She had not expected the money to be so casually hidden that she would stumble over it immediately, but neither had she expected the man to take extraordinary precautions in hiding it. She knew that they were counting on her not learning that the money had been withdrawn on a forged receipt, and of there being no search made for it.

Noiselessly she slipped down the corridor to Cabin 51, occupied by Jacob. She knew that he had retired an hour or more before, and the fact that the room was in darkness would seem to indicate that he was asleep. She listened carefully at the door. The man was asleep. His deep, regular breathing was clearly audible.

Entering quietly with a skeleton key she found that sufficient light came through the porthole to make her electric torch unnecessary. Then she slid over to the berth and listened again. There was no doubt of it. The man was sound asleep.

Carefully she placed the peculiar weapon she carried on the edge of the wash basin—a weapon that seemed harmless enough and yet was, as she

knew, much more effective than a gun in a situation where the sound of a gun would be fatal. It was something her fertile brain had devised, and was, in later years, to become part of the equipment of every member of the Legrand gang when on an errand like this.

Then she set to work. Every bit of baggage was gone through. Every space that could have possibly held the money and her jewels was ransacked. But without success.

And then her eyes lit on the one place that she had not searched. Noiselessly she crossed the cabin to it.

The steamer, like most of the pre-war vessels in the Turkish trade, was not equipped with running water. Instead, each cabin had a small tank which was supposed to be kept filled by the steward.

Lifting the top of this white enameled tank, Vivian Legrand plunged her hand into it. A smile of triumph illuminated her face as she brought up a dripping package wrapped in oilskin.

And then tragedy swept upon her with sinister swiftness.

An intuition, a sudden leaping of her nerves from no visible warning, saved her. She leaped sidewise under this intuitive impulse as the extended hand of the man behind her aimed a blow at her head with a revolver held clubwise. And at almost the same instant she struck with the edge of her hand on the man's wrist, a short chopping blow that sent the gun spinning into the corner of the room.

Jacob Arbatian flashed on the light, and for a moment the two, the killer and the woman, stood there staring at one another.

Jacob was between Vivian and the door, and his eyes were fixed on her with a dancing alertness as he backed

slowly, a step at a time, toward the corner where his gun had fallen.

For once, Vivian Legrand was not armed with a gun. True, she had that strange weapon, but it lay on the edge of the washbasin where she had left it to reach for the oilskin package. She could not reach it in a single backward leap, but she dared not make that leap, because that single instant of time would give the man the opportunity to leap for his own gun.

Not a word was spoken by either. Slowly, so slowly as to be almost imperceptible, Vivian Legrand backed toward the washbasin where her own weapon lay, and slowly the man inched toward his own gun on the floor.

Then he flung himself forward, snatched it up. His finger was just curving on the trigger when some sixth sense caused him to glance at her right hand.

"Put your hand down!" he screamed. "I'll shoot. I'll—"

He broke off with a horrible, high-pitched, choking noise. He stumbled back and crashed to the floor, clawing frantically at his eyes.

"Oh, my God!" he moaned. "I'm blind! My eyes! You've put them out. I can't see!"

His lips slobbered. He kicked and writhed on the floor. Concentrated ammonia does that. It burns the eyes and scorches and strangles. Renders a man immediately helpless.

Vivian Legrand's weapon had been a small rubber syringe filled with the stuff, and she had squirted a fine spray full into the man's face. She dropped the syringe back into the washbasin and started toward the door.

Almost simultaneously there was the muffled sound of a shot from the porthole, barely distinguishable a dozen feet away because of the fact



that the gun from which it came bore a silencer.

Jacob crumpled to the floor, a gaping hole in his forehead. Almost instantly Vivian Legrand threw herself to one side. Her hand found the light switch, plunged the room in darkness. Then, keeping out of the light that streamed through the porthole, she crept across the cabin and flung open the door.

Standing outside, blocking her passage, was Vedova Bey, the Levantine Monster.

WITH a quick gesture he thrust her back into the room, stepped inside and closed the door behind him. A quick turn of his wrist and the door was locked and the key in his pocket.

"I was a fool this afternoon," the man said. "I should have realized that a woman clever enough to have worked that trick in Monte Carlo would be clever enough to fit two and two together and get to the bottom of Jacob's rather clumsy attempts upon your life. But when you shot your way out of that trap this afternoon it did not occur to me that it might be you."

"Jacob," Vivian Legrand said with deadly calm, "seems to have paid for his carelessness."

"I do not regret having to shoot him," the Levantine Monster said with an indifferent glance at the still form on the floor. "He deserved it."

"Now," went on Vedova Bey, his eyes again fixed upon her, "if you will

be so kind as to give me the little package you have there you may go."

Fire flashed instantly into Vivian's greenish eyes. She struck out swiftly and boldly.

"Do you realize," she told him, with just the right amount of calm insolence in her voice, "that you have just murdered a man? Even though this be technically Turkish soil, there will be inquiries."

"I murder my friend—my very dear friend and companion?"

"Do you think, my dear Madame Legrand, that I intend to take the blame for a murder that you committed? No. Most assuredly not. You had a rendezvous with my companion. You quarreled. You shot him. And now I, out of the goodness of my heart, am offering you an opportunity to escape before the crime is discovered. Will you give me the bag, now?" he added, apparently as an afterthought.

Instead he found himself staring into the muzzle of the revolver Jacob had dropped when he fell to the floor.

"If you will be so kind as to step aside," Vivian Legrand suggested, "you will live a great deal longer than if you compel me to shoot." Her voice came low, steady with threat. "The authorities might be interested in knowing that I was passing. I heard a shot. I flung open the door and found you standing over your victim, the smoking revolver in your hand."

The Levantine Monster shook his head. There was a light in his eyes that

Coming next week—

**Jimmie Dale**

in "The Missing Hour," by Frank L. Packard

warned her that he had not played his last card.

"That was clever," he said, and his slight smile deepened into a sneer. "It took an exceedingly agile brain to think of that on the spur of the moment. But, unfortunately, I had anticipated something of the sort. For that reason, I stationed my little Suzette in the hallway. We were together, Suzette and I, we heard the shot. I flung open the door and found *you* standing over your victim." He shot a glance at Vivian Legrand. "Ah, you do not believe." He raised his voice and called.

"I am here," came the voice of a woman from beyond the door panel.

"Now will you give me the bag?"

"I will not," Vivian Legrand said.

"IF you will hand the bag to me," said Wylie's voice at the porthole, "that will end the matter."

The slim and menacing muzzle of a revolver peered through the porthole, covering Vedova Bey.

"I witnessed the whole thing," came Wylie's calm voice. "It was most fortunate that I was on deck, just outside the cabin, and heard and witnessed the whole thing through the porthole. You, *madame*, if you will hand me the bag, I will deposit it with the purser for you."

Vedova Bey had stepped back involuntarily against the door jamb as Wylie first spoke. He leaned there, anger flaring in his eyes as Vivian Legrand swiftly crossed the cabin and handed the bag to Wylie through the porthole. He tried vainly to catch one glimpse of the face of the man to whom she handed it, but the darkness outside baffled him.

"You do not realize," he said slowly, "that I am powerful in Constantinople. That my power is great. You

will surely be sent to prison unless you deal with me. You have committed a murder. I am a witness against you. No one will believe that I, Vedova Bey, would murder my companion."

"Beat it," Vivian told him, anger rising in her like a tide. Forgotten was the fact that her position in a court of law would be a dubious one. Forgotten was the fact that it would be futile to appeal to a consul for aid.

She walked determinedly toward the door.

But Vedova Bey did not move. He still stood there at the doorway, blocking her progress.

"I do not think it will be necessary for me to tell anything," he said softly. "While we have been talking, I have been leaning against the call bell, pressing it with my shoulder. Listen."

She did. There was the sound of voices in the corridor.

"The steward—the night watchman," explained the Levantine Monster. "The constant ringing of the bell has brought them."

A hammering sounded on the door, a shouted command to open.

"Turkish prisons are not pleasant places," said the Levantine Monster, as he took the key from his pocket and prepared to fit it into the door. "Perhaps after the experience of a few days in one of them you may decide to talk to me. I have great authority in Constantinople."

He turned the key in the lock.

"I may go to prison," Vivian Legrand told him grimly, "but I won't stay there. And I won't buy my way out by paying you, either."

Vedova Bey bowed with a smile, threw open the door.

"Summon the captain," he said curtly to the men on the threshold. "A murder has been committed."



# The Thin Hand



His hands and fingers stiffened into claws as he approached the foot of the bed

*Was It Death for the Old Man — Lying There Too Helpless Even to Shrink from That Reaching Hand?*

By Edmond Du Perrier

THE old man on the bed in the ancient farm mansion listened attentively to the footsteps in the hallway below. His eyes brightened. His thin, withered hand moved slowly to the side of the bed. The magazine rack, adjusted so that he might read while lying flat on his back, swung to the windows, shaded now against the night.

The bed stood in an alcove, which it filled. The alcove was brilliantly lighted. While the farmhouse was old, its electrical fixtures were modern, for Jacob Matthews was intensely interest-

ed in electricity. It had been an electrical magazine he had been perusing when he heard the footsteps.

Like all invalids, his ears had become acutely attuned to the meaning of sounds. He had recognized those footsteps instantly; had been expecting them.

The door swung open. A tall, debonaire young man stood in the doorway, smiling pleasantly. At first glance he gave the impression of a faultlessly dressed young man of the world. The second glance hinted at something wrong. The old man touched immediately upon that fault.

"Well, David, I've been expecting you," he said. "Not until tomorrow, however." The aged paralytic's lips moved into a crooked, wintry smile. "I hope you enjoyed your latest incarceration."

"Of course. Prison's quite a charming place." David touched his clothing. "A trifle loose. Prison diet does not incline me to obesity. However, a little good living will soon remedy that."

"Undoubtedly," agreed the old man, "provided you procure it."

"I shall," said the young man cheerfully. "For you, dear uncle, shall provide."

"Ah!" sighed the old man. "And you made post-haste—"

"Exceeding haste, I assure you. Very modern since I went up. At two hundred miles an hour—by airplane."

"And saved a day. By the way, we've turned quite modern here. You like the lighting arrangements?"

"Excellent. You're still tinkering with electricity, then? I'll appreciate it when I—"

"I see," Matthews interrupted. "You have come to plunder."

"And to kill," the young man added.

"Twice, perhaps?"

"Your paralysis hasn't dimmed your perceptive faculties, 'King' Matthews. I'll be a little reception committee of one when Orin returns from his call on that bovine-looking female up the road. I presume that you have not changed the will?"

"Your presumption is correct. In case of Orin's death—and mine, of course—you become the sole heir."

"Splendid," said the tall young man, seating himself in a chair in the center of the room. He nodded at his uncle pleasantly. "Roger, then, still persists in refusing any of your filthy lucre?"

"Yes. A stubborn but estimable young man. And his latest letter assures me that his fortunes are in a remarkably healthy state."

"Lucky ass," the young man snorted.

"Perhaps. Matter of attitude. Anyway, it's not a bad idea for you to have it. Orin and Roger have sufficient intestinal fortitude to survive comfortably. Two hundred thousand will but bring you to hell that much sooner."

"You can't insult me," laughed David. "To hell, yes. And I'll make it an enjoyable passage."

## II

THE young man sat back in a moment of pleasant reverie. In a few moments he would kill his uncle—later, Orin, his cousin. He and his uncle had always enjoyed their hatred. Their brutal frankness, dressed in excessive politeness, had always been part of the game.

There were only three of them—and "King" Matthews, head of the clan. Roger and David were brothers—Orin a cousin. The three had been orphaned early. Jacob Matthews had controlled them as far as he could.

Orin, a quiet chap, had molded his life to fit that of the old man. He alone had cared for the aged paralytic. Roger, an independent rebel, had gone his own way, to success. David, an equally independent rebel, had also gone his own way—the other way. He had eschewed work and ambition. His uncle had cut off his income. He had lied, stolen, and victimized anyone who would believe in him. And he had taken three trips to the penitentiary.

Another trip would threaten his freedom for life. Murder—a double murder—would give him financial freedom.

The old man would be simple. The ancient farmhouse was far from neighbors, isolated in a grove of ancient walnuts. The old man was perfectly helpless; he could scarcely move his hands. A slight pressure of the fin-



gers on the throat, a little unnecessary roughness, would stop that feeble heart. Murder without a trace of violence.

And Orin. In this dark, gloomy house he would be easy to waylay and bludgeon into death.

The old man seemed unmoved by his threats. But that was true to King Matthews' character. He would bandy polite sarcasms at the door of his tomb. He stared at the old man; his lips coiled in a smile. Yes, the old man was perfectly helpless. The bright lights, and a little yellow beam at the edge of the coverlet, accentuated the old man's frailty.

The old man's eyes lighted with sardonic laughter.

"Oh, you think I won't get away with it, King? Rather outsmarted you, I think. Arrived a day early. And I have a perfect alibi. In truth, I'm hundreds of miles away. At this moment I'm in the Rialto in Portland. The coppers always give a studious evening to the patrons of that place. Met an actor chap in prison. Almost my double. A touch of make-up and—officially I'm there."

"Three trips to the prison should have sharpened your criminal wits," agreed the old man. "It seems perfect."

His head sank wearily, and his thin arms stretched out slowly over the coverlet. Every vestige of strength had gone from those paper-thin hands.

"I'm tired, David," he said in a different tone. "Talked—talked too much."

