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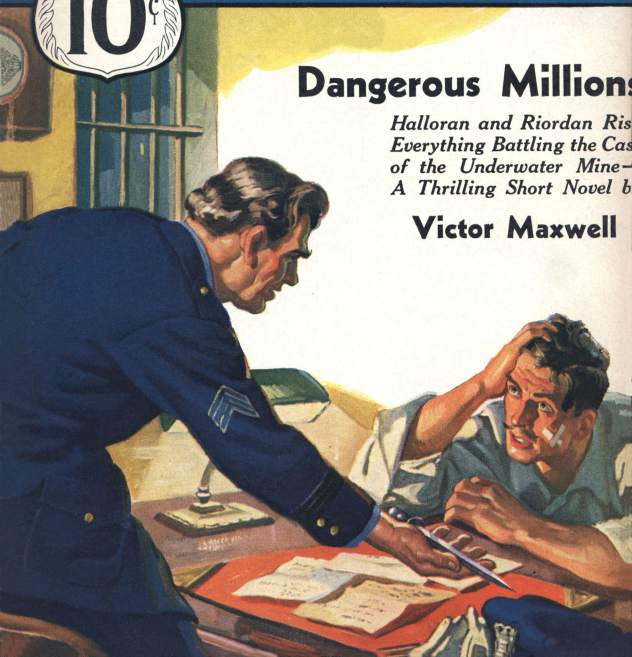
FICTION WEEKLY

FORMERLY FLYNN'S

Dangerous Millions

*Halloran and Riordan Risk
Everything Battling the Case
of the Underwater Mine—
A Thrilling Short Novel by*

Victor Maxwell



"DOWN THEY WENT... IN EACH OTHER'S ARMS"



Thrown into Lake by Summer Squall D. E. Medlock Rescues Sweethearts



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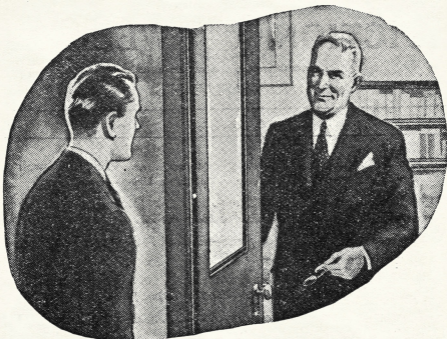
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FICTION WEEKLY



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VOLUME CIV

August 1, 1936

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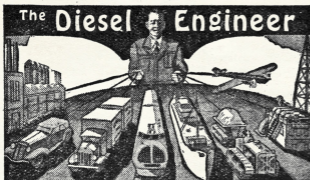
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"The lady claims there was a burglar in her place!"

Dangerous Millions

By

Victor Maxwell

CHAPTER I

Who Is "J. G. H."?

YOUNG DETECTIVE WILLIS twisted the wheel, kicked out the clutch, turned off the ignition, and let the car roll in to the curb and come to a halt. Pulling on the brake, he leaned back in his seat and sighed.

"Pretty soft, I call it," he com-

mented. "Nothing to do but roll around in a nice, new bus, and . . ."

"Soft is right," interrupted Detective Halloran, his voice a throaty growl rising from deep down in his two hundred and eleven pounds of beef and brawn. "Soft, but it ain't police business. I don't like it."

Willis explored his pockets, found two cigars, thrust one at Halloran and lighted his own. "I suppose you'd



rather pad around on your dogs all night. Been doing it so long, I suppose you don't feel right sitting on cushions. Maybe if you didn't weigh so much and this car would ride level, and not all tipped over on your side, you'd like it better. A big moose like you ought to have a bus of his own, with the steering wheel in the center."

Halloran ignored the jibe. "What I mean, youngster," he replied, "is that it ain't police business. A bus like this is all right for the prowl boys, but you an' me is dicks. When we ain't on some special job we're supposed to be passin' along among the people, with our eyes open. Paddin' round, like you say. Goin' into

this place an' that place, an' gatherin' the dirt. What can we do in this bus? Roll up an' down Broadway, a sign on the side o' the wagon which says 'City Police Department,' an' every wrong guy seein' the sign an' takin' it on the lam before we can even figger what he's doin'. This is soft, all right—but it ain't police business."

Before Willis could answer that the loud-speaker under the dashboard suddenly gave voice: "City Police Department, calling all cars. Calling all cars. A hit-and-run, at Seventeenth and Main. Man down on

Sergeant Matt Riordan Risks Everything on an Angle That Was Hidden from Halloran in that Desperate, Pressing Case of the Underwater Mine

the crosswalk and all mussed up. It was a light car, they say it was blue. A light blue car with wire wheels. The bumper was torn loose. All cars look for a light blue car with a loose bumper.

"Car Number Five, go to Seventeenth and Main and investigate. Ambulance on the way, step on it. That is all; City Police Department, broadcast number eighty-one, at nine-ten."

Willis snapped the ignition key, trod on the starter button. The car leaped away from the curb with a grating of gears. The young detective expertly dodged a street car, kicked on the siren, screeched through the late evening traffic, whirled round a corner on screaming wheels, and came to a jolting stop seven blocks away. Leaping out, leaving the engine running, he ran to a knot of people standing at the curb, and pushed his way through them to a limp figure lying on the sidewalk.

Halloran sat in the seat, turning his cigar round and round between his lips.

Not until a white ambulance rolled up with a whining siren did he move; then he was out on the street and had one end of the stretcher in his ham-like hands before the interne had dropped down from his seat beside the driver. He helped lift the huddled heap to the stretcher, helped carry it back to the gleaming ambulance, and laid a detaining hand on the interne's shoulder.

"Dead, ain't he?" he asked.

"I didn't stop to look, thing to do is get him to the hospital—"

"Thing for you to do, doc," said Halloran, "is see if he ought to go to the hospital. You go haulin' a stiff to St. Lucia's, they won't thank you none. Will want to know why you didn't call the Morgue. Doc, you're young yet, you got a lot to learn."

The interne regarded the seamed

face and rheumy eyes of the sleuth, and turned suddenly to his patient. He ran an exploring hand under the rumpled shirt, snatched at the wrist with trembling fingers, then reached for a stethoscope and snapped it to his ears, prodding the hard rubber diaphragm case under the man's clothes.

"You're right, he is dead," he said, looking up. "Well, we can't dump him on the street. I'll haul him down to Emergency, and they can notify the Morgue."

"I'll ride with you," Halloran rumbled, and he climbed on the back of the ambulance.

AT Headquarters Detective Sergeant Riordan looked up as the door of his office opened and Halloran waddled inside.

The gargantuan detective let his huge form drop into a chair, and closed his eyes.

Riordan smiled. "What brang yuh in, yuh big lummo?" he demanded. "Yuh fall out o' yuhr nice wagon when young Willis took a corner on two wheels?"

Halloran shook his gray head. "Willis is up at Seventeenth an' Main, Matt, lookin' for me, likely. He left his buggy with the engine runnin', burnin' city gas. That hit-an'-run case the radio desk reported. Funniest hit-an'-run I ever see. The guy's pockets was turned inside out. Well dressed guy, about forty-five, soft bodied, slick shaved, gold watch chain an' ticker—looks like he might be well-to-do. All mussed up, he was, like he'd been dragged, but his pockets was inside out."

"Where is he now?"

"Downstairs, Matt, in the ambulance. The young sawbones had him picked up before he saw he was dead.

They're waitin' for the Morgue wagon to come get him."

"An' yuh come up here to rest yuhr feet, eh? If this is such a funny job, why ain't yuh out workin'?"

"I done all I could, Matt—in the ambulance on the way in. Initials 'J.G.H.' on the watch. No laundry marks on his clothes, they must be washed at home. Nothin' in his pockets at all, not even a bunch o' keys. He was cleaned good an' careful. No tailor's tag in his suit—nothin'. He's got a gash on the head—back o' the head—one elbow is scraped, an' one leg has a cut on it. Willis was buzzin' everybody up there. I come in to look at the directory an' see how many men there is with initials 'J.G.H.' in the book."

Riordan reached to a stand beside his desk, picked up the city directory and threw it with considerable force at the huge sleuth. Halloran caught the heavy book with the skill of a baseball fielder—or better—and opened it on his knees. But he did not look at its pages.

"Don't get sore, Matt," he said. "No use me lookin' through this thing for no 'J.G.H.' Likely there's a million. You might have the Civil Clerk, outside, look for them initials—give him somethin' to do besides read the sports pages in the paper. Listen, if this guy was a hit-an'-run case, it'll all come out in the wash, sooner or later; but if he's some important guy who was slugged an' cleaned, an' then threw out of a car—why, that's a horse of another color. Willis will get what he can, an' come in when he can't find me—but what can we do right now?"

That was sense, and Riordan knew it. In fact, he had been running through his mind the names of all "important" people he knew, trying

to place a "J.G.H." Still searching his memory, he looked at Halloran. A moment later he reached for his phone, jiggled the hook.

"Have somebody call all the good hotels," he barked into the instrument. "What I want is the name of any out-of-town guest whose initials would be 'J.G.H.' Tell me what yuh get."

He banged up the receiver and looked at Halloran again. "If yuh didn't make him while yuh was goin' over him, I guess mebbe he was a stranger. Big feller, yuh really got brains. I see why yuh come in, now."

Halloran nodded, looked down at the directory and began to read down the columns of names, marking his progress with a pudgy finger. After some moments' industrious application, he banged the big book shut and looked at the sergeant.

"There's no sense to this, Matt," he exclaimed. "Puttin' dicks in a prowler car. The place for dicks to be is minglin' in the crowd. Suppose there was some dips, now, in a mob in front of one of the theaters—how could we see 'em from the car as we drove by?"

"There's no sense to a lot o' things, yuh big lummo," counseled Riordan. "But we got a new commissioner, an' he says two dicks in a car can cover more ground than four dicks paddin' round on their dogs. Who are we to dispute him? Only thing to do is to teach him the police business, an' that takes time. How many guys have yuh found whose initials is 'J.G.H.'?"

"I found forty-two, Matt, an' didn't half finish lookin'. No use to look. We don't want to call up or chase out on all the 'J.G.H.' guys in the book—was a man out to lodge or on a toot, mebbe, an' we ask his wife is he home, she'll have hysterics. Time enough for his missus to call up when he don't

come home. One thing is certain, this guy won't come home—an' if we wait long enough there'll be a missin' persons report on him, an' then we'll know who he is. Besides, like you, I think he was a stranger here."

THE office door opened and young Willis came in. He favored Halloran with a grimace, saluted his sergeant.

"Nobody saw it at all, Sarge. That is, nobody I can nail down," he reported. "I buzzed the crowd standing around—they just gathered when the cigar-store man dragged this fellow off the street."

"The cigar-store man?" demanded Riordan.

"Joe Fuller, on the corner. You know Joe. Has run the stand there for—oh, ten years. Joe says a feller run up to his stand and shouted somebody had been hit by an auto. Said it was a light car, a blue car, and for Joe to call the bulls or an ambulance. Joe called the desk downstairs to report it, and then he ran out in the street, saw this man lying there, and dragged him to the curb. Then the rubbernecks . . ."

"Uh-huh. Who was this man told Joe about it?"

"Joe don't know, Sarge. He said it was just somebody likely passing by and saw it. Said the man had on overalls. He didn't notice any more—turned right to the phone to call the desk."

"Where'd he get the stuff about the broke bumper?" asked Halloran.

Willis shrugged. "I suppose this guy in overalls told him. You made who he is yet?"

The office door opened again, and Coroner Wilson came in. He nodded to the three, found himself a chair.

"You boys got anything on this at all," he asked. "I came down with the wagon from the Morgue—these auto accidents are beginning to get my goat. Something ought to be done about it. Damn me, Sarge, if I don't cite somebody, some of these days, for murder in the second on one of these cases."

"We got less than nothing," answered Riordan. "Doc, you better go take a good look at this guy. I wouldn't be surprised if it turns out that he wasn't hit by no car at all. Wouldn't be surprised but he was took for a ride, an' dumped out. Halloran, the big lummo here, don't like it—an' when Halloran don't like something, I don't like it neither."

Coroner Wilson fished in his pocket, produced a watch.

"I took this off him before I sent him in," he said. "No use putting temptation in the way of those boys down at the Morgue. I noticed you boys here had been through him—how'd you come to miss the watch?"

"Nobody but you was through him," rumbled Halloran. "Doc, he had been cleaned before even the ambulance saw-bones got to him. I know, I helped pick him up. His pockets was all inside out." The big detective turned suddenly to Willis. "You see any marks on the pavement, youngster, where he would have been dragged?"

"No marks at all," answered Willis. "Why didn't you look, too lazy to bend over?"

Halloran grunted. "I looked twice—first when I was sittin' in the car, waitin' for the ambulance; then again when I walked round to get the stretcher out. I jus' asked to see was you on your toes. There was no marks. There was no blood, even—yet this

guy has two good cuts on him. This was no hit-and-run, take it from me."

Riordan reached for the report basket, scanned the latest radio reports. "We'll leave it be a hit-an'-run for the present," he said. "Wait till somethin' turns up. Doc, you better telegraph the factory that made that watch, give 'em the serial number, an' see can you trace it down to its sale. Or mebbe find out where it was engraved. Let me know what yuh get—when yuh get it."

Dr. Wilson nodded. A doorman thrust his head in the portal and saluted.

"Downstairs reports, Sergeant, that none of the hotels has anybody registered whose initials would be 'J.G.H.' Anything else you want, Sergeant?"

Riordan shook his head, waved his hand, and the doorman withdrew. Dr. Wilson rose, hesitated at the door.

"I'll go down to the Morgue and go over this man now," he said. "If I find anything I'll phone you."

"Phone me, doc, whether yuh find anythin' or not," interrupted Riordan. "An' if any o' them reporters pester yuh, do me a favor. Tell 'em this was sure enough a hit-an'-run job, an' that yuh think the man is James G. Hoopnagle—or any other good name that occurs to yuh. Say yuh're havin' him looked up—that yuh think he come in from the rhu-barbs an' got confused in city traffic. No use havin' the newspapers set off yet. Will yuh do that, doc?"

The Coroner nodded, smiled, departed.

Riordan looked at the two sleuths. "Yuh boys better go climb back in yuhr bus an' do some more ridin' round. Report yuh investigated this case, found the man dead, an' that the Coroner took charge. Make as dumb

a report as yuh can. Halloran, if yuh get any ideas, let me know. The same for yuh, Willis. An' if yuh see the new commissioner while yuh're ridin' round, be sure to make a showin'. That'll be all."

THE detective sergeant returned to the endless routine of posting reports. He heard the motorcycle men go forth, sirens screaming and cut-outs open, but paid no attention to it. Motorcycle men were always whizzing from the garage downstairs—accidents, fires, fights, crazy people, almost any disturbance of city life summoned them to duty.

Later he heard the quick stamping of feet in the outer room as some pair of sleuths departed on sudden call—and again he paid no attention to it. Much of the police business was routine—if there was anything important, the sergeant would be notified. If he was not notified, in time he would see reports on what had transpired. He went on working at his records.

His phone rang, and he reached for it.

"This is the desk downstairs, Sarge," said the operator. "There's some kind of a ruckus out to Hank Brownlee's place. I thought you'd like to know."

"Who's out on it?" demanded Riordan. "What is it?"

"Motorcycle men went out, Sarge. Then two of the dicks was called. Motorcycle men called the dicks. I don't know what it is . . . wait a minute, here's a call now . . . wait a minute, I'll put him on to you. It's Enright, he says."

The line clicked once or twice, and the sergeant heard Detective Enright's voice:

"Give me upstairs, in a hurry . . ."

"Yuh got upstairs, Enright—this is Riordan. What is it?"

"Sarge, me an' Stacy is out here to Hank Brownlee's. Somebody stuck him in the ribs. I think you better . . ."

"Call Captain Brady, to his home," barked Riordan, shutting the other off. "I ain't got time. I'm on my way."

He leaped from his chair, snatched cap and coat from his locker, and raced downstairs to the police garage. An instant later his big red roadster was bouncing and roaring along the street, the siren wailing a throaty warning to intersecting traffic.

Under his breath, as he guided his powerful car, he was swearing to himself: Hank Brownlee, president of the Farmers' & Drovers' Bank, in some sort of a ruckus, and no executive of the department yet making a showing! What a note. When he got back he would skin somebody alive. Then he laughed—he could guess how it was; the call had come in simply as trouble at a certain address, and nobody had recognized the address as being the banker's home.

As his car grated in to the curb in front of the residence on Forest Avenue, he felt better, however. There was certainly a "showing" being made.

He saw two prowling cars, one of the big limousines reserved for detectives, an ambulance, and three uniformed patrolmen.

He jumped from his machine, ran up the walk, and yanked at the old-fashioned brass knocker on the heavy entrance portal. A uniformed houseman opened the door, took a fleeting glance at Riordan's gold shield, and motioned down the long hall. A patrolman in blue and brass appeared from the semi-darkness and pointed to one side. The sergeant pushed be-

tween heavy curtains and found himself in a library.

A white-robed ambulance interne was bending over a leather-covered sofa, and Detectives Enright and Stacy were standing at one side. Enright moved forward.

"One of them things, Sarge," he said. "All I got is from the butler, or whatever you call him. He says Brownlee was alone in the house—it seems his missus is away. Mrs. Brownlee, I mean.

"Brownlee told the butler he was expectin' a caller and to show him in the library and see they wasn't disturbed. The caller come an' the butler showed him in. This was about nine o'clock. The butler was downstairs, lallygaggin' with the rest of the help. Come along to about eleven o'clock, the butler says he figgered he would go upstairs an' see did old Hank want anythin'.

"So he puts a bottle o' wine an' some glasses on a tray an' pussyfoots to the library.

"He knocks an' don't get any answer. So he walks in. Hank is lyin' on the floor and the caller has vamoosed. The butler, he calls Dr. Sanders, who is Hank's family doctor, but can't raise him, so he calls St. Lucia's for a doctor. St. Lucia's gets it balled up and sends an ambulance. The saw-bones on the wagon, he don't like the looks of it an' he calls the bulls. The motorcycle men take one look an' they call the dicks, an' me an' Stacy gets the nod. Hank has been stuck in the ribs—the saw-bones, here, is tryin' to do what he can—says he's afraid to move him. I'm sure sorry for the saw-bones."

"Where's the butler?" demanded Riordan.

"We got all the help locked up

downstairs, Sarge. The bull on the beat is ridin' herd on 'em."

RIORDAN waited for no more; turned and found his way to the lower floor. A uniformed patrolman, sitting at the foot of the stairs, rose, saluted, and pointed to what was evidently the servants' dining room. The sergeant entered; half a dozen palpably scared men and women were sitting in a silent, nervous circle.

"Who's the butler here?" he demanded.

One of the men rose. "I am, sir. Higgs is the name, sir. I will tell you just what happened, sir, I . . ."

"Yuh answer me what I ask, never mind the rest of it. Who was this come to see Mr. Brownlee?"

"Mr. Lagrande, sir."

"Who's he?"

"I don't know, sir. I never saw . . ."

"All right, skip it. Mr. Brownlee told you he was expecting him?"

"Yes, sir. He said a Mr. Lagrande would call, and that he would be in conference with him and did not wish to be disturbed. Mr. Brownlee often has gentlemen here in the evenings, sir, for conferences. I happened to be in the hall when the bell rang, and I admitted Mr. Lagrande, sir."

"What sort of a man?"

"A portly man, sir. Very well dressed. He came in a car, sir. I saw it at the curb. He was a gentleman of about fifty, portly as I have said. Round face, smooth shaven. Grayish hair, sir. By a round face, I mean slightly fat, sir."

"He give you his card, say where he was from?"

"No, sir. He said just he was Mr. Lagrande and that Mr. Brownlee was expecting him, sir. I showed him directly to the library, sir. Mr. Brown-

lee rose to meet him—that was all I saw before I closed the door."

"Uh-huh, yuh think Brownlee knew him?"

"Yes, sir, certainly; that is, I would suppose so . . ."

"All right when did he go? Lagrande, I mean."

"That I do not know, sir. I did not hear him depart. I was down here, sir . . ."

"Never mind that. Later on yuh'll have to give a history o' yuhr life. Listen, is Mr. Brownlee in the habit of lettin' his callers out hisself, or does he ring for one o' you people?"

"Frequently he goes to the door himself with his friends, sir. Sometimes he will ring for me or the footman to show the visitor out, sir."

"You hear any ruckus upstairs?"

"No, sir, not a sound."

"Yuh know what this man wanted to see old Hank—I mean Mr. Brownlee—about?"

"Naturally not, sir."

"All right. Yuh got burglar alarms on the windows?"

"Yes, sir. The house is wired . . ."

"How about the front door?"

"The alarm on that is only set, sir, when I close up for the night."

"Uh-huh. Brownlee say anything to you when you found him?"

"No, sir. He was unconscious."

"Any of the other help see this man or hear him go out?"

"No, sir. We all supposed he was still here. It was Mrs. Dowsey, the housekeeper—that lady over there, sir—who suggested that I take some wine upstairs, sir—as a sort of hint, you know, that it was getting late."

"Who put Brownlee on the sofa upstairs?"

"I did, sir. He was on the floor when I entered the room. I lifted him

to the lounge, and then tried to call Doctor . . ."

"All right. Yuh people stay here till the officers come an' talk to yuh. Yuh say yuh never saw this man before?"

"I do not know him, sir."

CHAPTER II

M. F. Lagrande of Pottsville

WHEN Riordan returned to the main floor, Captain of Detectives Brady had arrived. The head of the bureau had already assumed charge of matters. The first thing he had done had been to telephone for several prominent physicians, and had posted one of the detectives at the door to relieve the house man. Then he had called Headquarters for more sleuths.

"Boy," he said to Riordan, "I don't know whether to call Roberts or not. Certainly I won't call the Chief till we get some real saw-bones here. The idea of that ambulance man trying to handle Hank Brownlee alone! He says he's got an internal hemorrhage, and he don't dare move him lest he'll slip out on him. I've called Weems and Ketrick and Barnstable, they ought to do for doctors. You ask me, I think old Brownlee is a gone goose—he looks bad to me. What you know about this, anyway?"

Riordan told what he knew—or what he didn't know. Enright added that he and the butler had been over the house and it showed no indication of having been prowled. The library was in perfect order, there was no indication of a struggle. Mr. Brownlee apparently had all his personal belongings in his pockets, there was nothing to indicate robbery.

"The way I figure it," said Enright,

"is that Hank and this party had some sort of a jam, and the feller just got mad and stuck him. Lagrande, that's a foreign name. Lots of these foreigners pack a knife."

Brady nodded, turned to Riordan again. "Boy, you find a phone. Call up Jim Garthwick. He's Brownlee's right-hand man at the bank. Ask Jim does he know this Lagrande, or can he figure out what this was. Of course Garthwick will want to come running over here, but you buzz him good before he starts. There'll be hell popping over this, boy."

When the sergeant returned from telephoning he found a tense group about the lounge. Two of the physicians for whom Captain Brady had sent were on hand. One of them was bending over Brownlee, aided by the ambulance interne; the other was standing watching the unconscious man's face.

He suddenly touched Captain Brady and pointed. Brownlee's eyes had opened—for an instant he stared blankly upward, dazedly, then consciousness flashed in his orbs, his lips parted, and it was evident that he was making a tremendous effort to speak. All of those about the lounge became instantly motionless, every ear was attuned to catch the slightest sound.

"Lagrande," came a whisper, yet it had impelling firmness in it. "Lagrande . . . he was not the man."

Brownlee's eyes searched the faces above him, as if he were trying to see if they understood; then the banker's vision clouded, his eyelids drooped as if he was very tired, and his whole body sagged. The three doctors moved closer to him, one grasped his pulse. Then the trio rose as one.

"He wouldn't wait," said the ambulance interne.

Captain Brady sighed, turned around, saw Riordan had reentered the room.

"You heard what he said, boy? That it wasn't Lagrande? That means somebody else come in here—what did Garthwick say?"

Riordan shook his head. "Said he never heard of anybody named Lagrande, Chief. He's comin' right over."

"Oh, damn, oh, damn!" exclaimed Captain Brady. "Boy, you go back in—down to Headquarters. Phone Roberts, the Old Man, before you leave. Tell Roberts Hank Brownlee was murdered, and that I'm here. You go on in, boy—somebody's got to be at Headquarters when Roberts blows up over this!"

Once again at the Detective Bureau, Riordan busied himself taking steps to prepare for the storm both he and Brady knew would break. He ordered such detectives as were not on specific detail in to the office; only men working definitely on some case were left out. To the first few to arrive at their desks, he spoke briefly:

"Boys, Hank Brownlee's been bumped off. In his house. Stuck under the ribs. Last man to see him alive, as far as we know, was a party named Lagrande. This Lagrande was supposed to have been to Brownlee's house for a conference. I'm trying to get a line on Lagrande. I want yuh boys to do the same thing. Get busy on your phones, call anybody yuh know who works at the Farmers' & Drovers' and see can yuh run down any Lagrandes. An' stick close to yuhr desks."

WHEN Halloran and Willis reported in, summoned by radio from their "prowl car," Riordan had them both into his office. He

told them what had occurred, what he knew about it, then leaned back in his chair and looked at them. Halloran fixed his rheumy eyes on the ceiling, and began to rock his huge form back and forth in his chair. That indicated he was thinking, checking through his veteran mind for the identity of some criminal who might have done this thing, or had a hand in it. Young Willis walked over to the window and stared out into the night. A moment later he whirled about.

"Back in ten or fifteen minutes, Sarge," he said, and hurried from the room.

Halloran's gaze came down from the ceiling and he stared at the door which had slammed behind his younger partner. Then he grunted.

"The master mind, Matt—I get me a kick out o' these young bucks. So sure, they are. Poor Willis—he'll be back shortly with his tail between his legs, like a dog run after a bird an' didn't get it."

Riordan shrugged. "Willis is a bright lad. He wouldn't run out unless he had somethin' in his noodle. Yuh ol' lummo, yuh know by this time that in the police business a hunch is oftentimes worth more than what a stool-pigeon will tell yuh. Lay off Willis, yuh might learn somethin' from him, wise as yuh are. Listen—why would a guy go to Hank Brownlee's house to stick him?"

"To get somethin', Matt," replied Halloran. "The stickin' proves it. 'Somethin' Hank had, an' woudn't give up. The guy couldn't drill him—the noise would bring the servants. So he stuck him. It might ha' been this Lagrande at that."

"But Hank said it wasn't Lagrande—I heard him," objected Riordan.

"Matt, a banker will cover up jus-

like a yegg, when he thinks he might ha' been caught with the goods. Hank Brownlee was into all sorts o' things, as you well know. This might not have been bankin' business. It might ha' been somethin' on the side. Knowin' he was goin' to die, Hank might not ha' wanted anybody to question this Lagrande an' find out what it was. Say! Lagrande — Lagrande — Matt, could you have got the name wrong? Could it have been 'Frenchy' LeGrand? Marcel LeGrand is his right moniker—a high class con man, he is!"

Riordan frowned. "I thought Frenchy was in New York."

"So he was, Matt. They was goin' to deport him, but he beat the rap. He wouldn't stick round after that, naturally, but would lam somewhere. Still, likely it ain't Frenchy—he was never one for the rough stuff. Smooth, he was, he didn't need to be rough."

The phone rang. Riordan reached for the instrument and listened for a considerable time. "Yes, sir, I'll do that," he said, and hung up. Turning to Halloran, he smiled.

"Roberts it was, the Ol' Man. He's out there. 'Have a dragnet put out for this Lagrande,' he says. Huh, I've already started that. Go outside, yuh big lummo, an' help the other boys out there try to locate him. See how good yuh are."

As the big sleuth opened the door, he collided with young Willis, who pushed him back into the room. Willis was beaming all over.

"I got two Lagrandes, Sarge," he said, very evidently proud of himself. "One's registered at the Belmont-Grand, and the other at the Brunswick. Both got rooms an' bath, and bon-ton at that. One's paying seven a day and the other nine. I guess I wasn't covering hotels so long for nothing, eh?"

Halloran straightened, jammed his round hat on his head. "Well, we'll go see 'em, son," he said.

Willis laughed. "No soap, big boy—they're both out. I went into the judge's room, down to police court and grabbed his phone. Called all the hotels—the big hotels, where a guy seeing Brownlee would be apt to stop. Asked did they have a Lagrande and was he in. The Belmont-Grand had A. M. Lagrande, and he's out; and the Brunswick has M. F. Lagrande, and he's out, too. The one at the Belmont come in yesterday, registering from Pottsville, and the one at the Brunswick come in today, and registered just from 'City.' I called two or three other of the good hotels, but they got no Lagrandes."

Riordan waved to the two of them. "Yuh guys beat it," he said. "One to the Belmont-Grand, t'other to the Brunswick. Wait for yuhr Lagrandes an' bring 'em in. The Ol' Man will want to talk to 'em, whether they're right or not. He'll be talkin' to all the Lagrandes he can find for the next week."

Shortly after the door to the little office opened again and Coroner Wilson came in. He sat down, tossed Riordan a cigar, and began to settle himself for a chat.

"What yuh doin' here?" barked the sergeant. "Don't yuh know somebody stuck ol' Hank Brownlee in his ribs, an' they're waitin' for yuh up to his house?"

THE Coroner lighted his cigar, took two or three leisurely puffs, and smiled. "I'm afraid I've missed the call, Sarge?" he said. "Anyway, I was out when it came. That is, if it came. Many's the time Hank Brownlee has kept me waiting when I've gone to his bank to get in-

formation about the estate of somebody who had the bad luck to come to my notice in the violence of her or his death. Now Hank can wait for me—or get along with one of my deputies. There's always a night man at the office. Who killed Hank and why? Somebody was bound to, sooner or later."

"What yuh mean, Doc, was bound to, sooner or later?"

Dr. Wilson waved his hands. "Sarge, he was a bad hombre. Women. He had one wife, but wasn't satisfied. She might have done it, she was pretty sick of him. I happen to know."

"His wife wasn't to home, Doc."

"It might be worth your while, then, to find out where she was, and why she was there. Maybe Brownlee sent her away, to clear the scene. Bankers, Sarge, are just like other folks—only more so. They have too much money—to play with."

"Yeah, I guess so. Doc, yuh know anybody named Lagrande? Any Lagrande with a wife, I mean? There was a Lagrande who was supposed to have been to Hank's house tonight."

The sergeant continued speaking, giving a brief account of such facts as he knew. Dr. Wilson listened attentively, shook his head.

"I don't know of any Lagrande woman who might have interested Brownlee," he said. "Well, I suppose I'd better happen out there—even if my deputy did take the call and go, I'd better show up. You have to be attentive to bankers, Sarge. But what I came here about was to tell you about this hit-and-run case. The man was dead before the car hit him, Sarge. Very dead."

"Yuh mean . . ."

"I mean the car hit him, all right.

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The cut on the head and the abrasion on the knee are fresh enough. I suppose the running board or rear fender hit his head as he was thrown out. Likely his body caught and the knee dragged a little. But those wounds are practically bloodless. The man had been dead—oh, perhaps half a day before he was dumped out there."

"Uh-huh, and how was he deaded?"

"It is my opinion, Sarge, he was doped. Drugged. Poisoned, if you prefer. I am not yet sure—it will take some time to make the analysis. But you can take it from me that he was very dead, Sarge, before he hit the pavement."

Riordan rubbed his chin. "An' yuh found nothin' on him?"

"Only the watch, Sarge. And I've telegraphed the factory about that. In a few days we may get something. I thought you'd like to know. Well, I suppose I'd better go out to Brownlee's now, and see what sort of a job that was. You stick around, Sarge."

Riordan laughed. "I'll stick, all right, Doc. With the Old Man out there, I'll stick till he goes home to bed. I'll be seein' yuh, Doc—come in an' tell me what yuh found."

CHAPTER III

The Mysterious Visitor

BY the time Chief Roberts reached Headquarters several and sundry gentlemen by the name of Lagrande had been persuaded to come in and be questioned—or interviewed. Busy detectives had seen to that. Of course none of the Lagrandes knew anything, and all of them had perfect alibis. But Roberts worked on them a while, with Detective Captain Brady and Mr. James Garthwick listening, and then he abandoned that line.

"Have your night sergeant down here," he snarled at Brady. The captain phoned upstairs, and presently Riordan entered the chief's office. Roberts stared at the moon-faced lesser executive of the detectives, and pointed to a chair. "You got anything at all—anything at all—on this?" he demanded.

"Young Willis, sir, he might have something," answered Riordan. "He located a man named Lagrande—A. M. Lagrande, it was—at the Belmont-Grand. Registered from Pottsville, sir. But this Lagrande was out. Willis is waitin' for him to come in. While he was waitin', sir, he phoned the marshal, or somebody, to Pottsville, an' asks who is this Lagrande. An' the marshal, or whoever it was, he says A. M. Lagrande is cashier o' the Pottsville Bank. He says he left Pottsville yesterday to come to the city, he don't know what for. It might have been him, sir, who was to see Hank Brownlee."

The chief turned to Garthwick. "I wish you'd stop your damned covering up," he said testily. "I don't want to pry into your damn bank's business, but this is homicide. Do you know if this Pottsville Lagrande had been to see Brownlee?"

Garthwick shrugged. "I know Lagrande, of the Pottsville Bank, Chief. An estimable man; certainly nobody to do murder. But I don't know whether he had any business with Brownlee or not. Chief, why all this fuss about Lagrande? Brownlee distinctly said Lagrande was not the man."

"I know what he said," barked Roberts. "But as far as we know, this Lagrande was the last person who saw Brownlee before the ruckus. I want to find this Lagrande, whether he was a banker or not." He turned to Riordan

again. "You get anything else?" he asked.

"Willis is waiting for Lagrande to come in, sir. Besides that, Halloran has found another man named Lagrande at the Brunswick. He's out, too. He registered there tonight, early—late this afternoon. Halloran took a chance an' got the house dick, sir, an' prowled his room. There was nothin' in it, not even a suitcase. The register showed this Lagrande—F. M., his initials are on the book—paid cash for his room. The day clerk said he said his baggage would be along later. Halloran is stickin' at the Brunswick, to parley him when he comes in."

Roberts grunted. "And that's all you've turned up?"

Riordan nodded. "Except what the boys have brought in so far, sir. There's a lot o' Lagrandes in the city—but more than half o' them wouldn't be seein' any banker, sir."

"You picked up any dirt on Brownlee?" demanded the chief. "Never mind Garthwick here—he'll not be surprised. Likely he knows more dirt than we could dig in a week—but he won't talk."

The sergeant looked at the banker's "right-hand man."

"I'd like to ask Mr. Garthwick, sir, if he knows where Mrs. Brownlee is."

Roberts seemed surprised at the question. Garthwick laughed.

"She's at Hot Springs—with my wife," he said. "They went away together this afternoon."

"Yuh know why she went?" demanded Riordan.

Garthwick laughed again. "Yes, Brownlee sent her away. Told her to take some friend and go on a trip. He thought a change would do her good."

"Meanin', I suppose," said Riordan.

dan, "that Hank had somethin' on he didn't want his wife to stumble onto. Wanted her out of the way. What was it—this meetin' tonight, or was he figgerin' on a binge? Yuh ought to know."

Garthwick shifted in his chair. "I'll tell you frankly what I know," he said. "But it isn't much. Brownlee had something on. He wouldn't tell me what it was. But he said he might be out of town for a day or so. He didn't entirely expect to go out of town, but he might. I haven't any more idea than you have what he had in view—except that I don't think he was going on a spree. He'd just been on one—last week. Usually one a month is enough for him. I think he had some deal — some investment — on the fire, and didn't know how soon it would be ready. But he didn't tell me what it was."

NOISE of a sudden commotion outside came faintly through the door of the chief's office. There was the pounding of feet, then the wailing of sirens, as motorcycles shot out from the police garage, followed by the heavier rumble of the patrol wagon rolling forth, its gong clanging. Roberts snatched for his phone.

"What the hell's broke now?" he barked into the instrument, nervously. He listened while the desk answered him, banged the phone back on his desk and pointed a finger at Riordan.

"You'd better go," he said. "Shooting at the Yorkshire Arms. I suppose all your dicks are out—hell of a note!"

Riordan, in his big red roadster, almost overtook the motorcycle men on the dash across town. He beat the patrol wagon by several blocks to the city's newest apartment hotel, and

dashed into the ornate lobby, to find it filled with excited tenants. Somebody pointed upstairs, he took the flight in a running leap, and on the second floor found one of the motorcycle men and an open door. The man in the hall was inspecting the walls; Riordan pushed past him and entered the open apartment. Two other motorcycle men were in it, one holding a pearl-handled revolver. In an easy chair sat a woman in elaborate peignoir, a handkerchief pressed to her face, and her bosom rising and falling with excited breathing.

"I'm sergeant of detectives, madam; what's the ruckus here?" he asked.

The woman shook her head and began to sob. One of the motorcycle men spoke up:

"Lady claims there was a burglar in her place. She chased him out the door and took a coupla shots at him. Kelly, there, has the rod—two shells fired—an' Magnus is out in the hall lookin' for the slugs."

"Burglar me eye—in this dump?" Riordan's voice was more than doubting. "Why, nobody gets upstairs in these high-tone joints till they pass the watchdog in the lobby! Sister, yuh want to talk, an' talk quick—or shall I go down an' ask the manager how come yuh had callers this time o' night?"

The woman's sobs ceased abruptly, she dashed the handkerchief from her face, and looked at Riordan with flaming eyes.

"No — no — don't make it any worse," she said. "Don't talk to the manager."

Riordan snorted. "Likely he's out—or abed an' ain't got up yet — or yuh'd be talkin' to him yuhrself. Come on now, what was it? Boy frien' got fresh, an' yuh tried to scare him with

the rod, an' it went off? Or what was it?"

The woman glared at him venomously. "You have a filthy mind, officer. I will tell you—and then you will please go away. A man, who gave the name of a—of a friend of mine—called up and said he had a message for me. I sent word to have him come up. When I went to the door it was—it was not the man I expected at all."

"An' so yuh took a coupla shots at him, eh? Try another one, sister, that story won't wash. Yuh want me to believe every time yuh go to the door yuh pack a rod? If so, why? What are yuh expectin'?"

"Send these men away, I don't care to talk before them," the woman said, pointing to the uniformed officers.

Riordan chuckled. "Yuh boys go downstairs an' wait. Take the rod with yuh. Ask downstairs who come to see this woman tonight, what time he come, what name he gave, all about it. Buzz round the other tenants. When yuh get the dirt, one o' yuh come back an' report. Send the wagon back in—I can handle this. Have somebody phone Roberts it is nothin' but a crazy skirt—he's all jumpy enough as it is."

"You certainly must be accustomed to dealing with strange people," said the woman, as the officers departed. "I must say it is quite an experience to be talked to the way—in the manner which you have used."

RIORDAN dragged forward a chair, sat down. "Sister, I talk to all sorts o' folks, yuh're right. Listen, I'll know all about yuh as soon as the motorcycle men gather the dirt an' come back to report. So yuh want to start talkin' now, or wait? What's yuhr name?"

"I am Mrs. Merrifield, Mrs. Grace Merrifield. And I am not your sister, and do not relish being spoken to that way. I am staying here while some legal business in which I am concerned is being arranged. If you will permit me, I will call my attorney, and you may talk to him. I am sure you will be more respectful if a man is here."

"I might be, an' I might not, ma'am," interrupted the sergeant. "Yuh can call yuhr attorney when I get through with yuh—if I leave yuh here, an' don't take yuh in. Who was this man yuh was expectin', an' that yuh met with a rod in yuhr hand. For yuh must ha' had the rod—for yuh say it was the wrong man come to the door, an' yuh let fly the slugs."

The woman bit her lip, then suddenly laughed. She looked archly at the sergeant. "Well, then, suppose we let it go the way you had it, officer. Suppose we say the boy friend got—what was it you said?"

"Yuh can't blarney me, ma'am," responded Riordan. "This is yuhr story, not mine. Yuh better cook it up quick—one o' the boys will be back any minute with a report on yuh. Yuh want to hope yuhr story an' his is somewhat similar."

The woman bit her lip again. A knock sounded on the door, and Riordan rose and opened it. One of the motorcycle men saluted.

"This is Mrs. Merrifield's apartment, Sarge," he said. "She's been here two weeks, paid two months' rent in advance. Very quiet, don't have no callers, goes out every afternoon. About an hour ago a party—man—called her on the phone. They got a darky runnin' the house switchboard nights, after the day girl goes home, an' the darky he answered. He plugged the call in on this apartment,

but he kept the button down an' listened. It was a man, he says.

"The man says: 'Something has happened and they have my hotel watched. I must see you.' And she says for him to come up. About ten minutes later a man shows, the darky says, and gives the name o' Mr. Strange. The woman says for him to be showed up. He was here half an hour, maybe, the darky says; an' then the darky heard shootin' an' the man come runnin' down the stairs like the devil was after him, an' out to the street. The darky, he called the bulls pronto."

Riordan smiled. Motioned the man to wait outside, and closed the door. He turned back to the woman.

"Well, sister, what's the story now?" he asked.

"What the officer reported to you is substantially true," she said. "Only it sounds odd because you have not the whole background. I will tell you the facts, all of them. As I said to you before, I am in this city to attend to some legal business. I am, in brief, plaintiff in a suit. I brought here with me some witnesses. One of them—this Mr. Strange—has been in trouble here before. I mean there have been charges against him. But he consented to come here as a witness for me in this suit I am bringing, with the understanding that if he was arrested because of the former trouble, I would look after him. That would mean, of course, that my attorney would act for him, defend him, if need be.

"This legal business—this suit—is very important. A large—a matter of considerable value is involved. The people on the other side of the suit—those who are opposing me—are very powerful and utterly unprincipled. That is why I had a revolver

with me, why I carried it to the door when I went to answer the call. I was afraid of a trick. But it was—was Mr. Strange who came, and I admitted him.

"He told me he had seen a detective who knew him hanging about his hotel, and he was afraid he would be arrested if he entered. He—asked if he could stay here. I told him certainly not; said I would give him money to go to another hotel. He began to argue—the long and short of it was that he declared I must consent to his staying here, with me, or he would 'blow the case.' Those were his words. I ordered him out; when he refused to go, I drew the revolver—which I had kept concealed in the folds of my dress. He made a lunge at me—and I fired. Over his head, of course. I suppose I must have fired twice. In any event he fled. I suppose I have lost a valuable witness. That is the truth of this whole occurrence. I suppose you don't believe me?"

Riordan smiled. "Sister, I believe yuh. That surprises yuh, don't it? If yuh had only come clean in the first place, yuh'd have saved me an' yuhrself some trouble. The best thing, sister, is allus to be on the level with the police. I'll be leavin' yuh now, ma'am. In the mornin', if yuh want yuhr rod, come down to Headquarters an' ask the chief for it. Likely he'll give it to yuh. Good-night, ma'am."