The young man rose. "Forgive me, dear uncle," he said with curled lips. "I shall trouble you but a moment longer." The lines of his face changed. The debonairness, the acquired charm of manner, vanished behind a mask

which displayed all of David Matthews' depravity, viciousness and hatred.

"King Matthews," he sneered. "All my life I've waited for this moment. I'm going to crush the life from you as if you were a fly. King! I'm king now. Your Matthews' honor—your Matthews' wealth! Your purse-proud whiphand over me! But now—I've got you where I want you. I've got it all—now! And you can't turn a hand to defend yourself."

"David, I—"

MURDER leaped into David Matthews' eyes. His hands and fingers stiffened into claws. He started for the only approachable side of the bed in the alcove.

The old man's hand moved feebly, as if he wished to lift it in defense. It cut across the little yellow beam at the coverlet's edge.

The roar of a sawed-off shotgun thundered in the bedroom. David doubled in the middle, gasped once, and thudded to the floor. Smoke rose from twin holes in the panel scrolling. The holes were lined to cover anyone standing at the edge of the bed.

King Matthews' hand moved slightly, and the little yellow beam reappeared.

"Too bad, David," he murmured to the dead man on the floor. "Always the single error. I *could* turn a hand to defend myself, although that turn is about the limit of my strength."

His hand moved to the opposite side of the bed, contacted another tiny beam. The magazine rack slowly swung back to place before him. He watched its progress.

"Amazing things, these 'electric eyes,' David. Their worth to mankind is truly astounding."





# ILLUSTRATED CRIMES

by Paul Berdanier

## THE BOBBED-HAIR BANDIT OF BROOKLYN

**A**pril Fools' Day, 1924, five hundred policemen were prowling the streets of Brooklyn, N.Y., looking for one small, slight, bobbed-haired girl, the first of New York's famous gun-girls. She and a tall man had held up store after store in Brooklyn.

**B**ut William Christie, an order clerk at the National Biscuit Co., wasn't alarmed when a small girl wearing a turban and a black sealskin coat entered and asked for the manager. Suddenly a tall young man came in, holding two big revolvers. The bobbed-haired bandit drew a pistol.

"**H**ands up, everybody, and make it snappy!" the man ordered.

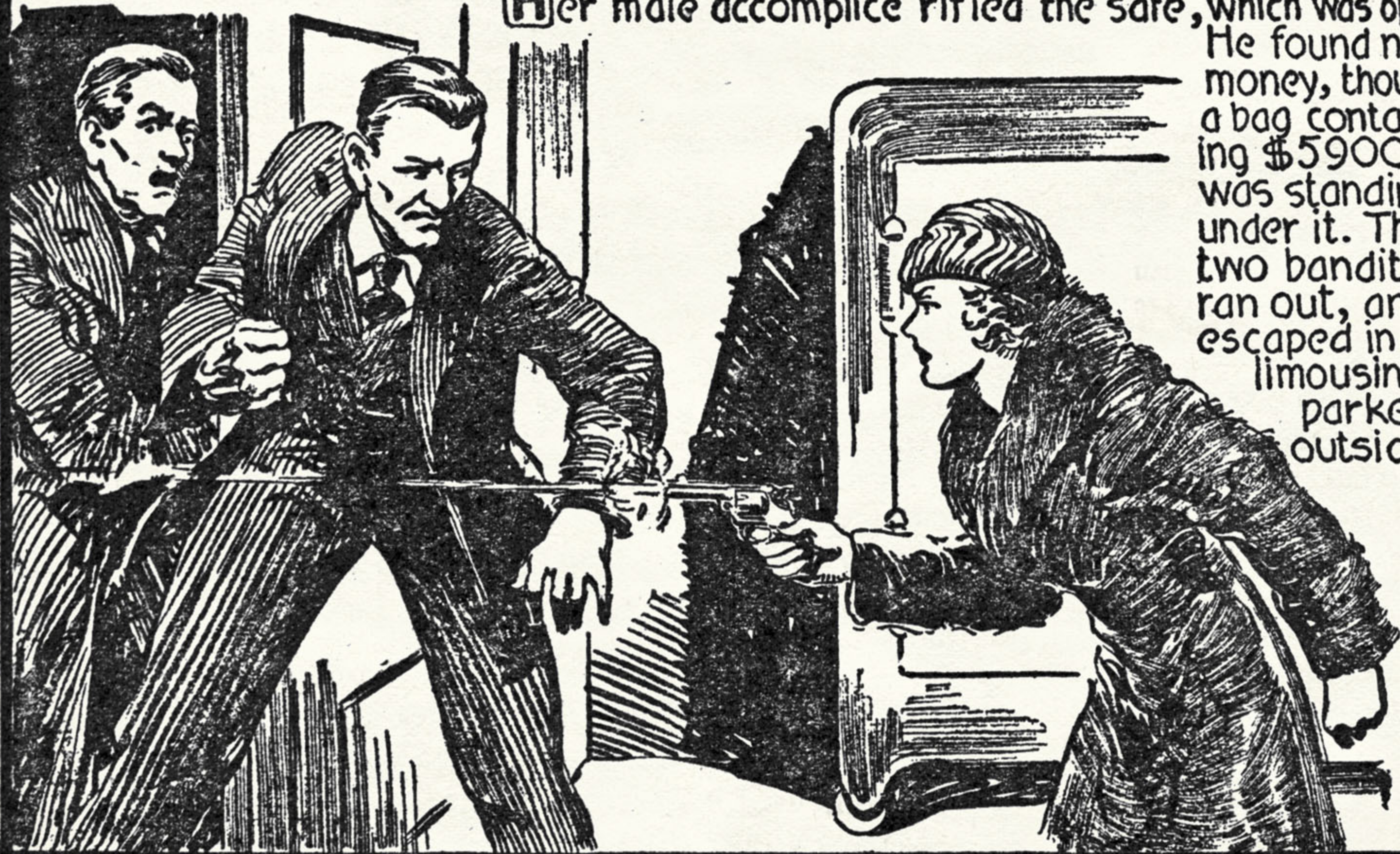
**T**he office force obeyed. The bandits herded them into a large closet, but the last man to enter made a snatch at the girl's gun. She fired. The bullet missed, but when her assailant leaped into the closet and slammed the door she fired through the panels, wounding him severely.



CELIA COONEY

**H**er male accomplice rifled the safe, which was open.

He found no money, though a bag containing \$5900 was standing under it. The two bandits ran out, and escaped in a limousine parked outside.



COMING NEXT WEEK—



The police traced the limousine to its owner and found that it had been hired by a "Mr. and Mrs. Parker" of Boston.

The only other clue was the condition of the girl. People who had seen her reported that she was going to become a mother.

Though the name "Parker" was fictitious, a nationwide watch on hospitals located Celia Cooney and her husband Ed in Jacksonville, Fla. A baby had been born and had died.

The undertaker who buried the infant, and a letter written to Celia's parents asking for money led to the arrest of the Cooneys, suspected of being the "Parkers."

In Jacksonville detectives went early in the morning to arrest the Cooneys. They were known to be desperate. The detectives wanted to surprise them asleep. They found the door locked, rapped on it, and ordered the bandits to surrender. Ed Cooney wanted to shoot it out, or commit suicide. Celia seized his gun.

"Don't shoot! I'll open the door as soon as I get dressed!" she called to the detectives.

They waited a moment, and then broke down the door.

The bobbed-haired bandit faced them with a gun in each hand, but the muzzles faltered, pointed to the floor.

Celia Cooney and her husband confessed to the long series of robberies, and were sentenced to ten years. She explained she had turned gun-girl only to give her expected baby a better chance. She was paroled three years ago and is now living an honest life.



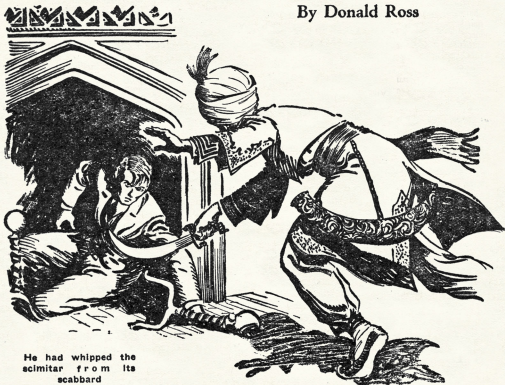
EDWARD COONEY



## THE HYPNOTIC POISONER OF INA, ILL.

# Bring Him Back Alive!

By Donald Ross



He had whipped the scimitar from its scabbard

## *Trapped in a Black Crypt Swarming with Foes, Jack Fights a Last Weird Duel for the Secrets of Enescro's Castle*

### WHAT HAS GONE BEFORE

**W**HEN Jack Laurence went to England, it was on a strange assignment. His orders were: "Find the man who calls himself Sir Ronald Enescro. Get him—and bring him back alive!"

Enescro, wanted for starting Red riots in the United States, was a neighbor of Arthur Ainsworth, a former classmate of Jack's, and at Ainsworth's suggestion, Laurence went down there for the weekend.

Ray Bronson, an American jewel thief, made Laurence a strange proposition.

Enescro, he said, had stolen one of the famous gems of history—the diamond known as the Moon of Monabar. Bronson proposed that he accompany Laurence as his valet, steal the diamond, and sell it back to the British government. Laurence, at the same time, by exposing Enescro as a *bona fide* criminal, would smooth the path for quick extradition.

Even before they arrived at Oswald Abbey, Ainsworth's estate, tragedy had struck. Upstairs lay the body of the village constable, mysteriously garrotted. And that very night the assassins struck again. For as Sir Ronald, over for a visit, was leaving, a turbaned shape, knife in hand, crept over the wall. Jack managed to frighten the intruder away and save the life of the man he was trailing.

The next morning he was told curtly by his host that he was no longer welcome.

This story began in DETECTIVE FICTION WEEKLY for February 9



In spite of the protestations of Theodora, Ainsworth's sister, Jack was ejected and returned to London.

What could be the reason for this sudden change of front? It could mean but one thing—Enescro had been informed of Jack's real mission in England.

Quickly disaster struck again. An immigration officer called to deport Jack as an undesirable alien. Furious, he overpowered the man and escaped, with Scotland Yard on his tracks. While fleeing he met Sadie, a coochie dancer, who suggested an ingenious way out. Ignominious as it was, he took it—and became the Wild Man in a little traveling sideshow. Blacked up, he was able to evade pursuit. Meanwhile he watched for the chance to resume his fight against his unseen and powerful enemies.

The opportunity came sooner than he had expected. It started on the night that Theodora, unknowing of his identity, visited the show. A cigarette tossed into his cage started a blaze and subsequent panic, and Jack rescued the girl after her escort had deserted her. Inasmuch as he was now sought by the police as a witness, as well as wanted for assaulting the immigration officer, Jack decided to break off with Sadie, to save her from possible arrest.

Bronson, at the same time, gave him news which made quick action imperative. Theodora was engaged to Sir Ronald Enescro. Jack persuaded the girl to meet him, but she remained deaf to any suggestions that Enescro was a crook. As Jack left her he was seized by Scotland Yard men and taken to the Foreign Office for questioning.

Here he received a welcome surprise. Jack learned that his mission was known to them, at least in part. While they deplored the means he had taken, and while he was technically liable to arrest at any time, they gave him to understand that they—unofficially, of course—wished his mission every success. He stepped out of the office a free man—and with a free rein to track down the man who was trying to ruin America.

Once more the assassins struck, and this time very close to home. Bronson, the thief who had helped Jack, who was even then planning a cleverly conceived foray into Enescro's home, was murdered in his

bed—strangled with a thin silk cord, like the others. Jack, however, had obtained the plan to the castle from Ray.

Now, above all, time was an important factor. The police sought Jack as the last man who had seen Bronson alive—at any moment they might follow his tracks to the little Devon cottage in which he had been hiding.

So he took the only possible gamble, the gamble that he and Bronson had planned to take together. Alone he went into the tunnel under Enescro's castle, making a lone raid on an armed fortress, where he would either lose his life or come back with proofs that would make Enescro a convicted murderer.

## CHAPTER XXVII

### A Lone Hand

FOR a minute, after I learned of Ray's death, it seemed as though nothing in the rest of that newspaper account could be of any possible interest or importance. But automatically I read on, and I found I had been wrong. Very wrong. For what I read was this:

As a result of statements made to an employee of this newspaper by the man Hobbs, Scotland Yard was forced to admit that this strange crime is connected with others.

Some time ago, in the village of Bennington, in Devon, one Henry Dobbs, local constable, was murdered exactly as was Bronson. Also an attempt was made upon the life of Sir Ronald Enescro by a man wearing a turban. Police think all these crimes are related.

Inspector Good positively identifies Mr. Bronson with one Green, who went with Mr. John Laurence to Mr. Arthur Ainsworth's residence, Oswald Manor, Bennington, Devon, as valet. Mr. Laurence, an American, like Mr. Ainsworth, was a week-end guest. It was Mr. Laurence who frustrated the attempt upon Sir Ronald Enescro's life and pursued the would-be assassin.

Inspector Good, who had a glimpse of the valet Green while investigating the

killing of Constable Dobbs, considered him a suspicious character and questioned Mr. Laurence regarding him. Mr. Laurence explained at the time that having no valet and needing one for the occasion, he had advertised, and that Green presented himself. The inspector checked his statement and found that the advertisement had appeared in several London journals.

There are other curious features to this affair. Laurence, for a reason not given, was recently ordered deported from the United Kingdom. Laurence attacked the officer who served the warrant, overpowered him and escaped. Police are searching for him assiduously.

Mr. Ainsworth states that he had known Laurence when they were fellow-students in Harvard University in America. Meeting him by chance, and having been deceived by the fellow's misrepresentations, he had invited him to spend a week-end at Oswald Manor. Upon learning that Laurence was not a desirable house guest, he requested him to leave after twenty-four hours, and Laurence complied.

Now it appears that Bronson had a house guest who resembled the description of Laurence and whom Bronson called by that name. Laurence departed from the house in St. John's Wood on the eve of the murder of Bronson—about ten o'clock, according to the servant. He took a suitcase and left no address. The police, naturally, wish to locate and question him. It is understood that Bronson's reputation in the United States is unsavory, that the American police suspect him of having been concerned in several notable jewel robberies.

**M**Y reactions to this cheerful article can easily be imagined.

As the police in England do not confide too freely to the press, it looked to me as though Inspector Good had supplied all this information for some purpose more or less sinister. Perhaps the persons responsible for my deportation order wished the Foreign Office to regret its interference.

I wondered if Good had extracted

from the manservant that I had departed and returned to the house in St. John's Wood as a dark man and made my second departure as a blond.

Apprehensions regarding my own safety were mingled with regret for the untimely death of my queer little friend. If they caught me, I could probably explain away everything but the killing of Peter Logan. Even if they didn't pin that on me, however, the Foreign Office would wash its hands of me and either allow me to be deported or jailed for the indignities that had been heaped upon Inspector Gaddish.

"What's eating you?" demanded Sadie. "You look like you'd been bit by a rattlesnake."

I folded the paper. "Pack your bags and get out of here, Sadie," I said sharply. "Ray isn't coming, the deal is off and you're going to America on the first boat."

"How do you know?" she demanded.

"Poor old Ray is dead, Sadie," I said mournfully. She turned pale.

"What happened? How?"

"Murdered. Looks like an East Indian had killed him."

She wiped away a tear with her little fist.

"In the paper?"

"Better not read it. Please don't."

She burst into tears and ran out of the room.

**I** WALKED up and down the room nervously. For the moment I was at my wit's end. I had made England too hot to hold me. From the day I had encountered Arthur Ainsworth I had blundered continuously. I had no business taking on Bronson as a valet for the Ainsworth week-end. I should not have accepted Arthur's



invitation to visit Oswald Manor because it was too obviously thrusting myself under the nose of Enescro.

At the time I had kidded myself that I must go to Ainsworth's because the manor was close to Enescro's residence, but the actual fact was that I went because I was infatuated with Theodora Ainsworth.

Hadn't Tom Keefe warned me not to get interested in women—any sort of women?

Enescro had observed the way my eye followed Theodora. He had made inquiries about me, learned my identity and business through his remarkable sources of information and arranged my deportation.

If I had approached him from some other angle, he might not have become suspicious.

My escape from the immigration official had caused this chain of damning incidents to pile up. The chain was long enough now to hang me. I ought to be hanged for a blundering fool.

I banged my right fist against my left palm. This enterprise upon which I had entered with Ray was crack-brained. I might have enabled him to get the jewel he was after but it was hardly likely to do me any good. Now Ray was dead; I was marooned here within a stone's throw of my enemy's castle; and the police of England were looking for me in three personalities—that of Follingsby, the dark man who had slain Peter Logan, and Jack Laurence, the friend and companion of Ray Bronson.

Theodora knew I was here. When she read of my latest entanglement would she continue to keep my secret? If she were engaged to Enescro, she must have a high regard for him. Suppose she thought it best to confide in him?

"Will I pack your things, Jack?" demanded Sadie from above.

"No, yes, no," I cried.

"You'd better come with me, hadn't you?"

"No, no. You go first. I'll follow."

"Well, all right."

I continued my idiotic pacing of the room. Minus a passport, I couldn't get out of England or into any other country. Sooner or later the efficient English police would lay hands on me. If they didn't suspect me of killing Logan, Enescro would put a flea in their ears.

"Sadie," I called. "The belongings of yours aren't worth much, are they?"

"Maybe five pounds," she called down. "Why?"

"Leave them behind you. Take anything which would identify you and conceal it on your person. I don't want it to look as if you were leaving for good. Take a train empty-handed, so people will think you're running up to town for a few hours."

"You're the doctor."

I sat down on the sofa. I was feeling better because I'd decided what to do.

Being a man whose bridges were all burned behind him, there was nothing for me to do but to go forward. Ray was dead but I'd carry on.

I had Peter Logan's automatic with six cartridges in it. Tonight I'd go into that tunnel and get into the castle, as Ray had planned to do. I knew that I'd be shot on sight as a house-breaker, that the chances of securing any worthwhile evidence against Enescro were slight, but there was something that I could do for my country and if the opportunity presented itself, I hoped I could rise to the occasion. It was a contingency I didn't

like to think of, hardly dared to think of.

SADIE came downstairs, hatted and gloved and looking very pretty.

"I'm going because you say I've got to," she told me. "I'll go to a cheap hotel called the William on Oxford Street and wait till I hear from you."

"No," I said firmly. "You go immediately to a steamship office and sail on the next boat. Go tourist cabin because you'll attract less attention. I want you out of England as quickly as possible."

"I can't sail until I get my passport."

I'd forgotten that contingency.

"Well, then," I told her. "Go to this William Hotel. Apply immediately for a passport but it's not likely that you'll hear from me before you sail."

"You want me to say good-by forever," she said glumly.

"No, no. I'll look you up in New York in a month or so. You must deny that you have seen your husband, Cedric, since he left you the night of the fire at Robbin's. And remember—you never saw or heard of Ray Bronson. You can't do me any good and you may do yourself much harm by remembering."

"If there is any way I can help you—"

"You can't."

"Well," she said sadly, "please kiss me good-by."

Her little face was twisted with distress as she put up her lips. I took her in my arms and kissed her. I was filled with tenderness for the good little sport and I was pretty certain that I'd never see her again in this life.

"I've burned some private letters

and stuck some junk jewelry in this handbag," she told me. "The stuff I'm leaving behind can't be identified. Isn't there anything I can do for you, Jack?"

"Yes," I told her, remembering suddenly I had given her all my money and I could no longer risk cashing a check. "Give me fifty of the two hundred pounds. I'll see that it's returned to you."

"Why, sure."

She handed me five ten-pound notes from the roll which she had parked in her stocking. We shook hands this time and I opened the door and she passed out. I watched her as she moved gracefully down the walk to the road and I could see her for some distance. Finally a grove of trees cut her from view.

"Anyway," I said aloud. "She's out of this mess."

THE hours dragged until dusk, when I ventured to go into the village and buy a flashlight at a hardware store. After that I made shift to cook myself some dinner and about ten o'clock decided that I might as well be about my enterprise.

During the walk to the spot where the cave was located I encountered nobody and I was reasonably certain that nobody set eyes on me.

I don't suppose that any man ever set forth upon a dangerous enterprise with so little hope. Ray had known definitely what he wanted and how to get it. He had a chart of the tunnel and the secret passages. He claimed to know the hiding place of the Moon of Monabar and he had chosen this night because he thought that Enescro would be in Paris.

I knew that Enescro was back; I didn't know where the jewel was hid-



den and I didn't want it. It was most unlikely that a man who had changed himself from a Mexican to a Rumanian would have preserved mementos of that portion of his life which might connect him with Alvarez, the escaped murderer, nor do people leave complete sets of their fingerprints hanging around.

I had decided to get into the castle because I had nothing to lose, because it was better to strike a blow than lie in hiding until the police dug me out, because I'd been sent to England to do a job and I had failed ignominiously. And because—well—let that wait.

I crawled through the mouth of the cave and then turned on my flashlight. The ceiling of the cave was low at the entrance and rose quickly to a height of six feet. I walked swiftly to the place where I had located the iron door and turned the flash on it.

Somebody had been here since my visit. The earth had been scraped off the trapdoor and piled up at either side. There was an iron ring by which the trap was lifted and this was free of dirt. It had been used recently.

So Ray's secret was no secret. Enesco himself might have come through the tunnel today, found its exit, inspected it and returned through the tunnel to the castle.

At the start of my enterprise its hopelessness was demonstrated. A sane man would have abandoned it. The thing to do was to go back. But go back where? To the Hathaway Cottage—to wait for Inspector Good to turn up? To London—where I'd had one experience of hiding-out, where sooner or later I'd fall into the hands of the law? I couldn't go back. I had to go on.

I pulled up the trapdoor, which lifted with suspicious ease. I turned

my flashlight into the hole. A flight of stone steps led downward. They were green with slime.

"Here goes nothing," I remarked with a crazy laugh and started down the steps, lowering the iron trap door noiselessly into place. There were a dozen steps and then I found myself upon a stone floor made slippery by some sort of fungus growth. The air in the tunnel was not bad, which meant there was some means of ventilation—probably airholes along its course.

I proceeded slowly and cautiously. The tunnel dipped, lifted again, dipped once more, and went down grade for a long distance, when it became level. It seemed to proceed in a straight line. My ears were alert for sounds. For all I knew somebody might be lying in wait in this weird underground passage. Ray had stated that it was half a mile long but it must have taken me an hour to cover that distance, so slowly did I proceed.

Nothing happened. Nobody rose up to bar my progress. I came at length against an iron door. The door of course, would be locked, in which case I'd have to go back to the exit and wait till the hounds trapped the foolish fox.

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## CHAPTER XXVIII

### Rat in a Wall

THERE was a heavy latch. I lifted it gingerly and pulled. To my surprise, the metal door swung open with a creaking of rusty hinges. In that place it sounded loud enough to wake the dead. I waited, listened, but heard no other sound. If, as Ray had said, a discharge of dynamite down these depths could not be heard in the inhabited part of the castle, the creaking of the door could have caused no alarm.

The flashlight showed me a small room beyond the door. I entered. At the left was a steep flight of stone steps with no railing. I climbed them. They deposited me in a passage which I followed for thirty feet, when I came upon another iron door. This also swung open when I lifted the latch and pulled. I stood in a low vaulted room of great size.

The air here was musty and unpleasant. While I'm a fellow who usually has his nerves under control, they were on edge by this time. At each second I expected enemies to plunge at me out of the darkness. I listened for breathing but there was no sound. Ray had not expected to obtain entrance into the crypts of the castle so easily. I had the evidence that the covering of earth had been swept off the trapdoor in the cave. Obviously, a visitor was expected and things were being made easy for him. Yet Enescro, if he knew of Ray's intentions, must be aware by this time that Ray was dead. And it was not unlikely he knew that I had planned to accompany him.

Finally I inspected the vault by the aid of the flash. It was empty save for a curious looking table in the center. I went over and looked at the table and drew back in horror. It was a medieval instrument of torture known as the rack.

I had blundered into the torture room of Dunhold Castle. Discerning a door at the far end of the room, I approached it. This also was unlocked and gave entrance to a long narrow corridor. There were low doorways at intervals on either side and I stopped and looked into one. It was a dungeon cell. There were no windows, no furnishings but I saw a pair of leg irons on a chain which I fastened to a ring in the stone floor.

Shuddering, I straightened up and followed the passage to the end. Here was a flight of steps but these led to an iron door and this door was locked.

Well, it was an interesting experience and it was over. Whoever had come through the passage, leaving unlocked doors, had finally passed through this one and locked it. Might as well go back where I started from.

Conscious of bitter disappointment, I walked slowly back to the place where I had entered the torture room but I couldn't find it. The room was rectangular in shape, I had entered through a door in one of its narrow sides, directly opposite the door to the dungeons, so it seemed.

There was no door, now, in that wall. Only solid masonry.

I RAN my flash along the four walls of the room. There was only one door, that which led to the dungeons. But I positively had come through an entrance in this wall. Enescro or somebody was playing with me as a cat plays with a mouse.

I lost my head.

"All right," I shouted. "You've got me. Come and take me."

An echo threw my words back at me.

That sort of thing wouldn't get me anything. I'd been in a lot of tough spots and got out. I was trapped all right but nothing had happened to me yet.

Behind the middle of this wall was an iron door. Naturally they would have arranged to conceal it, since it was the entrance to the passage out of the castle. All I had to do was to find the spring which operated it. One of the stones in the wall must control the mechanism. Touch or turn the right one. If it took me all night, I'd find it.

I figured out exactly where the door



must be and I punched and jabbed the wall until my fists and fingers were sore, trying to turn stones apparently set in solid masonry. In a rage at last, I stamped my foot savagely upon the stone floor. I felt something give beneath it. To my astonishment a curtain of rock began to rise. There lifted upward a section of the wall three feet wide. It was lifted on an iron plate by iron rods at either end, just beyond each side of the door frame. A curtain of stone and cement three inches thick went up into the ceiling.

I turned my flash on the stone upon which I had stamped. Here was a steel spike which protruded an inch out of the stone slab. Stamping on this had set at work the mechanism. I was free to go.

I didn't go. I was tremendously excited. There might be another secret door operated in some such manner, which would admit me above. I set about looking for it. And then a rumbling sound disturbed me. The curtain was coming down again. It worked automatically in its descent, it seemed. Well, I knew how to lift it.

FOR some time I sought assiduously for another spike in the stone floor, one which would open another secret door. It was spooky business. I'd been in a lot of tough spots, but my nerves were more jumpy in this foul crypt than ever before. In the end I decided that I would have to give up, go back through the tunnel and face what was waiting for me in the upper world. If there was an entrance from this place, in addition to the locked door at the end of the dungeon corridor, I couldn't find it.