He moved toward the door. The woman rose, her face showing how utterly dazed she was by his change in demeanor. For an instant she stood by her chair, then moved forward. Riordan turned at the sound of her high heels on the hardwood floor.

"Who's yuhr attorney, ma'am?" he asked. "I'll see him tomorrow — to save yuh the bother—an' see will he

give me the name o' this witness. We got a place to put guys that get—get fresh with women."

The woman halted abruptly, staring at him. Then she laughed. "Gordon Thaxter, in the Empire Building. He's my attorney. If you will see him, he'll confirm my account of this evening's happenings."

"Thank yuh, ma'am, I'll see him," Riordan said, and passed hurriedly out into the hall, closing the door behind him.

CHAPTER IV

At the Morgue

RIORDAN grasped the motorcycle man waiting on guard. "Yuh run down an' sit on that switchboard with the darky," he said. "Listen in on every call to or from this flat here. I'll have one o' the dicks up to relieve yuh as soon as I can get him—but yuh get down there now. I want to know where this frail phones—or who phones her. I'll make it all right with the apartment manager. I'm stoppin' to see him as I go out."

When Riordan returned to Headquarters, the chief had departed for his home. The chief was averse to night work, he preferred to leave that for the different lesser heads. Captain Brady was upstairs in the Detective Bureau; with him was Jim Garthwick, from the bank, who apparently got quite a thrill out of Headquarters' routine. Coroner Wilson was there, also, and Brady and the doctor had been spinning tall yarns for their guest's edification. The three looked up, however, when the sergeant strode in.

Riordan went to his desk and sat down. He glanced at Captain Brady, and the two exchanged silent messages

through their eyes. Then Brady laughed.

"You were a long time, boy, pacifying a crazy skirt," he said.

"She lied like a clock," answered Riordan. "I had to frame her. Something there, but I couldn't uncover it quick. I got her phone tapped, though. Any o' yuh know a shyster named Gordon Thaxter?"

"Fairly reputable attorney," said Dr. Wilson. "That is, he has been so far. Offices in the Empire Building. Lives out my way, got a little house, a wife and a couple of kids. I'd say he was perfectly harmless, Sarge."

"Good, Doc. Do me a favor, will yuh? Call him up—oh, I know it's late. Tell him yuh got a guy down to the Morgue yuh understan' is one o' his clients, an' yuh think he'd better come down. I want to see this Thaxter, but I don't want him to know I'm after him."

Jim Garthwick laughed. "That's what I call real strategy! Waking a man up at this time of night and making him believe a friend has been killed! I'd like to see his face when he finds out you only wanted him to question him!"

Riordan grinned. "Well, Mr. Garthwick, since yuh're spendin' the night slummin', like, yuh might as well come along. Go ahead, Doc, call him up. Tell him to meet yuh at the Morgue, an' we'll all of us go down there."

The Coroner reached for one of the phones. Captain Brady looked attentively at Riordan again, but did not speak. What he saw in his sergeant's eyes seemed to satisfy him, though. For presently he turned to Garthwick and began spinning another yarn of police work.

They rode down to the Morgue in

Garthwick's car. The "handy man" at the bank had offered to take Captain Brady home afterward. The attorney had not yet reached the grim building when the quartet arrived, and Coroner Wilson led the way inside.

"I'll show you the sights, Garthwick," he said. "Come out back—I've got a hit-and-run case on one of the slabs. Happened early today. Hasn't been identified yet."

They walked out into the rear of the Morgue, Dr. Wilson turning on the lights as they progressed. Garthwick looked about with little enthusiasm, and seemed relieved when he saw nothing. Coroner Wilson stepped to one side of the chamber, pulled out a panel of the wall, and a sheeted figure in a sliding box came into view. The county official drew down the sheet, and Garthwick gave a quick gasp, not of shock or fear, but distinctly of dismay. Riordan, who had his fingers on the wall button, and who had been about to snap off the lights as a typical Morgue jest, stayed his hand.

"My God!" exclaimed Garthwick, "that's—that's Lagrande!"

"That's who?" barked Captain Brady.

"Lagrande—of the Pottsville bank. The man Brownlee was to have seen tonight! How could he—how could he be here?"

The three officers stared at Brownlee's aide.

"Are you sure," asked the Coroner. "Don't you think it might be somebody who just happens to look like—"

"I'm as sure of it as that I'm standing here," said Garthwick. "I know Lagrande well. This is Arthur M. Lagrande, cashier of the Pottsville bank."

Captain Brady scowled. "Well, then, one thing is certain. This guy was killed this afternoon, Doc here

says. Then he couldn't have been to Brownlee's tonight. Huh—we got one Lagrande off the list, anyhow."

AN attendant came in, spoke to the Coroner. At a word he went out, to return almost instantly with another man. The newcomer looked at the group, then nodded to Dr. Wilson, and moved slowly forward, eyes on the sheeted figure.

"You said, Doctor, you had a client of mine here, you thought?"

The Coroner pointed to the still form in the refrigerator case. Thaxter bent over, looked at it carefully, straightened, shaking his head.

"I never saw the man—he is no client of mine."

"He's Arthur M. Lagrande, a banker, of Pottsville," rasped Riordan. "Yuh know him now?"

The attorney stiffened, paled, then shivered noticeably. He shook his head, stared at Riordan.

"I do—do not know the man," he said.

"Yuh heard o' him?"

Thaxter got control of himself, began to bridle. Perhaps the bridling was to bolster his courage.

"I said I do not know the man. Who are you, to talk to me like that?"

"I'm sergeant o' police. I'm investigatin' a couple homicides. A lyin' Jezebel by the name o' Merrifield—says she's a widow—she gimme yuhr name to alibi out for her shootin' at a man tonight. Yuh know of Lagrande? Yuh got a good chance to talk, now, if yuh do."

"Are you threatening me?" demanded the lawyer.

"Exactly. Yuh want to talk?"

Thaxter looked at the Coroner, found no sympathy in his face. He turned toward Brady, and saw no hope

there. His eyes returned to Riordan.

"It seems to me," he said, "this is hardly the place to conduct an inquiry."

"An' why not?" interrupted Riordan. "Yuh afraid this dead man will open up an' call yuh a liar? If yuh're scared o' that, see that yuh talk true. Answer me, yuh know of this La-grande?"

Dr. Wilson cleared his throat. "Thaxter, I will explain something to you. It may make the situation easier. Within the past twenty-four hours there have been two homicides in this city. I am investigating them, so are the police. I was at Headquarters, talking with Captain Brady here, mainly about these homicides, when your name was mentioned. I said I knew you, that I believed your reputation was good.

"Sergeant Riordan here asked me to call you, he wanted to talk to you. We were all—the officers and I—going to the Morgue, so I called you to come here. Naturally I said a man believed to be a client of yours was here. That would explain the request that you get up out of bed and come here at this time of night. My advice, Thaxter, is that you talk frankly with Sergeant Riordan. He is, you will find, a very square man. Blunt, perhaps, but square."

Thaxter did not appear to be greatly mollified by the Coroner's speech at first; after a moment he shrugged slightly and replied to Riordan.

"I have heard of this man La-grande, officer. In fact the—er—client of mine, Mrs. Merrifield, of whom you spoke not very respectfully or chivalrously a moment back, referred me to him when she placed certain legal matters in my hands. Referred to him, I mean, as to her own reliabil-

ity. I communicated with Mr. La-grande about her—her legal business—in fact, discussed it with him, both in letters and in telephone conversations. But, personally, I do not know the man—did not know him. I mean we never met."

Riordan looked at Dr. Wilson. "Doc, do me a favor, will yuh? When yuh phone Pottsville about this man, use yuhr head, an' find out for me what deviltry he was up to at his bank. Why he had to come down here to see Hank Brownlee to help him? Find that out for me, will yuh, Doc? It might help us on the other job, too."

The Coroner nodded, smiled. "That is an idea, Sarge—I'll try and do that."

THE sergeant then turned to Thaxter. "Counsellor, it's like this," he said. "Here awhile back I went out on a emergency call. To this here client of yuhrs, her flat. Mrs. Merrifield, I mean. She had just poured two slugs out o' a rod at a guy. No, she didn't hit him, she missed him, so yuh don't have to look so worried. What she tol' me was that this guy was to be a witness in a case yuh was handlin' for her, an' that he was somewhat of a bad actor. She says yuh knew all about his past, an' she says his name is 'Mr. Strange.' I think the name is phony—but yuh likely would know who she meant. Would yuh care to tell us who this hombre is, an' what this case is yuh're goin' to sue about?"

Thaxter looked about the plain, yet suggestively gruesome chamber, then down at the still and sheeted figure in the "box," and pursed his lips. Evidently after considering matters for a moment, he decided to tell some of the things he knew.

"Usually, Sergeant—I think Dr.

Wilson said that was your title—usually, officer, matters between a client and attorney are privileged. However, Mrs. Merrifield has a claim against the Light & Power Company. Its details, I do not think, are important at this time. She sought the advice of Mr. Lagrande, in Pottsville, and he referred her here, saying the head offices of the power company were in this city, and advised her to engage a lawyer. I understand he recommended me. I suppose he found my name in a gazeteer, or perhaps some client of his bank was an acquaintance of mine. Anyway, she came to me, told me of her claim.

"I—well, I was surprised at the details she gave me. So I called Lagrande up. After I had talked with him, I wrote him a letter. His answer demanded another letter from me—we had some correspondence. Still later I called him on the phone and talked with him about—about a detail of the matter.

"To be frank, I talked with him about one of Mrs. Merrifield's witnesses. I suppose it was the man whom you say she—she shot at. His name may be 'Strange,' for all I know—I gather he had several names, or aliases. But when I talked to him he told me his name was Lagrande—the same as the banker's at Pottsville. In fact, he said he was a distant cousin."

"An what did Banker Lagrande say to that," interrupted Riordan.

Thaxter lifted his shoulders. "He said he supposed he might be a distant cousin, a very distant one."

"He say he knew this other Lagrande?"

"He had met him—with Mrs. Merrifield. I gather he was not—not much impressed by the man."

"Boy, what'd you do with that woman?" asked Captain Brady.

"Don't worry, Chief, I got her on ice. Two o' my dicks sittin' on her tail, another good lad on the telephone switchboard downstairs in her apartment. She won't go 'way none. Personally, I think she's hit the hay—I think she figgers I'm so damn dumb she can wait till mornin' before she starts any backfire."

Thaxter listened to this conversation with evident interest. "Sergeant, if Mrs. Merrifield—if my client—is concerned in either of these homicides, I assure you I know nothing of it," he said.

RIORDAN shook with a silent chuckle. "No, mister, I don't reckon yuh do. I figger she pulled the wool over yuhr eyes, jus' the same as she did over this Lagrande here on the slab. No insult, mister—but yuh take a professional man, like a lawyer or a banker, an' outside o' his own line he's a sucker for a smart woman. An' believe yuh me, this woman is smart. What was it, mister lawyer, that these people let get out o' their hands? Somethin' they needed in this suit yuh was to bring. What was it the banker Lagrande got away from 'em?"

Thaxter's forehead was creased with a deep frown, as if he was trying to think. Riordan, apparently, was looking at him intently, yet the sergeant suddenly swung about and pointed at Jim Garthwick.

"What was it?" he barked. "Yuh know—what was it Hank Brownlee got, an' this Lagrande which was to see him tried to get back? Yuh know—come through with it!"

"Why — Sergeant!" gasped Garthwick.

"Yuh've stalled enough," said Riordan.

dan. "Yuh been stickin' too close to-night. First yuh come runnin' to the house out there, then yuh was stickin' round with Brady—the captain, here. Goin' to drive him home, yuh was. Then yuh come down here. Yuh wanted to see would we get it—whatever it was. What was it? Yuh just been playin' dumb—yuh know all about this."

"Sergeant, I give you my word—"

Riordan held up a hand. "Yuhr word, Garthwick, ain't worth a damn to me. Yuh was Hank Brownlee's man Friday. Yuh was allus round the bank, but yuh ain't got no regular job there. Not on the books. Yuh done most o' Brownlee's dirty work for him, yuh foun' out things for Brownlee. I know all about yuh."

"Look—here is this job: This country banker down to Pottsville stumbles onto somethin' that looks pretty good to him. Say this Merrifield woman brought it in to him. She was figgerin' on usin' the Pottsville banker for a sucker. But the Pottsville banker sees it is too big for him, or he ain't got the nerve to tackle it. So he phones Hank Brownlee what he's got. Whatever it is, it's right down Brownlee's alley. He says for the Pottsville guy to come see him, findin' out all he can, first. An' for the Pottsville banker to steer this woman off onto some good, safe, dumb law-sharp up here, where he can reach him."

"So the play is shifted from Pottsville to here. Hank is smart an' he gets hold o' somethin'. Likely he got it from this Pottsville banker. An' these other people, they want it back. Yuh know what happened when they tried to get it back. What was it? Stop holdin' out."

"That's a nice hypothesis, Sergeant," said Garthwick, calmly. "But

I haven't the slightest idea what you're talking about."

Riordan turned to Captain Brady. "Chief, what'll we do with this guy?" he asked. "Yuh was there, yuh seen him, yuh know what he did. What'll we do to him?"

The head of the detective bureau suddenly became very grave. "Garthwick," he said. "I shall have to hold you. For the Coroner, here. On suspicion of murder. You killed this man Lagrande, here, or arranged for his murder."

Garthwick burst out laughing. "Preposterous—too preposterous even to be funny, Brady. Why, I wasn't out in my car all day—not until late to-night, when you had somebody phone me from Brownlee's house. I can prove the car was in the garage all day."

"That tears it, Garthwick," said Dr. Wilson. "It's usually like that. The alibi is too good. Lagrande wasn't killed by being hit by an auto. He was poisoned. I can see you plying him with doped liquor—entertaining him for Brownlee. Entertaining him and getting him silly, so you could get what he had. This thing Riordan says was valuable. But you had too much dope in the liquor, and Lagrande died. Not accustomed to high life. Garthwick, you're in a hell of a tight place right now."

Brownlee's "right-hand" man looked at the three officers in turn. He paid no slightest attention to Lawyer Thaxter, whose mouth was half open in amazement at what he was witnessing. Finally Garthwick shrugged.

"Let's get out of this damn place. It's cold," he said. "Let's go somewhere we can talk. Talk comfortably, I mean. Bring that simpleton along, too. He's got a part in it, but he doesn't know it." He pointed to Thaxter,

whose mouth opened still wider in amazement at the words.

They climbed into Garthwick's big car, Riordan taking the wheel. On the way to Headquarters they stopped at the Belmont-Grand and picked up Willis. It being needless for him to wait longer there for Mr. Lagrande's return.

CHAPTER V

Underwater Mine

IN the inner office of the Detective Bureau they all found chairs—all except Willis, who, at a sign from Riordan, stood behind Garthwick. As they settled down there was a pause, and Captain Brady opened his desk, found a box of cigars and passed it round.

"I didn't kill Lagrande," said Garthwick. "I didn't even know he was dead till I saw him down there in that—that box. Wilson you've got a ghastly place there, a horrible place. I don't know how Lagrande was killed. The Coroner, here, said it was a hit-and-run case he was showing me. That's why I said I hadn't been out in my car all day. I thought you figured I'd run him down. If he was poisoned, somebody else plied him with doped liquor—not I. And whoever did it had the trouble for nothing, for Lagrande didn't have—didn't have this thing the sergeant is talking about.

"Brownlee had it—had it all the time. Lagrande sent it to him, by registered mail. What Lagrande came up for was to get his bit—get his pay for sending this thing in. Lagrande was to have seen Brownlee last night—yesterday night. He never showed. Brownlee never saw him. We telephoned Pottsville, and they said he'd left in ample time to get here. So—

well, Brownlee figured somebody else had got Lagrande, that's all."

Riordan blew a cloud of smoke at the ceiling. "It starts good, what's the rest of it?" he asked.

Garthwick puffed at his cigar a little while. "The rest of it is this," he continued. "When Lagrande didn't show, Brownlee asked me to—to look around. I found Lagrande was registered at the Belmont-Grand, but he was out. Had been out all day. I left word for him to call me. I suppose one of your men found the message, and so you thought I was hooked into this thing. I left word for him to call me, and went back and told Brownlee.

"While I was talking to Brownlee his phone rang, and he answered. When he hung up he looked at me in a funny way. 'That was Lagrande,' he said. 'He says he was detained, and wants to come see me tonight.' He looked so funny I asked him what was wrong. 'Nothing,' he said. 'Only it wasn't Lagrande's voice. Somebody is trying to cut in on this, Jim. I told him to come up, that I'd be home. I'll find out what's turned sour.'

"And then he told me to have my wife ask his wife to go up to Hot Springs over the week-end. You see, he thought there might be some sort of trouble, and he didn't want Mrs. Brownlee in the house if there was a row. Of course he didn't know Lagrande was dead. I suppose he thought somebody had got Lagrande. Oh, well, let's say under sequestration somewhere."

"You mean," exclaimed Captain Brady, leaning forward, "that Brownlee was that cold-blooded he was willing to take a chance on talking to some—some thug who might have snatched Lagrande?"

Garthwick nodded. "Hank would face the devil himself if there was anything in it, Captain. And there was a whole pot full of money in this."

"About how much?"

"Oh, three—four millions, maybe more."

"A fine bunch of bandits," snorted Brady. "You fellows are just big time bandits, that's all. Well, get on with it."

Garthwick smiled, but there was no mirth in his eyes.

"This Merrifield woman," he said, "turned up at Pottsville with a story that she was the last of the Merrifield heirs. Likely you don't know about the Merrifields. Years ago they lived up in the Rock Valley country. That's in Potts County, up in the hills. Rock Valley is now blocked up by the big power dam, and all the land is flooded—in some places the water is two hundred feet deep. It's a reservoir, instead of a valley."

"Of course the Power Company bought all the land before it built the dam, or got quitclaim deeds, or something. But there was some chance of doubt, because the old Pottsville courthouse had burned up, and a lot of the early day records had been destroyed."

"Well, this Merrifield woman, as she calls herself, turned up at Pottsville and claimed she was the last surviving heir of old man Merrifield, and she had a mine on the property. She was clever, too. She went to Lagrande, up there at the bank, and tried to borrow some money. Not much, just a couple of thousand. She had this mining claim, this mine, and said she wanted to pay a few debts, get some timbering, rehabilitate the plant, get a living out of it. She left the papers at the bank, for Lagrande to look up. Took a receipt from him for the stuff."

"Lagrande began to search the claim and checked on it. Of course, right away he discovered from the description that the property was located under the big reservoir. But he could not find any record that the Power Company had ever purchased a mining claim—this one or any other. Now you may not know it, but mining claims are different from realty holdings. The law is different. A mining claim gives you title to the mineral underground, but not the surface above. A realty deed gives you title to so much land, as specified, but it does not give you title to what is beneath the surface. That's the law."

"If you have a mine, and disturb the surface of the ground above it, you are liable for damage. That is, if one of your tunnels caves in, and a house above is ruined, you have to pay for the house. The same way, if you own land over a mine. If you disturb the mine underneath, or injure it, you are liable. For instance, if you want to dig a well, and the well pierces the mine, you have to make an agreement with the mine owner, and wall up your well so the water won't flood his mine."

"SO you see what Lagrande found? If this mining claim was good, it was valid, and if the Power Company had only bought the land above the mine—why, the Power Company would be liable for damages for flooding out the mine, making it useless. And Lagrande couldn't find any record that the Power Company had acquired the mine rights. In other words, the owner of the mine—if the claim was valid—could make the Power Company pay and pay, and pay through the nose, till the value of the mine had been made up. And who could tell the actual worth of a mine

buried under two hundred feet of water?

"You see the situation? Lagrande saw it—but he was only a small town man, and the very magnitude of the thing scared him. So he called up Brownlee, knowing Hank would pay him well for the information, if the thing was good. Hank liked things like that, and everybody knew it

"Oh course Lagrande knew the woman could be handled. He could lend her the money, take a mortgage and then foreclose when she claimed she couldn't pay because she couldn't get to the mine. He knew she couldn't sue the Power Company. The Power people would drag the case along and pile up costs till they froze her out. But Hank and his bank. They could make the Power Company pay up, and handsomely.

"Well, when Brownlee heard about it, he was all on fire. It was something right down his alley. He told Lagrande to bring the mining claim up to him, and to put the woman off with some excuse—saying it would take time to arrange the loan or verify the papers, something like that. Meanwhile Hank had me look it up, and as far as I could see, it was good.

"There was a record showing the Power Company had bought the mortgage on the Merrifield place and foreclosed, so getting the property—Merrifield had a farm down there—but I couldn't find any record of any mine claims being acquired. When I reported to Hank, he phoned Lagrande to ship the woman up here, and bring the papers up himself.

"The woman came up right away, but Lagrande didn't. He said he was busy, annual audit, or something. Personally, I think he was delaying, to make Hank more anxious—so Hank

would give him a bigger share of the proceeds. So, to stall the woman, Hank told her to go see Thaxter—that she'd need a lawyer to get things straightened out. Thaxter had a note overdue at the bank, and Brownlee didn't believe there'd be any trouble handling him. You see the situation?"

"Yeah, I can see it now," said Riordan. "The woman was playin' Lagrande for a sucker. Later on, when they turn her over to Thaxter, she sees the bank is wise, but she also sees they think the mine is valuable. An' she decides the play the bank—Hank's bank—for a sucker, an' get what she can. Garthwick, yuh're quite a louse, ain't yuh? Doin' Hank's dirty work for him, an' not carin' who gets stung, so long as yuh get yuhrs?"

The banker's aide shrugged. "A man has to live, Sergeant. I've done nothing wrong—just did a little investigating. You might say I was the same as a detective."

"Yeah, a private dick," grunted Riordan, with scorn.

Captain Brady frowned, scratched his head. Suddenly he looked up. "By gorry!" he exclaimed, "I got an idea. This Merrifield dame, she must have a suspicion Brownlee was stalling her. She sent this partner of hers to see him—likely give him the receipt for the mining claim, and told him to get the papers back, figuring they would try it somewheres else. I see what Brownlee meant, now, when he said: 'Lagrande wasn't the . . . Lagrande was not the man.' He meant it wasn't the Pottsville Lagrande who was to see him. Meant it wasn't this small town banker had stuck him. Shucks, we been barking up the wrong tree!"

Garthwick drew a long breath, shrugged his shoulders.

"Tough luck, Captain — but it

breaks that way, sometimes. Now you know what you've got to look for."

FOR a man expressing sympathy, Riordan thought Garthwick appeared a trifle too smug. He rose from his chair, began to button his coat.

"Yuh'll likely want to talk to Mr. Garthwick more particular about this, Chief," he said. "Yuh might want to say some things Doc an' me shouldn't properly hear. Confidential matters, like. So we'll step out a bit, an' leave yuh to get a statement out o' Garthwick that the Old Man will be glad to read in the mornin'."

The sergeant flashed Brady a message with his eyes, jerked his head at the Coroner, reached for his hat and coat, and with the county official left the small office.

At the Brunswick they found the huge form of Halloran reclining comfortably in one of the lobby easy chairs, from which he could watch the door and the desk. Riordan kicked the big man's foot in passing, and led the way to the desk.

"This M. F. Lagrande yuh got," he said to the clerk. "I want to see how he registered. This is the Coroner with me."

He turned back the lapel of his coat, exhibiting his golden shield.

"Nothing wrong, I hope," the night clerk said, and reached under the desk, producing a pile of guest cards. He shuffled through them quickly, drew one out, glanced at it a moment, frowned slightly, then placed it before the sergeant.

Dr. Wilson and Riordan looked at the registration card, and the sergeant laughed.

"Kind-hearted guy, wasn't he? Filled out the whole card. It's all in

the same writin'. How would yuh account for that? I seen yuh frown at it, when yuh looked at it."

The night clerk shook his head. "That's the day clerk's writing, all right," he admitted. "He must have lost the original card. Sometimes, you know, a card gets lost . . ."

"The day clerk live in the house? We'll see him," said Riordan.

"He's asleep . . ."

"We'll go right up. Have a bell-hop show us where. An' mind yuh, no telephonin' to say we're comin'. Mister—yuh listen to me—the less fuss yuh make over this, the less chance there is o' the hotel gettin' some notoriety. An' yuh know how much a hotel o' this kind would like to be mixed up in a Coroner's case."

The night clerk appreciated Riordan's gruff warning. Perhaps, rather, he appreciated his job, and did not want to run any risk of losing it. He called a bell-hop, and a moment later the sergeant, Dr. Wilson and the burly Halloran were at a door on the top floor of the hostelry.

Riordan sent the bell-hop away, turned to Halloran.

"Yuh knock on the door. Go in first an' scare him to death. We'll be right behind yuh," he said.

It was good strategy. Anybody, being awakened from a sound sleep and confronted by two hundred and eleven pounds of veteran police officer, would be somewhat shocked; and Halloran's manner was not at all reassuring. The clerk was still blinking at the huge form, and backing away from it, when Riordan's voice snapped through the room.

"I'm a sergeant o' detectives, an' this is the Coroner with me. How come yuh fill out a registration card for M. F. Lagrande? All about it, quick!"

THE clerk, backing away, stumbled against his bed and sat down on it in no very dignified manner. Properly garbed and behind his desk, he might be a very haughty person; but fallen on the bed, with his night-shirt all awry, he was only a very scared human.

"Just a minute—just a minute—I'll tell you," he said, gasping and trying to regain some poise. "It was this way—Mr. Lagrande called up—I know him—and said he wanted accommodations. And I thought the best way was to make out a card."

"Yeah?" Riordan's interruption was not reassuring. "An' so yuh put the money in the till out o' yuhr own pocket an' marked it paid, eh? Or wasn't it paid, an' yuh was fakin' yuhr books?"

"I knew—I knew he would pay."

"You did, huh? An' now it's past two o'clock the nex' mornin' an' he ain't in the house an' ain't paid. What about that? Mister, I think yuh'd better tell me the straight o' it—else I'll have the manager woke up an' yuh'll have a heluva time."

The clerk swallowed, pulled his nightgown down over his calves.

"Don't—don't get the manager into this," he gasped. "I'll tell you. This man—this man—I know him pretty well. He called up and said he might—said he was expecting a phone call. Said he thought somebody might call up and ask for him. He's a friend of mine. So I said I'd fix it—and I put his name down. Marked him for a room that I was pretty sure would be vacant. So if anybody called—you know, as soon as a guest is registered his name goes to the switchboard."

"Yuh're doin' better," cut in Riordan. "But yuh forgot somethin'. This is the Coroner here. Yuh know what

the Coroner does, an' why? Now—all about this party. We ain't got much time. Yuh don't think the Coroner stays up this time o' night because he likes my company, do you?"

The clerk shook his head, stared at Dr. Wilson, held up a hand.

"This is God's truth. The man called up. I know him—and said if things broke right with him he'd want to stay in the house tonight. Said in the meantime there might be some telephone calls for Mr. Lagrande. Just as I told you. He asked me to—"

"Uh-huh, then his name ain't Lagrande, eh? What is it?"

"It's almost that. His name is LeGrand—it sounds like—"

Halloran drew a deep breath and turned toward the door. The air rushing up through his nose sounded like the exhaust of a locomotive.

"Stan' still, yuh big lummo," barked Riordan. "I want yuh to hear the rest o' this bed-time story. Then Doc, here, an' me, we got another story to tell yuh."

Halloran halted, came back to the bed. He sat down upon it, and the clerk sank into the hollow beside him. Halloran placed one of his ham-like hands on the man's knee, and pinched through the nightgown. "Talk, damn ye," he wheezed, "or I'll squeeze your leg off!"

The clerk tried to edge away, but Halloran's grip held him. He cast an appealing look at the huge man, then began to talk:

"His name is LeGrand. It sounds just like Lagrande—ouch, don't hold my leg so tight. He asked me to tell the phone girl that the name was 'Lagrande.' I supposed he was up to some scheme. He's a bit of a rogue, but he never does anything very bad, and as I know him, I—"

"Frenchy LeGrand, eh?" interjected Halloran. "An' he pays you to cover him, eh?"

"Don't—you hurt my leg," moaned the clerk. "Yes, it—yes, the boys call him 'Frenchy.' His name is Marcel. That's why I wrote 'M. F. Lagrande' on the card—'Marcel, Frenchy'—the only initials I could think of. What's the matter—is he dead—that's why the Coroner is here?"

"He may be dead, we don't know," said Riordan. "We want to find out about him, that's all. Go on—he tells yuh why he wanted to be registered here? An' was there any phone calls for him?"

"No—he didn't tell me why. He always stays here when he comes to the city. I've got to know him pretty well. Some kind of sharper, he is, I guess—but he's always been all right with the house—pays his bill and never kicks—and is liberal with his tips. I hope there's nothing wrong."

"Yuh know where he hangs out?"

The clerk shook his head. Then suddenly tried to wrench himself free of Halloran's pinching grip on his knee. Unable to get free of the agonizing pressure, he swung a fist at the big sleuth, but it never landed. Halloran's other big hand flicked at him, and he fell back gasping on the bed.

"No, I don't—I mean I'm not sure," the clerk gasped. "I think he has an apartment—his wife or some woman. It's called the Yorkshire Arms."

"He's not there," cut in Riordan. "Yuh know his hang-out? He tried to come here tonight, but he seen this big dick in the lobby an' beat it."

Halloran was so surprised at that revelation that he released his grip, for a moment, on the clerk, and the man lost no time in springing out of reach.

He ran to a corner of the room and cowered there, rubbing his leg.

"He phone yuh again?" asked Riordan.

"No—but I expect he'll be in—to slip me something."

RIORDAN laughed. "Keep on hopin' that. An' if he doesn't come in, yuh can go to the Morgue an' look for him. Listen to me, feller. You want to stick right close around here an' stay on yuhr job. We may want yuh. Will yuh give me yuhr word yuh'll not try an' blow? Or will I take yuh down to the jail-house right now?"

The clerk promised he would not leave the hotel. Riordan nodded, and the three departed, returning to the lobby, where they settled on a lounge.

"Forget the clerk," the sergeant said to Halloran. "We don't need him, an' we got the most important part. Main thing, yuh big lummo, is yuhr first hunch was good. 'Frenchy' LeGrand is mixed in this thing somewheres. I'll tell yuh what we dug up so far."

Briefly he sketched what Garthwick had revealed. Halloran nodded his gray head as he listened.

"We ought to get Frenchy, Matt," the big sleuth said, after he had heard Garthwick's tale. "I wouldn't say Frenchy had any hand in the killin', but I would bet he framed the deal. He's always macing some poor gull with some 'estate' gag—you know, rich man leaves his money to distant heirs. He was likely usin' this Merrifield dame for a 'front,' an' then he made a pass at her the wrong time, an' she got sore about it."

"Yuh think he's blown town?" asked Riordan.

"Not because some dame flung lead

at him, Matt. More likely he'll get drunk an' go back an' beat hell out o' her. But if he was in the Brownlee job—say, Matt, why wouldn't Garthwick have bumped off Brownlee to get these papers, if they were worth so much?"

"Never mind about Garthwick. Brady is putting him through right now. But I would like to talk to this 'Frenchy'; ain't yuh got no idea where he might be?"

Halloran studied the square toes of his heavy shoes, and mentally reviewed all the personal history of various crooks whom he knew. He glanced up at Dr. Wilson, with a sly twinkle in his rheumy eyes.

"We might try a place, Matt. We would have to make a play; you wait-in' outside an' Doc an' me going in. Doc, he looks like he might be a sort of grifter. I mean he's got a sharp face. Doc, will you be a sucker for us, just this once?"

The Coroner laughed. "I've ruined two-thirds of the night already. Come on, let's go. I'll play the sucker for the rest of the night."

"We'll take a taxi," said Halloran, rising and moving toward the door. "This won't take much fixing—I'll tell you the play while we're in the cab."

CHAPTER VI

Denial and Accusation

LESS than half an hour later the taxi drew up soundlessly before a double house in the outskirts of the city—a double house which was the exact replica of six other double houses in the row. The only difference between any of them in fact, was the number over the door, and, perhaps, the occupants' personal taste in window drapes.

Halloran and Dr. Wilson got out, the huge sleuth ascending the house steps first and ringing the bell. After a brief wait, and some parley through a speaking tube, the door was opened by a shrouded figure. Halloran beckoned to the Coroner and they both went inside. The door closed and the pre-dawn silence once more settled on the street. No light showed through the windows of the house the two had just entered, though the taxi-driver watched covertly to see. Taxi men like to soak up all the assorted knowledge possible.

Finally the driver turned, pushed back the window behind his seat. "Where do we go from here, gov'nor?" he asked.

"We don't," replied Riordan. "Buddy, yuh know who that was got out o' yuhr cab?"

"Sure—the big fellah, he was Inspector Halloran. The other one—I seen him before, but I couldn't name him."

"An' yuh know who I am?"

The taxi-driver flicked a switch, and a soft light spread over the passenger compartment of his cab.

"Cripes!" he exclaimed suddenly, and flicked off the light. "Sure I know you. What is this, Sarge, a pinch?"

Riordan chuckled. "Was it a pinch we would have brang the wagon, buddy. Keep yuhr shirt on. Yuh're gettin' paid for this, jus' like we was suckers. Turn yuhr meter over to like yuh was waitin', an' let the clock work. Yuh can smoke a cigarette, if yuh got one. Yuh can do anythin' yuh want, excep' talk or roll yuhr wheels. I want for yuh to stay right where yuh are, no matter what happens. If a party comes along what wants to hire yuh, open the door an' let him in, but don't yuh move a wheel. Get me?"

"Okay, Sarge. An' you needn't pay me; I'd be glad . . ."

"I'd rather pay yuh, buddy. Then yuh won't be comin' to me all the rest o' yuhr life to square yuh with Traf-fic every time yuh get a ticket."

Within the house, Halloran, Dr. Wilson and the shrouded woman who had opened the door sat in an ill-lit "parlor," replete with old-fashioned, plush-upholstered furniture and marble-topped tables. Each had a frosted glass of very poor red wine.

"Like I say, Sheba," Halloran explained, "this is the Professor with me. He's a right guy, too; been on the road with a medicine outfit, puttin' on a magic show. But he says magic don't go so good no more, an' he wants to learn this here hypnotism an' spirit tricks."

"So he come to me to see could I steer him to somebody who was good, an' I brought him here, Sheba—for I told him there was nobody better at that racket than the Madame. Anything you can do for the Professor, Sheba, I will appreciate it personal."

The Madame endeavored to look flattered, and bent what was meant to be a coy smile at Dr. Wilson. The Coroner did his best to seem appreciative, mumbled something about respecting Halloran's judgment above everything else in the world, and assured the woman that he would pay, handsomely, for any information she could impart.

Inwardly he was rather sorry for the Madame, he realized she lacked her ceremonial robes and make-up, and he knew it was hard to look coy when one was sixty years old and had led a hard, uncertain life.

"I don't know, Inspector, that I could do anything for your friend," she said, with well-feigned regret. She

could manage her voice without robes or rouge. "Lately, as you know, I've done nothing but card-reading. It's safer—with all these reformers snooping round and claiming that a medium is just a faker."

Halloran laughed. "The Professor is no reformer, Sheba. You know me too well to think I would cross you up or play stool to one of those guys. I don't want you should show the Professor anything tonight; I just brought him round to make you acquainted and tell you he was right. You can make a date with him for sometime tomorrow when you ain't busy. Say tomorrow evening, when your husband won't be to home."

"Why, Inspector, I'm not married," declared the Madame, with a titter.

The huge sleuth shrugged. "Have it your way, Sheba. I thought you was married—or practically so. To Frenchy LeGrand. O' course I know Frenchy's been runnin' with another dame a lot lately. But I figgered that was just some job he was puttin' on, usin' this young frail for a front."

Even in the dim and yellow light the Madame's eyes snapped, and she set her glass down with a ringing slap. "He's been *what*?" she demanded.

Halloran waved a hand. "Cut it out, Sheba," he rumbled. "Be yourself. You know when a body gets as old as you or me, this what-you-call love is all the bunk. Mind you, I ain't sayin' Frenchy is soft on this frail—but he's sure been with her a lot. At that I think likely she's two-timing him. Tonight he was up to her flat, and somebody flung a coupla slugs at him. The frail's boy-friend, likely. The motorcycle men was up there, but by the time they checked in, Frenchy an' the boy-friend had both beat it, an' the

frail puts up a stall there was burglars or somethin'. Anyway, there was nothin' come of it. Now, when can you see the Professor an' wise him up to this spirits stuff?"

"Oh-ho, so!" exclaimed the Madame, in no pleasant tone, "that's why he come runnin' here, scared like a rabbit and as pale as a ghost, eh?"

"Huh, Sheba, he here now?" asked Halloran, apparently embarrassed. "I didn't know. I figgered he'd lammed somewhere—or I wouldn't have brang the Professor. Frenchy might misunderstand, you know, at this time o' night."

"No, he isn't here," the Madame said, promptly. "He went right out. That is, I think he did. You wait a minute, I'll go look. But I'm sure he went out. You sit right here, Inspector, and I'll go see. If he's here, I'll bring him in and you can tell me more about this woman he's running round with. I'd sure like to see his face when he hears it. And after I get done with him, too!"

SHE rose, moved toward the door, came back and refilled her guests' glasses from a bottle, and then departed. Halloran leaned back in his chair and regarded the dirty ceiling. Dr. Wilson picked up his wine, sipped it, with his eyes closed. In a moment the Madame returned. She had a tambourine in one hand, two or three bells in another, and yards and yards of soft white cloth thrown over her shoulder.

"No, he isn't here—went out again, like I thought," she said. "And that being the case, while we know we won't be interrupted, I'll show the Professor some of these things." She sat down, put the bells and the tambourine on one of the tables, and began ar-

ranging the folds of white cloth. As her hands were busy she turned to Dr. Wilson. "This, Professor, is what we call a spirit robe," she said. "Me, I always use a light alpaca cloth. It's got a sort of slick feel to it, and don't make any noise, like silk does. Of course, when I have a séance, I always put the alpaca cloth in the ice-box for an hour or two beforehand, to make it cold.

"Now you watch closely, Professor, and I'll show you how to do one or two of these things. We'll suppose the inspector here is the sucker—the client, I always call them. Inspector, you sit over there . . ."

The front door of the double house opened noiselessly and a head was thrust out. Then the body of a man followed the head. He stood in the darkened doorway an instant, looking about. He regarded the taxicab intently, noted the driver lolling in the front seat, a cigarette glowing between his lips, and the general immobility of the vehicle.

After a moment he came down the steps, stood at the edge of the sidewalk a minute, scanning the cab, and then moved rapidly to the driver. The taxi-man turned his head, looked up, noted that the man wore neither hat nor coat.

"You want to make a piece of change?" asked the man, not looking at the taxi-driver, but peering back into the dark tonneau.

"Can't," replied the driver. "Waitin' for a party."

"I know," the hatless man replied. "Two guys, inside. They'll be there—quite a time. Listen, I jus' got a phone call from a sick friend, downtown. Wants me in a hurry. I'll give you ten bucks to drive me there. You can be back here in twenty-five minutes and

still have time to wait for them guys inside."

The taxi-driver shook his head. "Mister, I'd like to make a ten-spot, but where would I be if them two fares of mine came out? They been ridin' round with me all night—here, there, the next place—an' they already run up more'n eleven dollars on the meter. Suppose I take you for ten, an' these guys come out an' I ain't here? They call another cab, an' I lose my fare. Even with your ten I'd be a buck or a coupla bucks shy. No, I can't do it."

"Give you fifteen," said the man.

The driver shook his head.

"Twenty," bid the hatless prospect.

The driver shrugged, spat out his cigarette, reached his right arm out and opened the rear door.

"Essex Hotel, opposite the depot—and step on it," said the man, and climbed into the cab.

The taxi-driver had expected a commotion of some sort, but he was really surprised. The cab tilted on squeaky springs as the new fare stepped on the running board, then it started to settle back level as his weight moved toward the center. There was a short, guttural exclamation behind the driver, and then the cab began to bounce and pitch and rock as if it had suddenly become a boat on a storm-tossed sea.

There came to the driver's ears the thudding sounds of hard and sincerely-meant blows being exchanged at and in very close quarters. A heavy boot kicked the partition behind the front seat with a resounding force. Something metallic clicked against the glass behind his head and then clattered to the floor. The cab gave a sudden and more violent lurch to one side, swayed back to upright, and there was a thump as something heavy and yielding hit the floor. Then absolute quiet.

THE driver waited a moment, listening intently and with every nerve aquiver, heard or sensed nothing, and slowly turned and pushed the sliding window behind him slightly open.

"Where to, now, sir?" he asked, without turning his head.

"I tol' yuh once," came a voice he recognized, thankfully. "I tol' yuh once—don't yuh roll away from this curb. Not yet. Yuh done fine so far—done jus' right." The driver slid the glass panel shut and reached for another cigarette.

Twenty minutes later Halloran and the man the taxi-pilot didn't recognize came out of the double house and climbed into the rear of the vehicle. Somebody slid the glass open and said:

"Headquarters, driver—the alley door."

Coroner Wilson entered the inner office of the Detective Bureau, walked to Riordan's desk, drew a stiletto with a flexible blade from his sleeve and jammed its point in the wood beside the blotter. The handle of the keen dagger swayed back and forth slowly, and then the whole clattered flat and lay still.

Jim Garthwick, who had been writing upon a pad held in his lap, looked up with startled eyes; Captain Brady pursed his lips. Dr. Wilson pushed his hat on the back of his head and sat down. He noted Thaxter, the lawyer, had departed.

"Been fishing," he said.

"Catch anything more?" asked the captain. Then he turned to Garthwick. "Go on with your writing—unless you want to be locked up."

Dr. Wilson nodded. "Yes, a fish. The sergeant and Halloran have it upstairs in Emergency now, getting it

cleaned up. Cap, you've got a great pair in those two. They work fine together."

Brady grinned. "Halloran will kill somebody, some day. Some day he'll hit a guy so hard the hospital can't fix it."

The Coroner smiled. "It wasn't Halloran. He was with me. Riordan had this guy all asleep when we came out. All Halloran did was play dumb, so this guy's woman could tell him to beat it. He beat it—right out to Riordan, waiting for him. What's Garthwick doing, writing the story of his life?"

"Something like that," answered Brady. "I told Garthwick, after we had a talk, that he could write out a statement for you, Doc. If you like it, you can leave him loose or not—just as you think. If you don't like it, why, I said likely you'd want me to hold him for you."

The door opened again and Detective Sergeant Riordan came in. Captain Brady noted that his clothes were slightly mussed and disarranged. The sergeant flung off his hat, went to his desk, sat down. He looked at the stilet to a moment, then slipped it in one of the pigeonholes, out of sight. He fished in a pocket for a cigar, lighted it, got up, went to his locker and changed to his uniform coat, pinning his star on its front, beside the rows of bright brass buttons, and returned to his chair.