Suddenly I remembered what Ray had told me. He'd said nothing about this torture room. But he had said

that a staircase led from the tunnel entrance directly up to the bedchamber of the ancient earls.

I located the spike, stepped on it. For a few seconds nothing happened. When I had about made up my mind that I'd starve to death here unless I died of the jitters first, the stone curtain rose slowly and ponderously. It was a relief to open the door and go down the stairs.

Once more in the lower room, I felt less oppressed. I had spied the staircase immediately upon entering from the tunnel and had not looked about. Now I ran my flash around the room and discovered an aperture on the right of the tunnel exit. I threw the light into it. Another staircase, very narrow. As I mounted, I discovered that it was a spiral around a stone pillar. The steps were worn and slippery.

I mounted swiftly at first, then more slowly. Finally I was breathing heavily. It seemed that I had climbed a hundred feet. I was passing an opening, not more than eighteen inches wide but as tall as a man, but the staircase continued on. I hesitated. Might as well investigate everything.

I squeezed through the opening and found myself in a passage less than two feet wide. My flashlight revealed that it turned about twenty feet ahead. I moved on, reached the turn. On the right, four or five feet distant, I saw a streak of yellow light. It came out of the wall. A peephole. I crept to it.

I was looking down from a height of ten feet into a huge brilliantly lighted drawing room. The peephole was about an inch in diameter. Just below were two huge divans, facing each other in a manner to suggest they were at either side of a fireplace. Across the room was a grand piano and the person named Villiard, whom I

had met at Arthur's, was playing softly. In the middle distance was a bridge table. Arthur and his wife and two strangers were playing.

And suddenly Theodora came into my range of vision. She was wearing a crimson velvet evening gown and she was absolutely ravishing. My heart began to pound. She sat down on one of the divans, glanced up and seemed to be looking directly at me. It didn't seem possible she couldn't see my eye staring at her. The peephole, however, was ingeniously concealed in the elaborate walnut carving above the fireplace. Theodora looked grave.

IT'S funny, but I felt embarrassed, as though I were an uninvited guest. I expect I blushed. And then I decided it was worth all I had risked for this unexpected sight of her. It was more than likely that I would never see her again.

"Ah, there you are," said a hated voice.

Enescro appeared, resplendent in evening dress, a pleased smile upon his dark face. He seated himself beside her. He spoke in a low tone but his voice was wafted up to me.

"That phone call was from Inspector Good in London," he said. "I'm sorry to say, my dear, that your sympathy has been entirely wasted upon Laurence."

"I merely said that Arthur had treated him very rudely," she replied, "and that the insinuations about him in the newspapers are preposterous."

"I told you that he had impressed me favorably," he said smoothly. "It's possible he saved my life at the Manor, if there actually was an East Indian with a knife and I was his target."

"I thought you had no doubt about it," she retorted.

"I rather think there was an assassin but that Laurence was to have been his target."

"Why on earth should a Hindu want to kill a harmless young American?" she demanded scornfully.

"There is no doubt at all that Laurence was Bronson's companion in the house in St. John's Wood," he replied. "Bronson was killed by an East Indian, exactly as was Constable Dobbs. It's possible that Laurence and Bronson had stolen jewels from some Indian nabob, whose hirelings were upon their trail. You know that Inspector Good identified Bronson as the valet whom Laurence brought to your brother's home. Laurence was in hiding at Bronson's house from the police, who sought him for the assault upon an immigration inspector—that proves that the "master and man relationship was a masquerade."

"I'm sorry, but I don't believe Jack Laurence is dishonest," said Theodora firmly. I saw the man's eyes flash.

"My dear Theodora," he replied, "the police are hunting Laurence now for the murder of a man named Peter Logan in a train from London two nights ago."

"No!" cried Theodora. "It's impossible. It can't be true!"

Her voice reached the bridge table.

"What can't be true?" demanded Arthur.

"My dear Ainsworth," said Enescro in his smooth, polished tones, "your recent guest is wanted for murder."

THE remark created a sensation in which I fully participated. True, I had feared that the police would come to suspect me, but it was a shock to know positively that I stood a good chance of being hanged.

"Indeed!" cried Theodora. "Well,



it's not true, do you hear?" She had leaped to her feet and stood with her head thrown back and her fists clenched. I adored her at that moment. "Let me tell you something. Jack Laurence is an officer in the United States Secret Service—"

Ainsworth laughed noisily. "Cock and bull story. I suppose he told you that when you drove him up to town."

"He did not," she cried. "He told me yesterday."

"Just a moment," said Enescro sharply. "Yesterday? You didn't go to town yesterday. You mean you saw him in this vicinity?"

The entire group was around her.

"I—I don't mean yesterday," she muttered. "Oh, I don't know what I'm saying." She burst into tears.

"It seems to me you take a peculiar interest in the scoundrel," declared Arthur angrily.

"And why shouldn't I?" Theodora flashed back at him. "When you, like a coward, left me to shift for myself in the fire at Bright City. Jack Laurence saved my life. So there!"

"I say," exclaimed Enescro. "You said it was the African Wild Man."

"W-ell," she said reluctantly. "Jack was the African Wild Man."

There was a second of shocked silence and Mrs. Ainsworth laughed.

"I believe the child is mad."

"I do not," stated Enescro grimly.

"Now listen to me, Theodora. Two nights ago Laurence left St. John's Wood, in the company of Bronson, to go to a railroad station. He was wearing a black wig and had a dark stain on his skin. He returned about three hours later. Bronson's man admitted him. He went upstairs, removed the disguise and left the house. A man answering the description of his disguise was seen in the compartment of

the murdered man on the railroad train. He jumped from the train near Anselm, stole a motor car and abandoned it in London. I have reason to know that there was bad blood between Laurence and Logan who was murdered. You might as well give up any notion that the fellow is reputable. His tale of being a United States officer is absurd on the face of it."

"I want to go home," said Theodora tearfully.

"I'll drive you home," declared her fiancé. "If he was the Wild Man in that sideshow and did save your life, I understand how you feel."

"I'm going alone. Don't any of you come with me," she said.

She pushed through the group and disappeared from my range of vision. The others followed her except Villiard, to whom Enescro beckoned.

"Laurence is lurking in the neighborhood. She's going straight to his hiding place," he said in a low tone. "Follow her. We'll nab him in short order."

"Well!" exclaimed Ainsworth from somewhere out of my sight. "She's spoiled our evening. You'll excuse us, won't you, Sir Ronald?"

"She wishes to go alone. I suggest you wait a few minutes."

"You're spoiling her, giving in to her whims," protested the contemptible Ainsworth. Enescro laughed disarmingly.

"I love her," he said.

## CHAPTER XXIX

### The Struggle on the Stairs

THERE was a clatter of tongues from over at the left, suggestions to resume the bridge game, then the business of paying losses. After several minutes Enescro went over to

the unseen group and good nights were said. After they had gone he appeared again, crossed to the piano, seated himself and played.

He played a Chopin nocturne very well, I thought, though I'm no musical expert. He was facing me and the light from the chandelier lighted his face. His expression softened, he had a half smile on his lips and suddenly he shifted from the classic into a haunting, plaintive and familiar tune.

Where had I heard it? In California, in a Mexican café on Geary Street. A red-cheeked girl with a rose in her jet black hair had sung it. I could almost remember the name. He was singing it—a rich, tuneful baritone—singing Spanish words. I remembered the name of the song. *La Golondrina*, "The Swallow," a Spanish song.

I know a little Spanish; my ears sharpened. Yes, he pronounced the letter *s* in Mexican fashion.

Of course it was possible that the song was known in England, but a Roumanian speaking Castilian would not sing it in Mexican-Spanish. He certainly hadn't learned it in Roumania.

Alvarez, the murderer, was betraying himself.

If I could get at him now, cover him with my automatic pistol, force him to press his fingertips against inked paper, compel him to escort me out of this place, I could tie him up somewhere, hide him in a hole, get to America by the first boat, turn the prints over to Cameron and let the machinery of international law do the rest.

An utterly impossible notion, of course—but as he played, I was frantically searching for a spring or a lever which would open a panel and permit me to burst in on him.

If there was a secret entrance into the drawing-room I couldn't locate it. I had another idea, more practical. In his post on the piano stool, he was a fair target. I could shoot him from the peephole.

Enescro dead would no longer instigate crimes in America. He was an escaped murderer—if he lived he would marry Theodora. He richly deserved death, yet I couldn't shoot a man from ambush. But if we came face to face—if we battled—I'd kill him with no more compunction than I had felt in shooting Peter Logan.

Suddenly a door slammed somewhere outside. Enescro rose from the piano bench and walked swiftly out of my range of vision. The opportunity was gone. And a moment later the lights in the great hall were extinguished.

**A**LONE in the dark, my own situation pressed poignantly upon me. I could not blame Theodora for having been goaded into revealing what she had promised to conceal. Sadie had declared that Theodora loved me—I had been pretty sure of it before, but her passionate defense of me in the face of damning evidence convinced me. Unfortunately the darling had rushed away alone to find me, and Enescro, who professed to love her had had her followed. It meant that the cottage was no longer even a temporary refuge. As soon as I poked my nose out of the cave at the far end of the tunnel, I would find police waiting for me.

And Enescro must know about the tunnel and the secret passages through the thick walls of the castle—or how explain the fact that the trapdoor had been uncovered between my two visits to the cave? A man as shrewd as this



one would surmise that my presence in the vicinity meant that I hoped to get at him by means of the secret entrance.

Leaning against the wall, I figured things out. Alvarez, alias Enescro, must have known of Tom Keefe's visit to London—if Keefe remembered one among the many criminals he had sent to jail, the criminal was even more likely to remember him. He knew that Keefe, after many years, was again on his trail. And he had expected one of Keefe's men to arrive in England to get the goods on him.

In England Enescro was strongly entrenched. He had reached the top of the financial ladder; no doubt he had built up an impregnable life history of himself as a Roumanian. He feared only the capture of his person and the forcible taking of his finger-prints.

No British official would dream of submitting him to the indignity of finger-printing, even upon an official request from the United States. But if our authorities submitted prints alleged to be those of Sir Ronald Enescro and stated they were identical with those of Alvarez, the murderer, they would not hesitate to force him to give them finger-tip impressions to confirm or refute the charge.

Which explained why Enescro had set to work to eliminate me as soon as he learned of my arrival.

The fact that he was the Alvarez explained his animosity against the United States. As a great industrialist, he would hardly foment riot and sabotage in the United States, since his business profits from the crippling of our factories would hardly repay him. No, having become a multi-millionaire, he was revenging himself against the nation which had condemned him to death for murder.

If he caught me moving like a mole

in the secret passages, he'd not risk turning me over to the authorities. He'd kill me out of hand.

I wasn't doing anything for myself by remaining here. Better explore further. I felt my way along the passage, towards the spiral staircase. There was a thick layer of dust, ages old, on the stone floor. It muffled my footfalls and, rising, irritated my nostrils. Perhaps it was a hundred years since anybody had gazed through the peephole at festivities in the great drawing-room of the castle.

I was not using the flashlight—it being easy to feel my way along. My hands were outstretched in front of me. I moved very slowly and cautiously. And then—with horrifying unexpectedness my right hand touched flesh. I heard a whinny of terror—I echoed it and then I was engaged in mortal combat with the unknown, the unseen.

WITHOUT being aware of it in the obscurity, I had reached the staircase and had collided with a man who was descending. His two hands were clutching my throat before I recovered from my astonishment. There were small hands but strong as steel springs. I threw my arms around a thin body and squeezed like a bear. He grunted and tightened his grip. My flashlight had fallen from my right hand. My gun was in my right side pocket. And we were so near to the inhabited section of the building that I would not have dared to use it. I shifted my grip to the waist and tried to break his back. He deftly thwarted my intent by releasing my throat, dropping down and wriggling like an eel out of my embrace.

With amazing strength he thrust his neck between my legs and lifted me off

the step. I clutched at his hips, hanging head down. He was straightening up with me, breathing like a porpoise. His intention was to throw me down the stairs. I let go his hips and my right hand struck the wall. I pushed against it with all my strength, drove him off balance and we both went crashing down the stone steps, but he went headfirst and fell beneath me. We fell half a dozen steps and brought up with great force against the circular stone wall. My knees struck it so hard that I thought they were broken. No time to worry about that—I was conscious and had the advantage. I rolled off him. He was no longer grasping my thighs, but he lay motionless, his head jammed against the wall.

I drew my gun.

"Get up or I'll put a bullet through you." He did not stir. Warily I stooped and ran my hand over the body of the man. He was unconscious, dead perhaps of a broken neck or a smashed skull. I touched his head. He wore a turban. An East Indian.

Rolling him over, I laid my ear against his chest. The heart was not beating. Dead all right. Except for a break of luck, I would be lying there instead of this fellow.

Sitting down on the step beside the body, I breathed deeply. The fight in the dark had been short, sharp and vicious. I couldn't tell of course, but, as the folds of the turban had protected his skull, it was probably the shock of collision with the wall had broken his neck. I felt of it. A thin neck.

And all of a sudden I understood what had puzzled and alarmed me. It was this man who had entered ahead of me through the tunnel. An East Indian, after the Moon of Monabar. The Indians had been aware all the time that Enescro had the great jewel

but they didn't know how to get it. And learning that Ray Bronson was after it, they had been watching the jewel thief.

Ray had made a deal with the Rajah for its return—a vast sum. He had boasted that it was three millions, but probably he was lying. A million would have been an enormous reward in this day and age and the Rajah probably didn't want to pay that.

I remembered that Ray had been quite set up at the prospect of dining with a Rajah. Suppose he had boastfully revealed enough to that unscrupulous potentate, to make him decide that he didn't need Ray; that his own people could secure the jewel and save the reward. Ray had said something about another Rajah who was after it. Well, this was the agent, either of the rightful owner or his rival. It was probable that he had slain Ray in his bed and stolen the chart. In which case I had revenged Ray.

Having the chart, the East Indian had located the cave, come through the tunnel, found a way to unlock the doors and had left them unlocked for an easy exit. And he had been prowling about. If I had not strayed into the passage looking down upon the drawing-room, he would have heard my steps on the stairs and I would have had a knife in my heart.

That reminded me that a knife might come in handy. I felt about for it and found it in a metal sheath fastened inside his trousers waistband. I thrust it inside my shirt.

Well, I would have a look up above. In case I had to descend quickly, I didn't want to stumble over the corpse and break my neck. I lifted him. To my surprise he didn't weigh over a hundred thirty-five pounds. Carrying him up half a dozen steps, I placed him



in the passage leading to the drawing-room. After that I located my flashlight by striking matches. Taking it in my left hand, I drew Logan's automatic and held it ready in my right.

It was very possible that my dead friend hadn't ventured into Dunhold Castle alone.

I took off my shoes, tied them together by the laces and suspended them around my neck. There was a chill in the ancient stones which penetrated through my socks but I wasn't bothering about that.

Ten feet up I discovered an aperture similar to that which led to the drawing-room. I entered it, being careful to keep my light upon the floor directly in front of me. The passage extended thirty feet, made a right turn and ended abruptly thirty feet further along. I saw no peepholes—which meant that, if there were any, they looked into dark, unoccupied rooms.

### CHAPTER XXX

#### King on His Throne

**R**ETRACING my steps, I reached the staircase. Half a dozen steps up I came upon another exit. This I followed for a considerable distance and then a peephole revealed itself by a ray of light from a room. I placed my eye to it eagerly. It was a small, scantily furnished room and there was a large, homely woman lying in bed. Probably the cook.

There was a labyrinth of passages in the thick walls of the castle; it looked as if the original builder was a wag who liked to spy upon his servants and guests when they were offguard.

I went on and on in the darkness. When I began to fear that I might never find a way out I came suddenly back to the staircase. This passage

evidently made a circuit of the main building of the castle.

Ten feet higher I found and entered another passage and a glimmer of light a little distance down rewarded me. I gazed through a peephole into a noble apartment, the walls of which were



JACK LAURENCE

paneled in walnut. There was a fine painting of a seventeenth century notable upon the opposite wall and a great carved chair beneath it. I glanced to the right and gaped in astonishment. Upon a small raised platform stood what appeared to be a golden throne. Its high back was topped by a coronet in which rubies and diamonds gleamed haughtily. Upon the floor was a rare Oriental carpet and on the opposite wall was a great mirror.

While the room was lighted, it had no occupant. I had time to observe the wall decorations. Behind the throne was a Gobelin tapestry. At right and left of the oil painting, directly in front of me, was an amazing array of swords, scimitars and such, the scabbards of which were of gold or silver profusely studded with jewelry.

Everything in the room was a museum piece—no doubt the throne had belonged to some ancient monarch. I remembered that Ray had said that Enescro liked to have his treasures where he could see them.

There was something lacking in this remarkable room—a door. The door, of course, must be to left or right of my point of vantage and invisible.

I got a glimpse of a carved and richly painted ceiling. My eye picked up more detail. There were lances, with ancient pennons attached, standing upright in each of the opposite corners. And all of a sudden there was somebody in the room. I hadn't seen him enter but he appeared from my right.

This man wore a tall white turban, in the front of which gleamed an enormous red stone, too big, it seemed, to be a ruby. He had on a magnificent Oriental robe of many colors into which were sewn rows of diamonds, sapphires and emeralds.

Suspended by a sash of red velvet was a curved sword in a broad gold scabbard, much bejeweled. He was a superb figure and he moved directly toward the throne. He stooped at the platform and a trap sprang open from which he took something. I had seen only his back up to this time. From the coffer within he took a large jeweled ball and a gold sceptre, upon the top of which was a great flashing diamond. The trap closed; he stepped upon the platform and seated himself upon the throne. And his face was the face of Sir Ronald Enescro.

I HAD guessed his identity already and despite my perilous situation I was wearing a broad grin.

The Mexican murderer was a play actor—playing that he was a king.

He was smirking at himself in the mirror opposite. That's what the mirror was there for.

I thrust my flashlight in one pocket and my gun in the other and placed both hands flat against the wall to enjoy the show.

Here was a man with a brilliant mind, a person who in twenty years, had risen from the lowly estate of a Mexican peon to that of a British baronet of stupendous wealth. It takes brains to make a fortune in any country. He must have had an amazing mental equipment, yet, in him, was a childish streak, Mexican, perhaps part Indian.

His money had not bought him social position in England, but when he was alone he dressed up and sat on a throne and dreamed that he ruled an empire. He didn't buy jewels to present to his women but to bedeck himself, as an Indian dresses up in beads. I studied him as he sat there. There was no doubt that he made a finer appearance than most kings. I looked over his array of flaming jewels and wondered which was the Moon of Monabar.

Enescro seemed content to sit there, sceptre in his right hand, sword across his lap. If Theodora married him and caught him behaving like this she'd put him in an asylum.

In the meantime I was still a rat in a wall, able to look but not to enter. I was gazing from a height of about nine feet. If I could find the secret door into this room—well, I didn't know what I would do when I got inside. At no time had I had a sane plan.

"Bring him back alive!"

I had no passport; I was wanted for murder. All exits from the kingdom were barred to me; my prospects of



carrying off this fool on the throne were nil.

Aëroplane? That was a laugh. If we landed in a Continental country, the passport trouble. A transatlantic flight requires elaborate preparation, an experienced, daring pilot and willing passengers. The finger-prints would do the trick. Catch this fox letting me take his finger-prints. In impotent wrath I stamped my right foot and hurt my stockinged sole upon the rounded top of a spike.

The ground dropped from under my left foot; my right slid off a shelf a few inches wide. Like a plummet I dropped through a hole, fell three or four feet and landed in a heap upon the stone hearth of a deep fireplace. My astonishment and dismay were so great that for a second I lay there, gaping at the self-elected monarch. And His Majesty shared my surprise and gazed at me with open mouth. As I struggled to rise, he sprang to his feet and whipped his scimitar from its scabbard. He shouted something in the Spanish tongue.

I thrust my hand into my pocket for my automatic but before I could draw it the point of the sword was at my breast.

"JOHN LAURENCE," cried Enescro, "this is a greater pleasure than you know. And where did you come from? The moon? Ah, I see. My castle secrets. You know them and I don't. Well, your knowledge won't do you any good."

"Why the masquerade?" I inquired with as much scorn as a man could muster who expected to be stabbed to death in a second.

"Stand up, murderer," he commanded.

I got to my feet, the weapon always menacing me.

He tapped my pockets with his left hand and drew out my automatic and my flashlight.

Tossing the flash to the floor, he concealed the pistol inside his robe.

"Go sit down—under that painting," he ordered. "I wish to talk to you. I had been looking forward to our next meeting."

There being no choice but to obey him, I crossed to the chair and sat down. Enescro sheathed his sword, drew forth my pistol and then climbed back on this throne.

"I can trace my ancestry to Genghis Khan," he said. "It amuses me to sit on a throne occasionally."

"I suppose one of your ancestors swam the Pacific to Mexico, Alvarez," I said scornfully.

"I happen to be the son of a Roumanian prince, Mr. Laurence," he said with much dignity.

"You can't bluff. I know you."

"I've wondered about secret passages in this castle," he said musingly. "I've intended to have the walls tapped in several places in search of them, but never got around to it. I'm curious to know how you discovered them."

"I'm curious to know why you have persecuted me since my arrival in England?"

"I didn't happen to like you, Mr. Laurence, or the way you looked at Miss Ainsworth."

"What are you going to do to me?"

He laughed. Being in a position to put a bullet in me when he pleased, he was taking a certain feline pleasure in baiting me.

"I should turn you over to the police, who would hang you with neatness and dispatch for a murder in a railroad compartment. It would, how-

ever, pain Miss Ainsworth, who is grateful to you. It appears you were instrumental in saving her life. A man of your birth and breeding working in a circus as an African wild man! Fie, fie, Mr. Laurence. You should not have resisted deportation."

"Why have me deported?" I inquired. "Whether you are Alvarez or Enesco, you have nothing to fear."

He smiled. "Certainly not. I thought it would chagrin your employers to have you shipped back to them."

I smiled back. "It would have annoyed them very much. I was told to bring you back alive."

HE laughed cheerfully. "And had you worked out a method?"

"It looked impossible to me, to tell the truth."

It was really a friendly conversation on the surface.

"I'm afraid I underestimated you, by the way. Your real job was to assassinate me, was it not?"

"Americans don't go in for assassination," I said, angrily. He lifted his eyebrows. "No? More American presidents have been assassinated in the last seventy years than European monarchs. An assassin fired at and missed President Roosevelt just before he was inaugurated."

"Perhaps he was in your employ?" I said boldly.

"No, though I have no love for America. I can think of no other purpose for this unexpected visit save assassination."

I didn't answer. If I killed him in fair fight—

"You caused me considerable annoyance by assassinating one of my agents," he continued. "Peter Logan was a most useful man."

"He drew a gun on me; I took it

away from him and shot him in self defense."

"You're a very dangerous man," he assured me. "You ruined several of my plans in America. At San Francisco, for example. The revelation of the secret passages gives me an idea. I think it would be better if you disappeared than if you stood trial for the murder of Logan."

"Then you're thinking of going in for assassination?"

"No. Are you much of a swordsman?"

"Never held a sword in my hand."

He rose. "You are going to. I am one of the best swordsmen in Europe."

"Why not put a bullet into me and be done with it?"

"A shot would alarm the house. This room, I must explain, is a secret chamber. I discovered its existence by accident, which caused me to suspect that the old building held other secrets. Would you prefer a sword, a sabre or a scimitar?"

I rose. "If you don't mind, I'll use my knife." I thrust my hand inside my shirt and pulled out the weapon I had taken from the East Indian.

He smiled mockingly. "I didn't know that Americans made use of the knife. If you don't mind, I prefer the longer blade. Or a sword and a knife, eh?"

"You're the doctor," I said resignedly.

He threw off his robe.

## CHAPTER XXXI

### Sword and Knife

DRAWING his sword, he removed the sash from which the scabbard hung and cast it aside; then he went over and took down a knife with an eight-inch blade.



"Make a choice of any of these swords, Mr. Laurence," he said courteously.

I took a sword down at random, drew it from its scabbard and inspected it.

"You are left handed?" he asked. I was holding the sword in my left hand.

I nodded. It wasn't true, but I hoped he would believe it to be true.

"Wish to remove your coat?" he asked politely.

I smiled. "Think it necessary?"

"Oh, I don't fancy the match will last long enough for you to get overheated."

His dark face lighted with pleasure and excitement. Alvarez was a born killer who hadn't been working at his trade lately. I knew what he expected to do to me—toy with me, pink me, draw blood in a dozen places and, when he had enough sport, give me my quietus.

He saluted me. I made a clumsy salute.

"On guard."

He assumed the position of a fencer. Right foot forward, knee slightly bent, left foot solidly on the ground to give him a base for swift thrusts with body and sword.

His knife he grasped by the hilt, blade down. He did not expect to make use of it. He was humoring me.

I turned my left side to him, sticking out the sword awkwardly. He rapped my blade playfully with his, drew back and then—

The position of my body had concealed from him my right arm. I had shifted my grip on the knife. The hilt on my palm, my fingers supporting the blade lightly.

He thrust again, deftly twisted my sword out of my hand. As it flew across the room, my right arm swung and the knife flashed through the air and plunged deep into his side, a few inches below the armpit. It had a long, heavy blade and penetrated far.

With a gasp, he crumpled and fell forward on his face, the right arm, holding the sword, stretched out in front of him. He had not asked me if I knew how to use a knife. In my youth I had become expert in throwing it. My ambition at that time was to grow up to be a knife thrower in a circus.

I pulled out the weapon, wiped the handle of the blade and dropped it on the rug, where it dripped blood. I turned him over. His heart was beating. I had to get away.

I glanced at the fireplace. To my dismay, the trap, which had dropped me, had lifted back into position. But a wide panel at the left of the fireplace was open and beyond I saw a lighted room. I entered. It was a very elaborate bedchamber. In a corner was an old-fashioned desk. And then I knew what I had to do.

I inked a sheet of paper. I rushed back into the secret room and very carefully took the finger-prints of the wounded and unconscious scoundrel. They were as clear and complete as if

Coming next week—

## Jimmie Dale

in "The Missing Hour," by Frank L. Packard

taken by the police expert in New York headquarters.

HOWEVER, while I had them, I hadn't got away with them. I rushed to the fireplace and began fumbling for the spring which would release the trap. I couldn't do anything for Enescro. If he bled to death it was only what he deserved.

Frantically, I prodded and pushed. I became aware of a pounding upon the door of the bedroom. If I didn't answer they would break in. I ran back into the chamber. I imitated his voice as well as I could.