This guy the big lummoX will bring down in a minute ain't never seen me," he explained. "It was dark when he—when he come against me."

"Boy, he try to stick you with that thing?" asked Brady.

"No, Chief—it jus' fell to the floor in the ruckus. As I was sayin', this guy ain't even seen me. He don't

know who took him. Likely he will think it was Halloran. Yuh let me parley him first a bit, will yuh?"

HALLORAN came in then, half dragging and half supporting a man who gave every visible appearance of having passed through a cyclone or automobile wreck. There was a white bandage over a cut on his cheek, his eyes were discolored, and he kept moving his tongue about inside his mouth as if his teeth did not feel familiar. But he managed to cast an all-embracing glance about the office, and for the merest fraction of an instant his eyes rested on each figure in turn.

"Well, well, if it ain't Frenchy LeGrand!" exclaimed Riordan, chuckling at the new arrival. "Yuh look like yuh bumped into somethin', Frenchy—what's the matter?"

The prisoner turned his head slowly and looked at the massive form of Halloran towering beside him, speculation in his eyes.

Riordan frowned. "You big lummoX, haven't I tol' yuh, time an' time again, not to beat up . . ."

"Matt, I never touched this guy," interjected Halloran solemnly. "He was this way, only worse, when the saw-bones called me to the hospital to bring him down."

The sergeant shrugged. "Well, Frenchy," he demanded, "what is it this time?"

Mr. LeGrand scanned the occupants of the room again.

"Sergeant, I have been beat up," he said.

"I hear different, Frenchy," the sergeant declared. "I hear yuh went up to the Yorkshire Arms las' night, an' a dame named Merrifield poured a coupla slugs at yuh. Then yuh lammed

first here an' then there, an' was finally found half dead in a taxicab downtown. How about it?"

Mr. LeGrand's swollen and discolored eyes again swept about the room on an exploratory mission.

"I guess I was pretty drunk," he said, at last. "I don't remember."

"Uh-huh. What was yuh an' this Merrifield dame cookin' up?"

"Nothing, Sergeant. She was just a—a skirt. You know."

"Why'd she go gunnin' for yuh?"

Mr. LeGrand managed a shrug. "Jealous—I think. You know how these women are."

"She don't say so."

LeGrand's eyes widened slightly. "You—got her?"

"Sure. Yuh think a dame could fire off a cannon in the Yorkshire Arms, an' us not get her? She says . . ."

"What ever she says is all lies, the lies of a jealous woman, Sergeant. You know how they are."

"Maybe, Frenchy. These dames sometimes get flighty. But she don't say nothin' bad about yuh, Frenchy. In fac' she covers yuh up. Says it was all an accident—somethin' about yuh was showin' her how to use a rod, or she was showin' yuh, an' the thing went off by mistake. If she was jealous, Frenchy, why would she cover yuh?"

"I was pretty drunk, Sergeant. I do not remember."

"Yeah, yuh was drunk all right, Frenchy. Hirin' expensive rooms at the Brunswick an' then not sleepin' in 'em. The clerk says yuh were boiled worse'n an owl."

Mr. LeGrand peered at Riordan, made an effort to straighten himself. "Sergeant, I was not near the Brunswick," he said, earnestly.

"Zat so? Yuh was so drunk yuh

don't remember where yuh was, but yuh know yuh wasn't to the Brunswick, eh? Yuh remember anythin' else?"

LeGrand shook his head. "I do not remember anything. I guess I was pretty drunk."

Riordan nodded. "I guess so, Frenchy. I guess yuh was pretty drunk. Or else yuh have started the wrong stall. Let me tell yuh what we've foun' out. Yuh an' this Merrifield dame was framin' somethin' about a mine. Some kind of a mine. Yuh had some papers—yuh an' she—showin' one or the other o' yuh owned this mine, or had a interest in it.

"An' yuh let the papers get away from yuh. Likely when yuh was drunk, like yuh say. An' yuh went to her flat last night an' tol' her yuh'd lost the papers, an' she threw lead at yuh, she was so mad. Yuh remember that, now that I remind yuh of it?"

Mr. LeGrand slowly shifted his feet. "I don't know of any mine, Sergeant. So I would not know of any papers."

Riordan lifted his hand, pointed to Garthwick. "That man there, has the papers," he barked. "He stole them. He admits it. He has written a confession. He's got it in his lap—see? Your name, this Merrifield dame's name, is there. Now, how about it?"

LeGrand turned his head, stared across the room at Garthwick. Saw, for the first time, the implication of young Willis, standing erect behind Garthwick's chair. Garthwick, he realized, was a prisoner, already admitting theft of the mining-claim documents. He saw more, too. For a moment he considered what he saw, then turned back and looked as squarely at Riordan as his swollen and discolored eyes would permit.

"Then, Sergeant, he killed Mr.

Brownlee," he said. "I know Mr. Brownlee is dead, because I was at his house, last night. Had an appointment with him. I was sent—ushered—directly to his library. He was lying dead on the floor. I—I fled—ran away. He was dead, and I knew if I was found there—with my reputation, and everything, I would be—be blamed. So I slipped from the house. Went on the lam . . ."

"Yuh went to the Merrifield dame's flat?"

"Yes, I went there. Told her. She—she got very excited. Said if Brownlee was dead, she believed I killed him. Said she believed I had come to kill her, and she drew a rod on me. So I ran from there. She was crazy. She thought I'd double-crossed her—that I'd got the claim and was going to try and get the mine. It's her mine—her folks'. She was crazy, and shot at me. That's God's truth. That man killed Brownlee!"

He turned and pointed at Garthwick.

"An' then yuh went to Sheba Beau-deau's an' hid out till the bulls flushed yuh, eh?" demanded Riordan.

"Yes, yes—I was afraid they would say I did it. That is the man, Sergeant—if he has the papers, that is the man!"

Riordan snorted. "It's a good story, Frenchy, but it don't work. I'll show yuh why." He swung about, one hand shot to the pigeonholes of his desk, and came back, a keen, slender blade flashing in it as the office lights were reflected on its gleaming sides. "Here's why it don't work, Frenchy! This is the sticker that finished Hank Brownlee, an' where would yuh think we found it? Give a guess, now!"

LeGrand's bloodshot eyes fairly popped from their inflamed and dis-

colored lids as he stared at the weapon balanced on Riordan's palm. His mouth opened, but no words came forth; suddenly he put both hands to his throat, gasped hoarsely, and would have collapsed on the floor if Halloran's grip had not held him dangling, half erect.

"Take him upstairs, big fellow, an' lock him up," said Riordan. "Book him 'hold for Coroner'—the D. A. can file a information on him when Doc, here, holds his inquest. Willis, yuh hop in a car an' go out to the Yorkshire Arms, an' bring in that Merrifield woman. Never mind Garthwick, the Chief an' me here, can take care o' him."

CHAPTER VII

Mrs. Merrifield's Story

THERE was, for a moment, the quick commotion of shifting figures, then the office became quiet again. Garthwick drew a long breath, wrote something on the papers in his lap, and placed the pad on Captain Brady's desk.

"Remarkable work," he said, taking a handkerchief from his pocket and wiping his forehead. "It gave me quite a start—when that—that murderer—accused me. Of course I had nothing to do with it—but to be accused, like that—quite a shock."

"It must ha' been," drawled Riordan. "When yuh didn't kill Brownlee, to be accused like that o' having stuck this snickersee into his ribs. Quite a jolt it give yuh—I can see that. 'Special' when we all know yuh didn't kill Brownlee. It was Legrande yuh bumped off!"

Garthwick leaped from his chair. "I didn't—I didn't—you haven't got a bit of proof," he screamed.

"Sit down, or I'll make the same sort o' hash out o' yuh I made out o' that other murderin' thug," rasped Riordan. "I got all the proof in the world. This lyin' statement yuh been writin' will prove it. An' yuh wait till that woman gets here with Willis, an' I'll give yuh some more proof!"

"But I can prove where I was every minute of the time," shouted Garthwick.

"Yuh sit down," repeated Riordan. "Yuh smart guys are all suckers. Look at yuh, now. Yuh seen this Le-Grand guy stick his neck in the noose all o' his own accord, when I jammed him into a corner. He seen the chance to hang the Brownlee killin' on yuh, an' he jumped at it—forgettin' that he wasn't supposed to know Brownlee had been croaked.

"There was nothin' said to him, here or elsewhere, about Brownlee been croaked. So how would he know? But he did know, an' he suspected we knew, an' he seen a chance to hang it on yuh. An' jumped at it. That was a sucker play. But yuh can't see it, an' yuh're makin' a sucker play on yuhr own account. Sit down an' wait, Garthwick. For all yuh know I may slip up, an' yuh'll have a chance. I don't claim to be smart. I'm jus a dick."

Garthwick subsided, but did not appear comfortable. Several times he started to speak, apparently to Captain Brady in protest, but each time he thought better of it. The captain picked up the "statement" Garthwick had written, and without looking at it, passed it to Dr. Wilson. Detective Halloran reentered the room and walked ponderously across the small chamber, taking up post behind Garthwick, where young Willis had formerly stood. Riordan pawed around in his pockets, found a match, lighted it,

and tilted back in his chair, devoting himself to rekindling his cigar.

"Yuh wanted to see life tonight, Garthwick," he said. "Yuh was took to the Morgue, an'-yuh have been up here, an' seen the way we handle prisoners. Mebbe for all yuh know it was all some sort of a gag the captain, here, an' Doc Wilson, was puttin' up on yuh. Mebbe I am part o' the play, too. Mebbe yuh will walk out o' here, after a while, feelin' yuh have had quite a night of it—an' never again wantin' any more. Did that ever occur to yuh?"

Garthwick looked at the sergeant searchingly, then shook his head. "No, it didn't. And if all this is a joke, I'm free to say it is in pretty poor taste."

"Huh—that's funny, now. It seems to me if yuh hadn't killed this Lagrande, yuh'd begin to suspect, by this time, we was stringin' yuh. Yuh must ha' expected bein' treated kind o' rough when yuh come down here."

"I expected to be helpful; I thought perhaps I could assist you—the captain, I mean—discovering who killed Brownlee."

"Well, we found out who killed Brownlee. Yuh ought to be satisfied—even if yuh didn't help much. Listen, do yuh think this minin' claim is any good?"

"Brownlee thought it was good—"

"An' so yuh stole it off Brownlee?"

"I didn't steal it. He gave it to me to check."

"An' yuh jus' forgot to give it back, eh?"

"No! I would have returned it to him, if he had asked for it—if he had lived."

"Umph—an' what yuh figger doin' with it now?"

"Why—why turn it over to the bank, of course."

"I wonder if yuh will," said Riordan, speculatively. "This Merrifield dame, now—when she comes here, she will claim it is hers. I wonder if yuh won't give it to her—that is, offer to give it to her. If yuh didn't go to no trouble to get it, an' if she proves it is her property, I wonder wouldn't yuh be damn glad to turn it over to her, an' get rid of it? She don't owe the bank nothin', does she?"

CAPTAIN BRADY smiled broadly, and averted his face.

Garthwick saw the motion, and frowned. Riordan sighed gently, shut his eyes. The only sound in the office was the shuffling of pages, as Dr. Wilson read Garthwick's statement. The banker's "right hand man" never answered Riordan's inquiry.

Young Willis ushered in Mrs. Merrifield with quite Chesterfieldian politeness, drew forward a chair for her, and indicated the two bureau officers.

"This is Captain Brady, ma'am; this is Sergeant Riordan."

Mrs. Merrifield looked at Brady a moment, then shifted her eyes to Dr. Wilson. The Coroner put down Garthwick's statement and hitched his chair closer to Brady's desk. The woman, in turn, glanced at Garthwick and the huge form of Halloran behind him. Then she snapped her eyes at the sergeant.

"Well, I've seen you before, anyway," she said. "What's this all about? Am I under arrest? Or do you think it's funny to get an unprotected woman out of bed between midnight and dawn and drag her down here to Headquarters?"

"Sister, I jus' work here," Riordan replied. "This man over here, he's Doc Wilson, the Coroner. It was him who wanted to talk to yuh."

If the county official was surprised at Riordan's attitude, he did not show it. He inclined his head in what might pass for a formal bow, and spoke:

"Mrs. Merrifield, I am conducting a preliminary investigation into a homicide. The police are assisting me, as the law provides they shall do. Later on I shall hold a formal inquest. It has occurred to me that you, being a lady, might not care to attend the inquest, so I asked that you be brought here. Perhaps if you will tell me what you know, it will not be necessary for you to appear at the inquest.

"Mrs. Merrifield, the police have arrested one Marcel LeGrand for the murder of—of one of our citizens. The police have obtained, from this LeGrand's person, the weapon with which the homicide was committed. And the police inform me, Mrs. Merrifield, that some time previous to LeGrand's arrest he visited your—your apartments—and that you drove him out at the point of a gun. In fact, that you discharged a revolver at him. I would like to hear why you—let us say—why you acted in a such a drastic and determined way."

The woman looked at the Coroner thoughtfully. After a moment she asked: "Listen—if I talk, if I tell what I know—do I get floated out of this?"

Dr. Wilson looked at Captain Brady, then at Riordan. The woman followed his glance, but she could not see that either of the police officers conveyed any signal to the Coroner. The county official looked back at her.

"I am somewhat averse, Mrs. Merrifield, to placing any woman in—in a position of public obloquy," he said. "Ordinarily I would say to you that if you talk freely and truthfully, you would be protected. But in cases of

homicide, it is different. I will say this, however. We will value such information as you may give us according to its worth. If it is worth what it should be, we will do our utmost to save you—er—er—embarrassment.”

The woman looked at Garthwick a minute, and her expression underwent a subtle change. Suddenly she seemed less of a woman, and more merely a human being—a human being in a trap. Her lips parted and she gave a short, hard laugh.

“I guess it’s my turn to squawk,” she said. “I never thought I’d be a squealer, but I was the sucker in this deal. That’s a laugh too—me being a sucker. It’s something new for me. Well—here’s the lay.

“FRENCHY LEGRAND came to me a while back and asked me if I knew anything that could be used for a plant. Times had been pretty tough. I’ve known Frenchy, here and there, for quite a while. He was always a good egg, and he always played square. I didn’t know anything—but we got to talking, of this and that, and I happened to mention that my father had a mine up in the hills, and maybe we could unload it on somebody.

“These times, you know, there’s quite an interest in mines; people have gotten off stocks and bonds and rackets like that. Of course, the mine never did my father any good. He was killed in a fight over it, in fact; but among the stuff I’d always carried with me was his claim papers.

“Well, Frenchy was interested. So I dug up the claim papers, and Frenchy went to the land office, or wherever it is you go, to look them up—see were they any good. He came back all afire and said we had a million dollars right

in our hands. He said the Power Company had flooded out the mine, that nobody could get to it to see was it any good, and that we could claim there was everything in it, and make them pay handsome.

“I told him that was all right, but we’d look like a couple of rummies if we tied into the Power Company. What could we do, him with his known record, and with what they’d find out about me, if we tried to shake them down? Frenchy admitted it didn’t look so good, but he kept studying over it, and one day he came and said he had it all doped out.

“We were to let some bank find out what we had, he said, and the bank would not only fight the Power Company, but would buy out my title to the mine, so it would have the clear title to make the fight on. The idea was we’d get ours out of the bank, all regular and legal—and leave the bank to get its cut out of the Power Company.

“It looked good to me, ’specially the part where it was all right and legal to sell a mine to the bank if the bank wanted to buy the mine. There would be nothing wrong in that. So I went to a small bank out of the city—it would look better, you see, starting with a small bank—and showed the man the claim papers and said I wanted to borrow some money on them.”

“What bank an’ what man, sister?” asked Riordan.

“Just as if you didn’t know,” the woman snapped at him. “It was the Pottsville Bank, and it was the cashier, Mr. Lagrande. That was what gave Frenchy the wrong ideas later—the names being so much the same. You want me to tell this, or do you want to tell it for me?”

“Yuh go ahead, sister. It’s yuhr story. Only for the Doc’s benefit, here,

I'm goin' to stop yuh any time yuh slip up. Sister, yuhr on damn thin ice—yuh want to remember that."

Mrs. Merrifield glared at Riordan an instant, then looked back at the Coroner. "It's these smart Aleck dicks that ball everything up," she said. "But never mind that—I gave these papers to the man at the bank, and the long and short of it is he swallowed it, hook, line and sinker and said we'd have to come to the city and do business with the big bank; something about the Power Company having offices in the city, and the big bank could make a better deal for us. The way he talked you'd think the bank was going to get me a price for my father's mine just out of goodness of heart. Of course I knew that was all hokey—banks don't work that way. But we should worry. We had the big bank on our hook, and we knew the big bank thought this claim was good. They'd have to give me something for it. So Frenchy and I came to the city, and I got a nice, refined apartment, and went to see the banker."

"Yuh ever see this man over there?" interrupted Halloran, pointing at Garthwick.

THE woman shook her head. "Not until this minute. I suppose he's some dick at the bank. No, I never saw him. I never worry about bank dicks, they don't know anything, anyway. I never saw anybody at the bank but Mr. Brownlee. Mr. Lagrande gave me a letter to Mr. Brownlee. Mr. Brownlee was very nice. I could see that he thought he had a good thing. He talked to me quite awhile, and then he told me to go see Mr. Thaxter, a lawyer, and that Thaxter would tell me what to do.

"So I went to the law-sharp. He

acted at first like he thought I was crazy, but after he did some 'phoning he changed his song; was awful nice. And as soon as he got nice I told him first thing I'd need would be some money to pay my rent and keep up appearances—you know, the 'front'. And I talked him out of two hundred bucks. Let him get it from the bank, I figured. I'd get little enough from the bank in the end—that is, compared with what the bank would get out of the Power Company. You know how banks are."

"Well, that was that. Everything went along all right, and then Thaxter began to stall. I saw something had curdled. Either something had gone wrong, or the bank was figuring on gypping me because I was a woman. So I put up a holler, and finally Thaxter came through and said the trouble was Lagrande of Pottsville, hadn't come up with the claim yet. I supposed, naturally enough, Lagrande was holding on to the papers till he got his end. He'd be a fool not to get his before he gave the stuff to Brownlee. Bankers are no different from other folks.

"Meantime Frenchy got to worrying something awful. He was accusing me of holding out on him. I guess it was because Frenchy was getting old—he'd changed a lot from when I knew him before. Too touchy, he was. He'd lost his grip on himself. He wouldn't trust anybody any more, said everybody was trying to chisel in on him. Finally he said he was going to stick his nose into things and see what was going on. I told him to watch out he didn't crab the whole deal. But he was bound to find out what was stalling the play.

"Then came last night. Frenchy showed up at my apartment in terrible shape. Wild, he was—crazy. I poured

two or three drinks into him and finally he got so he could talk. He said we were gyped—that somebody had worked the double-cross on us, got the mining papers, and would collect and leave us out in the cold. I asked him how he'd found all that out, and he said he'd been to see Brownlee, and that Brownlee told him Lagrande had never showed up with the papers at all.

"It looked to me as if Brownlee was stalling Frenchy, and I told him so. 'I figured damn well he was stalling,' Frenchy said, going wild again, 'and I told him so. We had a fight and I pisted him one and knocked him cold. Then I went through all his stuff, and the mining papers weren't there. So he didn't have the papers.'

"Of course that set me going, and I told Frenchy off proper, and he said he'd queered the whole thing; that Brownlee would drop it now, and that we couldn't work it on any other bank or anybody, because Brownlee would tip off whoever we tried it on that we were using rough stuff. Then Frenchy blew up and said Brownlee wouldn't tell anybody anything—and then it came to me what Frenchy had done; he'd killed Brownlee. I was so mad I wanted to kill him, for crabbing the deal. I made a reach for my rod in the dresser drawer, and I guess the darned thing went off. The next thing I knew the place was full of bulls and Frenchy had gone. Then this smart Aleck dick here came in."

She jerked her head toward Riordan, and added: "And you were just smart enough to fool me, too. If I hadn't been so excited I'd have seen you were satisfied too easy. I'll know better next time. Now, that's the whole of it—my father did have a mine, the papers are all on the level, and if

Frenchy went crazy and killed Brownlee I didn't have anything to do with it personal. Of course I'm sorry the whole thing happened, but I didn't have anything to do with it. You can ask Mr. Thaxter — everything I did was just what he told me to do."

Coroner Wilson smiled grimly. "You make a very clear and concise statement, Mrs. Merrifield—or is it Miss Merrifield? What's in a name, anyway, as Shakespeare said. Anyway, your statement is very enlightening. If you will excuse me a moment, I will ask this other—er—witness, a question."

CHAPTER VIII

Riordan's Trick

WILSON turned his head, faced Garthwick, and tapped with his fingers on the statement the banker's aide had written.

"You set forth here, Garthwick, that these mining papers, the documents this woman speaks about, were sent to the bank in a registered letter by Lagrande, from Pottsville, and that Brownlee gave you the papers to look up, to verify. What sort of a record of its registered mail does the bank keep?"

Garthwick stiffened in his chair. "It doesn't keep any record, so far as I know. Why, the bank must get fifty or a hundred registered letters every day—money, cheques, mortgages, things like that. Why would it keep a record? The post office files would show—"

"Show what?" barked Riordan sharply.

"Show the bank had received the letters—show receipts. Say, what are you driving at?"

"At what I tol' yuh—that all yuh smart guys are suckers. Yuh heard

what this woman said? That Thaxter tol' her Lagrande would bring the papers up? That he'd be a fool to give them to Brownlee before he got his, or got a promise of it? Yuh think she don't know what she's talkin' about?

"Yuh think Brownlee or Lagrande would write letters to each other, tellin' how they had the world by the tail an' was goin' to make the Power Company pay through the nose? Yuh think they'd chance them letters bein' found—or some stenographer squawkin' about them? Don't yuh see this registered letter spiel o' yuhrs won't hold water? How could yuh prove, now, these papers come up in a registered letter—with Lagrande an' Brownlee both dead?"

"Why—you fool—I don't have to prove it!" exclaimed Garthwick.

Riordan nodded his head. "Yuh're right—yuh don't have to prove it, but if yuh don't prove it, yuh'll swing on hemp for killin' Lagrande to get the minin' claim papers!"

"You're crazy!" shouted Garthwick. "I've told you Brownlee gave me the papers to search the records."

"Sure, yuh tol' me that. An' yuh lied. Look—this here deal stalls. This woman says so. Thaxter will say so. Why does the deal stall? Because Hank has only heard about it over the telephone from Lagrande at Pottsville. Hank has heard about it, an' it looks good to him. Likely he tol' yuh what a fine job was comin' up. How rich the pickin's would be. But Hank ain't the kind to move a wheel till he has the papers—sees what he has. He is waitin' for Lagrande to show with the goods.

"So what? Lagrande don't show. Because why? Because yuh have met him an' drugged him, to get the papers away from him. Lagrande wouldn't

trust yuh. He might trust Hank, but he wouldn't trust yuh. So yuh had to dope him to get the stuff off him. So Hank ain't even got the papers. Hank is expectin' Lagrande to show any day, however, and then this Frenchy Le-Grand phones him he will be up to see him. He is at the Brunswick Hotel, he says, was delayed in getting up to the city.

"Frenchy has already fixed it so he will have a nice telephone address if Hank calls him back. But Hank don't call him back. He don't recognize the voice, but he tells this party to come see him, that he will be home. He smells a rat, and the deal is so good he don't want it to get away from him, so he wants to see this party to find out what has curdled.

"So Hank, he sees this Frenchy Le-Grand—with what result we all know. Which, of course is nothin' to yuh—save it leaves yuh in the clear with the minin' papers in yuhr mitts an' Brownlee dead an' out o' the way.

"But what yuh can't show is that Brownlee give yuh the papers, or that Brownlee ever had the papers. An' yuh got to show that to make yuhr story any good! Yuh kicked yuhr foot first when yuh shouted yuh never had yuhr car out all day, so yuh couldn't ha' been the hit-run party which hit this Lagrande. Who said yuh did hit him? Yuh sprung yuhr first alibi too soon—suckers allus do that. As to the rest o' yuhr story, I tol' yuh this woman would nail yuh."

"She doesn't know a thing! She's a crook, a rogue! She told you right here she never saw me before! You asked her." Garthwick rose from his chair in his excitement. Halloran's hand came up and fell on his shoulder, crushing him back to his seat.

"She named the play," said Rior-

dan, his voice hammering out. "She said Lagrande would never give up these claim papers till he'd been paid or made a deal personal with Hank. She knows bankers—an' other people. Even if she did think yuh was a dick. Likely yuh don't look clever to her—no more than yuh do to me. Garthwick, how long do you think it will take Traffic to find yuhr other car? The one you used when you threw Lagrande out at Seventeenth an' Main? The one with blood on the runnin' board or fenders? Especial' as now Traffic will know where to look—in places where yuh are known an' could hide a car?

"Garthwick, yuh ain't got far to go—yuh admit yuh got those papers. Brownlee wouldn't have give 'em to you if he had 'em—had he wanted a search made, he would have kept the originals an' give yuh a copy. Garthwick, when the papers get hold o' this—two bankers murdered in the city, practically the same day—everybody will be runnin' here with tips. Half the tips won't be no good, but some o' the tips will point to yuh, an' put yuh on the spot. Yuh only got one out, Garthwick—to admit you doped the liquor yuh give Lagrande, an' say yuh must have put in too much or got the wrong dope. Claim it was an accident."

JIM GARTHWICK stared at Riordan with wide eyes, but seemed unable to speak. In the tense silence which followed, the Coroner spoke:

"Sarge, I think you're missing something. I've been watching this Merrifield woman—I think she knows something."

"I expect she knows a lot more'n she's spilled, Doc," said the sergeant. He turned to the woman. "Sister, yuh

want to stick yuhr oar in this? The more yuh put in, the less yuh may take out."

"Is his name Garthwick?" she asked, with repressed excitement.

"One o' his names, sister. The one he's most common known by round here. Likely he's got others. Why?"

The woman leaned forward. "Mr. Thaxter told me—told me one day after he had telephoned Pottsville—that Mr. Lagrande was coming to see a Mr. Garthwick. He said Garthwick was somebody at the bank, and that probably after Lagrande had talked to this Garthwick, things would go along more rapidly."

Riordan spread his hands, looked at the banker's aide.

"Yuh see how it works, sucker? Little by little it builds up. What this woman says ain't worth a damn. It's hearsay an' her reputation ain't so good, likely. But we get this Thaxter on the stand, an' if he says that—where does it leave yuh? That yuh phoned this Lagrande an' tol' him Brownlee wanted yuh to meet him. Yuh better take a plea, Garthwick—likely all yuh will get then is life. Yuh keep on tryin' to lie out of it, an' yuh will stretch hemp."

One of the telephones rang. Riordan reached over to Captain Brady's desk and picked up the instrument. The head of the Detective Bureau looked at him with an odd expression, but made no move.

"Detective office," those in the room heard the sergeant say. "He's out just now . . . this is Riordan . . . yeah, I think he'll be through soon; I'll tell him . . . is that so now? Well, I'll tell him. Goodby."

He hung up, pushed the instrument away, leaned back in his chair, and chuckled.

"Yuh're all through, Garthwick," he said, "they found the car."

The banker's "right hand man" jumped from his chair. Halloran's massive right arm shot out, his pudgy but powerful fingers closed on the desperate man's shoulder, dragging him back and pressing him down. Garthwick squirmed forward, slipped from the chair and fell to his knees on the floor.

"Listen, listen!" he shrieked. "I didn't kill him. He died in my car. I didn't kill him—he died—just toppled over and died, fell against me. That's the truth! If the stuff he had to drink was—was drugged—I don't know anything about it. I met him when he got to his hotel—the Belmont-Grand—and took him out to dinner. Afterwards we went out to Swaley's place—the tavern on the Pike. We had some drinks, all of a sudden he flushed up, got sick.

"I took him out, put him in my car, and started back for the city. And he died—died right in the car. I was frightened, I didn't know what to do. I took him to my place, left him in the car in the garage. Next day I took everything out of his pockets but his watch—it didn't have his own initials on it. Some watch a jeweler lent him, I suppose, while his was being fixed?

"I thought that would make it difficult to identify him, see? Then I put him in my old car and drove round and round, trying to figure out what to do. At last I saw—make it look like an accident. So I pushed him out at Seventeenth and Main. It would look as if he had been hit. You see? I was frightened—didn't know what to do. But he died—died in my car—I swear I didn't kill him!"

"Uh-huh. An' yuh got the minin' claim papers off him?"

"Yes—that was why I was so frightened. Don't you see? I couldn't tell Brownlee I had the papers—Brownlee would have thought I'd killed him and was trying to—trying to do what you said. Brownlee would have turned me in for — for killing him. It would have looked as if I had. But I didn't kill him—he just died; died in my car."

Riordan shrugged, looked at the Coroner. "Doc, I think mebbe we better lock this guy up. Give him a chance to think it over. Mebbe after he's been in a cell awhile he'll want to admit some more. Meantime we can send a coupla the boys out to Swaley's to check on was he an' Lagrande there, did they have a private room, an' did they buy liquor there or bring their own? He admits he shoved Lagrande out o' his car. Mebbe tomorrow he'll be ready to take a plea an' save the state some money. What yuh think, Doc?"

Dr. Wilson nodded his head. "Surely. And the woman, too. I shall have to hold her, material witness."

Riordan turned to Captain Brady. "That was yuhr missus what called, Chief. She wanted to know was yuh goin' to stay out all night—said she'd get a divorce if yuh didn't come home nights. Yuh heard me tell her yuh was out. The phone ringin', like that, give me an idea . . ."

Garthwick scrambled from his knees and strained forward in Halloran's grasp.

"You tricked me," he shouted.

"Yeah, like yuh tried to trick us," said Riordan. "In the police business we have to do that, sometimes. Garthwick, I tol' yuh yuh was a sucker. Now Halloran will take yuh upstairs an' lock yuh up where yuh can think it over. Yuh better take a plea an' come clean.

Take him away, you big lummoX."

Captain Brady motioned to young Willis. "Take that woman back to her flat, let her get her things," he said. "Likely she'll want to sleep—jus' like the rest of us. She can sleep comfortable in the detention home. You take

her there, book her to the Coroner. Well, well, we've had quite a night, an' I'm glad it's over. Doc, you take me home, will you, and explain to my wife that I had to stay down here all this time? I always like to take an alibi home with me, this time of morning."

Cipher Solvers' Club for May

Look for your name in the following list if you sent us one or more answers to ciphers Nos. 103-32, inclusive, published in our cipher department during May. The monthly total was 6,397 answers, raising our yearly total to 31,591 answers! The asterisks indicate members of our Inner Circle Club, which is composed of solvers who have individual records of 1,000 or more solutions. Keep your answers coming, cryptofans, and watch for the Cipher Solvers' Club for June, to be published in an early issue!

Thirty Answers—Aachen, Hollywood, Calif.; Jay Abey, Los Angeles, Calif.; Amanovlettus, Franklin, N. H.; Baab, Montreal, Quebec, Canada; *Herbert E. Batho, Avalon, Calif.; *See Bee Bee, Hamilton, Kans.; B. D. Bill, Chicago, Ill.; S. B. Booth, New York, N. Y.; Ben Brownie, New York, N. Y.; *Mrs. C. G. Burroughs, Madison, Wis.; *Blue Hen Chick, Middletown, Del.; Ciphermit, Houlton, Me.; Judson H. Clark, Elmira, N. Y.; *Comrade, Baltimore, Md.; *Joseph E. Conklin, Riverhead, N. Y.; Gladys L. Couch, St. Louis, Mo.; Jos. M. Crosby, Hayes Center, Nebr.; Cryptanalyst, Clinton, Iowa; W. E. Dalton, Marion, Ind.; *Edward J. Drumm, Eagle Rock, Calif.; *M. E., Scranton, Pa.; *Edmaca, Albany, N. Y.; *Arty Ess, Scranton, Pa.; Ezymarc, Franklin, N. H.; Farad, San Francisco, Calif.; H. C. Fetterolf, Palmyra, Pa.; *C. F., Baltimore, Md.; *G. Fulton, Cleveland, Ohio; The Griffin, Swansea, Mass.; Makem Harder, Berkeley, Calif.; Earl C. Heatwole, Brawley, Calif.; Dr. S. F. Hedgcock, Glencoe, Ill.; *T. Hegarty, Brooklyn, N. Y.; Helen, Boonton, N. J.; Hitch, Boonton, N. J.; *G. M. Howe, Allston, Mass.; A. W. H.,

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Continued on Page 60

*You start off
with 2 strikes*



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PROBAK JUNIOR

Old Lady Fate

By

Johnston McCulley



Jim dropped the handkerchief over the end of the metal rod

CROUCHING at the corner of the ramshackle blacksmith shop in the darkness and drizzle, Jim Lancroft looked up the village street.

It was about nine in the evening. Lights gleamed in the windows of a small hotel, a pool hall, a drug store and a barber's shop. For the rest, the street was dark, except for kerosene lamps set on posts.

A few men shuffled along with their heads bent against

the gusty wind. A woman came out of the drug store, passed through the hazy gleam of one of the street lamps, and disappeared into the night.

Raucous laughter drifted down the street from the pool hall, where the town loafers were killing time. Jim Lancroft's lips curled in a sneer when he heard it.

"Hicks!" he growled. "Boobs! Jakes!—Every last one of them!"

So he termed them. But he had been born and reared in this village of Riverdell himself. It was his home town. His parents were buried in the little

*Jim Lancroft Forgot to Keep
His Eye Peeled for the Little
Old Lady Who Moves in
Her Own Mysterious Ways*

cemetery beside the river. His uncle lived here now, as he had all his life. But Jim Lancroft had gone away at the age of seventeen and had been gone for ten years. A lot of viewpoints can change in ten years. So he called the villagers "hicks" and "boobs" and "jakes."

He had gone away from Riverdell after a bitter quarrel with his Uncle Abner, who had tried ineffectually to handle him after his parents had died. He had left his village sweetheart behind, vowing that he would return rich and successful some day soon, marry her, and lord it over the others of the village who had disliked him. That had been his consuming ambition, especially the desire to lord it over the others.

Well, he had returned. He had a stubble of beard on his face, and the beard was matted with grime. His clothes were little better than rags, and there were holes in the soles of his shoes. He had a dime and a penny in one pocket, and an old knife and a ragged handkerchief in another. He had sought success along the wrong channels, and it had eluded him.

Hate seared his soul—for this village, for his uncle, for the adversity which afflicted him. Save for his Uncle Abner, he was the last of the Lancrofts. His Uncle Abner was rich enough. He had a big house in which he lived in bachelor splendor, and he owned farm land and village lots and mortgages. He had no heir except Jim Lancroft.

Jim Lancroft judged that he was entitled to some of the Lancroft wealth simply because he was a Lancroft, and he had come to collect. He did not know how his uncle would greet him, was not certain what the outcome of the meeting would be. So his approach had been cautious and furtive. But Jim

Lancroft had been cautious and furtive in his daily life for years. A man had to be, to dodge the cops successfully.

He had a contempt for all cops. A cop was nothing more than a man, he often said. A shiny badge made no difference. Forget the cop part—and it was only a case of one man outwitting another. Jim Lancroft thought a deal of his own cleverness.

"No harness bull or dick'll ever clamp the clammy on my shoulder. Beat 'em with brains, if you can. If you find yourself in a corner, give 'em the rod. T'ell with 'em!" Jim Lancroft often had said.

JIM had traveled to Riverdell from Chicago in a roundabout way, taking his time about it, financing the trip by petty theft. From the Junction he had stolen a ride on a freight train. No one had seen him get on the train. No one had seen him get off at the top of the long hill a mile from the town. And no one, he felt sure, had seen him in transit. Not so many men stole rides on freights nowadays—they patronized the trucks on the highway—and trainmen were less alert.

It was a part of his scheme, too, that no one saw him here in Riverdell, except his Uncle Abner. He had a plan to propose to his uncle. If his uncle agreed it was necessary that nobody else knew of this visit.

So he left the corner of the blacksmith shop carefully and got across the street and made his way to an alley. The town had not changed much in ten years. It was that sort of town. A few had died, a few had married and some babies had been born. Otherwise, Riverdell was the same.

The pitch darkness of the alley did not bother him, and the drizzle of rain was welcome, for it meant almost

everybody would be keeping indoors. He got behind his uncle's house, listened intently, heard nothing to cause him alarm. He opened a gate, the creaking of the hinges drowned in a sudden rush of the wind.

The big house had a light burning in it. And a shed attached to the house had a light also, showing faintly through a rather thick shade. Standing at the end of the shed, Jim Lancroft curled his lips again.

His uncle was up to his old tricks, he supposed. Ten years had made no difference. His uncle had garnered wealth through land deals, but his passion was inventing. He was always trying to invent something. This shed attached to the house was his workshop.

Jim Lancroft looked up at the big bulk of the house. His uncle had acquired that before he had left home, through a mortgage. He lived in it alone, with an old housekeeper who came early in the morning and went home nights. The house was full of old-fashioned furniture. It had a library stuffed with books. Abner Lancroft prowled through the many rooms; sat in the library before a dog fire, felt himself a sort of lonesome lord of the manor, nursing a life sorrow.

Everybody in the vicinity of Riverdell knew the story. Abner and Silas Lancroft had courted the same girl. Abner had been a stolid, ambitious young man. His brother Silas had been devil-may-care, ne'er-do-well, romantic. The girl had taken Silas, and had become Jim Lancroft's mother.

The Lancroft brothers never had spoken after that. And Hiram Thomas, who had aided Silas in the elopement—he and Abner Lancroft had been bitter enemies from that day, though they lived with only the width of a village street between them now. Jim Lancroft

felt sure none of that had changed, either.

He shook some of the rain from his coat and went on to the door of the shed and knocked. He had listened enough to satisfy himself that nobody but his uncle was inside the shed.

"Who is it?" That was his uncle's thin voice.

Jim Lancroft muttered something which could not be understood. He heard a key turned in the lock, and the door was pulled open. Jim Lancroft pushed it open wider and entered quickly, and swiftly closed the door behind him. His uncle had recoiled a step at his abrupt entrance.

"Why, it's—isn't it Jim?" Abner Lancroft asked.

"Right! It's Jim. Thought I'd drop in and pay you a visit."

Abner Lancroft took the shade off the lamp, so he could see better. Bright light flooded the room, Mercilessly, it revealed the state of Jim Lancroft's apparel and person. Abner Lancroft gave him a swift appraisal.

"So, you've come back."

"Here I am, Uncle Abner."

"It's been about ten years."

"That's right."

"If I remember correctly—" Abner Lancroft cleared his throat and adjusted his spectacles. "That is, you were goin' away to make a fortune and come back and walk over everybody. Wasn't that it?"

"I've made a couple of fortunes and spent 'em," Jim Lancroft replied. "I've traveled some—seen the world."

"Seen the inside of a jail?"

"That's enough—"

"I see you have," Abner Lancroft remarked. "That's why what I said got under your skin. If you hadn't you'd have laughed and joked."

"I suppose everything around here's

the same?" Jim asked, wanting to change the subject.

"Things don't change much in Riverdell."

"You're lookin' the same. Still have your battles with old Hiram Thomas?"

"He still lives across the street—he's a widower now," Abner replied. "We ain't any friendlier than we were. Each waitin' for the other to die first, so's he can gloat."

"You ain't asked me to sit down."

"Take that box," Abner said, gesturing toward it. "I'm at work."

"Still inventin', huh?"

"Just tinkerin' around at somethin'."

"Well, you can stop your tinkerin' and have a little talk with me. That's what I've come here for."

"Didn't know we had anything to talk about. But you go ahead, and I'll listen. I can keep right on with my tinkerin'."

Abner Lancroft stood at his workbench, bending over it, fussing with something he had in a vise.

II

JIM LANCROFT made a cigarette and lit it.

"It's like this, Uncle Abner," he said. "I've had some hard luck recently, and I'm sick of knockin' around. We're the last of the Lancrofts. I want to come here to Riverdell and marry and settle down. By the way, did Lettie Martin ever get married?"

"She never has," Abner said. "She's about twenty-six now."

"A year younger than me. We were sweethearts in our school days. When I went away I promised her I'd make good and come back."

"Maybe she's still waitin'—fool girl!"

"I wrote to her for a while, then just got out of the habit," Jim Lancroft admitted. "What I was goin' to say—I want to come back and settle down—"

"You're back," his uncle interrupted. "You didn't have to go away in the first place."

"What else could I do? We had that quarrel."

Abner turned and looked at him an instant, then bent over the work bench again.

"That quarrel wasn't necessary," he said. "Your father, who was my brother, won the girl I wanted. Hiram Thomas helped him. You might have been my son if— But she wanted Silas. And she got him. Got a lazy wastrel—"

"Let's cut out the family history!" Jim snapped.

"Except this: your mother died when you were ten. Your father died when you were sixteen. I took you in. You were my nephew—the son of the woman I'd loved and lost. I intended to adopt you later, train you, make you my heir."

"And you started in by being a tyrant," Jim interrupted.

"Nobody else in the world ever said I was anything like that. I knew your father, my brother, and didn't want you to be like him. I wanted you to be sober and sedate, a good, honest man of business. You didn't want to go to school. You got some bad habits. Only good thing about you was you lovin' Lettie Martin, and even that wouldn't straighten you up, and you only seventeen. So I—I tried to put on the screws some. And you quarreled and lit out."

"Well, I'm back now," Jim said. "And I've got an idea."

"I'm listenin'."

"Nobody knows I am here. I

slipped into town. I want to slip away again and come ridin' home right. I want everybody to think I've made good and come home—like I said I'd do. You'd rather have it that way, wouldn't you? Don't want everybody to see me comin' back like a tramp, do you?"

"What's the rest of it?" Abner asked, bending over the work bench.

"I've got to have money, so's I can go away and buy clothes and stuff and come ridin' home right. Maybe in a pretty good car of my own. You've got plenty of money, and nobody else to leave it to. Why not use some of it now? Four or five thousand—without anybody knowing you're doing it. I know you can always put your hands on that much cash. I know how you distrust banks. Used to keep money and papers in the house—"

"Yes, I can get my hands on money," Abner Lancroft broke in, "if I feel like it. Suppose I did what you ask—then what?"

"Why, I'd look like a success. I'd come home here, and stay. Maybe go into business. Live like a Lancroft should. Probably marry Lettie Martin—"

"All that on four or five thousand?"

"I'm expectin' you to hand me plenty, and set me up in business of some kind, if I feel inclined. You can juggle the money so's everybody will think it's mine, money I made while I was away."

"And why should I do all this?" Abner Lancroft asked, turning toward him again.

"Why not? I'm your only heir—"

"My will don't say that," Abner interrupted. "I've cut you off with a dollar. If you'd behaved yourself ten years ago you could have been my son and had everything in time."