"Asking you pardon, Sir Ronald," called a servant, "but Inspector Good is here as you requested."

"Tell him to wait," I called. I ran back into the secret room, looking frantically round. Trapped. Well, if I could get the finger-prints to Tom Keefe, the English could hang me. I had done my job. I glanced at the fireplace. Glory be, the trap was open!

But they'd be here in a few minutes. And Enescro would regain consciousness. The police would search me and Enescro would see that the prints didn't reach their destination.

I ran back into the bedroom, searched the desk, found paper, envelopes and stamps. I addressed an envelope to Tom Keefe, scratched below the prints their identity, sealed and put a two and ha'penny stamp on the envelope. Maybe they would find it here on the desk and mail it. No, too risky.

I thrust it in my pocket, picked up a small chair and was running with it toward the secret room when the chamber door opened and a manservant walked in.

"I say!" he exclaimed. "Where is Sir Ronald? Who are you?"

"I'll tell you," I said, putting the chair down. I walked close to the fellow and gave him everything I had behind my right fist. He took it on the chin and went out. Picking up the chair, I leaped the body of Enescro, placed the chair beneath the opening, climbed upon it, got my arms through the hole and pulled myself up. I stepped on the spike, but had no time to wait to see if it caused the trap to close.

Then I fled blindly down the passage. Having no flashlight now, I could see nothing, but I knew the way. I went down the spiral staircase at dangerous speed, tripped and almost fell over a yielding object some distance below. It was the leg of the East Indian, protruding from the side passage. I stopped. Pressed as I was, I risked searching the wretch and I found something, the character of which I could tell in the dark.

THERE was no sound above of pursuit. If Enescro remained unconscious and the trap had closed they would have no way of knowing how I had escaped. I was glad the servant had blundered in. He would find his master and have a doctor in a hurry. Enescro would die, if I succeeded in my purpose, not of a wound but on the end of a rope.

I reached at length the iron door which gave entrance to the tunnel. There was no key in it, no way of making it fast, and I had no time. I had taken an hour to work my way through the tunnel from the cave, but I arrived back in the cave in fifteen minutes.

I crawled out and breathed the sweet dewy air of the English countryside in the small hours of the morning. The night was as still as death, but



it was fragrant. I lost my shoes when I fell through the trap and something had to be done about that. I had shoes in my bags at the cottage, but the police were undoubtedly there. Inspector Good was on the job in person. Enescro must have notified him by phone that I was in the neighborhood.

I walked painfully down the road to the village. It was a long tramp, even for a well-shod person. The village was dark and sleeping. I had to post my letter.

I found the postoffice and had the letter poised over the mail box when it occurred to me that Enescro was landlord of this hamlet. When he recovered consciousness, he would observe his ink-stained fingers and he would know exactly what they signified. And he would assume that my first act would be to mail the fingerprints to America. I couldn't risk his getting my letter removed from the local postoffice.

In London it would be safe, but my chances of getting there without being arrested were slim. Of course I could post it on the way, but at any minute I might be nabbed. And then I thought of Theodora. Theodora would see that the letter went through the mails. Even if she distrusted me, she would do that for me.

I moved on and observed shoes in an unshuttered shop window. A man without shoes is a suspicious character. I found a stone, wrapped my coat around it and broke the glass. It was glass of single thickness and it broke with slight sound. Nobody called out from in back, where the shoemaker and his family were probably sleeping. Nobody appeared in the deserted street. I picked out pieces of the glass carefully and escaped cuts and I tried on four pairs of shoes from the win-

dow before I found a pair which fitted me.

My feet equipped once more, I started upon the long march to Oswald Manor. Dawn was breaking when I passed through the park and came in sight of the house. As I did not know in which room my darling slept, and could not risk awaking Arthur, Mrs. Ainsworth or the servants, my only course was to hide out until she came out. I judged she was in the habit of early morning horseback rides; in that case I had only two or three hours to wait.

Crawling under a hedge, I found myself overcome with drowsiness. For some time I fought against sleep and finally was vanquished. When I awoke voices were the cause. I could see two pairs of boot legs and I knew both voices.

"He'd better not show himself round here, the scoundrel," said Arthur Ainsworth. The boots came nearer.

"I'm just giving you warning, sir," said Inspector Good. "He is a desperate criminal and he almost killed Sir Ronald. An inch more and the heart would have been reached."

"Horrible, horrible!" cried Arthur. "To think he slept in my house. I assure you, Inspector, he was well thought of in college."

"It's most mysterious," replied the inspector. "I'm a good judge of faces. I never would have said that Mr. Laurence was a criminal. He seemed to me an estimable gentleman. Even the attack upon the immigration inspector was, in a way, justified."

"Justified, how do you mean?"

"I'm sorry, sir. I shouldn't have said that. It's of no consequence, sir."

"Well, all right. My sister will be horribly distressed. She went for a

ride half an hour ago. I don't know how to break the news to her."

"Them engaged to be married and everything," said the inspector sympathetically. They continued their walk and I heard no more. I cursed myself for sleeping. I had missed Theodora and the confounded inspector was lurking about. He'd make sure I'd have no private conversation with Miss Ainsworth. It was a wonder that Good's sharp eyes hadn't spotted me.

## CHAPTER XXXII

### Moon of Monabar

I GUESSED it to be about half past eight, which meant I had slept three or four hours. I could see gardeners working not far away. One of them was working towards me. I heard a motor car drive away and hoped that it carried the Scotland Yard man off in it.

Half an hour passed. The gardener was within twenty yards of my hiding place. Then, just as I was about to go insane, there was a clatter of hoofs and Theodora rode by on her way to the stables. Risking everything, I rolled out from under the hedge and walked swiftly in her wake. I saw a gardener look at me curiously. A groom appeared; he recognized me, touched his hat and said, "Good morning, Mr. Laurence. What can I do?"

I knew I was plenty disheveled and unshaven, but I smiled with as much condescension as I could muster, said, "Good morning. No, thanks," and walked past him.

Theodora had given her horse in charge of another groom and had turned. She saw me. One hand went to her mouth, another to her heart. She came towards me swiftly. I almost ran.

"What does this mean?" she cried. "Oh, Jack, you're in frightful danger! They are accusing you of horrible crimes. They say you have frightfully wounded Sir Ronald. It isn't true. Please tell me it isn't true?"

"I've committed no crimes, Theodora," I said earnestly. "I ask you to suspend judgment. I'm going to be arrested at any minute."

Theodora grasped my arm. "Quick. Run. My brother and Inspector Good have seen you. They're coming this way."

I pulled out the letter. "Hide this, dear, and mail it from London as soon as possible. Don't look at it. Hide it. If it reaches America everything will be cleared up. Don't tell anybody I gave you a letter."

The dear girl thrust it into the bosom of her riding coat.

"Answer quick. Why from London?"

"Because local mailboxes will be searched. It's government business, Theodora."

"I'll go to London. Jack, they say you aren't a government officer."

"Why did you tell them?" I countered. "Theodora, my life, everything depends upon posting that letter."

"I'll also register it. It's too late for you to run."

"Mr. Laurence, if you please," Good was shouting. I turned and made him an ironic bow. He and Arthur were arriving at a run. Arthur's face was red and he was boiling with rage.

"You murderer, you rascal, you impostor!" he bellowed.

I laughed in his face. "Anticlimax, Arthur," I replied. "You should have put murderer last. And I'll probably sue you for slander anyway."

"How dare you speak to my sister—"



"How dare you insult a countryman in terrible trouble," cried Theodora.

"Arthur, your remarks have no more effect on me than the yelping of a terrier," I answered. "Good morning, Inspector."

"Good morning, Mr. Laurence," replied the detective. "I'm very sorry, but you're under arrest."

"Splendid," I said cheerfully. "Shall we put on the bracelets?"

"By all means," cried Ainsworth savagely. "He's a homicidal maniac."

"Arthur, you're a fool," cried Theodora. "I don't care what he's accused of. He's innocent."

"He's guilty of assault, with intent to kill, upon your fiancé."

"He's not my fiancé any more. I loathe him. Besides, Jack didn't do it. I have money, Jack. I'll bail you out."

"Sorry, miss, but the charge against him ain't bailable," said Good. "Mr. Laurence, if you will give me your word not to attempt to escape I will not submit you to the indignity of irons."

"Handcuff him, I tell you," roared Ainsworth, beside himself.

"I know my business, Mr. Ainsworth, sir," replied the inspector with asperity. "Come with me, Mr. Laurence."

"Certainly, Inspector. *Au revoir*, Theodora. You know how I feel about you."

"Oh, Jack, I'll do everything possible," she said mournfully.

"You'll do nothing, understand?" cried Arthur. The Inspector and I walked side by side.

"YOU'RE a pretty good fellow, Good," I said. "After all, I'm accused of frightful crimes, yet you take my word."

The detective grinned whimsically.

"I had every intention of handcuffing you but Mr. Ainsworth annoyed me. If you'll excuse a disparaging remark toward a countryman, sir," he added, "it's my belief that Mr. Ainsworth is a bit of a bounder."

I laughed heartily and he looked at me queerly.

"I'm feared you don't appreciate the seriousness of your situation."

"I do, Inspector, I do, but you underestimate Arthur. He's not only a bounder but a rotter."

He hesitated. "I wouldn't go as far as to say that, sir. I have a car parked over here."

"Where are we going? To the local jug?"

"Directly to London, sir. Serious as is the charge in the case of Sir Ronald, a more serious charge hangs over you—murder."

I climbed into the back seat and Good got in beside me. The police chauffeur started the car.

"I am not guilty of murder, Good," I said earnestly.

"I would like to believe it but there is grave suspicion."

"I can clear myself. As for Enescro, we fought a duel."

"Duels are against the law."

"He used a sword and I had a knife. Not a very fair duel, Good."

He grinned. "As you were the victor, it seems to have been reasonably fair."

"How is he?"

"Sorely wounded but he probably will live. I'm very much perplexed, Mr. Laurence, regarding the manner of your escape from the castle. We found a chair under the fireplace, which indicates a secret exit there, but we were unable to find it."

"When I'm free of all this, I'll take

you up there and show you how it works. It's not a reliable system of secret doors, by the way. They behave rather unexpectedly."

"I presume because of their age."

"I'm going to ask you to do me a favor, Good."

He looked alarmed.

"I want to be taken to see Sir Robert Standish before going to Scotland Yard."

"Quite out of the question, sir."

I laughed. "I'm going to show you something, Good."

I drew from my pocket a diamond marvelously cut and as big as a small hen's egg.

The Inspector was shocked out of his customary aplomb.

"Is it a diamond?" he gasped.

"It is."

"And may I ask where you got it, Mr. Laurence?" he demanded harshly.

"Didn't you notice a lot of jewelry in the vicinity of Sir Ronald last night?"

"You stole this from Sir Ronald?" he demanded. He gripped my arm.

"Ever hear of the Moon of Monabar?" I inquired.

His eyes were fastened upon the gleaming stone. "Why, yes. It was stolen from the Rajah of Monabar. It has made a lot of trouble."

"It was among Sir Ronald's trinkets," I remarked. "Now will you take me to see Sir Robert Standish?"

"It's quite irregular," he said, dubiously.

"I don't need to tell an intelligent officer like you that if I confess to having stolen the Moon from Enescro, the rightful owner will want to know how it came into Sir Ronald's possession. It is going to embarrass your government a bit isn't it, Enescro being so important a person—?"

"No doubt he came by it honestly."

"Isn't Scotland Yard hard at work to discover its possessor? Isn't the Cabinet trying to placate the Rajah of Monabar?"

"I'll take the stone, if you please, sir. And we'll go first to the office of Sir Robert."

"Good man," I said with profound satisfaction.

IF I had been taken first to Scotland Yard, I was pretty sure that the fact that Sir Ronald Enescro was an escaped murderer would not prevent the police from prosecuting and getting a conviction of murder against me in the Peter Logan case. When a man kills another in England there must be abundant evidence that he was defending his own life, and British notions of what self defense is are less liberal than our own. If Good had taken me directly to the Yard, I would have been doomed.

But a situation affecting the interests of the Indian Empire—that was a horse of another color. The inspector, being an unusually clever person, had no desire to make a *faux pas*.

As I hinted some time back, when I touched the protruding leg of the dead East Indian, I recalled that he had been descending the spiral staircase when we collided. Since he had been leaving the castle, it might mean that he had accomplished the purpose which brought him there. That was why I delayed long enough to search him. I found, in a little bag suspended by a cord from his neck, a hard object, the facets of which told me in the dark that it was a diamond and probably the Moon of Monabar.

And my possession of the great stolen jewel explained why I was willing to accompany Inspector Good after



I had entrusted the letter to Tom Keefe to Theodora.

Good placed the stone in the inside breast pocket of his waistcoat and directed the police chauffeur to go directly to the Foreign Office upon reaching London.

About ten-thirty we drew up in front of the dingy building and mounted the stairs—I found myself extremely nervous—I was risking everything on one shot. My only hope of personal safety was whether the government official would risk defeating the ordinary procedure of justice to conceal the fact that a celebrated British baronet was a receiver of stolen goods.

The Inspector spoke earnestly with the young woman at the desk. She went within, came out immediately and told us to wait. Half an hour passed, each second seeming a minute long to a man whose life was staked on the result of this interview. Finally she beckoned and led us within. Sir Robert was alone in the room upon this occasion and fixed me with a cold hostile eye.

"Why bring this man here?" he asked harshly. "We wash our hands of him."

Good looked very apologetic and a bit frightened but he produced the huge diamond and laid it upon the desk.

"God bless my soul!" exclaimed the government official.

"Mr. Laurence informs me that this is the Moon of Monabar, sir," said the inspector, "and knowing that its theft was giving the government great concern, I thought it best to bring him here before taking him to the Yard."

Standish gazed at me now with a troubled expression.

"Where did you get it?" he demanded.

"May I speak to you privately, sir?"

He hesitated. Good opened his mouth to protest.

"I'll be responsible for your prisoner," said Sir Robert. Please wait outside, Inspector."

"You understand, sir, he is suspected of the murder of Peter Logan."

"Kindly do as I direct. I'm not afraid of the man."

"Very good, sir."

## CHAPTER XXXIII

### Conclusion

WHEN the door closed upon him, Standish scowled at me.

"You're getting to be a damned nuisance," he declared. "I assume that this is the Monabar diamond—it's too big to be anything else. How did you come by it?"

"I secured it last night in Dunhold Castle, Sir Robert."

"Eh? He stared at me fixedly. "You mean that Enescro was in possession of it?"

"Exactly," I said firmly.

He began to drum with the fingers of his right hand upon his desk.

"Knew the fellow was mad about jewels," he said slowly. "But this beats hell. A man in his position receiving stolen goods!"

"I understand that he sent expert thieves to Monabar to steal it."

"Indeed! The Indian department has been complaining bitterly about our failure to locate it. The Rajah has been in London for a month and being very nasty. Candidly, I never could stomach Enescro. This country is too liberal—we shouldn't permit foreigners to come here, steal our money and obtain honors and titles. Of course there is only your word that Enescro had it."

"Where would I be likely to get hold of the Moon of Monabar?"

He smiled shrewdly. "Perhaps from Bronson, the American jewel thief recently deceased."

"No. Bronson planned to steal it from Enescro. He had made a deal with the Rajah to get it for him."

"The worst of it is that we have to cover up the swine—can't let it get out—make a terrible mess," he said reflectively. "Sit down, Mr. Laurence. You're in a mighty bad hole, you know."

"I know it," I said mournfully.

"If you're thinking of making a deal, it's impossible. If you killed that blasted anarchist, Logan, you've got to pay the penalty."

"I don't care what happens to me, sir. I've done my job over here."

"Indeed. You come over to get evidence that Enescro was financing American revolutionists. We've suspected it, but the money has been transferred in what appear to be legitimate commercial channels. Of course you can prove—but I don't see how you can."

He pulled nervously at his mustache, lighted a cigar, made to offer me one, remembered that I was a murder suspect and shouldn't be coddled, so refrained. I don't smoke cigars anyway.

"I didn't come for that purpose, sir," I told him. "Sir Robert Enescro is not a Roumanian."

"He is. We've looked him up carefully. Had to have his life history before the King could give him a title."

"It's a false history. Enescro is a Mexican. His name is Alvarez. He was convicted of murder in California twenty years ago, escaped before his execution, presumably went to Roumania—"

"That of course, is rubbish," he said testily.

"Finger-prints don't lie. My busi-

ness in his castle was to get his finger-prints. I got them. And during our—er—interview, he admitted it, though, of course that's not evidence."

He pulled nervously on his cigar.

"It's a pity," I said politely.

"You'll have to turn the print over to me—wait. You're in a bad spot, my lad. No doubt you killed Logan in self defense—no, don't answer me—officially you haven't been captured—"

"You'll connive at my escape in exchange for the finger-prints—"

"Look here, Enescro'll do no more damage—we've got him between our fingers on this jewel business. He's finished. He will be told quietly to get out of the country—"

"The prints went by plane to France and by special messenger they go to America," I lied. "It's too late for a deal, Sir Robert. And if I am put on trial, I shall accuse Enescro of being in possession of the Moon."

"Damn it, you put me in a pretty position," he cried angrily. "What is it, Miss Whitcomb?" His secretary had entered.

"If you will step into Mr. Brown's room for a moment—he has something of great importance to tell you—"

Standish rose, grinned at me and said, "Stay here. You see, I am not afraid of an attempt to escape."

He was gone ten minutes while I fretted and twisted about in my chair. Things were going wrong. Naturally I hadn't realized the British angle. Enescro was so big a man that unmasking him would have most embarrassing consequences. It was fortunate I had made up the lie about the plane and the special messenger. By the time my story was disproved, the letter mailed by Theodora would be on a ship bound for America—I hoped.



WHEN Sir Robert came in I sensed by his manner that his tension had relaxed.

"Sorry to keep you waiting, Laurence," he said as he seated himself. "In strictest confidence I want you to make a clean breast of everything, beginning with your assault on Inspector Gaddish. Circumstances have arisen—I mean I want to be convinced that you deserve consideration."

I told him pretty nearly everything and he sat there twisting his mustache and occasionally saying "Ho" and "Ha."

"It seems to me that you displayed more boldness than acumen in this business," he commented at last.

"I've displayed no intelligence. I've just been lucky."

"Glad you realize it. Now, Mr. Laurence, the police case against you in the Logan matter depends upon identification by the train guard at Anselm and there will be no charge against you by Sir Ronald Enescro, either of theft or attempted murder. He died without regaining consciousness—wait—I believe your story of the duel. Here, have a drink. You look shaky."

I tossed off the brandy he poured into a glass and wiped my burning brow.

"I—I'm not sorry," I murmured.

"The best thing which could have happened to the scoundrel. So to the devil with your finger-prints, Mr. Laurence. We'll turn the Moon of Monabar over to its Rajah, who will ask no questions." He called, "Come in, Inspector, please." Good entered in haste.

"Inspector," said Sir Robert. "Your suspicion that Mr. Laurence killed Peter Logan is based upon your belief that Laurence was in that railroad carriage with him."

"And the fact that he left the house in St. John's Wood wearing a black wig, returned in about the time it would take him to get from Anselm to London, removed his disguise and departed again."

"Inspector," said Sir Robert, gravely. "Mr. Laurence is an American secret agent. Upon the evening in ques-



THEODORA AINSWORTH

tion he was at my house on State business. He came and went in disguise to avoid recognition."

Good's eyes were popping out of his head.

"In that case, sir," he muttered, "there seems to be no evidence."

"Right. Sir Ronald Enescro died about an hour ago. He made no accusation against Mr. Laurence?"

"No sir, but a man was in his rooms—he struck the valet."

"You will, of course, make a thorough investigation, Inspector. Look elsewhere for the murderer. I shall explain to your superiors that Mr. Laurence could not have been concerned, as he was in my company last night. Kindly take this jewel to Scotland Yard and say that you—er—found it in an ash heap. That's all."

Inspector Good turned his cherub eyes on me. His lip twitched. It was obvious to the inspector, of course, that a mantle of invulnerability had been thrown round his quarry.

"Certainly, Sir Robert. Good day, sir," he said.

"YOU came through for me in a big way," I said with a smile when the detective had left.

"Too much at stake to permit concern over the killing of a couple of scoundrels."

"By the way," I said, "you will find the body of an East Indian in one of the secret passages at the castle. He had stolen the jewel, he encountered me in the dark and—"

"Good God!" he cried. "For heaven's sake say no more. I'm going to drive you to Croydon airport in my car and put you on a plane for France."

"My passport—and I'd rather not leave immediately. There is somebody—"

"You're leaving at once. Too much risk of your being positively identified as the man wanted in one of your various—er—eliminations. In that case, we couldn't do a damn thing for you. Your passport will be fixed up. Let's go."

"I have several thousand pounds in the bank—"

"I'll have your check cashed here for what money you need immediately. Let's go."

I STOOD at the rail of the promenade deck of the *Ile de France*, as she lay off Plymouth, England. I was gazing anxiously at the approaching tender. I was almost a happy man. Despite my blundering,

my errors of judgment, the job which had brought me to England had been accomplished.

The sinews of war for the revolutionists in America had been cut and the red outbreaks would cease. Cameron had asked for finger-prints. He had them, but they were no longer of any use to him. Tom Keefe might sneer at my embroilment, within a few days of my arrival, with the British immigration officials. But success is what counts. And I had succeeded.

My conscience was clear regarding those who had met death at my hands; all were scoundrels who had sought my life. Now, if a certain person was on that tender— I strained my eyes. Nearer and nearer it drew. Suddenly I spied Theodora. I waved to her frantically. She waved back. I was an absolutely happy man.

I had written her that I was sailing from Havre on the *Ile de France*.

I didn't dare suggest that Theodora take passage on the *Ile de France*, but I had hoped and prayed. And now Theodora was below on the tender, smiling up at me.

I wondered what she had told Arthur. Nothing, most likely. She had an income of her own and could do as she pleased. Well, we'd exchange confidences in five minutes.

Theodora came up the gangway and into the companionway of the lower promenade deck. I seized her hand, pulled her out of the crowd, grasped her roughly and kissed her.

"You darling, oh, you darling," I murmured.

"Do you suppose the captain can be induced to marry us?" she whispered.

"We'll go ask him this minute."

We asked him and he married us.



# The Criminologist Says



By Major C. E. Russell

Consulting Criminologist for the States of New York, New Jersey and Connecticut; former Provost Marshal on the confidential staff of General Pershing for special investigating—he will help you with your problems.

## Case No. 7

Five years ago I completed a three-year term in an eastern prison for robbery. It was my one mistake, and as soon as I was free I came out here in the West. Under my own name I have become a respected citizen of the community, and now my friends want to run me for mayor. I know that when I was convicted I forfeited all my rights of citizenship, but I can't explain this to my friends without ruining myself. Is there any possible way by which I can get my citizenship rights restored?

Yes, you can have your rights restored by securing a pardon from the governor of the state where you served your sentence. I would suggest that you quietly secure a number of letters of recommendation from the responsible people of your community and deliver them personally to the governor, explaining just what you want and how you have conducted yourself since you were freed. I am quite sure the governor will give you a pardon restoring your rights and do it in such a way that none of your friends will know.

## Case No. 8

About six months ago my son stole the rent money and ran away. I have just learned that he joined the army under an assumed name. My husband, the boy's stepfather, is quite bitter and threatens to send the boy to jail if he can find him. I feel quite guilty in keeping my son's whereabouts from my husband, yet I do not want my son to be branded a felon. Is there no way out for me?

If your husband should really carry out his threat of sending your boy to jail it would mean more than his being branded a felon. It would mean that your son

would be dishonorably discharged from the army and thus would become a man without a country. While I do not believe in condoning crime, I do feel that in your case the interests of justice will be served if you keep your information to yourself and allow your son to remain where he is. Army discipline will make a man out of him if he has the stuff in him. Write him a letter telling him all the facts, give him the choice of repaying the money out of his monthly pay or of being arrested for theft. I feel quite sure your son will accept the former course.

**YOU MAY WRITE US YOUR PROBLEMS.** Letters will be answered at the discretion of Major Russell. If you so designate, your letter will not be reprinted here. In any case your letter will be held in strict confidence and no initials or identification will appear in this column. You must attach the coupon underneath, signed, and enclose a self-addressed, stamped envelope. This service is free.

I want guidance in the matter I have outlined in the attached letter. This is not to be regarded as legal service or investigation service and I will not hold DETECTIVE FICTION WEEKLY or Major C. E. Russell responsible in any way.

Name.....

Address.....



## Flashes From Readers

*Where Readers and Editors Get Together to Gossip  
and Argue, and Everyone Speaks Up His Mind*

THE answer to a number of letters received by the Editor this week is:

"You *can* have more time to tell THE CRIME JURY which you think is the best story published by DETECTIVE FICTION WEEKLY since Jan. 1, 1934. As you will note in the announcement below, we are extending the time-limit three weeks, or until March 30th.

Readers have written that they wanted extra time in order to read favorite stories again; and once started, most readers found that there were a lot of

favorite stories to read! For during the period covered by the contest DETECTIVE FICTION WEEKLY has published fiction enough to fill more than fifty books. Its entertainment would have cost readers more than a hundred dollars if the stories had been bound between book covers.

But though many readers want to re-read stories, no one has to! Your favorite stories will stick in your memory. The story that stood out in your mind may have been published last week, or this week. It may have been

**W**HAT is your idea of the best story (fiction or true story, regardless of length) published in DETECTIVE FICTION WEEKLY since Jan. 1, 1934? For the twelve letters from readers which, in the opinion of THE CRIME JURY, give the best reasons why this or that story stands out above all others, we will award twelve full yearly subscriptions. We don't want mere praise; we are interested in finding out exactly what stories you liked best. We don't care about your literary style.

Was there some story printed in this magazine which stood out in your memory above all others? Write and tell us about that story. Tell us why you liked it, what there was about it which made it stick in your mind. It isn't necessary for you to have read every story in every issue. You will have just as good a chance to win one of those twelve subscriptions as someone who has read all the issues from cover to cover. But we must know *why* you liked your favorite story.

Letters selected by the editors will be published from week to week, but not all letters published will receive subscriptions.

Make your comments as brief or as lengthy as you wish. But put down all your reasons. Address your letter to THE CRIME JURY, DETECTIVE FICTION WEEKLY, 280 Broadway, New York City, so that it will reach us not later than March 30th, 1935.



the first story you ever read. Write us about it. You have a chance to win a year's subscription.

#### WANTS TO BE SILENT WITNESS

DEAR SIR:

My choice from 1934 would be "She-Boss of Crime," by Howard McLellan. I enjoyed it immensely as it was an unusual tale and the main thing about it was the true places, names, and dates used. That helped me to realize that it really happened once on a time in the long ago.