"I was only a boy of seventeen—"

"You were already old in wickedness. And what have you done while you've been gone?"

"You want to know?" Jim Lancroft got up, his eyes blazing. "I've been a hobo, a drifter, a crook! I've been a cop-dodger. I did eighteen months for burglary, and got off easy at that. But I'm a Lancroft—the last of 'em except you. I'm sick of it! I want to come home—"

"You're here. You can stay as long as you behave yourself."

"I want to come back right, as I said."

"I can't see it that way," Abner Lancroft turned back to his work bench again.

"You mean you won't do it?"

"No reason why I should. You can stay the night, and if you want to go on again I'll give you a hundred dollars in the morning. But that's all."

IN that instant Jim Lancroft knew what he intended to do. He saw the eighteen-inch length of steel rod on the end of the work bench. He saw his uncle bending over the vise. He remembered how his uncle always kept, somewhere in the house, a metal box which contained papers and money.

Jim Lancroft began pleading again. He took the ragged handkerchief from his pocket and pretended to be wiping some raindrops from his chin. It had commenced raining hard outside. That was good—footprints would be obliterated.

Jim Lancroft leaned against the end of the bench with the handkerchief in his hand.

"It's the sensible thing," he said. "Ain't you got any family pride? Want me to hang around town lookin' like a bum?"

"You'd have to go to work, or Bill Daney, our marshal, would arrest you for bein' a vagrant and send you to the county rockpile," his uncle said.

"Bill Daney! Is he the town cop? That's a laugh! I used to handle him easy enough when we went to school together. So a hick village marshal would arrest me for vagrancy, would he? The best dicks in the business haven't been able to pin anything on me since that first time. Are you goin' to make the deal with me, Uncle Abner?"

"No. And it ain't only the money. I won't lend myself to the deceit—"

Thinking of fingerprints, Jim Lancroft dropped the handkerchief over the end of the rod, and when he gripped it the cloth was between his flesh and the metal. He struck swiftly, three times, the last time as his uncle, with a groan, was sinking to the floor. The body slumped, did not make a thump. One glimpse at his uncle's head informed Jim Lancroft that the job was complete.

The icy cold nature of some criminals descended upon him now. He listened, heard nothing. He dropped the metal rod on a piece of gunnysacking in a corner, wrapped it carefully, thrust it into his pocket. For into his mind had flashed another angle of the plan. A murder means a murderer. He would provide the murderer, and so escape himself.

He blew out the lamp, crept to the door, listened again, pulled the door open and closed it without sound. The rain was coming down in torrents as Jim Lancroft got into the house through the rear door.

He went at once to the library. He drew the heavy curtains at the windows, struck a match and lit a lamp. Then he began his search.

The desk yielded nothing he wished.

He tore books from the shelves and searched behind them. He felt for secret panels. He ransacked the room without success, spending considerable time at the task.

Finally he found it—a place under the rug in a corner where two boards were loose. He lifted the boards and found the metal box in which his uncle kept money and papers.

There was a lock on the box. Jim Lancroft broke it open with a heavy poker he found at the fireplace, risking the small amount of noise necessary, but knowing it would be drowned by the wind and rain outside.

There was a package of currency, which he counted swiftly. About fifteen hundred dollars. Used carefully, it would serve his purpose. There were papers, too—old receipts, notes, mortgages, a will.

There were embers in the fireplace, and Jim Lancroft tossed notes and mortgages upon them and watched them burst into flame. Perhaps suspicion would fall on some man over whose head Abner Lancroft had held a mortgage—if it did not fall where Jim Lancroft intended to direct it.

He glanced at the will. Yes, he was cut off with a dollar. A few of the villagers were given small parcels of land. Lettie Martin was made a present of the house in which she lived with her mother. The remainder of the estate went to found a library for the village.

Jim Lancroft laughed a bit—and tossed the will into the fire. Now he was sole heir. The village could do without its library. As far as Lettie was concerned, he'd take care of her.

He got out of the house swiftly, listened at the corner of it, watched for a time the semi-dark street, over which the branches of old trees almost met. He had the money in an inside coat

pocket. He had the instrument of death, wrapped in the piece of sacking. He had tossed the blood-soaked handkerchief away. No chance of anybody tracing that to him.

He darted across the street, crept carefully behind shrubs, and got to the rear of Hiram Thomas' house. There was an old shed against the barn, which was half filled with broken tools and odds and ends. Jim Lancroft put the metal rod, still wrapped in the piece of sacking, down in a corner of the shed and tossed some other things over it.

THEN he went out into the rain again and made for the railroad.

His present work in Riverdell was done. To finish it, he must get away unseen, return as quite another man.

On this branch line there would be no trains until morning, he knew. But the motor highway was only three miles to the west. He would make his way to it, he decided, get to the Junction, and travel on from there.

The street lamps were still burning, but all the business establishments were dark. Riverdell slept, except for Bill Daney, the town marshal. Jim Lancroft saw nobody in the street. He went along swiftly through the rain, dodging the light spots around the street lamps.

"Hey, you—" a sharp voice called behind him.

Instinctively, Jim Lancroft knew it was the voice of the law. Bill Daney, whom he had thrashed often in their school days. And he was a cop now!

"Stop or I'll shoot! I'm an officer!"

Jim Lancroft almost laughed. An officer! That hick! He supposed the marshal had seen him slipping along the street and suspected something wrong. No doubt he knew everybody in town and the vicinity. A stranger prowling around at that hour of the

night was enough to arouse suspicion.

Jim Lancroft started running. Behind him a gun exploded and a bullet whistled over his head. He snarled his rage and got out his own gun—an automatic which had been hidden cunningly in his left armpit. Bill Daney—the fool! He came charging on, straight through the light beneath one of the street lamps. Jim Lancroft let him have it—fired once. He saw Bill Daney collapse on the wet walk and ran on.

III

THE unusual gunfire would awaken somebody in the village, he knew. It had come during a lull in the storm. So Jim Lancroft made haste to get away. He dodged across the railroad tracks and followed a country road through the mud to the paved highway. Unseen, he got into the back of a covered truck, running empty, and journeyed for about fifteen miles, and dropped off as the truck entered a village.

He made the Junction just at dawn and caught an outgoing freight. The storm had stopped. The wind dried his clothes partially. Jim Lancroft journeyed until almost noon, left the train unseen in the outskirts of a town, walked into it and ate breakfast at a cheap restaurant, paying for it out of a dollar bill he had taken from the package of currency. The remainder of the money he had stowed away on his person.

He got a haircut and shave in this town, bought a pair of cheap shoes and went on. In two days more he was in Chicago. He had been watching the papers and had found a paragraph which told of the brutal murder of one Abner Lancroft, in the village of Riverdell. The Lancroft house had

been ransacked also, the item said, and money taken and papers destroyed. A prowling tramp was suspected of the murder. Bill Daney, town marshal, had seen a stranger and had been shot while trying to capture him. The marshal would recover.

Jim Lancroft grinned at that. So they had not found the weapon he had planted in Hiram Thomas' shed, had not connected Thomas with the crime. A prowling tramp had done it—let it go at that.

In Chicago, Jim Lancroft went to one of his usual haunts and sought out the owner of a cheap pool hall.

"If anybody ever asks where I was last Tuesday night," he said, "I was here."

"Sure, Jim! Pulled somethin' huh?"

"Nothin' very good. There may never be a quiz."

"I'll have it fixed up, Jim. You were playin' poker with some of us in the back room. Not only that, but it was my birthday and we were havin' a few drinks and celebratin'."

Jim Lancroft bought clothing from the skin out. He rumpled the suits and had them pressed, had underwear and shirts and socks laundered once to get laundry marks on them, worked up the shoes a bit and had them shined. Nothing looked too new, just new enough for a man of some prosperity.

He bought a trunk and bag at a secondhand store, had his own initials painted on them, rubbed dirt over the letters until it looked like the painting had been done some time before. He let a week pass, then wrote a letter.

The letter was to the old postmaster at Riverdell. Jim said he had read a paragraph in a paper telling of the violent death of his uncle, and asked for particulars. He enclosed the newspaper clipping and a stamp. The ad-

dress he gave was a decent hotel of the quiet sort, to which he had moved, and where he was living under his own name.

He got an immediate reply from the old postmaster, giving the details as they were known in Riverdell. His uncle had been buried. He was the only heir, as far as was known. If there had been a will it had not been found. Bill Daney, the marshal who had been shot, was not badly hurt.

Jim Lancroft wrote that he would journey to Riverdell as soon as he could arrange his business and make the trip. He was congratulating himself on a perfect job.

"Never pin that on me," he told himself. "I'll go back and claim the property, do some strutting around, look up Lettie Martin again. Might even marry her and settle down. She was a sweet kid—a lot different from the Loop broads here."

A perfect job and a perfect getaway, he told himself. Nothing to fear. A dick was only another man, and man to man he could outwit any of them!

It was a week later when he went to Riderdell. His appearance was that of a decent, prosperous young man. He showed proper horror at the violent death of his uncle. He went through the big house, had everything explained to him. He called on Bill Daney, who was able to sit up in an easy chair, and talked about the man who had shot him. Bill Daney knew little. He had seen a skulking figure and had been shot.

He met Lettie Martin, and found that she was a pretty, level-headed girl who still loved him.

"I'm glad you're home, Jim, though I'm sorry for the thing that brought you back," she said. "I always told myself that you'd come back."

"I wanted to make good first," he replied. "I've got a start—"

"Oh, stay here now, Jim! You'll have your uncle's property to look after now—it'll be yours. You can make good here at home."

HE let her, and everybody else, believe that she influenced him to do that. He moved into the big house and waited until the estate was probated, and the property turned over to him. He began courting Lettie Martin again, and was careful to be the right sort of person in every respect, though it irked him at times. Only old Hiram Thomas was skeptical.

"He's a bad un," Thomas declared. "Ain't much like his daddy. More like his skinflint of an uncle. Lettie Martin is a fool if she marries him."

Some of the bad qualities of Jim Lancroft came to the surface now. He sneered at the "hicks." He had the big house done over, spending a lot of money. He made some land deals which were not altogether scrupulous.

He had the money and position, had his way with everybody. People began disliking him, then detesting him. But they feared to antagonize him too much. They whispered behind his back when he ran away to the city for a week at a time, saying he had business which called for his attention. He was too wise to dissipate at home.

Not for a moment was he under suspicion of having caused his uncle's death. Nobody thought to look up his record for the last few years. He avoided leading questions, and his manner was such that few were asked him. They took it for granted that he had been in business in Chicago, had decided to settle down now in Riverdell and care for the estate.

He felt he had two enemies—old

Hiram Thomas and Bill Daney. The old man was a natural hater of any Lancroft except Jim's dead father, who had been his close friend. And Bill Daney had expected to marry Lettie Martin some day—until Jim's return. He felt now that he never would do that. She would marry Jim.

"I don't like him," Bill Daney confessed to Hiram Thomas. "And it ain't because I'm jealous, either. There's somethin' about him makes my flesh crawl. I've got the feelin' that he's a crook, though I reckon that's ridiculous."

"Maybe it is, and maybe it ain't," Thomas replied. "He was seventeen when he left home, just the age where wrong companions could have molded his life. And them trips he makes to the city—"

"I know. Everybody knows but Lettie. She won't listen to a word against him, and I'm not the one to say it, anyhow. He goes on a carouse every time he gets to the city. Liquor and gamblin' and women. If he marries Lettie and breaks her heart I—I'll break him!"

Everybody thought he would marry Lettie Martin. He finished modernizing the big house, landscaped the grounds. He was trading in land and dealing in mortgages as his uncle had before him. Only he was unscrupulous and hard-hearted, where his uncle had not been.

Lettie proudly showed a big diamond engagement ring after one of Jim Lancroft's visits to the city. They would be married in two or three months, she said. Everybody congratulated her except old Hiram Thomas and Bill Daney. The town marshal avoided her. Hiram Thomas was open in his statements that the match would bring her no happiness.

• Jim Lancroft heard about that, and found Hiram Thomas in front of the village post office and backed him up against the wall, clutching the old man by the throat until others made him let go.

"Don't let me hear you shootin' off your mouth any more about me and my affairs," Jim roared. "I've had about enough of you, you old coot! Let me hear of another crack you've made and I'll slap you to sleep!"

THAT did not popularize him with the villagers. Not all of them liked Hiram Thomas, but he was a harmless old widower who lived alone and puttered around doing little of nothing. He was not the sort for a young man to clutch by the throat.

And Jim Lancroft had been half wild with rage. His face was white, his eyes blazed as he roared at the old man. He was muttering threats as he moved away. Bill Daney started to remonstrate with him.

"And I don't need advice from any hick cop, either!" Jim Lancroft roared. "I used to lick you when we went to school together, and I can do it now. Keep away from me! Everybody knows what you're sour about."

Jim Lancroft intended to take the midnight train for the city that night, a last spree before his marriage. He packed his bag and sent it to the station. As he was walking around the front yard just at dusk Lettie came along the street and stopped to talk to him.

She had heard about the scene in front of the post office. In her gentle way she said she was sorry it had happened. He should learn to curb his temper, she said. Nobody paid any attention to anything Hiram Thomas said. And Bill Daney—he was all right, too.

A fine young man, trying to do his duty.

"A hick cop!" Jim growled. "I won't take anything off him!"

She went on home, and a man of the town came by, one who wished to ingratiate himself with Jim Lancroft and possibly profit by it later.

"You sure gave old Hi Thomas what for!" he said. "He was spoutin' some more after you went away. Said you were twice the skinflint your uncle was. Told Mrs. Appleby he was goin' to do all he could to keep a fine girl like Lettie from marryin' you."

"Oh, he did, did he?" Jim growled. "I'll have to slap him down, I suppose, even if he is old."

An hour later he saw Mrs. Appleby, the town gossip, go into the Thomas house with her husband. Going to lay plans to wreck his marriage to Lettie Martin, Jim Lancroft supposed. He'd find out about that.

He slipped across the street, got behind a hedge, made his way to the house. Beneath an open window he listened. Yes, they were talking about him. Hiram Thomas was asking Mrs. Appleby to use her influence with the other women to have them all urge Lettie to break the engagement.

"I'll get you for that, Thomas!" Jim howled through the window.

Enraged, he slipped back across the street. Bill Daney and two men on their way to the local lodge hall saw him.

And Bill Daney saw him again when the midnight train came through. Jim Lancroft had been drinking at home while waiting for train time. His face was still white with rage at Hiram Thomas when he boarded the train. Bill Daney and half a dozen other men noticed his condition, his white face.

He'd get Hiram Thomas, Jim Lancroft decided. He would use his wits,

get a mortgage on Thomas' house, kick him out into the street. He'd undermine Thomas' small fortune. That was the way he would get him—the way it would hurt Hiram Thomas most. He'd send him to the poorhouse.

He was in the city only a day and a night, having one of his sprees. He got back home on a noon train the second day, stepped off carrying his bag. He saw Bill Daney there, and an older man who wore the sheriff's star.

"Lancroft!" the sheriff barked. "I want you!"

A hick cop! And Jim Lancroft without a weapon on him.

"You want me for what?" he asked.

"For the murder of Hiram Thomas."

IV

HIRAM THOMAS had been found the morning before, after Jim Lancroft's departure at midnight for the city. He was found in the shed adjoining his barn, his head mashed in with a metal rod.

People knew how Jim Lancroft had quarreled with him and had threatened him at the post office. Mrs. Appleby and her husband had told of Jim yelling through the window after eavesdropping, and threatening the old man again. Bill Daney and two others had seen Jim Lancroft going across the street from the Thomas place. And he had been half-intoxicated, nervous, white-faced when he had boarded the midnight train.

Moreover, on the metal rod with which Hiram Thomas had been slain they had found a distinct thumb mark—and it was Jim Lancroft's.

"Hick cops!" he raged, in his cell in the county jail. Bail had been denied. He was being held for first degree murder. "It's a frame up. That town marshal wants my girl."

"Come clean with me, Lancroft!" snapped the criminal lawyer he had engaged, at the cost of almost all his fortune. "How about that thumb print on the steel rod? They checked it with prints in your house, and with the ones they took here in the jail. No dodging that, Lancroft. You come clean with me. I'm your lawyer!"

"I didn't kill him, I tell you! Sure, I barked at him through the window. And I threatened him. But I meant I'd get him in another way. I was goin' to break him, send him to the poorhouse, see him in the gutter—"

"If that's your yarn—"

"It's the truth, and I'm stickin' to it!"

"I'll do the best I can," the lawyer said.

The trial began, and as the prosecution heaped up the evidence Jim Lancroft became alarmed. Damning, every bit of it! They had even traced his Chicago associates. They had unearthed that old term he had done for burglary. But old Mrs. Fate was the detective putting the noose around his neck.

That metal rod with which he had slain his uncle, and which he had left in Hiram Thomas' shed to throw suspicion on him—it must have remained there all this time, untouched until the last. He had wrapped it in some sacking, he remembered. The rod had been greasy. The sacking had preserved that thumb print. No other prints were on the rod. Whoever had used it undoubtedly had worn gloves.

THERE was no suspicion regarding anybody else. None knew of the tramp who had been sleeping in the shed, of how old Hiram Thomas had heard a noise, and had gone to the shed to investigate. Nobody had seen

the bewildered, frightened tramp grasp the rod he found in a corner and strike with it, then run.

The very fact that there had been no robbery following the murder served to fasten it on Jim Lancroft. It was plain enough that Lancroft had lain in wait, had struck in the heat of rage, for revenge, then had fled to his own home and later had gone to the city. Everything pointed to that.

"I didn't do it—didn't do it!" he kept telling his lawyer.

"How'd that thumb print get on the rod?" his lawyer asked.

Jim Lancroft thought he knew. That ragged handkerchief he had used when he held the rod and killed his uncle—his thumb must have slipped through a hole in it and come in contact with the

metal. That was the way it had happened.

But he could not explain that. Would it avail him anything to confess to one murder to free himself of another?

"Guilty of murder in the first degree!"

Jim Lancroft laughed when he heard the verdict, and they thought it was hysteria. He laughed in his cell in the death house while a hopeless fight for a new trial took away the remainder of his fortune. Just before they pulled the black cap over his head on the scaffold he looked down at the witnesses and laughed.

No hick cop had got him, no clever city dick. Old Mrs. Fate had got him—the detective who always gets her man.

Cipher Solvers' Club for May

Continued from Page 48

*Mrs. Alice Routh, Oklahoma City, Okla.; Sachem, Washington, D. C.; Harold Schlote, Philadelphia, Pa.; Charles R. Schnerr, Waterbury, Conn.; Mrs. H. A. Seals, Cleveland, Ohio; O. I. See, Caroleen, N. C.; Alice M. Shott, Rickreall, Oreg.; *Sleepy, Bryn Mawr, Pa.; *A. W. Smith, Oklahoma City, Okla.; Mrs. Josephine Spalding, Arizona; Speck, Little Rock, Ark.; Sam Spiegel, Butte, Mont.; Big Stack, Anaconda, Mont.; A. Onyx Starkes, St. Louis, Mo.; Stas, Brooklyn, N. Y.; *Jack-Stay, Tucson, Ariz.; Hot Summers, Minneapolis, Minn.; *Dick Tate, Battle Creek, Mich.; *Old Timer, Guthrie, Okla.; Trams, South Bend, Ind.; B. A. Tress, Baskett, Ky.; Paw Tucket, Orlando, Fla.; Uuem, Dayton, Ohio; Waltraw, Detroit, Mich.; R. W. West, Passaic,

N. J.; *H. F. Wickner, Las Vegas, Nev.; *E. A. Wilson, Oakdale, Pa.; Sam Wilson, Chicago, Ill.; L. J. Yanchus, Masontown, Pa.; Lew Zirn, Wilkes-Barre, Pa.; A. R. Zorn, Perris, Calif.

Twenty-nine—Arulas, Los Angeles, Calif.; Donald P. Crane, Quincy, Mass.; Iflac, San Francisco, Calif.; *Mrs. F. M. Ingalls, Glendale, Calif.; Jonesibus, Austin, Tex.; *A. Meredith, Pittsburgh, Pa.; Mossback, Randle, Wash.; E. G. Ohazer, Anson, Tex.; Nickle-Plate, Saranac Lake, N. Y.; *Alvin Robb, London, Ontario, Canada; *Romeo, Waynesboro, Pa.; Ruth, Laramie, Wyo.; Kay Vee See, Seattle, Wash.; Sherlac, Philadelphia, Pa.; Little Willy, Johnstown, Pa.; *Doctor X, Kansas City, Mo.

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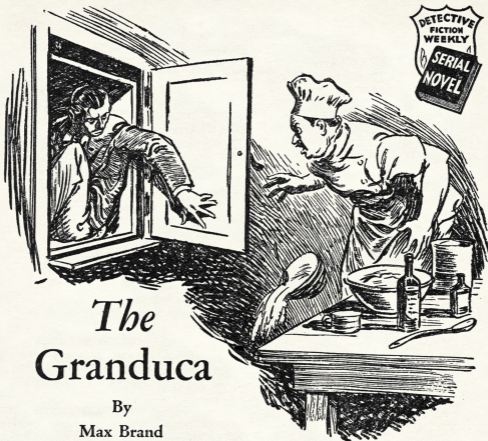


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FIT GEM AND EVER-READY RAZORS



The Granduca

By
Max Brand

What has happened—

As the door swung wide, I saw Mr. Tydings—inside the dumb-waiter!

HENRY TYDINGS, a wealthy art collector, has invited his bitterest enemies to spend a week-end with him prior to his marriage to Charlotte Reid. Foremost of these is Gene Chatham, a rich dilettante. Tydings' arch-foe, who has pretended to care for Vivian, Tydings' daughter, only so that he may be near Charlotte, whom he loves. Winifred Staunton, Tydings' former mistress, is also there, and when she finds that Lionel Reid, Charlotte's brother, is armed, she takes the weapon

from him. At dinner, when Tydings is baiting his guests, including Rupert Walden, another collector rival, and Willard Hamblin, a resident physician, Winifred shoots Tydings. Sergeant Detective Angus Campbell and his bickering team-mate, Sergeant Detective Patrick O'Rourke, are sent to Tydings' Island, which is within sight of New York City. When Clifford, the suave English butler, takes them to the

The Setup Is Perfect for Murder; There Are Plenty of Suspects. But While Theories Collapse and a Subtle Killer Roams Unfettered, Detectives Campbell and O'Rourke Must Find a Flitting Corpse, Collar a Crafty Killer and Prove a Murder Has Been Done!

This story began in *Detective Fiction Weekly* for July 25

dining room, Tydings' body has vanished. Questioning the guests, the detectives learn that each one had a motive for the murder, and that each is alibied. Meanwhile the jewel-casket, filled with precious gems, which Tydings was going to give Charlotte as a wedding present, has disappeared. While searching for Charlotte, who has left her room, the two detectives hear a scream in the house. It turns out to be Winifred, who became rather drunk and offered a drink to one of the armored wax dummies in the house. She insists that the face inside the helmet was that of Henry Tydings, dead. Campbell and O'Rourke rush into the armory, find one suit of armor dismantled. Almost immediately thereafter a kitchen maid rushes into the room panic-stricken.

"The cook's had a kind of a stroke!" she screamed. "Let me out of this house! I'm gonna be haunted! The cook saw Mr. Tydings, dead, in the dumb-waiter! Oh, I want to go away from here!"

CHAPTER VII

Prints in Blood

O'Rourke and Campbell did not hurry. They walked down the stairs towards the kitchen, the maid stumbling down before them and making moaning noises on the way.

"Tydings is a dirty dog," said O'Rourke.

"Murdered men are always dirty," said Campbell.

"Murdered my foot," O'Rourke contradicted. "He uses the play of the gunshot to sneak out of things. You're gonna find that he has a stack of bad bills to pay, and he's been losing on the stock market, or something. . . . He gets dropped on his back and left for dead. He figures that's the easy way out. . . . There's no murder around here, Angus. There's only a piece of dirty shyster work."

Campbell paused on the landing and looked O'Rourke in the eye.

"Maybe there's been no killing yet," he declared, "but there's gonna be one before long. There's murder in the air. I can smell it!"

"So can a buzzard," answered O'Rourke, in disgust. "And so can a damned Scotch crow, it seems."

They reached the kitchen and found the cook sitting up straight in a chair. Everything was so white that it hurt the eyes, and the whitest thing in that kitchen was the face of the cook. He grasped a small, half-emptied glass of cognac in one hand. The fat of the hand bulged well up above the rim of the glass. It was a wonder that he could find a place to drink.

An undercook and a kitchen maid moved softly about the master. The kitchen maid, with the end of a clean dish towel, had just dried the beaded perspiration on the fleshy forehead of the chef. He paid no heed. Even the angle of his tall white hat did not disturb him. His little round eyes were fixed on space and terror; his lips were a purple-gray.

"What's your name?" asked O'Rourke.

"Collister, sir," the cook answered in a mechanical voice, never looking at his questioner. "Collister, Cordon Bleu, and Willett and Wright's Cooking School, references. . . ."

"What's the matter, Collister?"

"I'm a dying man."

Here the kitchen maid covered her face with her hands and began to sob, silently, violently, racking her body with the effort of control.

"What are you dying of?" O'Rourke questioned.

"I've seen the living dead," said the cook. "And I know what that means."

"Go back to the beginning," Campbell urged. "Tell it bit by bit. Take your time."

The cook tasted his brandy and found no comfort in it.

He said: "I was making macaroons. A terrible thing like what happened today always upsets me and when I'm upset, I always make macaroons. I don't know why. They're simple and sort of soothing. . . . I'd laid out the sweet almond powder and the caster sugar, and the whites of some eggs. I was mixing the sugar and the almond powder together on the board—not thinking, only mixing—I heard the buzzer sound and the bump of the dumb-waiter stopping at our level. I looked around for Mary, the kitchen maid. She should have been here. But she wasn't. . . ."

"I'd only that minute stepped to my room, Mr. Collister. If I'd known you was making macaroons, I wouldn't dreamed of . . ."

"Hush," said Collister, sadly. "Hush, Mary! A good, honest woman. I'll say no more about her. A poor, good, honest woman. . . ."

"Oh, forgive me, Mr. Collister," sobbed Mary.

"I had to go myself," said the chef, "to open the dumb-waiter. There, sir . . . you see the door with the lever handle? I went to it and opened it. As soon as I pressed down on the lever, the door opened against me. I stepped back a little, and as the door swung wide, I saw Mr. Tydings—inside the dumb-waiter. He was turning towards me, with a strange smile, leaning forward, about to step out onto the kitchen floor. . . ."

Collister took another sip of the brandy. The fat of his hand got in the way of his mouth and caused a slobbering sound. A drop of the brandy ran down his chin and hung at the round flab of it like a tear.

"Things went black," said the cook.

"They went black. I staggered and things went black."

"Why?" insisted Campbell. "Tydings might have been drunk, or playing a joke, or—"

"In the dumb-waiter? Mr. Tydings in the dumb-waiter? Not if there had been life in him!"

"Life?" demanded O'Rourke. "But look at what you say, man. He smiles at you, and turns and starts to step out of the door. What's more living than that?"

Collister took a deep breath.

"His eyes were dead," said the cook. "I've seen dead things enough in my profession. I've seen the dead eyes of fish, and the dead eyes of roosters, wrinkling and half shut, and glazed. And the eyes of Mr. Tydings were dead as any. I saw the red stain on his breast. I saw the hole in the shirt and the purple of the hole in the flesh beneath it. . . . He was shot through the heart, and I saw where the bullet went in. . . ."

COLLISTER stood up. He moved the brandy glass towards his mouth and lowered it again without tasting the liquor. "Gentlemen," he said, "I have seen the living dead, and therefore I am only a step from the grave."

"Hell and fire!" said O'Rourke. "What I mean is, what did Tydings do?"

"I don't know," the cook answered.

"Damn it, did you turn and run?" asked O'Rourke.

"I staggered backwards," said the cook. "A darkness came over my eyes, and I staggered backwards, striking the mixing board with my hand and throwing the almond flour and sugar on the floor. . . ."

He pointed.

"I've cleaned it all up, Mr. Collister," whispered Mary.

The cook sighed.

"My back struck a wall that opened behind me—"

"What are you talking about?" snapped Campbell.

"It was a door, sir," said Collister.

"And I reeled into the passage. . . . Some of the under servants came crowding about me. I could only gasp a few words. I told them to go into the kitchen. I told them to look, and that they would see nothing. . . . I was right. For the door of the dumb-waiter was closed again, and there was no one to be seen."

"Was the dumb-waiter still there—still in place behind the door?"

"No, it had gone up," said the cook.

"Then the man inside it may have managed to send himself up to the top of the house again?" demanded Campbell.

"Yeah," answered O'Rourke. "All he would have to do would be to reach out through the closed door and punch the bell and pull his arm back through the wall as the—"

"Be still with your yammer!" snarled Campbell. "Here—will one of you show us through this layout?"

"Mary," said the cook, "step forward."

Mary stepped forward. She was built on a diminishing scale that reversed the ordinary rule. That is to say, her feet were very large and her head was very small. She looked like a familiar distortion, a snapshot taken from a wrong angle. Now she went with big strides to show Campbell and O'Rourke the way.

The cellar was dank, huge, and made mysterious by store-rooms stacked with old crates or the fragments of them. The furnace room was big

enough to have represented the power-plant of a small steamer. And everywhere through this lower world little alleys and by-ways jumped and twisted in a planless way.

They came to a covered canal in which appeared a pair of rowboats, two Sponson canoes hanging on the wall, a small sailing boat swaying its mast a trifle near the ceiling of the high passage, and finally there was a motor boat with a good, bluntnosed look of speed about it.

"Here!" said O'Rourke. "Here, Mary! That motor boat could get them across the tide-rip to the shore, all right, couldn't it? Can't anybody in the house run that boat?"

"Yes, sir," said Mary. "Two or three of the men could run it, but it was found all out of order and it wouldn't go."

"Lemme have a look," said O'Rourke, and stepped down into the craft, where he opened the engine.

"One thing," said Campbell to Mary. "Where's the switch that raised the sluice gates in the causeway?"

"Right in this closet, sir," said Mary.

She pulled open a door that creaked sharply on its hinges. This exposed a small closet, very shallow, with some dangling ends of incompleted electric wiring and one big switch standing out from the concrete of the wall.

Campbell bent over the switch. And as Mary moved back into the corridor the sergeant took out a small pinch of powder and sifted it delicately over the sides of the switch. A fingerprint appeared, perfectly outlined under the little magnifying glass that Campbell held over it.

Afterwards, he turned into the corridor, closing the closet door thought-

fully behind him. He found O'Rourke in the act of climbing out of the motorboat.

"Anything?" asked Campbell, studying the flushed face of the Irishman.

"No spark plugs," said O'Rourke. "The whole set of 'em is gone. . . . Go on ahead. We can find our way back, Mary. . . ."

HE turned and glanced towards the end of the canal. The tide kept pressing solidly upon the doors which closed the waterway; sometimes the heavy panels shuddered together; sometimes the hinges strained with soft groanings.

"Somebody," said O'Rourke, "comes down here after the shooting. And I guess I know who it is. It's Tydings. He comes down here and turns the switch that raises the sluice gates. That'll keep everyone from going ashore on foot. Then he spoils the motor boat so *that* can't be used. He knows that the other boats never can be got out against the race of the tide—hear the zooming of it now!"

"Why would he want to do these things?" asked Campbell. "To keep everybody from leaving the island? But was that so's he could leave the island himself and get a headstart?"

"Of course," said O'Rourke.

"Why would he want a headstart? . . . Where was he going? . . . If he spoiled the going for the rest of 'em, didn't he spoil the way out for himself? . . ."

"Yeah, yeah," said O'Rourke. "I know there's all those questions. . . . But I'm looking for the fingerprint of Mr. Henry Tydings, just now. I've got one print off the switch, there. And the one that will match it will belong to Henry Tydings, or I'm a mug."

Campbell said: "Look at it this way: Tydings is shot. He drops of a heap, knocked out, comes to and finds himself alone, left for dead. . . . Sees that this gives him a chance at some devilishness or other. . . . He sneaks out of the dining-room, starts to leave the house. Gets into the armory and his way is cut off. He has a minute to use. He uses it by opening up one of the suits of armor and stepping inside of it. . . . He stands there and looks on, and listens while you and me quiz everybody."

"Yeah, damn him!" said O'Rourke.

"Afterwards, the Staunton girl gets boiled and offers him a drink. She jams the glass right against his chin. He thinks that she's spotted him and opens his mouth to speak. She goes into hysterics. He sees that there's still maybe a way out. When she runs out of the room, hollering, he slips out of the armor, and pushes a chair under the door. He hopes that he'll have time to build up the suit of armor again, just as it was, but before he can start that, you and I are battering away at the door of the armory. . . . He has to move, fast. People are coming from all over the house. He runs back under the arch beneath the stairs, sees the dumb-waiter, and slides into it. . . . But instead of doing it right, he pushes the wrong button and delivers himself at the kitchen instead of the basement. There he— No, wait a minute. He must have been down into the basement, long before, to turn the switch and smash the causeway and jimmy up the motorboat. . . . How could he be two places at once?"

"An accomplice," said O'Rourke. "It was the accomplice that pressed the button and sent Tydings down in that dumb-waiter, where the cook could open the door. . . ."

"Once the door was open, why didn't Tydings speak?" asked Campbell.

"There was a bird," said O'Rourke, "with a brand new initial carved into his wishbone, and on the run, hell-bent. . . . Why would he waste time talking with a cook? You tell me that, brother? He hoofed it into the cellar . . . or wherever he went. You can be damn' sure that he's far away from his island, by this time. . . . Everything we've found about him is the picture of a man running desperately for his life."

"Why not?" asked Campbell. "He invites a houseful of his worst enemies. Kind of a joke. But the joke turns sour. They pull guns on him. He sees that he's penned himself in with wild cats. . . . He starts running before he's clawed to death by the whole mob of them!"

"Wait a minute," muttered O'Rourke. "You don't mean that we're gonna agree about something, do you?"

"Even an Irishman can be right when there's no way to be wrong," said Campbell. "Here's where we start and search this whole house with a fine-toothed comb. . . . Motives, Pat. We gotta find motives as well as things."

"This whole show is one of the funny damn' things," agreed O'Rourke.

THEY searched Tydings' house as they had promised, with a fine-toothed comb; and yet they went fast enough. A few glances did for many of the rooms. Now and again they rapped or kicked lightly a wall, a floor. But, as O'Rourke said, it was strange that such an old house should be so honest. All the walls were built solidly, without hollow flaws, it appeared.

They left the cellar regions, climbing gradually. When they reached the armory, O'Rourke said: "Here's one thing—a man with a bullet wound right across his breast, from over the heart—damned if I can believe it, hardly. Damned if I can believe that he'd be running about the house when he must of felt more like stretching himself out in a bed and yelling for a doctor. . . ."

They found nothing worthy of their remark in the armory except the thousand details of extravagant decoration.

They climbed to the bedroom floor. The room of Rupert Walden they approached first. In answer to their knock, he opened the door gingerly. Then he nodded to them and stepped back. He had in his hand a big weighty poker from the hearth of the fireplace.

He said: "You know—taking no chances!"

And he smiled a bit, nodding his head towards the old-fashioned weapon in his hand.

"I don't blame you," said Campbell.

"Not when there's a wounded man playing dodge with suits of armor and dumb-waiters all over the house," said Walden. "It makes one a little nervous."

"You've heard about the dumb-waiter?"

"Yes. Is the cook out of his head, d'you think?"

"Maybe," said O'Rourke. "We've got to take a look over your room. . . . It won't be long."

"As long as you wish," said Walden. He chuckled, softly. The summer heat had made him put his coat off, but he looked very trim in his white shirt and black bow tie. His fat merely rounded out and gave easy dignity to his figure, so to speak. "I'm glad to have a bit of

honest company, and I don't care how long it lasts. . . . What are you looking for, by the way? Tydings himself?"

"Tydings . . . or the devil . . . or Tydings' ghost . . . or something . . . or anything," muttered Campbell, going into the bathroom.

Walden sat down at a corner table and began to clip holes in some small cards, using a large paper punch. He had been at the work for some moments, and the result of it lay scattered before him—half a dozen gaudy butterflies affixed to cards which were prepared for being strung up on a line or affixed to hooks through the little holes that were punched in their tops. O'Rourke lingered a moment to scan the gay wings.

"You do a lot of that?" he asked.

"I fill in here and there," said Walden. "You know, if you're to enjoy a landscape, it's better to do something about it."

"Like what?" asked O'Rourke.

"Well, like painting it . . . or fishing up a stream . . . or catching butterflies, as a matter of fact. If you have something to do with your hands, your eyes will take their time."

"Yeah, that's a fact," said O'Rourke. "I remember whittling a stick when I was a kid. What's that yellow-green baby over there with the two kinds of eyes on its wings?"

"That's the Common Sulphur, *Anthracaris genutia*, if the correct name makes any difference to you."

"Sure it does," said O'Rourke. "I never could keep big words in my head. I ain't got that kind of fishhooks in my brain. But I like to hear 'em. Some people'll go and listen to music that's nothing but noise, and the same way with me. I sometimes drop in at a lecture that knocks the highbrows into folds and starts them clucking like hens,

but all the big words do is to make me sort of easy and comfortable. . . . One way of asking for ham and eggs is good enough for me, but it's kind of nice to think of birds that could ask for them in ten ways. . . . What's the big baby that looks like a four-winged biplane gone wrong behind . . . the big brown one with the Star Spangled Banner in the tail?"

"That's a Swallow-tail. A Tiger Swallow-tail, *Papilio Glaucus*."

"Complete with Latin," said O'Rourke, "that's a pretty gaudy butterfly, ain't it?"

"It is," said Walden. "It's one of the best, I think."

O'Rourke leaned over.

"But if you take a look right close-up into the mug of that butterfly," he said, "it's not so hot. Like one of those old gals that paint themselves sixty years young. They knock your eye out at a hundred yards, but when you come up close, you dodge. . . . Ready, Angus?"

They went on into the hall.

"We've got to speed it up," said O'Rourke. "It'll take us all night if we work both on one room. . . . You take Tydings' room and I'll take the doctor's . . . and we'll get along with it."

"What do you make of this man Walden?"

"He ticks right along and tells time," said O'Rourke. "He was telling me why he catches butterflies."

"Well, why is it?"

"To make the hand faster than the eye, and all that. . . . All these high-class mugs are funny birds."

THE doctor was in his room, also. He had taken off his coat but, unlike Walden, he had put on a light linen robe. His room was still warmer,

and a slight moisture polished Hamblin's face. He made O'Rourke welcome. He was very tired, and slumped down into a chair by the window and sat there with his eyes closed.

"When are we going to get away from here?" he demanded of O'Rourke. "The tide is still running, isn't it?"

"Hear that wind that never reaches the window? That's the tide, doctor. Those bozos on the shore ought to have one of the big motorboats arriving any minute, and then they'll come right over. . . . You planning on moving away soon?"

"If I can have my things packed before morning. . . ." said the doctor. "But I have to take these pictures with me. I can get some of the old crates out of the cellar."

"Sure you can," said O'Rourke. "Why not—as soon as everything is all checked over? Nothing moves, though, till we get through checking. You can see how that would be."

"Of course I can see," said the doctor. He closed his eyes. One of his hands relaxed on the arm of the chair. The other was gripped into a hard, nervous fist.

"You mean all these pictures on the wall are yours?" asked O'Rourke.

"They're copies that I've made," said the doctor, yawning.

"You made 'em?"

"Yes."

"To sell? These are the leave-overs that wouldn't go, eh? Or are they maybe some of your early tries?"

"They're not early tries," said the doctor, smiling a little. "That's as well as I can paint. I've made the copies for my own pleasure, sergeant. Not for the market."

"You don't say!" wondered O'Rourke. "You mean you liked these

chromos and that was why you started to put on the paint, eh?"

"That's correct, sergeant."

"This one here, where the gal has dropped something on the floor and is putting a crink in her back to pick it up, and all the little people back there on the stage—now what might all that mean?"

"That's a tapestry factory, by Velásquez," said the doctor. "It hangs in the Prado."

"I mean, you liked this picture?"

"Well, sergeant, what would you say about it? About the atmosphere, for instance?"

"It must of been a damned hot day," said O'Rourke. "There's a kind of a steam in the air, all right, if that's what you mean by atmosphere. . . . You liked this one, did you?"

"What would you pick out from the lot, sergeant?"

"I gotta tell you the truth," said O'Rourke. "I'm not nutty about paintings. For a whole acre of them I wouldn't give. . . . You know how people are. Every man to his own taste."

"Exactly. If he has any," said the doctor.

"If he has any? . . . That's a kind of a fast one, isn't it? . . . I'll tell you what. That one of the girl with the baby over there ain't so bad; she's kind of funny around the forehead but she's got a sweet mouth and eyes."

"That's the Granduca, sergeant. One of Raphael's Madonnas."

"Jeez!" said O'Rourke. "It is? What a mug I am! . . . What I mean, why don't they put a halo or something on the head so's you'll see it and know. . . .?"

He walked over towards the painting.

"It's a poor copy," said the doctor.

"Very hasty and careless work. I shouldn't have it hanging on the wall, in fact."

O'Rourke leaned over and studied.

"Come to think of it," he said, "I should of known that a real baby wouldn't be taking the air the way this one is. I mean, looking you in the eye, and all . . . and . . . and . . ."

"Is there anything wrong?" asked the doctor, rising precipitously from his chair.

O'Rourke turned, went to the door, and called sharply: "Angus! Hey! Campbell!"

"What's the matter?" asked the doctor.

A door opened in the distance.

"Come on here!" called O'Rourke. "Shake it up, too."

"Well? What in the world . . . ?" said the doctor, anxiously.

Campbell came in. He had a soft, long, slinking step.

"Well, Pat?" he asked. "Whacha got?"

O'Rourke was lighting a long, crooked cigar. "Go look at that Raphael over on the wall there," he said.

"Go look at which?" asked Campbell.

"The Raphael," said O'Rourke. "The Madonna and Child over there, that the doctor copied."

Campbell glared at the Irishman's fat back. Then he went to the picture and leaned close.

"Yeah, and what of it?" asked Campbell.

"Keep on," said O'Rourke. "Just be patient and keep on . . . Everybody knows that if you had a pair of eyes in your head you'd make a fair-to-middling detective. . . . But you'll find 'em pretty soon. Fingerprints, Angus—in blood—fresh ones. . . . It was up here

to this room that Tydings bee-lined when he left the dining room!"

CHAPTER VIII

Restless Night

DETECTIVE SERGEANT Campbell, in the bedroom which he and O'Rourke had reserved to themselves, leaned over the copy of the Granduca Madonna, his brows gathered in a frowning penetration. On the other side of the table, with certain fingerprinted little cards before him, O'Rourke was poring through a magnifying glass.

Campbell picked up a book he had taken from the library and said: "Whacha make out of this?: 'The smell of paint is unhealthy?'"

"It means: 'Don't put your damned nose in it,'" said O'Rourke. Shut up and leave me be, will you? I think I'm finding something."

"It ain't choice that makes me talk to you," said Campbell. "The most I'd ever ask of you would be to get out of my sight and take the stink of your cheap cigars along with you. But times come along when a man has to think out loud, even if there's only a wall to hear him. Now you take this picture. We know one thing: That it *is* the fingerprint of Tydings that's on it. That means that Tydings gets up with a bullet in his body and forgets his pain. Does he shout for help and a doctor? No, but he gets up, silently, and takes hold of himself, and crawls to his knees, and then staggers to his feet—"

The eye of O'Rourke was blank with disdain.

"I never knew anything about you, except that you'd never make a detective," he said. "Now I see the whole truth, like they say in the movies. You got the makings of a

star reporter in you, dripping words all over good paper."

Campbell scowled. "What a pig sty you got for a brain! The point is, that there's a man dying, or practically dying, who climbs to his feet and thinks of only one thing: a picture. Is it a classy, high-toned picture? I guess not. Walden is a fellow who ought to know, and he says that a copy of the best picture going wouldn't sell for much in the market. Then why does Tydings, that's a keen fellow about pictures, think of this copy before he thinks of anything else?"

"I don't know and I don't give a damn," said O'Rourke. "The fact is that he was feeling pretty sick, and he knew there was a doctor in his house, and the first place he went was to the doctor's room. Ain't that natural?"

"There's something about this picture. He didn't go and lean a hand on this picture for nothing. It was too high on the wall to be leaned on by accident. . . . There's something here. Listen to some notes I've been making and see what sense they make. . . . Maybe it's the way the paint was put on, because that seems to make a terrible difference. 'Rubens painted with his palette-knife, Titian with his fingers. . . .'"

"Think of painting with your fingers," laughed O'Rourke.

"Now, this bird Raphael," went on Campbell, "the book says: 'A splendid draughtsman, a fine composer, Raphael knew little about color. . . .'"

"There's a couple of lies in that, already," said O'Rourke. "A composer is a guy that writes music. And about color, ain't the whole picture nothing but?"

"It looks that way," said Campbell, patiently. "I'm telling you what the book says."

"The trouble with books," observed O'Rourke, "is the people that write them. Take any guy that's strong in the hair and weak in the head, and you got a writer."

"Anyway," said Campbell, "when you come to cock-eyed things like paintings, you gotta find cock-eyed men that care about them. There's something behind this picture, here. Maybe in the way it's done. Here in the book it says that every painter worked in a different way, had a different kind of pressure, a different length of stroke, held his brush at a different angle. They worked up their own paint different. They made the shadows different. Some of 'em—here's a laugh for you, brother!—put red into the shadows."

"Yeah—now, d'you mean that?" asked O'Rourke.

"That's what I'm reading."

"It's a funny thing," said O'Rourke, "how a damn fool will always pick out a damn fool book to read. . . . Why don't you chuck that book out the window and try to use whatever brain you've got! . . . To watch you, a fellow would think that we hadn't tackled the toughest job that ever came my way."

Campbell, impervious, had commenced to read aloud again, and O'Rourke with a sigh went back to the matching of those little cards which held the prints.

Campbell read: "Most bright pictures are bad, which does not mean that all dark pictures are bad. But too much seeing, too much light, obscures the spirit. A certain mystery inheres in all art. Words which are instantly apparent are prose. So the painter who has something to say is speaking spirit, not mere paint, and things of the spirit are not at home in the full glare of the noontide. . . ."

Campbell broke off to say: "What do you think of that, O'Rourke? A painter is a kind of a ghost!"

"Sure they're goats," said O'Rourke, muttering.

He started suddenly from his chair, crying out: "Hey, Angus!"

"Wait a minute. Don't yell the house down," said Campbell.

O'Rourke pointed towards a card and said, softly: "We were wrong. It wasn't Tydings that turned the switch that raised the sluice-gates in the causeway."

"What are you talking about? Who else would have a reason for wanting 'em up?"

"The fellow that thumbed the switch was Clifford," said O'Rourke.

"The devil he was; . . . Clifford?"

"Ain't that straight enough?" said O'Rourke. "Who else would have helped Tydings? Everybody else in the house hated his heart. The butler is the one that helped him to get down from the armory in the dumb-waiter. It would take a butler to *think* about a dumb-waiter, in the first place. Clifford is the fellow who turned his master loose and then, when Tydings was on his way, it was Clifford who worked the sluice-gate and cut off the chance that anybody would follow him. Look-at, Angus, the whole thing sort of comes over me. I see through it. This guy Tydings is afraid of something. We still don't know what. He wants to get all his worst enemies in one spot, and then he's going to slide out. He gathers them with an invitation to a fake wedding. He never intends to have any wedding at all. . . . All just preliminaries. And then he slides out and leaves the near-bride to drink the health of the thugs he's left behind him. Does that sound to you, Angus?"

"You're talking sense," agreed Campbell, nodding his head with what was almost admiration in his eyes. "When you come right down to it, it takes a thief to catch a thief, a lot of the time. There's a kind of a sympathy between any Irishman and any crook. . . ."

"Ah, shut up!" said O'Rourke, and rang the bell with a long pressure. "We'll get Clifford here."

"It's nearly one o'clock," said Campbell. "Will Clifford be on deck?"

He went to the window overlooking the garden and hummed a phrase from a song.

"Maybe it'll be shorter to take a look in Clifford's room," said O'Rourke.

He rang the bell once more, and when there was no answer, they prepared to leave.

Campbell said: "That Hamblin took it hard when we got hold of this picture and brought it down here to our room."

"He looked," agreed O'Rourke, "as though he was watching the horse that carried his last penny finish in the ruck. He ain't a bad-looking sort of a bird, though."

"Doctors," said the Scotchman, "are all kind of thugs. They been watching people die too much; they been opening up the young and the old and taking a look at the insides of things. What does a life mean to a doctor? Nothing. A doctor don't feel that he amounts to anything unless he's got twenty dead men to his credit. He don't feel like he's rolled up his sleeves and started being a professional man. You look in any case and where you find a doctor, mark him down in red. He's got something to do with the dirt."

"The point is," said O'Rourke, "would the doctor try to get his hands

on this picture if we left it in the room and went out?"

"Would he be that much of a fool? And how could he get in?" demanded Campbell. "The balcony outside runs to the window of Miss Reid's room, that's all. And she's in her room now, next to us. I seen her go in."

They waited no longer for Clifford, but left the room, locking the door behind them and pocketing the key. In their search of the house they had mapped every room of it in their minds, and now they went to the top story to the chamber of the butler. When they came to the upper hall, they could hear the monotony of a woman's voice. They paused to listen.

"Praying!" said O'Rourke. "It's that Mary, the kitchen maid. . . . Praying to get out of this Tydings hell-hole while she's still got a soul to call her own. . . ."

A door jerked open half-way.

"Mary!" called the voice of the cook.

The mumbling voice stopped. Another door opened a crack.

"Yes, sir?" called Mary.

"Close your face and let me try to sleep," said the cook. "The sound of you mumbling is like a conscience working in me. Go to bed and be still."

"Yes, sir," answered Mary, and closed her door.

"There's all these servants, too," said O'Rourke, softly. "Any one of 'em might have given Tydings the helping hand."

"They're all sheep," said Campbell. "Except Clifford, there ain't a one of them with a brain in his head. . . . Come on, Pat."

They tapped at the door of Clifford, twice with no response. Then Campbell tried the door and found it unlocked.

ONE weak bedside light was burning, but the bed itself had not been disturbed. It was a very large room for a single servant and it was comfortably furnished. Clifford had arranged his private domain in sections. In one corner stood a roll-top desk, open, showing pigeon-holes crammed with papers—domestic bills, no doubt. In another corner was the bed. In a third he had an easychair with a floor-lamp beside it, and two well-filled shelves adjoining, packed with books.

"Lookat!" said O'Rourke, staring at the titles. "Now what in hell could a butler be doing with all these books on painting? 'Painters of Old Spain,' 'Art in the Low Countries,' 'Light and Shadow,' 'Dynamics,' 'The Greek Spirit'—now, wouldn't that beat you, Campbell?"

"Clifford," said Campbell, "has too much brains to be a butler? Why is he a butler, then? Either because he's afraid of the world, or because he's a crook covering up. I say that he's a crook covering up. . . . He's not in the house, Pat. We'll go down and take a look in the garden."

They went down, accordingly, to the garden, and found the porter sleeping in his chair close to the garden door. No one, he assured them, had passed that way since he took his post.

"Nobody mean enough to wake you up, you mean," said O'Rourke. And they passed into the open night.

They reached the focus of the garden, the pool, without seeing a stir of life. But as they passed the pergola with its cloudy burden of roses, something moved through the moonlight and blackness, stealing softly beneath the pergola shadows.

"Hai!" called O'Rourke. "You in there. . . .!"

The figure paused and then, turning, came advancing slowly on towards them.

"Clifford, that you?" asked Campbell.

"Here, sir," said the butler, coming out into the moonlight.

"Kind of close in the house, eh?" asked O'Rourke. "You needed a breath of the garden air, right, Clifford?"

"I needed to be alone, to think, sir," said Clifford, with a sort of sad dignity. He remained at a little distance from the two detectives, and bowed stiffly to them.

"You heard us say that nobody was to leave the house, didn't you?" demanded Campbell.

"I thought there would be no harm," said Clifford. "And it's an unhappy thing for a man to be walled in by a small room and his own thoughts."

"What were the thoughts, Clifford?" said O'Rourke.

"When a man has invested both his time and his interest in a cause," said Clifford, "it is more than wasted money to see the cause lost."

"Now, what the hell cause do you mean?" asked O'Rourke.

The butler pointed to the high, corniced face of the massive Tydings house.

"The creation of a place of beauty," said Clifford.

"Yeah?" said O'Rourke. "And that's spoiled, is it?"

"Mr. Tydings is gone, sir," said Clifford, "and I fear that I never shall see him again."

"What makes you think so?" asked O'Rourke.

"One fears the unknown," said the butler, "and so many strange things have happened, today and tonight, that I expect the worst."

"Strange things like the opening of the sluice gates, eh?" asked Campbell.

"Yes, sir. That among other things."

"You didn't go near the switch yourself, either before or after?"

"No, sir."

"Wait a minute," said O'Rourke. "Come here, closer. Now what's been happening to you? While you sat out here doing your thinking, did you take and crack yourself one on the chin? You got a lump there that looks like something—and there's a tear in the knee of that trouser. . . . Ay, and dust in the cloth! What the devil's been happening out here while you were thinking?"

The butler said: "I wasn't watching my footing, sir. An occupied mind is always a slight danger, sir. And walking down the sharp pitch of the gravel path on the farther side of the pool, sir, my foot slipped on some of the loose stones. I fell almost flat, and struck my chin on one of the border stones of the path."

O'Rourke stepped close and stared at the slightly swollen chin of the other. He ran the tips of his fingers over the skin.

"That was a soft rock, with a lot of whang in it," said O'Rourke. "And if you don't mind me saying so, sir, you lie like hell, sir, and it was a bunch of fives that knocked you for a loop. . . . Come on, brother, and let us inside. Who was it jumped you here in the garden?"

"If you doubt me, sir, my wisest course is to be silent, with your permission."

"You talk like a damn book, Clifford," said O'Rourke. "I wonder, Angus, who around the house would be big enough to take a fall out of Clifford, here? Walden has the size but

he's fattened up a bit too much. . . . Feel the arm of this bozo, Angus. He ought to be in the ring. . . ."

"There's Gene Chatham," suggested Campbell

"Yeah, there's Chatham, and what a what *he* is!" cried O'Rourke. "Come clean, brother. Why not? It was Chatham that met you out here and put you to sleep. What with? Did he sneak over a counter or did he pick one off the ground and give you a lift?"

"I have not seen Mr. Chatham in the garden, sir," Clifford averred.

"He won't talk," said Campbell. "We'll take him back to the house and see what we see. I'll tell you something to think about on the way, Clifford. Think about the crook that took your fingerprint when you weren't looking and put it on the switch that works the sluice-gates!"

"My fingerprint?" murmured the butler.

"Yeah. A nice, juicy, new, fat one," said O'Rourke. "As juicy and fat as the sock that somebody gave you on the chin, this evening. Let me see your hands!"

Clifford, with a faint sigh, held them out.

"Yeah," said O'Rourke, "he dropped on his paws in the gravel, all right. He's got his hands all chafed inside. . . . But how come this knuckle is skinned, Clifford? Not by using your chin on something hard, eh? . . . The knuckle's swollen, too. How come?"

"As I stumbled to my feet after my fall, sir," said Clifford, "I was very dizzy and lurched to the side, and struck my hand violently against the trunk of a sapling that was . . ."

"D'you hear him?" asked O'Rourke.

"Yeah. I hear him," said Campbell.

"Good, aint he?" asked O'Rourke. "Watch this bird while I light a cigar.

Come along, now, and we'll go back to the house an' get some light on him."

They went quickly up the garden path until they were quite close to the house. Then Campbell stopped them with a lifted hand. "Look, Pat!" he whispered. "Do you see it? We turned out the light when we left our room . . . and now look. . . ."

A thin pencil stroke of brightness ran across the lower portion of the window Campbell had pointed out.

"There's someone in there. Keep Clifford here with a gun in his ribs. I'm going to have a look . . ."

"Wait!" called O'Rourke.

But Campbell already was scurrying over the grass at full speed.

CHAPTER IX

All the Pieces

CAMPBELL sprinted as far as the garden entrance of the house.

Afterwards he went on at a jog because he remembered suddenly the hardest fact for him to keep in mind—that he was twenty years older than the best fighting age.

He got up the stairs to the upper hall with burning lungs and uncertainty in his knees. It was here that he thought of calling in help, and then remembered that there was not a soul in the house whom he could trust. It was lodged back in his mind strongly—the suspicion that at last he had come upon what he always had dreaded: a crime committed by many hands, all working in perfect tact, sympathy, and intelligence together. If he turned for help to any of these people, he might be struck down from behind by the hand he trusted.

In the hall he went by the imposing figure of Rupert Walden without pausing to speak a word, though Wal-

den turned to say after him in his suave voice: "My dear sergeant, is there something wrong?"

He passed the magnificent space and sculpture arranged at the head of the stairs, and so to the left until he had reached the door of his room. The last steps he made softly, to get his breath, arrange his thoughts, and then fit the key in perfect silence into the lock.

He was rearranging the furniture in his mind according to the way it stood in the bedchamber, measuring the distances so that he would be able to deal with them when he stepped into the darkness. For it all might be a blind-man's bluff, with only the automatic in his hand to show him his way.

Near the walls there were three painted Italian chests with great, gaping keyholes. Over one appeared an old central panel of a tryptich—a Madonna and Child enthroned inside a little golden shrine. Over the door there was a painting of Jesus appearing to someone, Campbell forgot whom—the fellow had dim but very earnest features and seemed to take the apparition in perfect good faith. Between the two windows hung a terracotta of another Madonna and Child. If the Italians went in for a thing, they certainly went in for it, thought Campbell; but then, in those ancient days, of course, people had not many things to think about—your house—your horse—your new cloak—and the Madonna and Child which furnished the wall of your parlor with something to look at. This one was done, said the line of inscription under the frame, after the manner of Rosselino. Time had rubbed the face of the Child as if with sandpaper but still the lad had a lovely look, and in the background there were two more faces, as indistinct as vanishing thoughts. Behind the long table against

one wall hung a tapestry with greenish figures and faces worked into it. In fact, if Angus Campbell died on the floor of that room, a few moments hence, how many faces there would be to look down on his last moments, faces already long dying and never dead, ideas out of a musty old century.

The main thing to remember, however, was the location of the chairs and the exact position of the bed, and how it thrust out into the chamber.

All was utterly quiet inside the room, as he began turning the key, holding his breath, praying that there might be no grating sound, no sudden click to announce the final sliding of the bolt.

He had the automatic held where the regulations recommended it to be poised—just a little above the hip, so that it could be directed as one would point a finger. With the gun grasped in that manner he leaped right into the room, and as the door crashed back against the wall he sprang to the side.

A knife-stroke of light slashed across his eyes. He felt the cut of it inwardly, to the soul, and then a gun boomed and made all the shadows of the room rock to and fro.

He was about to fire in the direction from which that fire had spat, when he saw a moving silhouette against the stars in the nearest of the windows, and by the rounded turn of the shoulders he knew that the fellow's back was turned to him.

It was a good target. Campbell could have broken the back of that man with his first shot, and he knew it, but in the regulations it declares that an officer in the execution of his duty should use his weapon to save life rather than to take it, where possible.

So he ran to the window and got there before the stranger was half-way out.

There are rules for close combat, hand to hand, too. For instance, if an arm is crooked around the throat of an enemy and he is jerked strongly backwards—

THAT was how Campbell flattened the man at the window on the floor. The fellow hit with a crash. The gun slithered out of his hand in a dim streak and banged against the wall. The blow against the tiles had stunned him. Campbell felt the flesh turn to loose jelly under the pressure of his arm, so he went calmly back towards the door and switched on the light.

Near and far, through the house, doors were slamming, and feet were muttering up and down the corridors.

Campbell turned to see his man pushing up to a sitting posture.

Campbell pulled out a bit of thin, hard twine. He tied the helpless hands of the stranger behind the back and stood him on his feet.

The fellow was in his middle thirties. an average height, a bit hollow of chest and stooped in the shoulders so that his head was carried well forward. He had thick, black hair, worn too long and lank. His eyes were black, also, and set in nests of crossing wrinkles.

Campbell looked long at him.

"I thought you might be Tydings," he said. "But you're too young for that. Who are you?"

The stranger took a breath, blinked.

"William Kearton," he answered at last.

Someone banged on the door.

"Well?" called Campbell.

The door was thrust open by big Gene Chatham.

"What's up?" he asked.

"I don't know," said Campbell. "Just a plain, lousy picture thief, I guess. . . . He's been after that copy the

doctor painted. It was at the other end of the table the last time I saw it."

The copy of the Granduca, in fact, was at the corner of the long table, instead of before the chair in which Campbell had been sitting before.

Chatham came up to William Kearton and stood huge above him.

"What the devil would you want with a *copy* of a picture when the whole house is full of treasures, my friend?" he asked.

William Kearton looked earnestly at Chatham. Then he said in a quiet voice: "Damn you and your friendship."

More people were streaming down the hall.

"Send them all away, will you?" asked Campbell of Chatham. "I want to talk with this lad. . . ."

Chatham lingered for a moment to stare at Kearton again, as though he were searching through his mind for a final phrase of condemnation. Then he went into the hall.

Immediately after that, O'Rourke came in, sweating, shoving Clifford in front of him.

He shouted, as he slammed the door: "Are you all right, Angus?"

"That's all the swine managed to do," said Campbell, and pointed to the end wall of the room, where a bullet hole was punched in the plaster, with a thousand little wrinkles running out from it. A bit of the plaster had fallen.

"He had the right height," said O'Rourke. "Who is the guy, anyway?"

Kearton's eyes turned towards Clifford, almost like a child looking to a father for explanation.

Clifford said: "I think this is the man who caused Mr. Tydings to disappear from the house, sir."

O'Rourke turned and looked square-

ly at the red-faced, grim-lipped prisoner.

"What was that you chucked out the window?" he demanded.

"Nothing," answered Kearton, and locked his jaws together.

"You lie," said O'Rourke. "He chucked something out the window. A bottle, or something, Angus. I saw the streak of it flying out the window right after the gunshot. It landed in the water. . . . Why didn't you sock some lead into the dirty little sneaking murdering rat of a crook?"

Then rage overcame O'Rourke. He went up to Kearton and shouted: "Who the hell are you, anyways?"

Kearton said nothing whatever. O'Rourke swung back and struck with the full weight of the flat of his hand. The blow knocked Kearton's head right over on his shoulder. He would have fallen, but O'Rourke grabbed him by the shoulder and slapped him again, resounding cuffs that staggered the fellow's head back and forth. His knees gave way. O'Rourke hauled him back on his feet.

"Now you talk, you rotten rat's poison, you!" said O'Rourke.

The face of Kearton was crimson

with the slapping. He was breathing hard, and his eyes were half closed. But he said nothing.

"That's an old-timer," said Campbell, professionally judicious. "You won't get anything out of him, not if he has to burn for it." He turned to the butler.

"What do you mean by him being the cause that Tydings disappeared?"

Clifford said: "When the last flowers were brought, today, they were carried into the house by this man. Mr. Tydings saw him and seemed thoughtful and troubled. Afterwards he seemed to remember something and told me to telephone to the florist.

"I did that, and the florist had employed no one of this description. Mr. Tydings was very much perturbed. He was a man of excellent nerve, but on that occasion I watched him change color in a significant way. He looked over his shoulder towards the door, I remember—he was very much frightened—he was more frightened than I could imagine him being."

"All right," said Campbell. "This job is a crazy quilt, but I guess we got the last piece of it now. Things are going to move!"

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ALKA-SELTZER TABLETS



"Listen, pal," Johnny Dolan said, "this gat is right on your spine"

Done by Dolan

By
Edgar Franklin

JOHNNY DOLAN, aged twenty-five, scrubby, pug-nosed, pale-eyed, draped himself over the little cellar bar across which his more or less dear pal, Mr. James (Red) Binney, dispensed cleaning fluids, liquid blasting powder, that delightful needle beer which sends comets shooting before the eyes and, of course, an occasional snack of food as well.

Dolan Figured This Haul Would Startle the Entire Underworld. With Determination Which Surprised Himself, He Set out to Carve a Spectacular Career of Crime

"So how'd it be about a couple more beers, Red?"

"So how'd it be about coming through for the last six?" Red countered.

"Okey-doke, if that's how you feel. Forgettin' the beers, then, how'd it be about a couple o' hamburgers? Believe it or not, I ain't et since yesterday morning."

Mr. Binney smiled obliquely at his friend, on whose cheek and cuffs were longish whiskers, in whose aged cap a long tear gaped.

"For a flat tire like you, that couldn't take the pennies offen a dead man's eyes without gettin' himself chased by the radio cars? Stop around some time when I don't have to pay cash for my stuff here," said Mr. Binney. "And listen! Roll out o' here an' take the unemployed boy friend with you."

He jerked a thumb toward the individual hunched over the table across the room—a young man of twenty-eight, perhaps, whose clothes might have been nice at one time, whose hair was not yet so bad, but who, after one more day, could never be shaved without an anesthetic. Head down, this derelict stared numbly at his clasped hands.

"Aw, poor old Smitty!" Johnny Dolan mused. "Three nights now we been sleepin' in the parks t'gether an'—hey, Red! I'm gettin' the two of us a couple o' swell jobs, workin' in a shipyard out near Montauk Point, see? An' Saturday we get paid for the part week. So slip me a couple o' nice, hot hamburgers an' Saturday, so help me—"

"Hey, will you an' that palooka take a powder or will you get bounced out on yer ear?" Mr. Binney rasped, patience giving.

"My pal!" Johnny Dolan said witheringly and turned away, to lay a hand on the shoulder of his depressed associate. "Let's get goin', Smitty. It's past nine and they'd orter be a nice selection o' cars."

Deep in their sockets, it was nevertheless a fine pair of eyes that glanced up.

"We *have* to do it that way?" Smitty shuddered.

"Look, pal," said Johnny Dolan, in the kindly undertone of an elder brother, "unless you got seven dollars an'

forty cents fare t' get us down there, there *ain't* no other way. You don't have t' feel like this, Smitty; it's bein' done every day by guys down on their luck, an' nobody the worser off."

"But stealing a car—"

"I'm tellin' you, we ain't stealin' it; we're simply borrowin' it for maybe four hours an' then lookin' up who it belongs to an' telefoaming him where it can be found. It's that or starve, Smitty; Mr. Whiffle ain't goin' t' keep them jobs open for us after nine tomorrow mornin'." And, as Smitty still stared, Johnny Dolan said emotionally: "Golly, Smitty, you ain't the only one that was brought up careful! What'd my poor old mother down in Philadelphia think if she knew?"

With a groan, but with no further comment, Smitty arose and Johnny Dolan led him out to the dark side street, where the line of parked cars stretched off to Broadway. Smitty, his teeth chattering, peered about for policemen.

"Now what we strictly speaking need is a quite high-powered job, so's we can make good time," Dolan reflected, as they sauntered along. "What we're gonna get is what some sap left unlocked an'—well, will you *looka* what Santa Claus saved for us?" he breathed delightedly and opened a door.

"Heaven above! Can't you steal something less than a six thousand dollar car?" Smitty chattered.

"Do I ask *you* to pay for it?" Johnny Dolan chuckled, quite mischievously, sliding in behind the wheel and discarding the torn cap. "An' I'm a such-an'-such if the dumb Benny didn't even leave his keys in the dash!"

He swung expertly out of the line and headed for the Broadway traffic light. Subtly, indescribably, Johnny

Dolan began to change; he seemed less forlorn, less scrubby; an insolent jauntiness came to him.

"Y' might as well open that window beside you an' get some breeze, Smitty," he submitted. "She rides quite nice for an old can, don't she?" Johnny Dolan yawned and passed the Broadway traffic cop with a friendly wave.

WELL beyond the Long Island end of the Queensboro Bridge, Smitty had another of his jittery spells and the change in Johnny Dolan lost its subtle quality and became hideously defined.

"Get off this North Shore, will you, and cut across the island?" Smitty asked.

"Later," Johnny Dolan laughed, in a brand-new, blood-chilling way. "I rubbed out a couple o' punks over there by Jones' Beach not so long ago, an' they might still be lookin' for me."

"You did *what*?"

"Their numbers was up," Johnny Dolan said evenly.

"I wouldn't know about that," Smitty said, "but what's all this about? The last I heard, you were a riveter, two years out of work."

"Yeah, that was when we wasn't so well acquainted," Mr. Dolan explained, with his new laugh.

"Pull over to the curb and let me out," Smitty said quickly. "I'm on the wrong bus!"

"At that, your fare is paid, so stick, sucker—on account if you was t' jump now you'd break your neck. Hold yer hat, Smitty. We gotta make better time!"

Instantly, they began to make better time. They began to make so much better time that, as Smitty understood perfectly, a jump would have landed

him possibly in the hospital, but probably on a slab in the morgue. They went faster and faster, for fifteen minutes or more, the red lights vanishing much too obligingly as they approached.

Little towns popped up and immediately whisked away behind. They glided down the long Roslyn hill, whirled around further curves, whizzed along further straight stretches—and once or twice Johnny Dolan groaned aloud, for wouldn't it have to be on a night like this that he was that hungry he could have bit the ear off Smitty and munched it with gusto.

Smitty didn't know it, nobody in the cockeyed world knew it, but for John Aloysius Dolan, this was the supernight of supernights, the night which marked his elevation from the Grade Z dip to the master criminal. A long time now, certain parties had been giving him the bird as the world's dumbest crook. Certain parties had been in stitches because Johnny Dolan had gone to the big house for, in the last analysis, falling down two flights of stairs while endeavoring to steal a small marble statue. Well, after tonight these same parties would come buzzing around with their hats in their hands, trying to touch him for a fin!

How come? It was like something you'd read in a book. First, all the hooley in the tabs last month about the Loudon family and this young Alan Carter, and all the pictures they printed. Then, just last week, the sensational story from the drunken cousin of Loudon's chauffeur, about the trick safe and how the family would be away for further months; and especially how, on this particular night, the caretaker and his wife would be over in Jersey, watching their son get married and leaving the place all unguarded.

Johnny Dolan, high ambitions stirring, had hitch-hiked down to give the drum the once-over. A peanut would have been harder to crack!

And on top of that, as if it had been arranged by Providence for his particular benefit, he had come upon this Smitty, sound asleep on a park bench and he had looked, and he had looked—and the Great Idea had been born. And so, after tonight, it wouldn't be "Hey, slug!" when somebody wished to attract his attention; it would be, "Well, Johnny, old boy, how's tricks?" Moreover—

"Hey, you! Head over south and get out of this Westbury section!" Smitty bawled into his ear.

"We're turnin' here!" Dolan yapped back and swung off the main highway, into a bosky byroad. Smitty's grab at his arm all but sent the car into the ditch.

"Not up here! Not this way!"

"We're turnin' again!" Dolan barked and, this time on two wheels, he lunged into a curving, graveled drive and along it for twenty yards, to come to a stop before a great dark house, two stories the vertical way and a mile or so, one guessed, the long way. Beside them loomed dimly a wide, impressive doorway and tall casement windows giving upon a marble-walled terrace. Beyond these, in either direction, the building merely rambled away and lost itself in the gloom. Somewhere out back, dogs barked perfunctorily and subsided again in a clatter of chains.

"Say, am I gettin' batty with hunger or did a light go out in there just as we was turning?" Dolan muttered.

"Light, probably. There's a caretaker," Smitty said fiercely. He was getting hotter and hotter! "I don't know whether to knock you cold first

and find out afterward what the gag is, or find out first and then knock you cold! This is no accident."

"Listen, pal," Johnny Dolan said quietly, and the still menace of his voice was now so terrible that it frightened even himself. "You ain't gonna knock me cold, account this gat is sticking right where your dinner'd be if you had one inside you. You're tootin', this ain't no accident. You forgot your pitcher in the paper every day for a week; I knew you the second I saw you. So you got brought here—Mr. Carter!"

"Stop poking that damned thing in my stomach," Smitty said, not so hotly. "What's the idea of it all?"

JOHNNY DOLAN laughed, softly, frightfully. "Well—that about jobs in Montauk Point is the baloney, for one thing, pal. Y' see, I got quite some information about this drum, an' the way it looked t' me, a party like you would know his way around inside there including how t' find the really secret safe, which not even the servants know where it is, that has a solid gold dinner set inside worth forty grand. Would you know where that is?"

"Huh? Never heard that there was a safe of any kind in the house!" Smitty said, much too readily.

"Much obliged; I thought you did. Well, here's how it lays, then. Will you be leadin' me to this, now, safe or will I be fillin' you with lead an' findin' it myself? You got the say."

The gun wiggled, because Johnny Dolan was getting pretty edgy, with the sheer magnitude of this whole thing. Smitty sighed.

"Dolan," he said, "you are no gentleman; you lack the finer feelings. However, I believe the stuff's insured,

so I presume I'll be leading you there rather than figuring in the sort of funeral I could afford these days."

"You ain't dumb," Johnny Dolan commended, with the same dreadful quiet. "Step out an' get goin'."

He had to take the pistol muzzle from actual contact with Smitty's spine as he pushed that person up the four wide steps. In point of fact, Johnny Dolan was shaking so violently now that he wondered if he might not be about to faint. He pulled himself together and gave a tentative prod at the window. There was nothing to it; the thing squeaked and opened.

"You'll know where them light switches are, pal. Turn on a few," he ordered, pushing Smitty in ahead. "Always rememberin' that if you start a getaway you'll finish it goin' through them, now, pearly gates, as the feller says!"

Scuff, scuff, scuff they went through the blackness. You had to hand it to the lad, he was no nitwit, trying to make a getaway. Yeah, and you had to hand it to Johnny Dolan, for it was a wise guy could get this lad down here without suspecting where he was going or even that he was recognized! Mr. Dolan was just handing it to himself when he tripped over a flimsy chair, regained his balance and stood where he was, waiting for light—and then, in the millionth part of a twinkling, suddenly hurled himself flat on the floor, for not twenty feet away some female doll had screamed so piercingly that his very eardrums gave!

A thousand lights flashed on, all at once, so that for a little he was completely blinded. There were sharp, emotional gulps from opposite sides of the room, a squeal of delight, the sound of running feet, the soft thud of bodies colliding. Johnny Dolan dragged him-

self to a sitting position and blinked, dizzily aware of how a guy in the nut-factory feels, the night each week when they herd the harmless ones in to watch the motion pictures.

For instance, there was Smitty with his arms around positively the swellest doll in the world! She wore one of those long, white, woolly polo coats. She had hair the exact color of the gold loving-cups Johnny Dolan had once stood trial for, for having under his bed, and eyes like the sapphires Sol Levin had tried to sell him, the last time he was in the money, and a cheek that might have been the very peach-blow vase Johnny Dolan had smashed while he was trying to steal it, up in the Bronx. More, she was kissing Smitty and Smitty was kissing her.

And there was dialogue went with this movie!

"Alan, I knew it! *I knew it!* I knew you'd have to come back to me here!" she was saying, and Smitty was handing out some line about: "Eunice, honey! Oh, gosh, what a way to—"

It will be understood that Johnny Dolan found this situation excessively annoying. He had a misty idea of what was happening here, of course, but that didn't help much. The swellest crime of the month seemed to have hit the skids! At the first sound of her voice, he had meant to shoot the lady in the routine way, even if he never had shot anybody before, and get on with the pillaging; but as he pulled himself together again and had one good stare at her, he grew sick with the realization that nobody ever shoots a lady with all those looks.

"Hey, listen!" Johnny Dolan protested—but the dialogue was going on.

"What are you doing, all alone in this empty house?" Smitty demanded.

"But I've told you! I was waiting right here for you, where you left me, because I knew you'd come back. . . . Oh, if you have to be literal, Dad and I got back to town tonight and he wouldn't come out here till morning, so we're at a hotel. He went to look at somebody's second act, but—Alan, it's weird! I had to run for a train and get back to this room where I saw you last. I didn't know the Sells were gone tonight or—oh, darling, how could you run out on a beautiful, trusting thing like me, just three days before our wedding? Would you leave me like that?"

"Say, this is swell, but—" Johnny Dolan began irritably.

Only Smitty was talking now: "I told you in the note, why I had to disappear. The loony little rally blew up the day I was ready to get out of the market and took my two-cent business and everything else with it. Why, they even attached the furniture in my apartment and chucked me out of my car and took that! When I saw that I was an absolute, no-good bust I simply—dropped out!"

"Yeah. Tough luck, pal—" Johnny Dolan began huskily—but the lady now was babbling:

"Well, if it was broke and wouldn't let its momsey-womsey pay the bills for a year or two, doesn't she love it enough to go live in a packing-case with it?" Pure nut stuff, you see. "And Mother tearing out her hair in handfuls and ducking off to Europe with Harry, and Dad hitting the ceiling and yanking me off to our cabin in the pines till the scandal blew over, and every tab in town shrieking about engineer jilting heiress and Loudens family fleeing city!"

"I never foresaw that part," Smitty mumbled.

THE inferiority complex of Johnny Dolan, who could have been no more completely forgotten had he been something belonging to the Incas, suddenly burst into flame.

They called him a chronic bungler, a party who fell over his own feet, a person who consorted with a deathless jinx. Well, to hell with that stuff, because here was one grand, big-time job Johnny Dolan meant to pull, if it cost him a leg! "Hey, youse!" he bawled, at the top of his lungs. "Outa that clinch, Smitty, an' lay offen the mush. How about them, now, gold dinner plates and—"

The exquisite young woman whirled from Smitty's arms with:

"Who's that?"

"Oh, that's just Fate," Smitty sighed, when he had stared at Johnny Dolan for a moment and placed him again. "That's what brought me here under false pretenses, to rob the house, because you and I lived too long on the front page, Eunice. Er—Miss Loudens, Mr. Dolan, of course. Mr. Dolan is a professional burglar, I believe, honey."

"Um — ah — pleased t' meecher, lady!" Johnny Dolan mumbled, raising his cap, and where a moment ago he had been tougher than any bull's hide before the great blue eyes he suddenly became tender as a petal on spring's first violet. . . . A bright number, too, this moll! You could see she didn't have to look in the back of the book for no answers.

"So *that's* how it happened! I turned out the light when I heard the car coming in, that funny way, because I was scared stiff—and then you broke open the window and I screeched and—why, you absolutely darling little burglar, you!" she cried. "You brought him back to me, didn't you?"

An instant, as she darted toward him, Johnny Dolan wildly fancied that he, too, was about to be kissed; but the girl paused by the table and snatched up her white handbag. "Here!" she cried, and impulsively thrust upon him a roll of bills one inch thick. "I owe you lots more than that, but now you won't have to burgle for a week at least, will you?"

"Take it and scram, Dolan!" Smitty said shortly. "Run that devilish car down somewhere near the station and abandon it. There's a train to town in an hour or so."

"Yeah, sure. That part's all right an' I'm certainly very much obliged to you, lady," said Johnny Dolan, whose mentality made no lightning readjustments. "Only about them, now, gold dinner plates—"

"If you mean the dinner service, it's in the bank vaults, of course, but if you're so full of criminal instincts you just have to steal something, look around and steal whatever you like, only don't bother us, because we haven't seen each other for five weeks," Miss Louden said impatiently. And then, as if pricked by a pin, she started; she sparkled a sudden, new joy. "But, Alan! Opportunity kicking down the door and we're not even listening! I mean those ghastly wedding presents. *That's* what he can steal. Why, there must be thousands and thousands of dollars' worth of them, Mr. Dolan, and darned near every one something you'd use to scare the children with! Come!"

Johnny Dolan didn't quite get it, but she caught his hand and raced with him down the main corridor to an open door, switching on lights as she went. A dozen tables were in here, all laden down with white boxes and huge white kid cases.

"You see, we hadn't worked around

to returning them yet, Mr. Dolan, so here they are, all set for you—and aren't you tickled to death? Leave the things on that little pie-crust in the corner, please; they're rather nice. Have you a big car, Mr. Dolan? Can you steal all the rest of them, do you think?" Eunice asked anxiously.

With a mighty wrench, Johnny Dolan's gaze finally dragged away from her and roved the collection. "I'd say so, lady, except maybe one or two o' them big pieces."

"Then hop to it, burglar!" Miss Louden cried. "I'm taking the boyfriend upstairs for a shave and some of my brother's clean clothes, and to get the rest of the story out of him."

She sped away. Johnny Dolan, gaping foolishly, looked after her until she disappeared. *Some doll!* For a doll like that, a party would steal the tombstones out of a cemetery. He scratched his head and sighed. It seemed something had gone sour with the great dinner service robbery, but maybe this tripe wasn't so worse. Anyway—okey dokey! With a sigh, Johnny Dolan turned to his job.

Some of the stuff, he discovered, was pretty good and some of it was pretty lousy. There was a mass of bughouse crockery that would have to be ditched somewhere along the line and a lot of the silver plate, without regard to the names on the boxes, belonged back in the five-and-ten. However, Johnny Dolan was nobody to flout the wishes of a lady with a pair of eyes like those. He got off his coat, propped open the great front door and toiled back and forth with boxes and cases, filling the car and even the luggage space in the rear. He had resumed his coat and was just mopping his streaming brow when Eunice came downstairs with a total stranger—the Smitty that used to be,

but quite a hot-looking number now, with his clean shave and his swell serge suit!

"You stole them all?" Eunice asked. "All?"

"Lady," Johnny Dolan said proudly, "kindly take notice, I even stole them two oil paintings o' the cows standing in the brook."

"Alan, can you even grasp it?" The girl seemed almost overcome. "Even to the icewater pitcher Aunt Serena sent down from Maine!" She held out a cordial hand. "Just a million thanks, Mr. Dolan, and *must* you go now? Because, after all, the boy-friend and I are respectable, and we'll have to beat it out of here and get back to town."

"Well — yeah, absolutely, lady," Johnny Dolan hesitated, brokenly. "Only it—it don't so happen you got a bite to eat in the house? I wouldn't dare stop off nowhere with this junk in the car or—well, t' tell you the truth, lady, these vest buttons is rubbin' on my spine!"

MISS LOUDEN frowned—but after all, she was heavily in Johnny Dolan's debt. "Look in the kitchen and make it very, very snappy, will you? Down that way. Walk a mile or so and then turn right at the corridor."

The last Johnny Dolan saw of her, she was melting into Smitty's arms again and kissing him. Johnny Dolan kept on and on, turned right, fumbled for the light switch and presently was trembling with ecstasy. Because it was all there in the icebox—chopped meat and onions and butter and the dozen other odds and ends that go to save a man's life.

He scratched a match and tried the gas-stove. The gas was on, all right. He left it burning and, emitting a series

of happy little whinnies, got out a frying-pan and a steel kitchen knife and three onions—and since this miasma of onions, ineptly fried in a too-hot pan is not particularly appetizing, we may as well close the kitchen door and step back to the living room for a little.

The erstwhile Smitty and Eunice Louden were still kissing when the sound of an approaching car, the sound of steps crossing the terrace, forced them apart. Through the open French window stepped a big man in evening clothes. He was actually fifty-five, but he looked ten years younger. His start in life had been as a prospector and even at this late date he boasted just as much muscle as the day he had left the West. He was—although you have of course already recognized him from the newspaper descriptions—Huling B. Louden, Eunice's millionaire papa.

At the sight of Smitty, his eyes narrowed, for Huling B. Louden was a proud man and Alan Carter had stirred up the devil's own mess in the Louden family.

"So this is what became of you, Eunice?" he said, in his deep voice. "And *you've* turned up again, have you, Carter?"

Eunice was standing before him.

"I'll take the floor first and then you can have the apoplexy, Father," she said crisply. "I—er—came down here to meet Alan and he has explained everything. When his business took the nose-dive it threw him; he disappeared. You know all about that. Now his psyche's all fixed up again and the boy is in the center of the ring, punching with both hands and covering his chin. If you've got a couple of good blessings in your pocket, we'd love to have 'em, but win, lose or draw, we're being married about tomorrow noon. . . . Were you going to say something?"

Mr. Loudon breathed deeply. When he did that, his great chest in the inflated periods looked rather like a beer keg.

"Yes, I was going to say several things. I was going to tell him he's a full-blown jackass, for ever disappearing—and particularly just when I meant to tell him that we're reopening the Delaware plant next week and can stick him in there at fifteen thousand a year. Until business is better, of course, and then we can jack him up to the thirty thousand Furness used to get. Be a damn' sight better to deport him to Syria, after the stunt he pulled, but—say, who the devil's cooking in here at this hour?"

He sniffed. Eunice and Smitty also sniffed. Onions, in vapor form, were fairly rolling through the air. Huling B. Loudon stiffened and tucked back his cuffs.

"Just learned Sells and his wife took French leave tonight—came down to look around—county's full of prowlers," he stated jerkily. "You bring anyone down with you? No, of course not. So whoever that is—"

And even as he spoke, Huling B. Loudon was on his way to the kitchen.

"Maybe I'd better go give him a hand?" Alan Carter muttered. "Dolan's got a gun on him."

"Oh, Father'll probably shove the gun down his throat, so far as that goes," Eunice said serenely. "No, you stay here with me. It's five mortal weeks since—oh!" she cried suddenly, "Poor Mr. Dolan!"