As for picking out the best fiction story—I find it hard to do because each of the characters are favorites of mine and each writer takes me into a different scene and place. It is easier for me to name those I do not care for, and they are *Fluffy McGoff*, *Dan Riddle*, and *Tug Norton*.

The reason I don't care for them is they do not make me forget my surroundings and feel as if I am a silent witness of all that is occurring.

Yours truly,

MRS. GEO. A. FLEMING,  
Fillmore, Calif.

#### MAURICE BEAM FOR INSPECTORI

DEAR EDITOR:

I have been a reader of detective stories, both true and fiction, for many years and as an all way round magazine I do not believe D. F. W. has a peer.

Of all the stories published in the last year the novelette "Swan Song," by Maurice Beam, has my vote as the best so far. Mr. Beam undoubtedly knows whereof he writes. His story, for completeness of detail and colorful descriptions of the modern methods of operation of our present day mobsters are most complete.

Their cold-blooded, murderous methods of stopping at nothing, simply to fill their greedy pockets with money, wrung from broken-hearted parents and relatives to insure the life and safety of loved ones, are plainly portrayed. Also the patience and intelligence of Uncle Sam's now famous "G. men," whose insight into the psychological make-up of criminals gives them a powerful weapon with which to combat them; the one thing that all those who live by their wits and gun possess in never-failing huge doses, the curse of Vanity.

When the time comes, which I hope it does, when every city has a police force composed of *Satan Halls* and *Park Avenue Hunt Clubbers* I for one want to nominate Mr. Beam for at least an inspector's job.

EVERETTE D. HITE,  
Hot Springs, Va.

#### FROM A "SPEEDY"

DEAR EDITOR:

My job for the last 7 or 8 years has been as a "Speedy" in Uncle Sam's service; i.e., a special delivery messenger in the Post Office Dept. of the U. S. It is a non Civil Service position, but to obtain it is as hard as breaking into the White House at Washington, D. C. You have to get the references of two reputable citizens and your life history is checked from infancy in order to be bonded by Uncle Sam in \$1,000 and sworn in. The pay is on a commission basis—9 cents a letter and from 10 to 20 cents a package. In our daily rounds we certainly come in contact with life—its lights and shades, its joy and pain. I have gone into a house of mourning with flowers for the dead and my next delivery was a check for \$100 for a prospective bride. On my Chinatown "run" one day I delivered a letter in an evil smelling dark basement where I found a man nailing down a coffin. I did not wait to see what was in it. I left that to the Chinatown detail who were patrolling outside.

I then had a delivery for a joss house in Waverly Place where recently there was a Chinese murder and suicide. From there I went to a Chinese hotel and got the addressee in a gambling room. You should have seen the collection of "mugs" in that room—white, brown, black, yellow and nondescript. Due to the depression and decrease in business a number of us were put on payless furlough.

In my early days (I was born in Ireland) I was attached to the Royal Army Medical Corps as stretcher bearer in the fighting in Ireland. I have heard the leaden messengers of death winging through the air, and helped carry dead and wounded from the streets. Have had money and spent it. I went "broke" in London, England, and tramped its streets all night in the fog and rain. I crossed the Atlantic nearly 30 years ago in an old tub from Glasgow, Scotland, to Halifax, Nova Scotia, the wildest and stormiest voyage I ever had. I have been on the Pacific Ocean, spent 15 years in the northern wilds of Canada and met many of the old time Royal N. W. Mounted—Inspector Horrigan, Sergeant Major Liggett, Corporal Paddy White. Taught school in Ireland, England, and Canada. Worked on farms, in lumber camps, railroad camps. Beat my way in boxcars and on the bumpers and saw a fellow fall off the bumpers and get killed. Have had jobs as railroad clerk and timekeeper, hotel manager, clerk, but due, I suppose, to the wanderlust could not "stay put."

Yours,

GEORGE MERCER,  
San Francisco, Calif.

# Solving Cipher Secrets

*A cipher is secret writing. The way to solve ciphers is to experiment with substitute letters until real words begin to appear. In solving, notice the frequency of certain letters. For instance, the letters e, t, a, o, n, i, are the most used in our language. So if the puzzle maker has*



M. E. OHAVER

*used X to represent e, X will probably appear very frequently. Combinations of letters will also give you clues. Thus, the affixes -ing, -ion, -ally are frequent. Read the helpful hints at the beginning of this department each week. The first cryptogram each week is the easiest.*

NEARLY everyone is familiar with the names of the letters of the German alphabet, *ah, bay, tsay*, etc. Similarly, the Anglo-Saxon boasts of its *edh, thorn, and ypsilon*; the Greek runs the gamut from *alpha* to *omega*; and so on. But how about our own alphabet? To settle this vexing question, your cipher editor delved into numerous musty tomes, finding a few names here and there, with the following heartening results. And so, after all, our English letters are not merely nameless waifs and strays! Perhaps you may know of other names, not in this list. If so, please submit them for publication, with the name of the authority in which you found them. You will be duly credited, of course, for your contributions.

## ENGLISH ALPHABET

A—a.	O—o, oe.
B—bee, be.	P—pee.
C—cee, ce.	Q—cue, kew, <b>kewe</b> ,
D—dee, de.	kue.
E—e.	R—ar, arre.
F—eff, ef.	S—ess, es.
G—gee.	T—tee.
H—aitch, ache.	U—u.
I—i.	V—vee.
J—jay.	W—double-u.
K—kay.	X—eks, ex.
L—ell, el.	V—wye, wy.
M—em.	Z—zee, ze, zed, izzard,
N—en.	izzard.

An important lead in last week's Inner Circle cipher, Copper's No. 54, was the ending -DZT (frequencies 5-9-4), which, tried as -ing, would suggest *begin* for SVTDZ (-gin). Next, with symbol K reacting as y, due to its use only in the first, second, and last positions, KNGZT (y--ng) would yield *young*; and so on, to the full translation,

Analysis of  $E \times S = S$  in the current division puzzle, by Carroll B. Mayers, will give the value of E, for a starter. The key is a two-word phrase of ten letters, numbered from 0 to 9. Note the one-letter word E in connection with FPEF in Pangram's cryptogram. Follow up with FN, TRFP, and R; then ANZ'F, YNRZY, and EVS.

Short words EBLO, LO, EBF, and YLEB will provide entry to Biff's contribution. BKHFOEV will be next in line, completing HKE and LH, and leading to KAEFH and AKX, NXF and NO, etc. In Ky-Mo-Wash's construction, SVIV'H may be used as an approach to group 6, with GL and ZGV serving as check words. The initial diagram in URIHG and URT may then be supplied.

In Howard H. Woerner's 119-letter alliterative message, the symbol T occurs 19 times, and only as an initial. Patterns, double letters, etc., provide the necessary clues. A solution of Corundum's Inner Circle cipher, and the answers to all of this week's puzzles will be given next week. The asterisks in Nos. 56, 58, and 59 mark capitalized words.

No. 55—Cryptic Division. By Carroll B. Mayers.

Y T E ) O E H E X F ( S Y H  
O L S S

O L X X  
O O L T

Y E S F  
Y S U S

O E E



No. 56—Disputed Ratio. By Pangram.

\*HZODS \*BEL EZA NDA \*KNPZ \*QHDD, TRFP ZEGRSB, EVS  
XSA HU XHDD! \*ZRUUNZ OVRSB, "R ANZ'F OEVS E VEU;  
FPEF 'XRGs-XRGs-FPVSS' R'L YNRZY FN BOVEU!"

No. 57—Familiar Phrases. By Biff.

NRNSFO YLEB OLDLTNX DFNHLHSO NXF KAEFH AKZHR;  
NO, AKX FUNDGTF, LH EBLO GNLX: "BKHFQEV LO EBF  
PFOE GKTLQV," NHR "QXLDF RKFO HKE GNV."

No. 58—Honoring an Ancient. By Ky-Mo-Wash.

SVIV'H GL \*NLGSVI \*VEV, URIHG GIZMHTIVHHLI, DSL  
GLLP HVIKVMG'H ZWERXV, ZGV ULIYRWWVM UIFRG,  
WRHXLEVIVW MFWRGB, DIVXPVW URIHG MFWRHG  
XLOLMB DRGS URT OVZU!

No. 59—Hilarious Holdup. By Howard H. Woerner.

TOFFHE TOZZURK, TRXSPNKZ, TOFFY, TAXBY TRPRZSRK.  
\*TRKBOO TRXSPYURK TREY TRXSP. THAPSVAF THBOF,  
TXFOGP \*TRB, TRJJODY, TNOFLY TOBNFNB, TNDUNFNB,  
TAQFAB.

No. 60—Professional Technique. By Corundum.

TV SBUSKXVB-RFSNV GZFZHRHR, BTVSBVB OZHFV  
GDSNYV, BTRSFHX RYTNVTA HKBHXSFB. XSKBHB  
FZPTSXHX XZHTYTNVPK SBUHRVR FZPTSXPGDSRFBX  
PGVTSFHPK; GZTVKHX VEVTVRHR HKXDYBVB.

#### LAST WEEK'S ANSWERS

49—Key:     0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9  
              P H Y S I O C R A T

piques jaded company. Bohemian ventrilo-  
quist explains feat.

50—He gave her a heart so tender—but she  
paid for it dearly, and how! For he was the  
neighborhood butcher, and the heart was that  
of a cow!

53—Elegant cavalier, plumed equerry duel.  
Richelieu, observant, calm, sniffs snuff, de-  
crees nobility degree irrelevant, survivor  
hangs; swordplay terminates abruptly!

51—When you are all broken up, pull your-  
self together, find your bearings, pick up your  
feet, lift your chin, and look your troubles  
square in the face!

54—Blond flirt lures bland yokel midst  
leafy glade. Young folks fling party, chant  
lyric, dance polka, munch candy, begin amour.

52—Irked society group requests novel  
diversion. Jackdaw whistling airy zephyr

Answers to any of the current puzzles will be  
credited in our March Cipher Solvers' Club. Ad-  
dress: M. E. Ohaver, DETECTIVE FICTION WEEKLY,  
280 Broadway, New York, N. Y.

# How You Can Read Faces

By WILLIAM E. BENTON



**SHORT ROMAN NOSE**

Salesmen  
Travelers



WILL ROGERS



**LARGE ROMAN NOSE**

Executives  
Pioneers

## THE ROMAN NOSE—"They Rule or Ruin!"

WHEN you look at a face, look first at the nose. The nose is the most distinctly human feature. The shape of the nose shows the prevailing mental attitude, or mode of thinking.

People with the Roman, or convex type of nose are proud, independent and businesslike. These people would rather have a peanut-stand of their own than share a large store with another. They cannot stand being dominated by others. The large Roman nose, illustrated at the right above, is characteristic of executives and business managers of every race and nationality. Stalin, Mustapha Kemal, the dictator of Turkey, and Mussolini all have Roman noses.

There have also been many great discoverers who have had noses of this kind. Marco Polo and Columbus are two. When I had lunch years ago in Portland, Oregon, with Roald Amundsen, the South Pole explorer, his remarkable Roman

nose fascinated me. The large Roman nose is a sign of the desire and the ability to lead, to try new paths of all kinds.

The short Roman nose, illustrated at the left above, shares in general the same traits, but people who have noses of this type are more likely to be travelers and salesmen. They have real talents for business management, and love to move around and to promote practical, proven lines of business.

The well-known wanderlust of Will Rogers, whose travels cover the world; and his witty, convincing, racy speech, which would make him a marvelous salesman if he were not world-famous as an actor, are traits of the people with the short Roman nose.

The worst fault of Roman-nosed people comes from their greatest strength; they are so independent that they hate to take orders. They must rule or ruin.

*This is the first of a series of articles that will teach you to read the character of anyone at a glance. Save and study the entire series. Next week—The Round-Tipped Nose.*

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Fill out the coupon at the bottom of the page, and mail it to Mr. Benton. Enclose a photograph of yourself and ten cents. He will analyze every photograph personally.

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MR. WILLIAM E. BENTON,  
DETECTIVE FICTION WEEKLY,  
280 Broadway, New York, N. Y.

I enclose a photograph that I want analyzed, and ten cents. Please write me what character this face reveals.

Name.....

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Good for one analysis. Offer expires 3-23-35



## *Next Week the Crime Jury Selects!—*

**I**NTO a hop-joint staggered the ragged man whom the underworld knew as Larry the Bat. He flung himself into a bunk. No one guessed that Larry the Bat was also the Gray Seal, the super-criminal whose crimes managed to clear the innocent and punish the guilty, or that the Gray Seal was Jimmie Dale, gentleman-adventurer.

His arm hung limp, injured in a battle with gangsters. In his pocket was a fortune in diamonds, recovered from thieves—and no one thought he was worth robbing. Jimmie Dale, alias Larry the Bat, alias Smarlinghue, alias the Gray Seal, lapsed into unconsciousness.

Amid flame and smoke he roused himself. Someone was carrying his limp body. Someone was risking his life to bear Jimmy out of a hop-joint that had suddenly turned to a furnace. And that night Jimmie made a vow. Some day he would pay back the man who had saved him.

The rescuer was Sonny Gartz, Bowery thief. Five years later he asked Jimmie Dale to redeem his promise—and that is the start of a thrilling, lightning-fast serial. Here is the greatest adventure of Jimmie Dale, the underworld adventurer known to millions of readers throughout the country. Don't miss this great story!

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By FRANK L. PACKARD

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