This last was occasioned by the crash from the kitchen. It sounded rather as if somebody had thrown a large wardrobe trunk across the room and into a pile of scrap-iron. There followed a wild yell, which certainly did not come from Huling B. Loudon.

Next came a second, heavier crash and a howl of pain. Then a slam. Then silence.

Huling B. Loudon reappeared, dusting off his hands.

"I locked him in the vegetable closet and telephoned for the police! Some tramp, my child, cooking himself a meal, no less! This damned barn! If I ever build another house, it'll be twenty feet square, no more! I'll take a day off some time and go through this place and see if there aren't half a dozen families living here we never noticed! I pay taxes enough on this dump to have 'em give me a private police force and—well, that's service!" he commented, more calmly, as the thin shriek of a motorcycle siren came down the stilly night.

Now a second siren sounded, much nearer, and a third, of hoarser note. The chugging became a roar; the roar came straight at them, up the drive. Huling B. Loudon hurried outdoors to meet the constabulary.

"What was *that*?" Smitty cried. "That thud, I mean. It shook the whole house."

"I felt it shake," said Eunice. "I think possibly Mr. Dolan—hah! That's glass breaking now."

THE roar of engines had ceased; there were bass voices outside.

Behind the returning Mr. Loudon came six feet of uniform upon a body that should have hailed from the Cumberlands; behind him, in turn, trotted what looked like a retired prelim fighter turned trooper.

"Yep!" Eunice's capable papa was remarking. "Knocked him for a loop and locked him up. This way, please."

The trio vanished down the corridor. Through the front door came even a third trooper, a spectacled, kindly-

seeming man of middle age. He carried a white pasteboard box.

"Why, evening, Miss Louden. I'll bet these here are yours!" he said, removing the cover of the box to reveal two small Italian vases, all red and green snakes and tumbled-down castles. "I never seen articles like them, except they was wedding presents," the officer stated in his keen, deductive way. "Isn't them some of your wedding presents?"

"Them," Miss Louden admitted faintly, giddily, "is some of my wedding presents—yes."

"Ma'am, there's a car out there packed with 'em!" the officer cried dramatically. "All your pretty wedding presents was stole and ready to be took away, and you never suspicioned it an'—well, now, honey, there ain't no call for you to start whimpering like that. You ain't going to lose one of 'em. Here! I'll bring 'em in myself!"

He started out to bring them in himself. Eunice's lovely eyes flamed accusingly at Alan Carter.

"Some taste you have in burglars, I must say!" she hissed. "That wash-out couldn't steal the food from a goldfish! I must have given him two hundred dollars and—*and look what he's done to us!*"

The kindly trooper had a dozen or more of the boxes brought back when Huling B. Louden, richly purple, returned with his guard.

"Kitchen's a wreck!" he roared. "It'll cost two thousand dollars to rebuild it! Icebox flat on the floor—gas range cracked in two—every damned vegetable in the world strewn about—kitchen door completely shattered—"

"Well, now, sir, let's take this kind o' calm, sir," the prelim fighter sug-

gested, since it was not his kitchen. "How I reconstruct what happened is, this man come to in the closet, busted down the door and got loose. Seems he must have lost his footing and caught at them vegetable bins and pulled 'em down. Then he started for the outside door, only there was a sort of hamburger sandwich on the floor; his heel slid on that and in falling he grabbed at the open door of the icebox and pulled that over, and it must have hit the gas range in the middle. By then he was that rattled and excited that instead of unlocking the outside door he just dived through glass and everything and—"

"Well, where is he *now*?" Mr. Louden roared.

"Why, sir," the member from the Cumberlands said soothingly, "he may 'a' managed to hitch a car the second he got to the road, or he may 'a' had another car waiting, or he may 'a'—"

"He may 'a' took crosslots and hopped the twelve-eleven," the prelim fighter supplied. "That just went through."

When Huling B. Louden cooled off, he cooled off suddenly.

"Point is," he said rather wanly, "what are you going to do about it?"

MR. JAMES (RED) BINNEY had finished giving his little bar its morning bath and was just getting out the metal polish when Johnny Dolan sauntered in.

There was a wide discoloration on Johnny Dolan's jaw, three distinct and widely separated lumps on his head and two considerable areas covered by adhesive plaster. And upstairs he was still quite fuzzy, because the icebox itself had made that largest lump before caroming off to the gas stove and it was really worse than anything the—

plainly—retired champion of the world had handed him with his fists.

He knew that he had failed, in the sense that no forty thousand dollars' worth of tableware were melting down in somebody's furnace this morning. He felt numbly that he had failed in the matter of the wedding presents, too, although how hideously he would never understand to his dying day.

But at that, fuzzy or not, he knew that, for Johnny Dolan, he had succeeded, too, for had he not drawn an actual percentage on last night? Was he not at this moment stripping a genuine ten-dollar bill from his roll?

"One beer," he said casually. "Take out for seven."

Smiling brightly, Mr. Binney drew the beer.

"In spite o' gettin' run over by the truck, or whatever happened you," he observed genially, "it looks like business ain't so bad these days, hey?"

"I got no kick comin'," Johnny Dolan answered remotely, as he blew off the froth.

Mr. Binney grew even more smiling. He never tried to disguise his preference for people who had no kick coming.

"Well, I'm cert'y glad to hear that, Johnny, old boy, old boy," he beamed. "How'd it be if I fix you up a bite to eat, huh? How'd it be if I fix you up a couple o' nice, hot hamburger sandwiches?"

Johnny Dolan pushed away the empty glass, gathered and carefully counted his change and slowly looked Mr. Binney over. Most of last night might still be fuzzy as fuzz, but one or two details shone out as clear as crystal.

"You," said Johnny Dolan, from a considerable altitude, "can take your hamburger sandwiches and go plumb to hell!"

Cipher Solvers' Club for May

Continued from Page 60

Twenty-eight—Cucumber, Redondo Beach, Calif.; *Jayel, Canton, Ohio; *Jayem, Bellingham, Wash.; Fae Malon, Englehart, Ontario, Canada; Hard Boiled One, San Francisco, Calif.; Rena Patton, Los Angeles, Calif.; Mrs. Bruce Richardson, Saginaw, Mich.; Box Six, Lapeer, Mich.; *G. A. Slight, Newburgh, N. Y.; I. Workem, Bismarck, N. D.; Charles E. Zirbes, Clinton, Iowa.

Twenty-seven—Ernest G. Alstadt, Erie, Pa.; Avis Belew, Indio, Calif.; R. L. Blaha, Newark, N. J.; Jaleco, Los Angeles, Calif.; Mrs. Josephine Johnson, Pittsburgh, Kans.; Sue de Nymme, Chicago, Ill.; Rengaw, Chicago, Ill.; George Shakeshaft, Winnipeg, Manitoba, Canada; W. R. W., Chicago, Ill.

Continued on Page 107



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They were fishing for something human

Traitors Three

By Robert W. Sneddon

THE case of Mrs. Emsley had Detective Sergeant Tanner properly puzzled. Someone had killed her for her money, but who among London's teeming millions was the killer?

Of course there was something to go upon. Whoever had knocked the old lady on the head with a hammer had apparently been able

to walk into the house without any further ceremony than knocking at the door. Doors and windows were intact. They had not been forced. The intruder must have been someone known to Mrs. Emsley, someone she trusted implicitly.

A Trio of Cops Hiding Behind the Law Turn Criminal—and Try to Beat the Rap

Quite a character was Mrs. Emsley. The widow of a rich builder, she had property bringing her thirty thousand

dollars a year, yet she chose to live in a miserable house in one of the most congested slum districts of London. Lived alone in this comparative hovel, when she might have had a decent house and servants.

Her poorer neighbors, far from admiring Mrs. Emsley for coming to live in their midst, resented her presence. Seeing her locking and relocking her front door with suspicious, searching glances up and down the street to see if anyone was watching, they felt that she anticipated their robbing her any minute.

And it was well known that, for all her dingy black trailing skirts and battered hat, she used to come in from her rent collecting expeditions each week with a purse that would have kept the average family in the street in comfort for six months.

They knew that the reason she lived at Number Nine Grove Street was not because she chose to be humble, but because, since the house was hers, she had to pay no rent. She held it like a fortress. Anyone who had business with the mistress had to be well surveyed from the window and questioned before the door was opened on the chain.

So it stood to reason, argued Sergeant Tanner, that Mrs. Emsley had herself opened the door to Death. But no one in that crowded busy street had seen the grisly intruder step inside.

Two women living across the street had seen Mrs. Emsley peering through the tattered curtains of her sitting room about seven on the evening of August 13th, 1860.

On the next morning (Tuesday) a grocer's boy knocked and whistled shrilly for ten minutes without bringing Mrs. Emsley's pinched features to the front window. Finally, after giving

the knocker a vicious farewell bang, he left.

On Friday morning Mrs. Emsley's lawyer had a visit from Mr. Walter Emms, a rent collector employed by the widow.

There was consternation written large on the little man's round good-humored face as he plumped into a chair in the office.

"'Ave you seen Mrs. Hemsley, sir? I can't think wot can 'ave 'appened to 'er."

"I haven't seen Mrs. Emsley for two weeks anyway," said Mr. Rose. "You know her as well as I do. She never leaves Number Nine."

"Yus, I know. Fäct is, Mr. Rose, my mind ain't heasy about it. Wednesday I calls at the 'ouse, rings and knocks, and no hanswer. Back I goes Thursday, twice, and no hanswer. Stringe, I calls it. I never knew such a thing to 'appen before. Of course she's seventy, sir—liable to pop off any minute sudden-like."

Mr. Rose considered him a moment, fidgeting and twirling his hat in his hand, then made up his mind.

"Get the police—I'll go with you," he said tersely. "Wait—I know Sergeant Tanner—get him. Anything wrong, he'll find out what is what!"

With the aid of a locksmith, the front door was opened. Mrs. Emsley lay dead in the front room on the second floor, struck down at the door. In front of her was a bundle of wall-papers, and she still held a roll under her arm as though afraid in her last moments that she might be robbed of it. Near the body was a large splotch of blood and in it the partial imprint of a hobnailed shoe, two of the nails standing out quite distinctly.

If he could find this shoe and the foot which wore it Tanner knew he

had the murderer, but it was a puzzle more difficult than the finding of the needle in the haystack. He set to work, questioning, examining everyone who might be possibly connected, but without any success, and finally a reward of a sum equal to fifteen hundred dollars was offered for information.

ON September eighth a stocky, florid-faced man came into his office. Tanner saw his visitor was an ex-policeman, George Mullins, whom he knew and had recently seen in connection with the case. Mullins had taken up plastering and had done some work for Mrs. Emsley.

"I see there's a nice little reward offered in this Grove Street case, Sergeant," he said suggestively. "I would not mind copping off a little piece of it myself."

"It's yours, George, if you can assist the authorities," said Tanner. "What's on your mind?"

"You know, I've been thinking quite a lot about this business—it coming so close to home with me, in a manner of speaking, seeing I did some plaster work for the old girl—and, well, I got an idea who did her in."

"You have, have you?" said Tanner impatiently. "It's got to be more than an idea to satisfy me now."

Mullins smiled slyly. "It's pretty near a cert now, Sergeant. I think I got my eye on the fella. Oh, he's a cunning one all right, but I ain't an ex-policeman for nothing."

"Oh, cut the cackle, George. What are you getting at?"

"I've had my eye on him for some time, but now I know he's the man."

"Who is it?"

"Emms."

"Nonsense." It was on Tanner's lips to add: "He could get both feet into

the shoemark we have," but he refrained. This piece of evidence was being withheld from the public.

"I tell you it's no nonsense," said Mullins eagerly. "I been watching Emms off and on, having my suspicions, and this very morning I'm near his cottage—you know, in the field they calls Emsley's Brickfield. About eight thirty it was. And all at once I sees Walter come out of the house with a parcel in his hand. 'Oh, ho,' says I to myself, what's up? Keep an eye skinned, says I. Sure enough he sneaks into a woodshed and after a minute or two comes out without the parcel. Now, to my way of thinking, Sergeant, if you were to lay hands on that parcel it might tell a tale."

"And what do you imagine is in the parcel?"

"No idea, Sergeant. Unless it be money. They say the old girl kept money in the house."

Tanner nodded his head briskly. "All right. Tomorrow morning I'll have a look-see. Meanwhile let me just set this down in writing."

"Don't go without me, Sergeant."

"Don't trust us, eh, George? All right, eight o'clock, here. Only, you keep your mouth shut when you get to the cottage. Let us do what has to be done."

"You know Emms does a bit of shoe repairing on the days he ain't collecting."

"I know, I know," said Tanner testily. "Give us credit for knowing something."

Next morning the search party arrived at Emms' cottage. The little man's eyes opened wide as the police tramped in.

"Search warrant, Emms," said Tanner curtly. "From information received."

"I've got nothing to hide, so help me!" said Emms earnestly.

The police found nothing of an incriminating nature in the house, and nothing in the shed. Tanner signed to the two men with him that the search was over, but all at once Mullins caught his arm:

"You haven't half searched. Look behind that damned slab."

Tanner kept his temper.

"Look there, Rogers. Find anything?"

"Why, yes, seems to be something. Just a moment, sir, till I raises this slab. Yes, a parcel, sir."

"I told you," said Mullins triumphantly.

Tanner took the parcel, wrapped in paper and tied about with a dirty piece of tape which might have been an apron string. Within was another paper wrapping secured with waxed thread such as cobblers use, and the contents were several teaspoons, a pair of spectacles and a rent check bearing the date of the Monday on which Mrs. Emsley was last seen alive. This check, it was discovered, had been paid to the dead woman personally in the forenoon of that day.

"Well, Emms?" said Tanner gruffly. "What do you know about this package?"

"Nothing, sir, nothing. I never saw that parcel before."

"Tied with a waxed thread, Emms—and I suppose you wear an apron when you cobble shoes. I want to see that apron. That it? There's a new string on it. What happened to the old one?"

"I lost it—it must have fallen off—Oh, sir, you don't think I killed her—I swear I—"

They took Emms away with them, protesting piteously.

"About that reward now?" said Mullins, smirking.

"Oh, you'll get your reward all right," said Tanner, curbing his disgust.

HE felt strangely disquieted as he returned to his office. Did he have the murderer so securely linked with the crime as had at first appeared with the discovery of the stolen articles. Why should George Mullins still be busy on police work instead of attending to his plastering?

Tanner could not rest. Somehow little Mr. Emms was on his mind, with his tortured eyes. He returned to the cottage to find the neighbors gathered about, talking. One woman approached him: "Is it true, sir, as they've taken Mr. Emms to prison?"

"Yes."

"I 'opes they takes care of his 'ealth, sir. He's delikit, sir, with his chest. Yesterday morning—you see, I does his housecleaning and gets his breakfast—he was sick abed—such a cold he 'ad, I tells him to 'ave his breakfast in bed and he don't get up till after ten—"

"What's that?" said Tanner, suddenly attentive. "When did you get to the house?"

"Arf past seven, sir."

"And he was in bed from then till after ten, you say?"

"That's right, sir."

"You were here all the time? He couldn't leave the house without you seeing him?"

"Not 'im, sir. I 'ad me eye on 'im all the time."

Tanner took her name. He could think of nothing now but getting hold of Mullins and arriving at the truth if that were possible. He called a cab and set off for Mullins' lodging.

"No, sir, he ain't home," said Mrs. Mullins, opening the door. "Sergeant Tanner, ain't it? Won't you step in a moment, sir. You'll have to excuse the mess sir, this being me washday."

Tanner stepped inside.

"Drat that clothes line," said Mrs. Mullins chattily. "Just broke in me hand as you knocked at the door. Excuse me a minit, sir, while I ties the ends with a bit of cord." She reached her hand to the mantelshef.

Suddenly Tanner's hand leapt out to the tin box of odds and ends of string she took down. A dangling piece had caught his eye. He took the tin from the startled woman and emptied its contents on the table. From the mess he picked out a piece of apron tape, a length of waxed thread and a piece of cobbler's wax.

He was just transferring them to an envelope when the door opened and Mullins came in.

"'Ello, what's going on here? Oh, it's you, Sergeant. I couldn't see you for the steam me missus is making in her tub. Come to say when I get me reward, eh?"

"You infernal rascal," bellowed Tanner. "You are a disgrace to the uniform you once wore!"

"Here, here!" protested Mullins. "I do you a good turn and this is what I get. Sergeant or no sergeant, this is my house, Tanner, and I'll trouble you to get out of it."

"Oh, I'll get out quick enough, but you come with me, Mullins."

"What for?"

"You need to ask me that? Come on, no nonsense, Mullins. I have a cab waiting at the door."

The ex-policeman spent the night in a cell and continued to stay there while Emms was set free.

Seven reliable witnesses were found

to testify to his being out of London on the Monday of the murder.

Tanner's investigation being narrowed down in no time at all began to weave the noose that was to go about Mullins' neck.

The gentleman had been so anxious to lay the crime at Emms' door that he had overlooked his own safety. Keeping the cord with which he had tied up the planted parcel was an unexcusable blunder for him to make. Being on friendly terms with Emms he had managed to pocket the apron string, waxed thread, etc., on a call made to the cottage.

In addition Tanner found a hammer in the Mullins' house, the edge of which fitted exactly into a wound over the eyebrow of the victim.

Now if he could only find the missing shoe. There was not a sign of it in the Mullins' house. Tanner, however, discovered that Mullins had been keeping a room in another part of London, unknown to his wife. He went there and made some inquiries of the landlord.

"Yus, that's right," said that worthy. "Mr. Mullins left here August twenty-sixth—remember the day well—my terrier had a litter of seven—like to buy a nice dog, sir?"

"No, no. Did he leave any clothes or other property behind?"

"Lemme see. No, don't think he did—some empty beer bottles."

"You didn't happen to see such a thing as a shoe lying round these premises?"

"Not I. Whoa! Wait a bit. Now you mention it, sir, I do remember. Day before he left he flung a blooming shoe out of the winder into the yard—messy way he had of doing things—so I picks it up and throws it in the dusthole."

"Has your dusthole been cleaned out since then?"

"No."

"I want to see that dusthole."

THE two men went out to the back yard and looked at the enclosure into which the rubbish of the house was thrown. Tanner called in a man and had him rake over the piled up mess, and sure enough there was the shoe discarded by Mullins.

The piece of flooring stained with Mrs. Emsley's blood had been cut out by the police. The imprint corresponded exactly with another imprint made with the shoe, and as the shoe fitted Mullins' foot there was little doubt as to who had stepped into the blood.

The shoe was examined by a microscope, and, in spite of all that had happened to it, there still adhered to it three gray hairs which corresponded exactly to those of Mrs. Emsley.

During the first examination of all those who might have been involved, Mullins had managed to lead Tanner off his track, Tanner never for a moment suspecting that an ex-policeman could commit the crime. He had stated an alibi which had been accepted without actual investigation.

Now Tanner studied the clock. Mullins, he found, had been working in one of Mrs. Emsley's houses, near Grove Street, until six on the evening of the crime. When he left off work he was seen carrying his hammer. At eight he was seen going towards Mrs. Emsley's. At five next morning a seaman saw him hurrying along, his pockets bulging. He spoke to him and Mullins acted in such an excited way that the seaman was amazed, Mullins being usually so cool. He thought no more about it until the arrest, and then came forward to give evidence.

It was clear to Tanner that Mullins, after striking down the old woman, who had trustingly let him into the guarded house, had spent seven or eight hours searching for the money he knew she had received that day. He may have found some, but when a thorough search of the house was made later money came to light in various strange hiding places, in tins hidden among the coals in the cellar, and so on.

Put on trial, Mullins maintained he was innocent, but when the jury, in addition to hearing Tanner's accumulation of evidence, learned of the dirty trick the prisoner had tried to pull off on Emms, their verdict was guilty, and George Mullins was duly hanged.

II

THE news ran like wildfire through the little town of Newtown-stewart, County Tyrone, Ireland, during that day in June, 1871.

Willie Glass, the bank clerk, was lying in his own blood in the bank, his head looking as if some maniac had battered it, and the bank safe was open, with gold and notes scattered all about, dropped by the man that did the killing and the hasty picking of the cash.

On this June Thursday Mr. Grattan, the manager, who lived over the bank, was away, and his maidservant, Emma McBride, out, so Willie Glass, as nice a young fellow as ever drew breath, was alone to attend to business and close up the bank at three.

Just after four, Emma McBride came in, and as she passed the side door to the bank on her way to the living premises upstairs, she gasped and drew back. From under the door there was a red stream of blood making its sluggish way.

In an instant she was out in the street screaming. A crowd gathered and without delay the door was forced, and there lay the corpse of Willie Glass. Awe-stricken they gazed at the carnage.

"Mother of mercies!" said one of them. "'Tis a job for the inspector himself. Sad news for him that was so fond of Willie. Off with ye, Con Kelly, and get word to him to come at once."

In a short time the tall, good-looking police official, Inspector Montgomery, of the Royal Irish Constabulary, was on the scene. Eager eyes watched how he would take the death of his friend Willie, who, while marking time as bank cashier, was studying to enter the constabulary, but the inspector preserved an official stern, cold air. If he was moved he gave no indication of his emotion.

He looked down at the body, bent over and examined it. He inspected the safe, with the grave impersonal manner of one who had never before seen the dead lad.

The bustling little town doctor came from the back room, where he had gone to wash his hands, and the group of silent onlookers stirred. Now they would hear the opinion of the two men.

"A nasty business," said the doctor briskly. "Well it's up to you, Inspector, to find the murderer."

The inspector looked at him coolly. "Murder is it to you, doctor? Suicide I call it."

"If that don't bate Banagher!" said an incredulous voice in the crowd, "and Willie Glass with the skull of him drove in upon his brains."

The inspector turned. "Out of here, the lot of you. Be off this instant minute or I'll be arresting ye for obstruction of duty."

Grumbling, they piled out. The doc-

tor pulled his mustache nervously. "Sure, now, Inspector—'tis a plain case of murder—unless ye have a plan—some of those detective thricks to be after catching the man that killed poor Willie, God rist his soul—"

"I say it's suicide, doctor. Let it go at that." Inspector Montgomery spoke peremptorily. "That will be all, doctor," he added. "I'll have to go and search Willie Glass' lodgings now for some reason for him to be killing himself."

The doctor, much disturbed, left, shaking his head.

The inspector now went to the hotel where both he and the dead lad had lodged and searched the room.

"God between me and harm, and the like coming to me, but is it the truth that Willie Glass took his own life?" asked the landlady fearfully.

"Of course he killed himself. Only a fool would be thinking different," Montgomery snapped back at her.

He telegraphed to his superior officer, Purcell, that "a death under suspicious circumstances" had occurred, and that an inquest would be required.

Purcell was soon on the scene. He was a silent and observant man, but able to acquire a store of information. He visited the temporary morgue and came out without saying anything and apparently paid a good deal of attention to Montgomery's theory of suicide and the causes of Willie Glass's tragedy.

FOUR days after the killing he arrested the murderer, Montgomery himself. "I am innocent. There's divil a thing I have to fear," said the inspector as they led him away."

Purcell was taking a grave risk in the arrest. He had not discovered the

weapon nor the missing funds, amounting to seventeen hundred pounds in all, in gold and notes. And so far he had found no one who had seen the policeman enter or leave the bank.

But there was this much against Montgomery. He had been in the habit of dropping into the bank around closing time on Thursdays, when the manager was away, and having a chat with Willie, who used to take him into the back office. He was thoroughly acquainted with the bank premises, and the trusting cashier had let him see the safe and its contents. Who would suspect a policeman? Besides, Willie had the greatest admiration for the constabulary he wanted to join. They could do no wrong.

Montgomery's back was against the wall. He was in desperate need of money. Certain members of the constabulary force who believed he had financial ability had entrusted him with their savings to invest. He had speculated and lost all. He had borrowed fraudulently. Unless he could pay off these claims coming due he would be kicked out of the force, disgraced, ruined, imprisoned.

Money he must have at any price. That he had been meditating obtaining it by murder, the murder of Willie Glass, Purcell unearthed.

The policeman had, apparently for official information, asked the doctor what part of the skull was most vulnerable and been told.

Witnesses related that he had remarked how easy it would be to knock the bank cashier on the head and vanish with the money.

Montgomery could not account satisfactorily for his movements between half past two and half past three on the day of the murder. After some time witnesses were found who had

seen him in the near vicinity of the bank during that period. By comparing the testimony of five of them Purcell established to his own satisfaction that Montgomery must have entered the bank at five minutes to three and left it at five minutes after three. What had been done had been done hastily. The murderer had grabbed what he could and left the rest of the cash strewn about in his hurry to get out.

A short time before the murder Montgomery had bought a quantity of lead. For what purpose? Purcell thought he had answered this question when there was discovered in a wood a billhook weighted with twenty pounds of lead. He claimed this was the terrible weapon used.

Only no witness had seen Montgomery carrying it, to or from the bank.

Six months passed and Montgomery was put on trial in the county town of Omagh. He had a clever lawyer who saw where the weakness of the attorney general's case lay.

The murder had been a most brutal and savage one in which blood had been splashed all over the walls, the safe, the furniture. It must have splashed and spattered on the clothes of the murderer.

Yet here was Montgomery, the accused, seen walking about the streets without a spot or stain and not ten minutes passed.

The weapon was large and cumbersome. Anyone carrying it must have been noticed. Yet no one saw it in the hands of the accused.

The argument told; the jury disagreed. A new jury heard a retrial and again disagreed. Several members believed it impossible for Montgomery to have killed Glass and come from the bank without sign of his crime.

A third time Montgomery stood trial. This time the prosecution had a card in reserve.

"Constable O'Neill to the stand."

There was a gasp in court. Excited eyes turned from the witness to the prisoner in the dock. They were almost doubles, both tall, broad, wearing black beards.

The witness had an overcoat over his arm, Montgomery's. He was wearing the clothes worn by Montgomery the day of the murder.

The court asked the witness to walk up and down. He was supposed to be coming from the bank after the murder.

The counsel for the defense began to smile. This little piece of theatric display was wasted on a jury he already felt was headed for another disagreement, and, consequently, dismissal of the murder charge for all time to come. But suddenly he checked his smile.

The witness took the overcoat from off his arm and there, plain to all, the handle in the trousers pocket, was the murderous billhook. Yet covered by the overcoat there had not been a sign or outline of it.

Unperturbed by the gasps from the body of the court, the constable drew from his pockets, where they had lain unobserved by all, a number of packages containing the stolen money in gold and notes.

He had thus demonstrated how it was possible for the murderer to walk away from the scene of his crime without attracting attention.

This time the jury was convinced and Montgomery was pronounced guilty.

He saw his fate was sealed. Speaking without sign or emotion, he told the court that he had been insane for

almost a year, and that he was not responsible when he killed Willie Glass. This plea did not save him from the gallows.

He admitted that he had sponged his clothes of bloodstains the moment he got back to his office.

III

ANOTHER in that very small family of police who go wrong turned up in Paris.

Sergeant Prevost was fond of talking about the mistakes of murderers.

"Sacré! A pack of blundering fools. No science there. They leave tracks everywhere. Now if I were to kill some one I would take care there was nothing to identify me with the crime. I would get rid of the body so skillfully that even the Chief himself might mark the case off his books as impossible to solve."

This September of 1879 he was entertaining the office staff with his opinion of the latest crime.

A woman sitting in the doorway of a house in Rue de la Chapelle towards dusk, enjoying the air, suddenly saw a man across the street performing rather oddly. He had a basket on his arm, and from it he was taking and throwing onto the street what looked like pieces of meat.

Madame Thierry at first thought he was one of those benevolent eccentrics found in all large cities who feed stray cats, dogs or birds, but as she watched him, hidden by the doorway, she saw him take out what looked like a whole joint of meat and shove it down the opening of the sewer.

The man went off after this. She sat for a little, then her curiosity prompted her to take a stroll along the route followed by the man with the meat basket. Two stray cats had taken advantage of

his generosity, but Madame found a piece which they had missed. She stooped over and her heart gave a jump. She screamed and a storekeeper ran out, to see her pointing at something on the street. He looked too.

"It is not possible!" he exclaimed. "A crime has been committed—"

"The man with the basket?" faltered Madame Thierry. "In a case like this one should warn the police."

"You are right, Madame. One minute and I go with you. See, I place this object in a piece of paper. Ah, good God, what things happen about us in Paris!"

Madame took her story to the police office, and in a short time a number of the detective force were all but crawling along her street looking for fragments of flesh. From the sewer, where it had caught on some projection, the joint of meat was fished up. It was human, part of a thigh, a man's.

Intensive search brought to light enough to constitute a whole body, the head alone being lacking.

Sergeant Prevost this time admitted that the murderer had been clever.

"There is someone who knows his

business—or hers. Cunning work. He behaves like a cat's meat man. Who is going to suspect a cat's meat man? No one. He comes, he goes, he gets rid of the remains. There is someone to whom as a policeman I can raise my hat."

"They want you at headquarters, Sergeant," said a messenger.

Prevost nodded importantly.

At headquarters the stout policeman walked into the chief's office. He had a splendid record. There was not a single bad mark to his discredit. He saluted and stood at attention. He threw out his chest and waited for Monsieur Macé to speak. A matter of promotion perhaps. He had earned it.

BUT the chief merely stared at him, and suddenly Prevost began to tremble, for all at once he saw a woman seated who was leaning forward staring at him. He had no recollection of ever having seen her, yet she appeared to be trying to place him. Then, without any warning, she was on her feet, pointing at him, saying:

"That is the man with the basket. Yes, I am not mistaken. When I saw him in the street I could not place him.



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He began to haunt me in my dreams. Always I was on the point of pronouncing his name, and always it slipped away from me. And then it came to me, from the blue, Prevost. You lived next door to me when I lived in Rue des Rosiers. I remember you. At first when I told Monsieur here that I knew the man with the basket he laughed at me. You were the model of all policemen in Paris—but now—”

“On the evening when Madame saw you,” said Macé coldly, “you were off duty. You had exchanged nights with a comrade. Speak, Prevost, whom did you kill?”

And suddenly Prevost found himself talking. A jewelry salesman had called several times at his lodging to display his wares. One day the suitcase of glittering baubles had dazzled Prevost. A wave of greed swept over him. He struck down Lenoble, as he was called—and dismembered the body. Shredded into fragments it could never be identified.

Prevost continued to talk, to unburden all that lay back of his boasting which had so amused his colleagues. It was almost as if he were making a re-

port of another man's crime to his Chief.

Macé, pitying, let him confess. He went with him to his lodging. He made him enact the crime once more. He asked him where the head was, and Prevost silently pointed to the fireplace. A detective reached up and brought down a bundle.

When it was opened the detectives, used to macabre objects, were horrified. The decapitated head looked precisely like one of those wax heads in a hairdresser's window. The face was handsome, the complexion pale and waxy, the mustache curled, the chestnut hair waved.

But more was to come. This policeman, leading a double life, uniting in one the personalities of two enemies, the murderer and the pursuer of murderers, confessed to another killing, another dismemberment. A woman with some money had come to keep house for him. To obtain her property he had killed her.

Prevost died on the guillotine with courage. After all this traitor had served for many years in the forefront of the battle against crime.

BEECH-NUT SPEARMINT

...especially for those who like a "stronger" taste. A Beech-Nut Quality product.



with BEECH-NUT GUM



BEECH-NUT PEPSIN GUM... candy coating protects a pleasing flavor... and, as you probably know, pepsin aids digestion after a hearty meal.



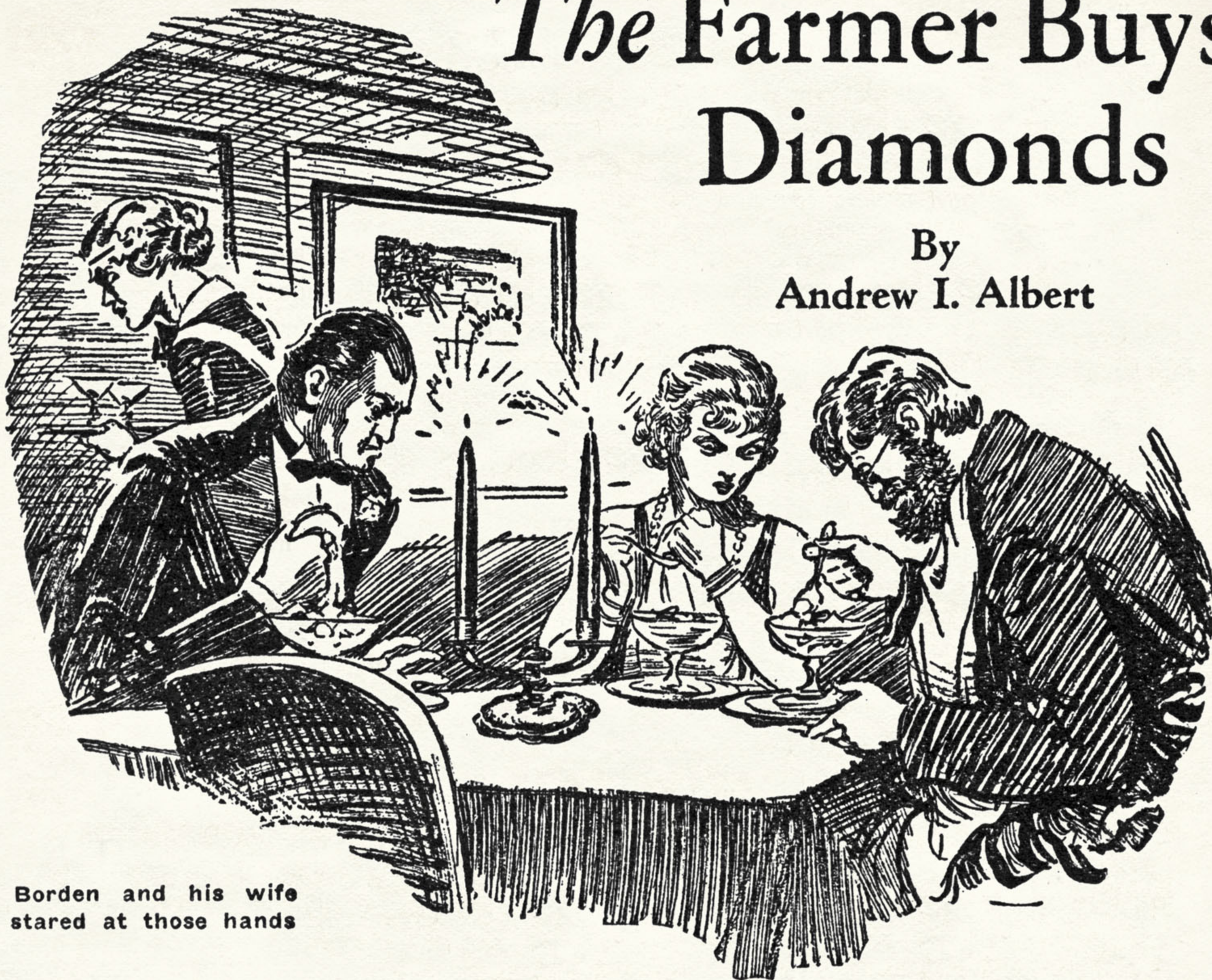
BEECHIES

...another really fine Peppermint Gum sealed in candy coating. Like Gum and Candy in one.

ORALGENE... Its firmer texture gives much needed exercise and its dehydrated milk of magnesia helps neutralize mouth acidity. Each piece individually wrapped.

The Farmer Buys Diamonds

By
Andrew I. Albert



Borden and his wife
stared at those hands

"THERE were two of them. One was a woman, I'm sure, dressed in a man's suit—blue." The girl's voice was flat and low. "It was the big one, the man, who hit mother so hard—so terribly hard . . . poor mother!" The fount from which tears came was exhausted, and she could only shudder as memory evoked the dreadful scene again. "I'm sure mother would have given them the combination of the safe if she could have remembered it, but she was so frightened . . . it's a terrible thing to wake up and find yourself in the power of crea-

MYSTERY
F
D W
SHORT

Brutal Murder Bought That Diamond Necklace. Underworld Greed Increased Its Value. But Death in an Execution Chamber Was the Tax Imposed for Possessing It!

tures like that . . . in their power, to do with as they please. I was tied to a chair, and gagged, but I suppose they saw by my eyes that I wanted to tell them. So

they tied mother and put a wad of paper into her mouth, although she was already unconscious from those terrible blows . . . she must have been dead then already. Then they freed me and I opened the wall safe for them, and they took everything out. I begged them not to hurt mother any more—I might just as well have saved my breath."

Inspector Bradley, huge of stature, both length and

breadth, with tight gray and black curly hair, said gently, "Your mother is past all suffering now, Miss Saunders." To divert her mind he asked, "What made you think one of them was a woman? You said they wore masks, didn't you?"

"Oh, the way she walked—and so short, for a man. And the bigger one became sort of—sort of—free with his hands when he carried me into the bedroom and threw me on the bed, and she came in and stared at him—jealous, like a woman would be. She had a revolver, too, and then he let me alone. What do dreadful creatures like that find to be jealous of in each other?"

The young lieutenant with Bradley, Larry Tripp, asked eagerly, "Could you recognize them if you saw their pictures, Miss Saunders?" His face blazed with sympathy and the urge to punish. A black-haired young fellow, with impetuous green-gray eyes, whose arms were reputed to be thicker and stronger than his legs.

"I don't know!" Lying in bed, not yet recovered from the terrible ordeal, she turned her head to one side wearily. "I could see their eyes gleaming through the masks—so cruel—but the room was almost dark . . ."

BACK at Police Headquarters, Lieutenant Tripp commented diffidently. "That was a professional job, Inspector, wasn't it?"

Bradley faced his subordinate squarely. "That's what it was. They didn't leave a fingerprint or a clue, and we're going to have one heluva time over it. The chances are they'll get away with it. They knew too much. Take that diamond necklace now. They'll never try to sell it as is. Any jeweler would recognize it—it's famous—worth more

than a hundred grand. What they'll do, they'll hold the stuff for six months, maybe a year, then break it up and get a fence to handle it for them."

Tripp asked quickly, "Who do you think did it? What's your hunch, Inspector?" It was known in the department that by just such a sudden question might some sixth sense in the veteran detective be stimulated to activity, with uncanny results.

"It might be Freckles O'Connor," murmured Bradley, but without conviction. "Or Tony Miceli, or Jimmy Palmer, or Big Ed Travers, or Max Factor—he was sprung only a month ago. They all have their molls, too." He shrugged his shoulders impatiently. "If that girl had only used her eyes . . . She thought every other picture I showed her might be the one." Thick gloom settled on his ruddy face. "The papers are going to raise particular hell, and I know just what the Commish will say—'When I had your job I knew who pulled a deal like this the minute I heard about it!' Hell, he don't realize how different things are now—yeggs and second-story men coming from out of town all the time!"

Tripp said softly, "White Hands Moreno!"

"Nah!" Bradley spat disgustedly. "That guy is too wise—he wouldn't trust a jane—nor anybody else, for that matter. He works alone. Besides, he goes after the wise money. He lets the little crooks do the stealing, and when they cop anything worth while he goes in and takes it away from them. Bumps them off when it's necessary. Too bad he don't make a wholesale job of it."

But the young lieutenant continued thoughtful. "Just the same, it's White Hands for me—he might lead me to it. I'm going to look him up."

But after a week of painstaking investigation in the most select and hidden circles of the underworld, Tripp had to report failure. Mr. Moreno was up in the Adirondacks recuperating from a bad case of *measles*! Of all diseases in the world for a hard-boiled thug like Moreno—*measles*! He knew nothing about the great Saunders robbery and murder case and, since it would be a long while before he could leave his bed, his interest was purely academic. He had heard of the famous diamond necklace, of course.

"And that," commented the inspector, "leaves you just where you started—nowhere! I told you those that did it knew too much!"

"Looks that way." The lieutenant's face was not cheerful. "But I'm not giving up yet. Every time I think of their beating that old woman to death—just an unnecessary, brutal murder—I feel as though I'd be willing to give up my next chance of promotion just to lay hands on that big guy who did it." The light line across his forehead deepened to a furrow, and his eyes held a longing ferocity.

Bradley remembered the stories extant regarding Tripp's strength. "I wouldn't like to be the guy you laid hands on," he grinned. "But if you did break this case, you couldn't avoid promotion—it would be rammed down your throat and pinned on your chest."

But as the weeks passed by Tripp's hope of ever solving the case grew dimmer. He grilled, investigated and trailed every rogue who might have perpetrated the crime without turning up a vestige of a clue. Miss Saunders came down to headquarters and stared at the figures under the glaring lights, but was unable to identify any of them. Occasionally the papers still made editorial and sarcastic reference

to police incompetence and inactivity, and on such occasions the Commissioner made corrosive remarks to Bradley, who repeated them significantly to Tripp.

Then one day a stool-pigeon told Bradley that Moreno was back in his old haunts, lean and hungry, and Bradley passed the information on to Tripp, though without much hope.

Tripp's green-gray eyes lighted up. "Good old White Hands Moreno, the bird dog!" he murmured softly. "For once in my life I'm rooting for a crook!"

II

THE inscription on the door read, "BORDEN & Co.," and under it, "DIAMONDS AND PRECIOUS STONES." To judge by his appearance, the visitor who opened the door and walked in, somewhat hesitantly, was not by any means a Cræsus. His clothes, his shoes, even his whiskers and unkempt hair proclaimed a penurious son of the soil on a visit to the golden Mecca of the western hemisphere.

The man who took his feet off the desk and rose to greet him looked much more like a mainstay of the world of finance than a jewel thief. Wide-shouldered and natively groomed, with thin brown hair combed meticulously over a low forehead, he greeted his unpromising customer with a bare nod. If that sort of visitor had any money, he was no doubt thinking, like the farmers of gold-brick mythology, it would be as easy to take him as to win a pot with a cold deck, but all he probably had in his pockets was the second half of a round trip ticket home, and a few cents for tobacco.

"What can I do for you?" The small, hard eyes, set a little too closely

together, lighted up with surly humor. "I'm not the guy who sold you the aquarium, Silas."

The visitor scratched his neck and squinted through his spectacles. "Funny, ain't ye? Yuh city folks think ye're smart, don't ye? Nobody ain't sold me no aquarium, Mister. My name is Frank Perkins, an' I know my way about, even if I was born on a farm in Oregon. Say, I wouldn't live down here if you was to give me the hull darned town fur nothin'! Listen, if you got a diamond ring I kin buy real cheap show it to me; if you ain't say so an' I'll be gittin' along. I never gave my wife no engagement ring, see? Gosh-amighty, when I married Tillie I had to borrow money fur a plain gold band. Now I kin afford it, I'm figgerin' on bringin' Tillie a s'prise—providin' I kin git a bargain."

The broker extended an apologetic, cordial hand, and through shrewd gray eyes the visitor could read the self-castigation he was inflicting. "My name is Borden, Mr. Perkins. Don't mind a little kidding. We don't mean anything by it in this burg. Say, I like to hear a man talk like you do. Give me the fellow who thinks of the loyal little wife after he's made his pile! She wasn't looking for it when you didn't have it—all the more reason for giving her a break now. Am I right?"

"Well, that's jest how I feel." Perkins permitted his resentment to evaporate under the broker's cordiality. "We ain't had no easy times, Tillie an' me. Dry spells that burnt up the crops, an' wet ones that drowned 'em, an' dust storms— Say, yuh city folks don't know the half of it. Well, Tillie likes gewgaws, same's any other woman, an' I'm danged if she don't git 'em, now I kin afford it. Show me what yuh got, Mister."

"Certainly, I'll be very glad to." The jewel thief removed his glasses with an air and wiped them cordially, unaware of the glint of sardonic amusement his bordered silk handkerchief caused. "And say, Perkins, I don't pretend I'm going to sell you my merchandise at a loss. I'm not looking to make a profit on you that's unreasonable, that's all I want you to know." He opened a drawer in his desk and took out a blue plush box. "Now here's a beauty—three carat, real blue diamond—platinum setting—class! Here, take a peek through this magnifying glass. You won't find a flaw. It isn't one of those big, cheap yellow stones. It's a real blue diamond—the kind the Four Hundred wear."

From that point the bargaining began. Perkins was not an easy customer; he required plenty of persuasion and diplomacy. But the vision Borden conjured of a happy woman in Oregon wearing this beautiful ring on her toil-worn finger overcame sales resistance.

"I'll go as low as eight hundred and twenty dollars—exactly what it cost me," Borden finally stated. He had originally asked a thousand. "Take it or leave it. I'm not making a cent."

The buyer yielded with apparent reluctance. "Reckon yuh're robbin' me, but it does look right pretty. How do yuh want it, check or cash?"

Borden smiled deprecatingly. "No offense, you know, but this is our first business transaction . . ."

"All right, don't make no difference to me." The farmer pulled a shabby wallet from an inside pocket—shabby, yea verily, but full, full to overflowing. Borden's eyes bulged greedily. "Here yuh are!" Perkins extracted bills to the amount agreed upon, handed them to Borden, and put the wallet back carefully. He put the plush box into his

pocket. Apparently the idea of a bill of sale never occurred to his innocent mind—and started for the door. “Reckon I’ll look ‘round an’ find a few more fellers like yuh. I ain’t goin’ home with jest one ring, no, sir. I aim to bring Tillie a handful, so she kin wear a diff’rent one every day, an’ two, three on Sundays.”

BORDEN called faintly from the chair into which he had slumped, “Hey, what’s your hurry, Perkins?” Gathering strength, he rose and drew Perkins back from the door. “Here, sit down and make yourself comfortable. I don’t meet real folks like you every day. Look, I’ll tell you the truth, Perkins—you fooled me! You fellows that have the stuff and don’t have to give a damn about appearances! Here, try this cigar—come on, take a couple of them—lots more where these came from. I should have known the minute you began talking that you weren’t a piker.”

The farmer permitted Borden to extract his ornate lighter and ignite two comfortable smokes. “I was a piker when I didn’t have it, Mr. Borden. Reckon I jest don’t have to be now.”

“You weren’t a piker even when you didn’t have it!” commented Borden effusively. “Listen, I’ve got something to show you, something a queen would be proud to wear. I haven’t got it here—it’s at home. A diamond necklace of matchless beauty!”

Perkins muttered doubtfully, “Diamond necklace? I thought them things was pearls?”

“Pearls? No, sir, these are diamonds, not cheap pearls. My own wife wears them, and she knows what’s class—take it from me. Even if you don’t buy it, you’ll have something to talk about when you get back. Tell you what, you

come home with me, Perkins, and fill up on some real home cooking, and I’ll let you see the necklace. I don’t mind admitting I need money. This depression has lasted longer than I expected. My need is your opportunity, as the old saying goes. Anyhow, I’m going to make you admit even your wife can’t cook any better than mine.”

“Well . . .” Perkins scratched his neck and squinted dubiously. Scratching his neck seemed to stimulate his mental processes.

“Now listen, I won’t take no for an answer. Just make yourself comfortable. Here, take my chair, it’s more restful. I feel like having company today. I’ll be back in a minute.”

Lieutenant Larry Tripp leaned back thoughtfully after the broker had gone, and wondered just what Borden planned. The man was a killer, and the fat wallet must have roused his greed. He had committed at least one murder, and murder may become a habit. A little something in coffee or soup, a blow with a blackjack, a bullet from a silenced revolver . . . Why exchange jewels for money if the jewel thief could find a way to have both? Murder wouldn’t deter him.

For all the police officer knew, Borden might be preparing a lethal trap at this very moment, and here he was going into it with his eyes wide open. Well, if that was their game, they would find quite a different antagonist from the defenseless old woman whom they had beaten to death.

There was still time to take proper precautions.

III

THEY seated themselves at the table, and when the maid brought in the fruit cocktail Perkins hitched his chair forward, arranged

the napkin under his chin, and picked up the wrong spoon. But he tasted warily, and covertly watched his host and hostess.

He saw Borden cast a comical look towards his wife—and stare! He saw her face blanch, and a look of sheer terror cover it. She was looking towards him, yet he could see no reason for her emotion.

Borden glanced uncomprehendingly at his guest. Bent low over the cocktail, Perkins appeared to be enjoying the entrée. Mystified, Borden's eyes wandered back to his wife, and followed her gaze. This time he understood, and the detective sensed the chill of dread that swept over his quarry and made him lean back with a little gasp.

What was it? What had put him on guard?

Then he saw his own hands, at which they seemed to be staring. What a fool he had been! Smooth white hands! Perfectly groomed nails! Certainly not the hands of a dirt farmer.

White Hands Moreno!

But at the time Tripp did not realize that he was being mistaken for the famous hijacker of jewel thieves, whom neither of the Factors had ever met, but whose advent they had been dreading since Factor had foolishly brought his boodle to Moreno's fence for disposal—and been turned down because the stuff was too "hot."

Warned by the silence of something impending, Tripp glanced up alertly. Mary Borden's face was almost green under her rouge. Her husband rose, smiling palely. In the drawer of his dresser was an automatic.

"Guess I'll get a couple of cigars, Perkins. Excuse me!"

"Cigars with the entrée?" The detective grinned cynically. "You're rusty on your etiquette, Factor!"

Swiftly Tripp's hand darted into his coat pocket and appeared with a gun.

Borden put up his hands without being told, knowing Moreno's reputation.

Tripp nodded approvingly. "That's right. Sit down, Factor, but keep your hands on the table. Say, what put you wise? My hands, hey?" Their silence confirmed his surmise, and he added ruefully, "I should have dipped them in mud. Stand up, Factor, and hand over that necklace—and after that we'll collect the rest of the Saunders' swag. And don't try anything—unless you want a chunk of lead through your heart. You might," he added mendaciously, "get away healthy if you're smart." The Western farmer dialect was gone.

Quite promptly Factor pulled the necklace from his pocket and laid it on the table.

A sudden gleam in the jewel thief's eyes puzzled the detective. He glanced at the woman and saw the rush of color into her face, and although her gaze remained fixed on the table, Tripp suddenly sensed something in the wind.

He picked up the necklace, dropped it into his pocket, stood up and pushed his chair back.

"Now, you two," he began, "we'll—"

A voice behind him ordered sharply, "Put them up and drop that gat! Up!"

For an instant Tripp hesitated, but a cold metal barrel prodded the back of his neck, and he obeyed.

Over his shoulder he caught a glimpse of the maid who had brought the entrée to the table. He had hardly noticed her at the time. He wondered at his own stupidity. Anybody working in an establishment of thieves must be a thief herself. She was rather a

comely-looking blond, and she was dressed for the street.

"One side!" she ordered curtly. "Walk!" Her voice was too steady, he decided; he dared not take a chance of whirling about and tackling her. He took a stride to one side, as she directed.

The blond maid bent and picked up the police officer's revolver. Then she stuck out her left hand, palm upward. "Let's have that necklace!"

Tripp took it from his pocket and handed it to her, and as she snatched it her gun covered him alertly.

Factor called out exultantly, "Good girl!" and at once the maid pointed the gun at him. She backed towards the door.

"Nobody budge!" she ordered. "One squeak out of any of you and you'll be decorating a slab in the morgue."

Her mistress shrieked, "Wait, Sally, we'll go with you!" and made a step forward. She overturned a chair.

The noise made Sally jump; her eyes grew ugly. "Stay where you are!" she snarled, and pointed her weapon at the woman. "Don't try to do that again!"

At such ingratitude and disloyalty Mrs. Factor's breasts began to heave, and her lips to quiver.

"You dirty doublecrosser!" she wailed.

THE maid looked fixedly at her, her face dark, her fingers beginning to crook on the trigger. There was death in Sally's eyes. "Better keep your mug shut or I'll blast it!" she gritted.

Quite evidently Sally had a bad temper. Mrs. Factor became completely mute.

"If any of you poke your noses out

of the door," stated Sally grimly, "you'll get a bullet!"

She turned the knob of the door behind her and was gone.

Factor looked appealingly at Tripp. "You ain't going to let her get away with it?" He darted to the door.

With two bounds the detective overtook him, and smashed him to the floor with a solid punch. Then he put a whistle to his lips and blew shrilly.

Factor sat up, dazed. Through bleeding lips he muttered, "I thought we'd get her and divvy, White Hands. Why let her lam with that necklace? We can still catch her if we hustle."

"White Hands!" repeated Tripp. Then he understood and grinned. "Is that who you took me for?"

"Ain't you White Hands Moreno?" demanded Factor. His face turned white. "Say, are you a flatfoot?"

But Tripp was at the door and had swung it open. A moment later he stepped aside to let Sally come in, with three stalwart plainclothesmen propelling her. The maid's blond hair was gone; her head was covered with thick black curls, rumpled and disordered.

"She tried to pull a gat, Lieutenant," one of the newcomers stated, "and we had to muss her up a bit. But say, she's ain't a she; she's a he. We might have let her get away if you hadn't whistled."

Lieutenant Tripp regarded the maid fixedly, then he whistled long and low, and when he spoke his voice was full of awe and gratitude, like one unworthy upon whom the gods have bestowed a great boon.

"Look who we have here—White Hands Moreno, himself in person! What a female impersonator! Even the voice! So that's what happened to you? You know, Moreno, we trailed you to Factor's office. I saw you standing in

the hallway, looking at the door—"BORDEN & Co.' That's what put me wise. Then we trailed you back to your hotel, but you never came out again. Tim"—he turned to one of the police officers—"I suppose when a nice blond dame came out of the hotel you never thought for a minute she might be White Hands Moreno?"

The officer said, "Well, I'll be damned!" and looked at Moreno with an injured expression.

"With talent like that, why in hell do you want to be a crook?" inquired Tripp, putting handcuffs on Moreno. "You could make money on the stage." He sighed, pulled off his beard carefully, discarded his spectacles. "Just the same, when I get you down to headquarters, Moreno, I'm going to have someone fetch in a drink and a cigar for you." He turned to Factor with extended hand. "Here, you, come across with that dough I handed you at the office." This was the man who had

beaten Mrs. Saunders to death unnecessarily. "Hope I didn't hurt you?" inquired Tripp with sardonic solicitude.

And Factor, as he took the money from his pocket, remarked bitterly to his wife, "You sure pick your help, don't you?"

"Yeah—like you pick your guests!" she retorted.

"Looks like you two sweethearts won't mind being parted for a little while!" grinned Moreno.

He could afford to grin. He might be in for a long sentence, but Factor would burn, perhaps Mrs. Factor, too. Perhaps if he turned State's evidence he might beat the rap.

"He's got the rest of the stuff somewhere in his bedroom!" Moreno told Tripp. "I'd 'a' found it after a while—he had it hid good. Say, I kin tell you a lot about that dumb cluck." He looked contemptuously at Factor. "Them two ain't even married!" he finished virtuously.

Cipher Solvers' Club for May

Continued from Page 88

Twenty-six—Mabel B. Canon, Philadelphia, Pa.; Mrs. B. E. Craven, Rensselaer, N. Y.; L. S. H., Washington, D. C.; L. P. Janlin, Newburgh, N. Y.; Mrs. Altie Mather, West Allis, Wis.; J. G. Meerdink, Jersey City, N. J.; W. B. Nye, Flint, Mich.; Posius, Brookline, Mass.; *Hugh B. Rossell, Washington, D. C.

Twenty-five—Gold Bug, Newburgh, N. Y.; Kenneth Currell, Johnstown, Pa.; G. E. Long, Cripple Creek, Colo.; Cecil T. Partner, Kokomo, Ind.; B. P., Miami, Fla.; Quay, Springfield, Ill.; Ex-Sgt., Ossining, N. Y.; Karl D. Sherley, Tacoma, Wash.

Continued Next Week



Secret Loveliness

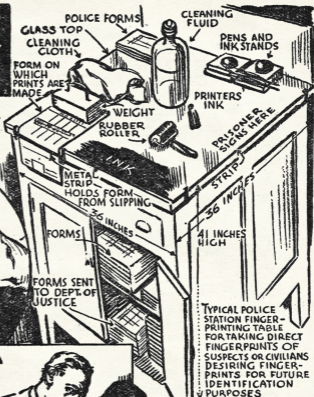
Tiny glints of gold
make dull hair
romantic

USE
MARCHAND'S
GOLDEN HAIR WASH

CRIME LABORATORY

by LOGAN REAVIS

METHOD OF ROLLING FINGERS ON INK-AND LATER ON FORM-SO THAT ENTIRE CHARACTER OF PAPILLARY RIDGES CAN BE RECORDED. SMOOTH, WHITE PAPER IS USED



DELTA SHOWN



FULLY ROLLED FINGERPRINT

PARTIAL PRINT



(A METHOD SOMETIMES USED IN GETTING PRINTS FROM DECEASED PERSONS)

THE USE OF INKED GLASS SLAB AND PAPER TO GET PRINTS OF DEFORMED HANDS WHERE FINGERS CANNOT MAKE USUAL IMPRESSIONS



SOME METHODS SOMETIMES USED TO CATCH THE UNWARY. A-DURING ATTEMPTED THEFT CRIMINAL IS OBLIGED TO HANDLE COPPER PLATE "CARELESSLY" LEFT INSIDE OF DRAWER. PLATE RECORDS PRINTS. B-SUSPECTS MAY BE ASKED TO STUDY SWINGING PICTURE. PRINTS LEFT ON GLASS.



SUSPECT MUST GRASP GLASS PLATES FIRMLY IN ORDER TO EXAMINE PICTURE

The complete registering of the identifying characteristics of the human being is best achieved in the official identification departments of the police or governmental stations, where, with the subject at hand, close study can be made. This is particularly true of those curious ridges which appear on the palms and inner skin surfaces of the hands and fingers,

POLICE DEPARTMENT **MALE**

NAME _____ COLOR _____

NO. _____ CLASSIFICATION _____

RIGHT HAND

THUMB FORE-FINGER MIDDLE FINGER RING FINGER LITTLE FINGER

LEFT HAND

THUMB FORE-FINGER MIDDLE FINGER RING FINGER LITTLE FINGER

RIGHT HAND

FOUR FINGERS TAKEN AT THE SAME TIME

LEFT HAND

FOUR FINGERS TAKEN AT THE SAME TIME

THUMBS TAKEN AT SAME TIME

DATE _____ PRISONER SIGNATURE _____

COMPLETE FINGER PRINT CHARACTERISTICS ARE TAKEN IN THE POLICE IDENTIFICATION BUREAU

FEMALE

ELABORATE FILES OF PRINTS ARE MAINTAINED. DEPT. OF JUSTICE HAS COLLECTION OF BETWEEN 5 AND 6 MILLION PERSONS. WORLD'S LARGEST REGISTRATION

PAPILLARY RIDGES ON FINGER SURFACES
PORES FROM WHICH SWEAT GLANDS POUR FLUID WHICH CREATES "LATENT" IMPRESSIONS OF FINGERS



PRINCIPAL TYPES OF FINGER PRINTS

THE "WHY" OF FINGERPRINTING
ENLARGED SECTION OF SKIN



LOOP (ABOUT 60% ALL TYPES)

ARCH

TENTED ARCH

WHORL



CENTRAL POCKET

LATERAL LOOP

TWINNED LOOP

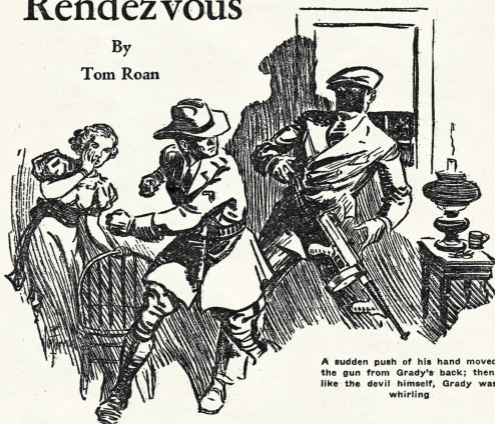
ACCIDENTAL

including the tips of the fingers. So exactly have individuals been identified by arrangements of papillary ridges peculiar to themselves alone that a scientific estimate has asserted that the chance of repetition between two persons is as one to 64,000,000,000.

The third feature of the CRIME LABORATORY series will appear soon.

Midnight Rendezvous

By
Tom Roan



A sudden push of his hand moved the gun from Grady's back; then, like the devil himself, Grady was whirling

CHAPTER I A Fight Begins

PARKED on a graveled spit at the south side of a gloomy New Jersey highway with a cold midnight rain beating and splattering against the back of his neck, Trooper Jim Grady cursed his luck. It was about the worst place and the meanest time of night for



*A Flat Tire, a Howling Dog,
and a Lady in Distress Hurlled
Brawny Jim Grady, State
Trooper, into a Hand-to-
Hand Encounter with Death*

a man to be caught with a flat tire back here on this lonely old road fully a dozen miles from the nearest garage. The confounded jack had twice jumped out from under the rear axle, and now the blooming wheel was sticking, refusing to budge because of a cross-threaded nut.

It was a waste of money to keep a trooper on this seldom-traveled road. Nothing but a

waste, damn it! Grady straightened, shivered from the cold, and wiped the heavy mud and grease from his hands with an already soaked rag. A man was all fingers and thumbs with it raining black cats like this; and then to make bad matters worse, he heard the confounded howling of the dog again.

He had heard it within a minute after he had parked the car. It came up through the wet jungle of trees and dripping undergrowth there behind him. A devil of a place for man or beast, anyway. It was one of those vast wildernesses here close to the coast, a tangled swampland country dropping away there below the highway with its thick briars and worthless scrub-timber growing down to the rim of stagnant lagoons and slugged sloughs that gradually led out some where to the Atlantic Ocean. A swampland dotted here and there, and at wide intervals, with a niggardly farm or two on the occasional islands of higher and drier ground.

But it was the third time he had heard the dog barking and howling. He tried to put it out of his thoughts, and again squatted back there beside the sticking wheel, and then it came again. There was something in that last long, wailing howl that started every nerve in his body tingling. It was too much like a pleading, begging call coming to him out of this dark, rain-drenched night. He heard it again, again, and again. It was growing fiercer, more lone and lonesome, each wail appearing to end in a shattering whine as if the dog was sobbing.

Something started him. It was something strong, something he could not resist. He took his flashlight and a sawed-off shotgun out of the car. He switched off the car's lights, and turned

down into that dripping underbrush. Even as he plunged into it, something kept telling him that this was a fool's errand. But something about the confounded dog was stronger. He kept hearing it. Some of the terrible loneliness had gone out of the howls. He stopped, pondering. It was as if the dog down there in the distance realized that he had stopped and was about to turn back. For fiercer and yet more lone than before, another howl lifted, held long and keen and hungrily shrill on its topmost note, and then fell away with a mournfully sobbing whine.

"Damn," whispered Grady, feeling queer, creepy things crawling up and down his spine and softly tickling the back of his neck like icy wings of the finest down.

He pushed on. The dog barked now. There was something like savage delight in those spontaneous outbursts. Grady stumbled over a rotting log, fell headlong, his gun flying out of his hands. He arose, smeared with black mud from the rotting vegetation. It took a minute to find the old shotgun, and again the dog howled.

Again Grady pushed on, a big, blundering figure of twenty-five. Now and then he flashed his light, but something had warned him to be careful. At last, weaving this way and that, he came out on the rim of a big lagoon. In the distance to his left, around a bend in the black water, he caught a glimpse of a light. He swung in that direction, keeping well above the water.

A thin hint of light from the sky showed a huge, tumble-down building on higher ground to his left. It looked like what had been a monstrous barn with bits of its broken roof and beams showing through a tall, heaped-up mass of briars and dwarfed trees. Somewhere in that hopeless mess was

the barking and howling dog. Grady could hear it whining now.

But he moved on toward the light. In a few minutes he could see that it came from the kitchen window of a big, ramble-shackle house there just above the rim of the lagoon. It was a two-story house, high-gabled, surrounded by a few run-down outbuildings and something like a vegetable garden stretching away toward the old mass of wreckage and briars on the hill behind it.

Grady advanced cautiously. He did not want to make a complete fool of himself by going up and kicking on a door at this time of night to ask people why a dog was barking and howling, but there was the light, and he could always fall back on the old, reliable gag—one used by every officer that ever wore a badge of authority pinned to his chest. He could say that some meddlesome motorist passing up or down the highway had made a complaint about the dog.

Halting at the fence, he surveyed the place. He could see now that there was an old, run-down wharf in front of the house, but not a sound was coming from the house. He moved on, stole up beside the kitchen window, and peeped in. Just then the dog howled again up there on the hill. It was the most mournful wailing thing Jim Grady had ever heard.

Through the window, across the spotless floor of a kitchen marked with muddy footprints, he saw a woman. She was sitting in front of a big, old-fashioned range with her back to him. To her left burned an old kerosene lamp on a table. He saw her straighten as the dog howled again. He saw her look around furtively.

She was a woman somewhere around twenty-five, a slender blonde, very

good-looking, he decided, in her pale-blue house dress. Good-looking were it not for the stark whiteness of her face! Then he caught a glimpse of her eyes. They were wide and blue—startling in their half-fixed stare.

AFTER a minute, Grady moved on to the kitchen door. With the shotgun cradled in his left arm, he lifted his right hand, and knocked. He heard the woman stir, get up as if with a start. A low, gruff voice spoke to her from somewhere. It was decidedly a man's voice, and he had not seen any sign of a man there in the kitchen. It spoke half-whisperingly, warningly. He caught a few carefully guarded words.

"Remember what we said if anybody comes!" And then, after a short wait: "See who's at the door."

Footsteps shuffled now. They came toward the door haltingly. Hands that seemed nervous about something fumbled with the old latch and bolt. At last the door opened about a foot. The woman looked out. Grady saw the wild stare flee from her eyes for just an instant before it returned.

"Sorry to trouble you, madam." Grady touched his hat with his free hand. "Somebody passing on the highway made a complaint about your dog howling and barking. I came to investigate."

The woman stared, touched her throat with a trembling hand, swallowed, and almost glanced back over her shoulder. She spoke then, her voice jerky.

"It—it belongs to a friend," she stammered. "We—we tied it up—in the barn. You know"—she made an attempt to laugh, but it was only a frightened cackle with those wild-starting blue eyes in that bloodless face—

"how—how dogs are. He's an awful pet. My husband will be home any minute now. He'll take care of him. I—I'm dreadfully sorry."

"I'm sorry, too, madam," bowed Grady with his most apologetic air. "I knew it was foolish to come, anyway, but orders are orders, you know."

"Yes! I—I know!"

The expression of her face and those quick, jerked-out words told Grady that it was all the woman could do to keep from screaming. Something told him at the same time that she was not afraid of him; something told him that she wanted to fly out that door and leap behind him for safety. But something was holding her. She seemed to want to close the door quickly, to slam it in his face. He held his ground for a moment more as the dog howled again, and ventured another question.

"Haven't you any men about the place who could, possibly, go up to the barn and bring the dog down to the house?"

"No—he—he's very vicious." Again the woman clutched at her throat. "Only—only my husband can handle him."

She started to close the door, but he had eased his foot forward. It caught and held the door. The woman tried to force it closed. He shoved his big shoulder against it.

"Wait, I'm sorry!" he told her, grimly. "I haven't the right, I know, to stand here and make you talk to me, but I am not satisfied, madam. Please, may I step inside?"

A quick push of the door shoved her aside. Grady stepped quickly into the room. The woman almost fell backward. She staggered against the wall, both hands rushing to her mouth. For a split-second she was about to scream.

"I'm sorry," he began, "to do this.

I don't want to be brutal to you. I am Trooper—"

It was as far as he got. There in the room now and closing the door behind him, he stiffened suddenly. From a draped doorway to his right a man had appeared. He was a big man, dark, well-dressed, though his face was covered with a black mask. On his head, pulled low on his forehead, was a cheap black cap, the kind a man could use for a few minutes or a night and throw away. In his hands, muzzle forward, fingers on the trigger, was a stubby-nosed machine gun. He spoke raspingly:

"Drop that gat, Trooper, and get up your mitts! Quick! I don't want to have to spray you!"

Slowly, knowing at a glance that he was trapped, Grady let his shotgun slip off his arm. Instead of dropping it, he stooped forward, and laid it on the floor. As he straightened he heard the woman start crying there against the wall. In the meantime, the dog sent out another one of his swift, savage fits of barking, ending it with a fierce, far-reaching, long-lasting wail.

"Watch those hands, *Trooper!*" The tone of the man there in the draped doorway was a harsh rasp of sound. "You're apt to keep on living if you don't try to play the damned fool."

"I guess it's your party." Slowly, Grady lifted his hands. "I'm not quite fool enough to stack my luck against that gun you're holding."

"Turn, and face the wall," ordered the man in the doorway. "Flatten your hands against it, *high*. I'm taking no chances with you, Trooper. You horned in on a little party. It's my turn to horn you out of it."

Grady glanced at the woman. He saw the danger. If the man there in the doorway turned that confounded

gun loose on him, the woman would be right in line with the shots.

He saw the man come forward, watched him out of the corners of his eyes. The muzzle of the machine gun planted itself firmly in the middle of his back. A hand slipped forward. It took the revolver out of his holster, moved back, and came forward again, empty. The hand felt over him then, swiftly, expertly. Just a little too expertly, thought Grady. His handcuffs were taken away from him. The man with the gun stepped back.

"Shove down your mitts and shove them behind you," he ordered. "No smart stuff. I'll spray you into Kingdom Come with one squeeze of the trigger, Trooper."

Grady slid his hands down the wall. He thrust them behind him. The right one struck the muzzle of the machine gun. It was a half-fool chance, but a sudden push of his hand moved the gun from his back and pointed it in a corner opposite the woman. Then, like the devil himself, Grady was whirling.

The machine gun clattered on the floor. Like a charging bull, Grady was upon the man, rushing him backward, conscious of a wild scream from the woman. They struck the floor, the masked man on his back, Grady's right fist trying to smash home a blow even as they were falling.

CHAPTER II

A Knockout

CAUGHT off his guard for a split-second by the sheer desperation of Grady's attack, the man on the floor snarled an oath, seemed too amazed to fight for an instant, and then became a human tiger battling for his life. He blocked Grady's lunging fist, whipped it to one side, and clinched

with the trooper. He was a fighting man now, and he was proving it, showing that he knew all the tricks of it as well as being a born wrestler.

They rolled over, Grady on his left side, the man in the mask on his right. From the first it was a real fight, a battle carried on with the fury of two snarling leopards in a death struggle. The man in the mask rolled himself atop of the trooper, drove down a blow, missed, and swore as he was hurled to one side, crashing into a table to tear the legs off of it and bring the table down upon them with a clatter of spilling dishes.

The room shook as they came up. Even the flame of the old lamp sitting over there on the smaller table wobbled. The woman had crouched down in the corner, dragging a heavy, high-backed chair in front of her for protection. Only that one scream had come from her. This straining, man-beating battle in front of her had left her voiceless, the blue eyes simply staring in the white face, and her hands clasped over her mouth.

They faced each other for a moment, both swaying, sparring. Grady was banking everything on keeping the man in front of him from getting his hands into his pocket. The masked man seemed to have no intention of it just yet. Something told Grady that he was grinning there behind that flapping mask, and suddenly Grady knew the meaning of it.

The masked man bobbed, swayed. He led with his right hand, even seemed a little clownish with that lead, but it was all only feign, a double lead, one might have called it. He whipped in with his left, and like lightning followed it with a smashing right hook that seemed to tear Grady off his feet, break every bone in his jaw, and send

him flopping crazily against the wall.

He clinched just in time, knowing now that he was fighting no ordinary man without science. He held on desperately, a little blinded, conscious of a taste of blood in his mouth. The masked man was patient, watching through the holes in his mask, waiting for something. Grady ripped him with a blow as they tore away from each other. The blow raked across the man's face, ripping off his mask. Even in the dim light of the lamp, Grady recognized that snarling face bobbing about there in front of him like an ugly mask.

Grady gasped. No wonder this man could fight. Hell, it was the face of Slugger Dan Gilotti, one-time heavyweight champion, now a retired stock broker with supposed hundreds of thousands in the bank, his fine cars, beautiful home, and, some said, a stable of racing horses. One of the Big Shots! Powerful financially, powerful politically!

The trooper had no time for anything more. Slugger Dan was upon him, battering furiously, slipping in fast rights and lefts, shooting up an uppercut, and then body blows. He carried Grady across the room, he rolled him along the wall, against the hot stove, and floored him with a right to the jaw, landing him against the broken table.

A second down there on the floor and Grady would have been gone. He saw Gilotti's right hand jerk toward a hip pocket. Gilotti was going to kill. Whatever his business happened to be here in this house, it was desperate business; business through which no New Jersey State Trooper would live to give evidence against him. All that was patent. All that was in Gilotti's narrow slits of eyes.

But Grady moved. He was up like a shot, throwing himself against Gilotti, catching him in the groin with his right shoulder and hurling him back and almost atop of the stove. He tried to follow up, but it was impossible with an old ring general like this Slugger Dan. He was all Slugger Dan now, all fight and damnation, a man watching and sparring for one more good blow.

Grady broke through his guard. A big, smashing right fist caught Gilotti flat and flush on the jaw. He tried to roll with it. Perhaps he would have rolled with it had it not been for a chair. He collided with that. It threw him off balance for an instant, and there the big fist slammed home. He went down across the chair, but he was not done for.

Gilotti's feet shot out. One hard-kicking heel caught Grady on the left knee-cap, the other caught him on the shin. Those feet were like sledge hammers. They threw Grady back, dropped him to one knee, and for a moment his left leg was like rubber, helpless, a thing that flopped about under him like a broken wing.

It was an opportunity. Gilotti was quick to take full advantage of it. He was up, weaving in, bobbing, swaying, eyes two little dark brown slits all aglint in the lamplight. He caught Grady a one-two, ripped him hard just below the heart, and seemed to stretch him out and up, flat against the expanse of wall.

Grady had sense enough to clinch again, to throw his arms around Gilotti's, and to hang on. They surged across the room, both their breaths whistling by this time, their faces white with rage. Grady's was streaming with blood a few seconds later when Gilotti broke away and ripped him across the

face, opening the flesh above the right eye to the bone.

And then Grady landed. He landed a hay-maker as Gilotti's foot slipped in one of the muddy tracks on the floor. The blow caught him on the left side of the nose and mouth, tearing out some of his bridgework and slitting one side of his lips to the bone.

But a man like Gilotti could carry a punch that would kill another man. He rolled with Grady's next blow, led with that trick right again, re-led with the left, and the right fist shot home. Blood squirted from Grady's nose. His head snapped back. The light swam crazily over there on the table. He was curving backward when another smashing blow straightened him, jerked him forward, and laid his jaw wide open for Gilotti's left.

IT was a miracle that Gilotti missed, but Grady was learning things from this one-time wizard of the squared ring. He had bobbed his head. Gilotti's fist slid around the back of his neck, and then they were locked in each other's arms again, and falling, crashing down through a chair, turning it to kindling wood.

They came up, tearing away from each other, both their faces bloody now, their breaths like screams. This thing could not go much further. It was not humanly possible. It seemed that they had been fighting like this for hours. As a matter of fact, it had been going on less than three minutes.

Gilotti ripped in another blow, a low, slam-down punch far below the heart. He missed with one of his famous left uppercuts. He was short enough to barely scrape Grady's chin as he came up with a right hook with lightning behind it. Grady caught him clean and clear with a left, spun him

half-around, and landed him headfirst against the bottom of the stove. He rolled over on his back. He spoke, the words gasping out of him.

"You—got me—Trooper! I—didn't believe—any man—could—put me—down!"

"Roll over on your belly and watch your hands!" gasped Grady, feeling weak and sick at his stomach, standing there over Gilotti, ready for anything. "Don't try to pull a gun on me."

"It—it fell out of my pocket, fool." Gilotti laughed whisperingly. "It—it's there behind you."

"He—he's telling a lie!" That was from the woman, still crouching there in the corner behind her chair. "Look—out!"

Grady was cursing himself for his stupidity in the next breath. Like an ass, he had glanced behind him. With the quickness of an eel, Gilotti had finched toward him, seizing him by the ankles. With a backward fall that rattled every dish in an old cupboard in the corner, Grady went down, arms flinging out on either side of him. Gilotti was like a gliding python as he flung atop of him, and slammed a bloody fist down in his face.

He barely remembered breaking Gilotti's hold and getting up from there. He was like a man who had been unconscious and was now suddenly finding himself back to his senses, still dazed, still doing little toward fighting, and being punch-whipped all over the room. How he kept on his feet was a mystery. How he weathered those blows was something he would never know. Gilotti was beating him to death right there on his feet, was hammering him and slamming him about. He went down, heard something crash, and came bounding up. He felt rather than saw his fist fling out. It must have

carried everything he had behind it. It tore into Gilotti's face, and the man was going down, crashing through the broken chairs, a huge, ungainly thing there in the wreckage.

Grady's head was clearing then, but everything had turned red there in front of him, and he had not seen Gilotti get up. He did not know that his face was streaming blood from a cut above either eye now. All he knew was that Gilotti was coming in, that his right fist again hitched out, slammed home with the sound of a cracking board, and Gilotti was down again.

"Watch him!" cried the terrified woman in the corner. "Watch him, Trooper. He—he's drawing a gun!"

Grady kicked the revolver out of his hand. He tore Gilotti to his feet, missed him with a right and left, and took a smashing right on the mouth. They were like dying men on their feet then, staggering about, striking at each other or pausing to wipe their bleeding faces on their sleeves—two ghastly, fist-hammered shapes blowing and snorting blood from their lips and nostrils. Grady got in another punch. He saw Gilotti go down to one knee, and laughed foolishly. As yet he still did not know what this damned fight was about. It really did not matter, but it was big, whatever it was. Damned big! He knocked Gilotti down again, and in a stupid way realized a few moments later that Gilotti had knocked him down. His brain cleared when he saw Gilotti wabbling about and trying to pick up the machine gun there on the floor. The woman in the corner screamed a warning, and hurled the chair away from her, striking Gilotti with it.

The next thing Jim Grady knew, he was in the corner beating hell out of

Gilotti. He was holding him there, holding him tight in the corner, his big fist rising, hauling back as if it were made of lead, but the big fist was still hammering, getting weaker with each blow. Grady seemed powerless to stop it.

He must have heard the woman screaming. He must have heard her warning cries. Cold air swirled around him. There was a noisy banging on the floor of hurrying feet, two men cursing, the woman crying and begging, and then something struck Grady on the back of the head. It was something that seemed to wrap itself all over the back of his head like a lashing whip. It struck him again, filling him with a great weakness that ran from the top of his head to his feet. Then his legs gave way. Everything gave way. He was slipping, sliding down, face downward. Gilotti fell with him, sprawling across him as limp as a rag.

It was still then, nice, restful and cool there on the floor. Even the light went out. Not a footstep stirred. In an overwhelming bundle of softness and peacefulness, he was swept away, losing consciousness like a man going to sleep.

He did not even hear the dog howl up there on the hill again, but it was a long and lonesome wail, fiercely sad, ending in a sobbing whine that fell across the lowlands like a pleading voice.

CHAPTER III

A Boat in the Lagoon

HE came to his senses slowly, dully conscious that his body was aching all over. Not yet did he remember where he was or what he had been doing. He heard voices rising and falling, some harsh, some argu-

ing for the others to keep a little quieter.

"It was that damned dog, I tell you," a man was saying. "I don't quite like dogs, especially on a job like this, and I told you from the first that he would have to be put out of the way."

"Then, why in the hell haven't you put him out of the way?" grumbled a heavier voice.

"Because the sucker's wise, that's why," rasped back the first voice. "He's up there in the wreckage of that old building. Scooted up there when Bugs killed that old devil in the back yard. He's 'way back in that old building. We worked for an hour, I tell you."

"He brought that damned trooper here by his howling."

"Sure! Ain't that what I've said from the start?"

"Here, Dan, take a shot of this. That guy must have been a fighting son-of-a-gun to do you up like this. *Damn!*"

It was that dog again. Three harsh barks rasped out in the distance, and became one of those mournful howls. A man swore violently.

"This dump gives me the creeps! I wish those damned fools would come on. They was to be here at midnight. What the hell time is it now, Charley?"

"A quarter after one."

And then Grady remembered, remembered the flat tire up there on the old highway, the rain beating on his back and neck, the doleful howling of the dog—and Slugger Dan Gilotti. He rolled his head to one side. One eye cracked open. The other was swollen shut, an ugly lump of black and blue flesh covered with drying blood. It came to him that he was lying on his side in a dark room. He tried to move,

and realized in a half-indifferent way that he was tightly bound head and foot, unable to stir a muscle.

Then he realized that he was not alone. There was something close to him, something trying to wiggle up behind his back. He felt something soft, damp and fluttery against his wrists, and came to know them as a pair of lips. He felt teeth against his hands, felt them working away at something, and heard somebody's hard, gasp-like breathing.

It was the woman. What the devil was she doing? Trying to eat him alive? He lay there wondering. His brain seemed steeped in a fog. A minute passed before he realized that the woman was bound and lying there on the floor beside him, and then it came to him that she was making a desperate attempt to free him from his bonds with her teeth.

A noisy shuffle of footsteps sounded. He felt the woman roll quickly away from him. It seemed that she was holding her breath now, waiting for something. Drapes were flung aside from a doorway. Two men entered the room carrying flashlights. Another man came shuffling in behind them. Grady knew that that third man was Gilotti. The man with the lights came on, halting there above him, the lights blinding in his face in spite of his closed eyes. One of the men spoke.

"Still out. You probably conked his hash for good, Charley."

"So much the better for him if I did. It's either him or us. We can't take chances now—not after getting in this deep. We'll have to—"

"Sh-h-h-ush!" hissed the other man. "Don't be a damned fool and let your tongue run away with your head."

"You little fool, I should stamp my heel down your pretty throat!" That

was Gilotti, speaking in a rasping voice to the woman. "I promised that you wouldn't be hurt, damn you."

"I—I didn't do anything." The woman was sobbing softly, straining, it seemed, to control herself. "I—I promised to—to do the best I could."

"I wish you were in hell, damn you!" Gilotti was standing there over the girl now. "You gave that guy a high-sign of some kind. He wouldn't have come pushing in without it."

"But—but I didn't," moaned the woman. "I—I was afraid to do anything. Didn't I see how one of your men shot Uncle Bob down? Didn't—didn't I know you would do that to me if I failed to obey you? *Please* go away. *Please*—"

"Dry it!" Gilotti's voice was a hiss now. "Dry it before I tell one of these mugs to dry you up for good. I—"

"Listen!" cut in one of the others. "It's coming. Come on out of here."

Not daring to open his eyes, Grady heard them turn, hurrying from the room. In the distance he could hear the low throbbing of a motor now. Soon he realized that it was a boat of some kind coming up the lagoon.

One needed little imagination to realize what Slugger Dan Gilotti and those men were doing here now. Slugger Dan Gilotti was smuggling something in from the sea.

Grady turned as the woman rolled back to him. He spoke to her in a thick-voiced whisper.

"How are you tied?"

"Like you—almost," came back her breathless answer. "With pieces of rope. Your handcuffs were so bent during the fight they couldn't get them on you."

"Let me work on your ropes," whispered Grady. "We'll have to make it fast. How many are in this gang?"

"Six—seven including the truck driver."

He did not ask about the truck driver. That could wait. Now every second counted. He squirmed and twisted, managing at last to flip himself over, facing her. He squirmed down behind her, and felt over her bound hands with his lips. Like a bulldog he was soon chewing and tugging.

IT was a hell of a job. In a minute his mouth was dripping blood. Two or three of his front teeth had been loosened in the fight. They ached now as if about to burst. But he kept it up, gnawing and tugging, feeling damned hopeless about it at one moment, encouraged at the next. At last something slipped. It was one of the ropes, but it seemed an hour before the woman's hands were free.

She moved rapidly now while he lay there sick and trembling, utterly exhausted. He heard her pulling at this and that, heard her gasp-like breathing, the scrape of her feet moving cautiously, and then she was turning to him. Without a word, she rolled him over on his stomach, her hands flying to the ropes on his wrists.

The minutes dragged. Low voices came closer to the house, then moved away. The noise of the boat down the lagoon seemed to get no closer. Once Grady heard Gilotti swearing beyond a window. Some man was arguing with him. Another now joined in the low conversation.

"Dan's dead right," the man was saying. "We leave things as they are for the minute. Our job's to get those men in that old moving van and get them out of here. Up the road, plenty far enough for nobody to suspect, and then we'll touch the match to the works. It's us or them."

"I don't like the idea of killing a damned woman."

"Yeah?" somebody sneered. "Well, maybe that hot seat over in Trenton appeals to you? It doesn't to me. That damned woman's going. You're just a fool, that's all. You flop for every pretty skirt, Tony."

Again the minutes dragged. The woman was working desperately. Grady knew that she was tearing her nails out almost by the roots, but anything was better than lying here in this room. He knew exactly what was going to happen. It was the only thing that could happen to save Slugger Dan Gilotti, and that was for this big old house to be burned to the ground with everything inside it, and that was a hell of a long ways from a pleasant thought.

"The damned boat must be stuck on a sand bar," grumbled a voice, close to the window again.

"I wish that damned engine didn't make so much noise!" hissed another voice.

And then the dog again. Longer, lonelier than ever, the howl arose up there on the hill. As it died away, men outside the window cursed and stamped his feet with impatience.

"It gives me the creeps!" rasped the man. "I'll never get caught in another jam like this unless I kill all the dogs on the place the first thing I do."

"You didn't have to bump the dame's uncle, anyway, Bugs."

"I didn't?" snapped back a voice. "Didn't the old devil start at me with an ax? I wasn't taking chances of getting my skull split open, and I wasn't taking chances on him darting by me and running off somewhere for help. Dan offered him a couple of hundred, anyway. The old fool should have taken it."

Something slipped. Stinging needles raced through Grady's left hand. He almost groaned when the woman lifted his arm. In two or three minutes more, he found himself free. He tried to sit up. The woman had to help him.

The boat was getting closer. Grady heard moving feet going away from the window, and breathed a sigh of relief. The men were evidently going out to the old wharf.

"We must hurry," whispered the woman. "Get up! Let's get out of here!"

He was up as far as his knees. She tugged at him again. He finally made it, his legs pricking and throbbing under him as the circulation of blood rushed back into them. She steadied him. He took a step forward, and then tried to hurry as he heard footsteps enter the kitchen.

One of the men was coming back. . .

CHAPTER IV

The Shot

WEAK as hell, dizzy as a fool, both hands swollen black lumps and as numb as a jaw pumped full of an anesthetic, and a man coming who would not hesitate a second to shoot a man full of lead! Grady shook back his big shoulders, trying to clear that nauseating swimming in his head. At the moment he would have given his right arm and both legs for a gun—for anything to fight with. Confound it, he could not walk a step. He could only shuffle, and the sound of a footstep in that room would be the end of everything.

Fortunately, the man who had entered the kitchen had come in to blow out the light. Grady heard him leave, heard him go outside, the door slamming behind him. Now the man's

footsteps were hurrying away toward the run-down wharf.

"We *must* get out of here!" The woman was still clinging to his arm, trying her best to help him. She rocked him rather than walked him to a door, opened it, and pushed him out on a short porch there in rear of the house.

A droning wind and a biting cold rain beating down on his head and in his face did what the stuffy air of that room would have taken hours to do—and it seemed to do it in a few seconds. His thoughts cleared. Some of his old robust strength came to him. He swung back his shoulders again, and licked some of the rain that was running down his hot face into his mouth.

"Quick," whispered the woman, holding on to him as if her life depended on it. "This way. Uncle's body is out here."

They entered dripping shrubbery, moving along a garden trail, and came to the corner of a little outhouse where water was spilling down a rust eaves-trough from the roof. He stopped there, allowing the water to spill in his thick shock of dark hair and run down his collar. Nothing in all his life had ever felt so relieving, so life and strength giving.

He wanted a gun. Damn it; he had to have a gun! Nothing else would do against this mob. A man could not fight hot lead with his bare hands—not these confounded lumps of swollen flesh and broken skin! He stumbled on as the woman kept urging him.

It was near the back of the house that they found the body of the man. He lay there on his left side, feet and legs drawn up where death's agony had left them. By the pale light coming somewhere from the sky, Grady saw

that he was a man past sixty, ruddy-faced and bald, the back of his head rimmed with cotton-white hair like the funny little goatee and the thin, straggly mustaches.

This was murder—murder in the worst manner. In spite of his weakness, Grady picked up the frail body as if it had been the body of a child. He and the woman moved on then. In a minute Grady was able to throw the body over his shoulder. They slipped through the back gate, rounded the old vegetable garden, and at last found a place where they could hide the body under a pile of wet brush at the head of a deep ditch. They had barely finished when the dog howled again.

The simplest thing would have been to take the woman and go for help. Grady thought about it, but going for help would take too much time. He wanted Slugger Dan Gilotti. He wanted him right here with whatever he was doing. How to get him was the question. The woman seemed to sense Grady's thoughts.

"They have a big moving van and a big sedan up there on the hill somewhere," she told him. "I heard them talking about it. It must be something very important."

"Chinamen, of course," he told her, his mouth paining him as he spoke and feeling swollen all over his face. "A lot of it has been going on of late. Haven't you read the papers?"

She started to say something. He stopped her, and moved on. This was a hell of a place to stand and talk about newspapers and government reports. She had said there was a truck and a sedan up here on this confounded hill somewhere. As yet he did not know just what he was going to do or what he could do, but he was as determined as a bull to do something.

They stumbled on. Once he slipped in the mud, falling flat. It seemed to do him good. He became cautious, following a fringe of low pines and bushes. The dog kept howling up there above them. At last they reached the top of the hill. He saw that it was a sharp-backed ridge; and there on the opposite side of the wreckage of the old building he saw the moving van and the big, black sedan drawn up close to the bushes and sprawled-about timbers.

Now what? He hid the woman there in the bushes and timbers, and slipped on. Keeping low, he came upon the sedan from behind, peeped through the rear window cautiously, and saw that it was empty. It was the same with the moving van, and that meant that the whole gang was down there at the house.

He inspected the car then, hoping to find a gun of some kind. Just any kind of a gun! But the search was fruitless, and he turned back to the van. It was one of those huge affairs, roofed with sheet steel, and with only one entrance into the body. That was through the rear doors, one of which was open as if ready to receive something, its heavy iron cross-bar standing there on the ground and leaning against the end of the van.

No gun here, nothing to fight with except an old monkey-wrench and a pair of long-nosed pliers. He shoved the monkey-wrench in his pocket. Those pliers gave him an idea. He lifted the hood from the van's engine, and started ripping out the ignition wires. Finished with the job at last, knowing it would take hours for a man to start the motor, he lowered the hood and turned his attention to the sedan.

It was shameful, the way he tore into that high-priced machine's ignition

wires. He ripped off everything. Nobody in that gang but Slugger Dan Gilotti could own a machine like this, and he was after it as if fighting Slugger Dan again.

"Hurry—whatever you're doing."

THE woman had come out of the bushes. With her now was a three-legged dog, the right fore-leg missing at the knee. He was a yellow cur, a mixture, it seemed, of all the breeds—a hopeless specimen of a dog, one that no up-to-the-minute fancier would have allowed to disgrace his kennels. But this night—even if the dog never lived to see another—he had poured out his heart and soul for the mistress there beside him. He seemed to know Grady as a friend. He dropped there on the wet ground, wagging a shaggy tail. He whined, and the woman stopped him with a low word of warning.

"Somebody's coming," she told Grady, breathlessly. "Please hide or do something!"

"Get out of sight," he told her, "and stay out of sight no matter what happens."

He hurried her back into the wreckage of the old building. There in the bushes they came to an old concrete stairway leading down into what seemed the basement of a barn. Grady pushed the woman on, once more cautioned her in a whisper, and returned to the edge of the wreckage.

Footsteps were sounding. The rain had let up for a few minutes, and the sounds of those footsteps were like those made by a company of infantry marching in single file. Then Grady saw the group. Marching at the head of it was a short, stout fellow, pug-nosed, round-faced. Something told Grady that he was the driver of the

big van. But those behind him! He counted twenty-four of them, and realized that these were the Chinamen he had heard mentioned. No wonder Dan Gilotti was rich, bringing in aliens like this!

"Where's Number One, China Boy?" The driver had reached the end of the van, turning to speak in a low, guarded voice.

"Me Lumber Lun China Bloy," said a tall, stoop-shouldered man. "Me do allee talkee."

"Yeah, sure," nodded the driver. "Get this. Pass it on to the others. You're not to make a sound. Don't smoke. Don't even whisper among yourselves. Get that? No matter what happens, just sit tight. In three hours you'll be where you're going."

There was a sharp whispering among the group now, the men all gathered there in a circle. A short time later, the Chinamen were hustling into the van. At last they were all inside, close-packed without a doubt, and the driver was closing the door, sliding the cross-bar in place, and fastening chains. In a minute or two everything was tightly fastened. It was now just a huge old van, one of the thousands always on the highways. It could pass through dozens of police patrols without arousing the slightest suspicion.

It had started to rain again. The driver moved on to the cab, climbing inside. He struck a match to light a cigarette in his cupped hands, and Grady caught a closer glimpse of his face and saw that it was deeply pock-pitted, the lower jaw heavy and protruding. He seemed to be waiting for something. In a minute another man appeared, carrying a sawed-off shotgun in the crook of his arm.

"We've got to get you out first," half-whispered the man with the gun.

"It's a hell of a mess tonight, buddy. Somebody'll come when that damned house starts to burn, and to make it bad, that boat's stuck again. You go ahead. You know what to do."

"Yeah, but where's my tail? Suppose somebody stops me?"

"Listen, buddy," the voice of the man with the gun had become hard and flat, "you know that the only damned trooper on that old road is down there in the house. There's nothing to be scared of."

"I'm not scared of anything, once I get on the highway," argued the driver. "It's coming out of this old road—"

"It's a good, hard road, rough as it is. You won't get stuck."

"It's not that that worries me. It's the going out—"

"Can it! Didn't I tell you the only trooper back here is in that damned house? When it burns, he'll burn with it. Now get the hell out of here. I've got to get back."

He was gone then, turning and walking abruptly away. Grady heard the driver turn the ignition switch, heard the man step on the starter, then kick it; then curse. Now the man was jumping out of the cab. He lifted the hood, and swore.

It was then that Grady hit him. Going forward like a streak, he brought the old monkey-wrench up, then down. It struck the van driver on the back of the head. With a grunt, he fell across the rusty fender, a fearfully limp thing as if his skull had been crushed like an eggshell.

Grady searched him. To his dismay, he found that the man was not carrying a gun. He took the man's belt then, strapping his hands behind his back. He gagged him with a big bandanna he found in the man's pocket, and dragged him back in the bushes.

He was none too quick about it. Hardly had he returned to the van—and there was the man with the sawed-off shotgun in the crook of his arm. Wearing the driver's cap, Grady was bending over the motor, the rain beating down on the back of his neck.

"Listen, that damned trooper's gone!" exclaimed the man with the gun. "The damned dame's gone with him. We're in a hell of a pickle now, buddy. Got to work! Say!"

The worst thing that could have possibly happened had happened. Lightning flashed in the distance. It was faint and far away, but it was enough. With a snarl, the man with the gun leaped back, the gun flying up. There was a blinding flash, and a thundering roar as a blaze of orange fire licked toward the trooper.

CHAPTER V

Counter-Attack

IT was fierce while it lasted, but it did not last long. Grady had dropped just in time, down to his hands and knees, and the cut slugs of lead and the blaze of fire passed over him. Down, then up! He was no longer going to be a fool about this fighting business. The heavy monkey-wrench was in his right hand. He struck furiously with it, catching his man on the left elbow. The shotgun clattered to the ground. Now the man was trying to get away, his right hand tugging at something in his hip pocket.

Grady tripped him, struck him across the hip with the old wrench, and the man sprawled forward. But he was as quick as light, flipping over on his back, his feet flying up. The hard heel of one foot caught Grady in the groin, hurling him back. He struck the kicking foot an instant later. The man

on the ground howled with pain, made a quick, desperate leap, and gained his feet. Grady caught him on the head with the wrench then, and he fell like a sluggish beef in a slaughtering pen.

Out, cold! That was the only way Grady really wanted him. He searched him. From the man's hip pocket he took a heavy, blunt-nosed automatic pistol. From another pocket he took two extra clips of cartridges and four shotgun shells.

Things were on the mend now! Grady bound the man, gagged him, and dragged him back in the bushes and the old timbers. He came out of them, picked up the shotgun, loaded it, and stood there listening. Not a sound had come from the old van. The men inside were obeying their orders to the letter, though it was reasonable to guess that they were doing a world of wondering, housed in there like prisoners in a box and unable to escape.

But there was no time to think about the Chinamen. There was little time for anything, because somebody else was coming. Grady heard a mumble of voices, footsteps splashing in water. To his surprise, he realized that the two men were coming down the slope from the direction of the old highway where he had left his car.

Then the lightning flashed again. It looked as though one of those freakish electric storms was about to break. At this moment he could have shouted for joy. The two men coming down the slope at a trot were troopers. One carried a rifle, one a shotgun. He recognized them as Trooper Tom Lee and Trooper Bill Marlin. In a moment they were dashing up, throwing their lights on Grady.

"Douse those lights!" he hissed. "There's hell to pay here, boys. This thing," he lowered his voice to a whis-

per and jerked his thumb toward the van, "has twenty-four Chinamen in it. Down the hill there's the body of a murdered man. Back in the wreckage of this old building is a woman, her dog, and two birds I've got knocked out and tied up."

"The dog brought us," whispered Trooper Lee. "Two complaints have come in tonight about it. We were sent to investigate. We found your car up there off the side of the road, saw your gun was gone off the back of the seat, and then heard the shot. Boy, are we here and rearing for business!"

Hastily, Grady told them of what had happened. Both troopers whistled softly. Trooper Marlin spoke when he had finished.

"But Gilotti's supposed to be a rich guy, one that wouldn't have to stoop to this business, Jim."

"A lot of men will stoop when the stakes are high enough," growled Grady. "He's a scrapper, too. You'll watch him when we take him. He's made me feel like fifteen cents' worth of dog meat."

"And made you look about like that, too," nodded Lee. "If I hadn't just known it was you I wouldn't have recognized you, Jim."

"Easy. Somebody's coming."

Two men were hurrying back up the hill. The troopers started toward them, and the lightning flashed again. There was a yell, a shot, and the men were turning, running back toward the old house. The troopers followed, and lost them in the rain.

"Wait!" Grady caught Marlin by the arm, halting him. "Go back up there. Hide in those timbers and watch what we've got so far. We can't let those Chinamen and the two ducks in the bushes get away. And whatever

you do, Bill, protect that woman. She's dead game as far as she can go. If it hadn't been for her I wouldn't have pulled out of this as far as I have."

HE was gone then, and Marlin was turning back, a good man for his job, one who would stand there and fight until hell froze over and hold his ground until the bitter end.

There was all kinds of noise down there below Grady now. He heard the boat chugging. Voices rose and fell. Lee was darting on there to the right. Grady saw him out of the corners of his eyes as he jumped a ditch filled with muddy water. Then they were swinging back together, their guns ready.

The lightning flashed. In the quick, whip-like glare of it, Grady saw a crouching figure behind a clump of dripping bushes. He yelled a warning to Lee. The trooper was scarcely ten feet away from Grady now, but the cry of warning had been too late.

Like lightning itself, jerky red ribbons of lightning, a tommy-gun ripped out a ten-round burst. Grady heard Lee's quick, fierce cry of death agony, and saw him stumble, fall, and go sliding head-first down the slope in the mud, a dead man almost the instant he struck the sloppy ground.

Grady was opening fire with his shotgun now. He saw the man with the tommy-gun whirl, and drop out of sight in a deep ditch half-filled with muddy water. He fired again, and heard the man breaking through the bushes down there below him.

Lee was dead when Grady rolled him over. The bullets from the tommy-gun had caught him heart-high, literally riddling his chest. A good man, a trooper with an excellent record, and shot down like this without even a

ghost of a chance to make it a two-sided fight!

Grady was a wild man when he rushed on. Nothing was going to stop him now. This gang was going to pay to the last damned man in the crowd! Going to pay with blood!

The noise below was a bedlam now. Somebody was cursing the others, trying to keep them quiet. One voice was rising hysterically, repeating the same words over and over:

"That hill's covered with troopers! That hill's covered with troopers!"

"Quiet! Quiet, damn you, *quiet!*"

A man darted out of the bushes to Grady's left. The lightning flashed. Grady saw that it was the man who had killed Lee. He caught him across the stubby barrel of his shotgun, and pulled the trigger. There was a blinding roar in the rain, and the man stumbled, rocking out of sight behind another bush. Grady fired again, heard a sob-like groan, and his man was going down, a rolling, bounding figure there ten feet above the pile of brush where Grady had concealed the body of the old man just after escaping from the house with the woman.

Cautiously, ready to pour it to the man again, Grady advanced. His foot struck the confounded tommy-gun. He picked it up. By a distant flash of the lightning he saw that the man lying there in the mud would never get up again. The heavy slugs from the shotgun had torn off the man's right arm and half of his chest.

The woman had said there were seven of the men, including the truck driver. Well, three of them were accounted for now, but Grady was convinced that there were more than the woman had seen. Of course there was the boat's crew. How large a boat it was, he could not tell, but he was cer-

tain that one large enough to go to sea and meet some ship with twenty-four Chinamen aboard to smuggle into the country would not have a crew less than six.

Discovering that he had escaped, crew and all were probably looking for him now. At least half the crew would be looking for him while the others maneuvered the boat, bringing it around so that it could leave the wharf for its return journey down the lagoon and out to some quiet harbor.

He picked up the tommy-gun. A moment later he was diving headlong into a deep ditch filled with water. Two men, one to his right, the other to his left, had opened fire on him with automatic pistols at close range and through clumps of low bushes.

It was as though those bushes were weeping lead. A dull streak had darted through him when the first gun fired. There was no pain, just that dull, warm streak under his right shoulder blade, but he knew he had been shot.

CHAPTER VI

"Run-out Powders"

STANDING there beside the short, thick-set man at the wheel of the *Gallant Fisherman*, Slugger Dan Gilotti spoke from the side of his broken and swollen mouth. "Let's get the hell out of here!" It was the first time there had been anything even like a hitch in his plans for more than two years. His business had been a paying one. There were a dozen out-of-the-way old wharves under his thumb. At regular intervals of two or three weeks, the *Gallant Fisherman* had called at them during late hours of the night, unloading their strange cargo from ships at sea. Old moving vans had done the rest, hauling the

smuggled Chinamen on into Newark, Elizabeth, or New York.

It had had a most fattening effect on his pocketbook. Every Chinaman he had handled had brought him the snug sum of three thousand and five hundred dollars. Others charged less. Others had the nerve to charge more, but there was the neat sum of eighty-four thousand dollars in this night's work. At times, too, there was an occasional criminal with a heavy reward on his head who wanted to escape the country. Men like that paid good, hard money when they knew every train, plane and ship was being watched for them. And now a damned three-legged cur had spoiled everything. That damned dog and Bugs Clark, Bugs by shooting the old duffer, and the dog with his hell-fired howling up there on the hill. He swore raspingly.

"You an't takin' a run-out powder on the rest of the boys, are you, Danny?" The man at the wheel turned slowly, looking at him. "It's bad business, if you want to ask me about it."

"Yeah, and I suppose you want to sit here and have your damned old boat's picture in the paper in the morning?" Gilotti looked at the man with a sneer. "I suppose—"

"It ain't my place to suppose nothin'," cut in the man. "My night's job is done, Danny. I told you, too, that any of the other places would do just as well, but you keep on insistin' on gettin' more and more places to unload your damned contraband—"

"Dry up!" snapped Gilotti. "I know what I'm doing, Jerry."

"Never knew you to fail, but this is one time when it looks as if you've put us all on deck for a damned hot seat to sit in."

Gilotti winced. It was a habit of him to wince when men talked of elec-

tric chairs, prison walls, and hangmen's ropes. He turned his back to the man, and walked to the pilot-house window, standing there looking out.

It had grown quiet there around the house. The three men of the *Gallant Fisherman's* crew of seven were returning to the old boat. The man who had been yelling his fool head off had been silenced with the barrel of a gun slammed down across his head. He was still lying up there forward on a coil of rope.

"Give the signal!" Dan ordered, suddenly turning. "We've got to get the hell out of here!"

"What about your Chinese?"

"Damn the Chinese!" Gilotti spat on the floor. "I'm not warming my pants for that chair in Trenton by sticking around here. They will just have to shift for themselves. If what Shorty said was true, the damned troopers have got them, anyway. My job's to get out of here and do a little fixing with a couple of high-ups I know. They may not even be able to handle this."

"Not with you leaving your car up there, too."

"That car's all right, fool. The owner of it is in Europe. In other words, I borrowed it from a private garage. Give that signal, I tell you. We have no time to lose."

"You're the boss, Danny, but I'm already thinking about my wife takin' in boarders." The short man turned. He gave a cord three short, quick jerks. A shrill little whistle tooted three times. "Somethin' tells me I'm goin' to be away from home a long time—unless those high-ups you know are damned powerful fellows."

"Don't talk about it!" hissed Gilotti. "You haven't a pea in a dish at stake when it comes to me. This night's job will cost me a hundred grand."

THE rest of his men were coming now. They were like shadows in the rain, this one darting out from behind bushes, that one coming around the corner of the house. Men down there on deck below the pilot house watched them, holding their guns ready. At last eleven men were aboard the boat. Gilotti swore as he counted them.

"Three missing!" he snarled. "This is bad!"

"It's hell!" corrected the short, thickset man he had called Jerry in the pilot house. "You'd better pray that they'll come."

"Gyp the Jigger won't, I know," put in a tall, hawk-nosed man. "I saw a damned trooper sew him up up there on the slope of the hill. If my guess is right, he's as dead as a can of corned beef."

"And if my guess is right," put in a big, barrel-waisted Italian, "there's a damned trooper dead with him. Me and Legs sewed 'im from both sides. If the bullets didn't kill him, the water he fell into will drown him."

"Signal again!" rasped Gilotti, turning to Jerry. "Damn it all, we can't stay here. We've got to get away from here!"

Again the little whistle atop the pilot house sent out its three quick blasts. Gilotti's heart almost failed him a second later.

That damned dog was howling up there on the hill again! It was a long and weird howl, one that sent chills down a man's back.

Gilotti stamped the deck. "Let's go! I'll go crazy as hell and crack like a pot if I stay here another minute."

A bell jingled down in the boat's engine room a minute later. Ropes were cast off the old wharf. The two men who handled them leaped aboard. Like

a black hull, its motors throbbing gently, the *Gallant Fisherman* eased away from the wharf. The man at the wheel stood there peering into the gloom. Not a light showed, not even the butt of a cigarette glowed in the crowd there on deck.

Slugger Dan Gilotti moaned. Leaving that old wharf was like tearing the heart out of his body. He stamped into the pilot house, jammed himself down on a stool, and cupped his swollen face in his big, bruised hands.

"It'll cost a hundred grand to fix it," he moaned. "Maybe a damned sight more. I hope those plugs we left behind are dead or have sense enough to get away."

"Run-out powders are damned expensive, if you ask me," grunted the man at the wheel.

"What the hell else was there for us to do?" Gilotti was off the stool, his eyes gleaming with murder there in the darkness. "You fool, what else was there for us to do?"

"Nothin'." Again the voice of the man at the wheel was a grunt. "All I'm thinkin' about, Danny, is my old woman havin' to take in a batch of boarders."

"If you mention her again I'll kill you!" snarled Gilotti.

"Sure!" The man at the wheel chuckled dryly. "Then you'd run this old tub on a snag or a sand bar—and the troopers would get you as sure as hell."

CHAPTER VII

Trooper Aboard

WASHING along there in the water, suddenly so sick he would not give the snap of his fingers whether he lived or died, Grady found himself lodged against a pile of

brush in a bend of the big ditch. He lay there for a minute, the water swirling around him, pulling at his feet and legs. For a minute he was not particularly interested in anything, and then he thought of Tom Lee lying dead up there in the rain and mud. He thought of good old Bill Marlin up there at the wreckage of the building. He thought of that woman, of that confoundedly pathetic dog with his three legs. What the hell! Why, they were depending on him.

He stirred. It was as if this was to be his last night on earth. No such a thing as the old hackneyed "duty call" came to him. To hell with duty! A man earned his living by the sweat of his brow, giving the best he could if he was the least sincere about it. But that woman, that sorry dog! Now that was something to think about, something to make a man get up and start tearing hell out of things again.

Struggling, he stood up. The devilish Tommy-gun was gone. No sooner in his hands—and gone! Lost there in that confounded water somewhere. Only the big automatic remained now. He did not know what the devil he had done with the shotgun. No matter, anyway. Hell, he was still able to travel! Still able to fight!

He slipped his left hand inside his bosom, feeling over his cold, wet skin. Well under his armpit, his fingers found a warm hole in the flesh, a hole dribbling blood. Pretty bad, but he was not yet out of this man's fight.

Warily, no longer going to be the familiar bull in the china shop with this thing, he came out of the ditch, dragging himself up behind the bushes above it. The lightning flashed. He took stock of the slope, and heard the whistle down there tooting. The slope seemed deserted, and then he heard the

chugging of the boat's motor. Something was up.

He slipped down the slope. From the distance he saw it in another flash of the lightning, and he saw all those men going aboard. At first he thought the Chinamen had somehow managed to escape from the van and Trooper Bill Marlin. And then, getting closer, he saw Slugger Dan Gilotti outlined there against the pilot house. He was close enough to have killed the man with one shot, but he knew that would never do.

And then, seeing the boat pulling away from the old wharf, he realized everything—or thought he did. It came to him that the Chinamen had escaped, that they were back aboard, that Gilotti was going to some other place to unload his yellow cargo. And then he had a picture of Bill Marlin lying up there dead in the rain, of the woman and the dog killed.

Another flash of the lightning decided him. He saw that the lagoon narrowed to a slough and curved around the toe of a small, ridge-shaped rise at his left. That meant that he could hurry in that direction and—if luck was with him—somehow stop the boat from escaping. He started in that direction as fast as his legs would carry him.

The distance was greater than it looked. Passing over the ridge-shaped rise, he came to a hopeless series of bog-holes. He went into one up to his ears, felt the slimy slipping sand under his feet, and saved himself by swimming and the aid of an old vine hanging down almost to the surface of the water.

But it was one hole after another, one slimy bog with something near quicksand underfoot, and then another. He saw the boat to his right, saw it

slipping around the bend. It looked hopeless now. But he could not let it get away. Slugger Dan Gilotti was on that thing, and Slugger Dan Gilotti was going to jail—or to hell!

He struck the slough at last, and went into the water. It was deep here, very deep. With slow, certain strokes, he started swimming. His clothes were like lead, like something trying to pull him down, and by now that infernal bullet-hole under his shoulder blade was beginning to hurt like sixty devils prodding him with hot pitchforks. But he kept going with only his face above the water. Soon the boat was heading straight toward him.

If only somebody aboard did not see him. But could he board the devilish thing, anyway? And then he remembered that surely they had had fenders over the side while lying beside the wharf. If only they had left them, had not thought to take them up on deck, then he would have some chance.

Fortunately, the boat was coming slowly, feeling its way down the slough. Its sharp bow soon loomed above him. He grabbed it, swinging his body to one side. No sound came from above him, and that meant that he had not been discovered. It looked good.

It looked like hell a few minutes later. Swinging out at arm's length, he thought he saw one of the braided rope fenders hanging overside. He released his grip on the sharp nose of the bow, and slid down the side of the boat, and then saw that there was not a thing hanging over the side.

What the devil now! Soon he would be in reach of the propeller, and he did not know whether there was one or two of them. The side of the boat was too high for him to reach up and grab anything. All he could do now

was to keep himself pushed away from the thing and watch out for the propeller.

It was hopeless a short time later. He had to swing clear, and the boat passed him, and the wash of the propeller dragged him astern. A close call, but it was just close enough. A short length of rope trailing over the stern caught his eye in a flash of the lighting. He seized it, holding on, and then he felt the tail of the rudder moving back and forth there in front of him. He caught it, found a toehold on its sloping tail, and started drawing himself up. He was at last high enough to reach the lip of a scupper. He caught that, and found then that his right arm was going as lame as the devil on him.

He found the end of a piece of pipe jutting through the planking, and tested it with his foot. It lifted him a little higher—high enough so that he could look along the deck. An old rope locker obstructed his view, but it also shielded his movements. Using what seemed the last ounce of strength in his body, he drew himself up, a dripping thing covered with the green scum of swamp floatings. He hooked a knee over something, lay flat against the stern rail for a few moments to rest, and then slipped over the thing, and crouched down behind the rope locker—aboard at last!

CHAPTER VIII

Most Beautiful Thing

GILOTTI stood there in the pilot house, an unlighted cigar in his mouth, his heart thumping furiously, sending up throbbing pains in his temples. He cursed himself whisperingly. He cursed his men—and all that damned State of New Jersey! Always meddling in a man's business! It

made him so sick at the stomach he felt like heaving up his shoes.

"Yellow!" The word burned him to the bone. He had heard it from somebody in the crowd there forward of the pilot house and peering with tense faces and nervous eyes into the slanting rain. It was not a good thing. Never before had a man dared to say that to him, and yet—in spite of the broiling anger stirring in him—he had a sneaking little feeling that the man, whoever he was, had half-whispered the truth.

It had been different in the ring. There a man fought like hell, whipping in his rights and lefts, taking a bang on this jaw or that, but one always had the thought in mind that each round of the fighting would soon come to an end. Besides, if a man took a clean sock to the jaw and dropped down and out, nobody could kick about it.

"The tiger of the ring seems to have become a house cat."

That was right down there below him. It turned his face ashen there in the darkness of the pilot house. His hand strayed to the left to a little shelf. A heavy knife lay there. He picked it up, changed hands with it, and dropped it into his pocket. He would fix that cluck who had made that crack.

But now the slough was widening, turning into another lagoon. Jerry signaled on the muffled bells. The *Gallant Fisherman* picked up speed. Very soon now they would be out of here into clear water. They would go it then as fast as the *Gallant Fisherman* could take them, and before dawn cracked the sky in the east, his plans would be made. A few telephone calls would tell him what to do, to lay low during the day or come out and make a bold front of it, or to send out an

S. O. S. to a certain ship bound for South America, and board her in the dark.

He had plenty of money yet, money cached here and there. In a round-about way, he could return to Italy, and continue to live like a gentleman for the rest of his life. And those who called him yellow could go to hell!

Then he saw something out of the tail of his eye. It was a ducking, darting figure coming up the deck from the stern. It scared him, robbed him of his voice for an instant, and it was gone, whipping out of sight there below the pilot house and the short overhang of the *Gallant Fisherman's* excuse for a bridge. He turned, the trooper's gun jerking out of his pocket.

"Look out below!" he bawled. "See who that was running up the starboard runway!"

And then noise, a rumble, a grumble, a wave of snarling and hissing, and then a sharp voice full of command crying out.

"Hands up! Every damned one of you!"

A machine gun answered, tearing off wood from the forward corner of the pilot house down there on deck. An automatic pistol roared. A man dropped, cursing, gasping, a machine-gun clattering down on deck. Then another gun was barking. Again that roaring automatic pistol lashed out its blaze of hot fire. A man sobbed, called out in a weak voice, and crashed down across a coil of rope. Then, like the occasional flashes of lightning, hell and all its angels awoke there ahead of the *Gallant Fisherman* and out of two inky black spots in the lagoon.

Two searchlights fed by powerful batteries hurled their light upon the *Gallant Fisherman*. The lagoon was suddenly as bright as day. In sudden

terror, Jerry jerked the engine room telegraph. The muffled bells below rang: Stop!

"You fool!" With a lurch, Gilotti stepped forward. Without even thinking of what he was doing, he brought the trooper's revolver down on Jerry's head, knocking him flat. "Why the hell do you stop?"

"Coast guards!" bawled a voice forward. "Look out!"

"Get 'em up, I tell you!" yelled the trooper down there in the shadow of the pilot house. "You're all going to hell if you don't."

And then the crash of another shot, the milling and stamping about of feet on deck, the cries and wails of terror from men finding themselves in a trap! Gilotti looked out across the water, and saw two big, motorized whaleboats filled with men bearing down on the *Gallant Fisherman*. This was a wholesale pinch! There would be no time for anything now. Just jail, locked up in a damned cell with a murder charge against all of them. He could not stand this thing.

He turned, and flung down a narrow companionway. In the noise and all the excitement he reached the deck unseen. Like a bulky shadow he started to run. He raced down the deck, past the old rope locker, and hurled himself out in the lagoon, the water opening and closing over his head. He would swim for it.

Years of fighting made him a good man there in the water. He kept down, swimming in the general direction of a dark cloud of drooping willows whose limbs came down to the water. Under those trees and up and away in the swamp, and a man would have a chance to do something.

An expert here underwater, he watched to the right and left. Over-

head the searchlights turned the water to a blazing sheet of gold and lighted it far down. He swam on, his lungs filled with air. Suddenly something caused him to turn his head and look back. He almost gasped as he saw something . . .

IT was an apparition. It could not have been anything else. The light on the water above it magnified it, lengthened it, broadened it. It was all legs and body, a swimming thing coming deep down, going almost to the bottom, then coming up with long, whiplike strokes. Suddenly it was closing with Gilotti. He thought of alligators, of monsters long lurking here in this old swampland. Something closed on his left ankle. In a fighting fury, he came up, breaking the surface.

He yelled as the thing below came up with him. It was that damned trooper again, that man he had fought, that hound of hell! They went down with the water churning and boiling in the glare above them. They went deep, fighting all the way. They came up, closer to the old willows now. There on the surface, Gilotti drove his fist into the trooper's face, smashing home a perfect blow, and then they were going down again, tearing through the water, deep, deeper. They came to a long buried log, fought along its slippery surface for a moment, and went deeper until black ooze of mud and sand sucked at their feet in a gripping slime.

Up they came then, and Gilotti was wondering what in hell he had done with the trooper's revolver. Somehow, the damned thing was missing from his pocket. With his right hand free for an instant, he searched desperately, and then thought of the old knife he had picked up in the pilot house.

This would do the trick! Right there under the very edge of the willows, Gilotti took the trooper down again. A half-drowned man would be easier to kill, and the knife would not make a sound.

Again they were battling along the sunken log with that golden sheet of illumination above their heads. They were like strange beings of the water, like monsters of some dark, stagnant pool fighting it out to death. Suddenly, down there on the log, Gilotti got in a stroke. He felt the knife bite, sink, and come ripping out. A thin, dark trail of blood wreathed upward against the golden glare above them.

Up they came, fighting, the trooper's left hand now gripping Gilotti's right wrist. They fought there on the surface, the water flying. Gilotti saw that one of the coast guard boats was heading toward them. He swore raspingly, sucked his lungs full of air, and again took the trooper to the bottom.

They went down beside the old log, and came up under it. It was there that Gilotti got in another stroke with the knife. He shot in his third stroke, and felt the confounded blade strike the log and snap off at the hilt. It was drown the devil now. Hold him here under this damned log until he grew limp, and then risk the get-away in spite of that damned boat up there.

With one hand gripped like death in the trooper's hair, he caught a snag on the old log with the other. And then he felt a hand tightening on his throat, felt fingers that were like steel digging into him. He saw the golden glare above him start to fade, and then his head was bending back. The trooper had hooked an arm around his head. He released his grip on the snag. He was dying, having his neck broken there under water!

Then it happened. There was a dull, snaplike sound. Gilotti saw everything turning black. His neck was gone, broken. At that, damn them, he had escaped the hot seat. All they could do now was to bury them. He had beaten them after all, had beaten everything. He seemed to drift away in a peaceful sleep, and then his eyes fluttered open in the glare of a powerful lamp. A voice barked above him.

"Don't shoot! It's a State trooper, boys—and he's got a man!"

Somebody caught the trooper's hand. Somebody reached down and caught Gilotti by the back of the collar. Half-fainting, he was dragged into the boat. A pair of handcuffs were clamped to his wrists. He swore raspingly. It was all up now. Everything! Out of the corner of his eye he saw the *Gal-lant Fisherman*. Coast guardsmen were swarming about on her decks. In the din of noise he heard Jerry talking.

"I didn't have nothin' to do with any shootin'. Gilotti's the duck. Him and Bugs!"

Squawking! The thick-set little snake. Suddenly Gilotti jerked to his feet. He was not yet done. Not yet! With a lurch, he threw himself over the side of the boat. He went down into the water again. There was nobody to follow now. Somebody was holding that damned trooper, keeping him in the boat. Gilotti had heard him raving.

"Go back to the old wharf. . . . Two men are killed. . . . Up on the hill—old building. . . . A trooper, a woman and a dog. . . . Moving van full of Chinamen. . . . Two prisoners in the bushes."

"Yes!" some officer had been shouting. "We've been trying to mop up this gang for the past three months. . . . They slipped us tonight in the fog and rain, but we know the ship. . . ."

He reached the trees, and came up for just an instant, feeling as if his lungs were going to burst. Behind him a light glared. A harshly-rolling voice yelled "Halt!" He ducked underwater, and was climbing out under wet bushes when a heavy service automatic crashed behind him. A pain snapped through his head. A big, ungainly thing, he slid down there in the mud. The bullet had entered behind his left ear and came out at the top of his head.

"NO, I'm not going to sit down. Damn it all, I tell you I'm all right. Just—just a little tired. This—this is a clean up."

Grady heard himself arguing that, and found himself aboard the *Gallant Fisherman*. The body of Gilotti was lying there. All the others were lined up and under guard. The night's job was just about finished.

"The woman knows. Bill—Bill Marlin will know, if they haven't killed him. We'd better hurry. Here, damn it, let me stand up."

He got up in spite of them, and then plunged forward into a burly-chested coast guardsman's arms. An officer swore. In a dull, vague way, Grady heard him.

"The poor devil's not only shot, he's slashed all to hell!"

And then the peaceful quiet. Afterward, riding patrol at night with a three-legged dog on the seat beside him, a dog that belonged to the woman he married, he swore that he merely closed his eyes and took a few minutes' rest.

He opened them in a white room, saw troopers and doctors around him, and faded out of the picture again.

It was exactly a week later that he opened his eyes. At first he thought Mom had changed the curtains of his window. On the sill there at his left, two sparrows were quarreling. He lay looking at them for a long time. At last he moved his right hand. It touched something, a shaggy head, a shaggy shoulder. It felt down a foreleg to a hairy paw, then down another foreleg. It came to an abrupt end at the knee. He turned his head then, and saw the dog there beside his bunk. Beside the dog, beautifully dressed in pale green, was a woman.

"I'm Merry Moore," she told him. "This is the third time I came. At first, they wouldn't let me bring in Nubby, but the doctor likes dogs. You were so splendid that night."

"That night?" His brows wrinkled.

"The night you came when—when Nubby was howling. The night Gilotti was there and they killed my uncle."

"Yes," he nodded with his eyes. "I remember now. Sure! Did—did we make a clean sweep?"

"Everybody, everything, yes. You were so splendid! The papers have been full of it since that night."

Well, that was nice. He looked up at the ceiling, and then back at her. Two big tears were in her eyes. He wondered why she was crying.

"Do you know," he sighed, "you're the most beautiful thing I ever looked at, Merry Moore."



Civil Service Q & A

By "G-2"

Could You Qualify as—

Special Agent (G-Man)
Secret Service Operative
Post Office Inspector
Customs Patrol
Immigration Patrol
Anti-Narcotic Agent
Parole Investigator
Prison Keeper
Internal Revenue Agent
Alcohol Tax Agent

Police Patrolman
Police Detective
Policewoman
Fingerprint Expert
State Trooper
Crime Prevention
Investigator
Probation Officer
Criminologist
Police Radio Expert

This department will give you every week typical questions asked in civil service examinations.

Clerk Test—Concluded

IN last week's issue the General Understanding and Mental Facility section of clerk, grade 1, civil service test was concluded. Below are the final questions in the test together with key answers.

DUTIES AND LETTER WRITING—

DIRECTIONS: For each of the following statements fill each blank space with a word or phrase so as to make the statements complete and true. Give only ONE solution to complete each statement.

Q 67—If a check has been lost, and a new one made out, the drawer can protect himself by the first check.

Q 68—Printed circulars are admitted to the mails as matter.

Q 69—The amount of postage required for a parcel post package sent uninsured depends upon the as well as the

Q 70—The abbreviation C. O. D. means

Q 71—The correct abbreviation for the word Maryland (a state) is

Q 72—The Hollerith is a kind of machine.

Q 73—The first copy returned by the printer for correction is called the

Q 74—The periodical listing of goods on hand is called

Q 75—The decision of a jury following a trial is known as

Q 76—An order on a storeroom for supplies is called a

Q 77—A notary public is an officer who is called upon to attest the on a paper.

Q 78—To place money in an account at a bank is called a

Q 79—Information arranged in columns with appropriate headings is said to be in form.

Q 80—When a person issues checks for more funds than he has in the bank, his account is said to be

Q 81—A card index where all names can be seen is called a index.

Q 82—When too much money has been paid, and it is necessary to return part of it to the sender, such amount is called a

Q 83—The material placed between sheets of paper in a typewriter so that copies can be made is called

Q 84—The card placed before a section in a file, and labeled to show what is contained in that section, is called a

Q 85—An extra stamp is needed to ex-

pedite the sending of a letter. Such a stamp, costing 10 cents, is called a stamp.

Q 86—Whenever money or supplies are given out a should be obtained.

Q 87—A good method of keeping track of the time of employees is to have them ring in their time of arrival and departure by means of a

Q 88—A boy under 17 must go to a continuation school if he has not high school.

Q 89—A boy who persistently stays away from school is called a

Q 90—An individual who owns property on which he pays a certain amount each year in order to finance the expenditures of his city is called a

Q 91—The appliance which determines how much gas or water a householder uses is called a

Q 92—The income paid to the government of the United States by its citizens able to do so is called a income tax.

Q 93—The head of the department charged with making investigations into city affairs for the mayor is called by the title of (Note: While this question applies to New York City, suit your answer to your community and check on it—"G-2").

Q 94—A man now out of service who was a member of the military forces of the U. S. during the war is called a

Q 95—If a man does not wish to accept the judgment of a court as final he may make an to a higher court.

Q 96—An alien is a man living in this country but not a thereof.

Q 97—Dial system is an improved method of communication.

Q 98—A list of persons, and the wages or salaries earned by each one, used for their signatures when receiving checks, is called a

Q 99—To attract the attention of a telephone operator move the up and down slowly.

Q 100—The number of boroughs in Greater New York City is

(Note: If unfamiliar with N. Y. City, substitute the question—the number of counties in my state is and check your answer yourself—"G-2").

Q 101—White Plains, N. Y., is in the county of (Note: If unfamiliar with

N. Y. state, substitute this question: The capitol of the state in which I live is in county, and check your answer yourself—"G-2").

Q 102—Atlantic City is in the state of

Q 103—The nation's capitol at Washington should be addressed at Washington,

Q 104—The appropriation for salaries and other expenses of running the U. S. government is called the

Q 105—The city department concerned with the safekeeping of persons serving prison terms is called the Department of (Note: If not familiar with N. Y. City, substitute this question: Agents of the Federal Bureau of Investigation, Department of Justice, Washington, D. C., are popularly known as

Q 106—If a person in your office is seriously injured you should call so that he may be taken immediately to a hospital for treatment.

LETTER WRITING: Address to the Civil Service Commission a letter. In rating this letter spelling, grammar, punctuation, neatness and handwriting will be considered as well as SUBJECT MATTER. Do not sign anything to bottom of letter; end it merely, "Yours very truly."

Q 107—Outline in detail what a young man should understand about his rights, duties and obligations as a citizen of this country.

KEY ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS 67 to 106: Q 67—stopping; Q 68—Third class; Q 69—Distance—weight; Q 70—Collect on delivery; Q 71—Md.; Q 72—tabulating; Q 73—proof; Q 74—Taking stock or inventory; Q 75—Verdict; Q 76—Requisition; Q 77—Signature; Q 78—Deposit; Q 79—Tabulated; Q 80—Overdrawn; Q 81—Visible; Q 82—Refund; Q 83—Carbon paper; Q 84—Guide or tab; Q 85—Special delivery; Q 86—Receipt; Q 87—Time clock; Q 88—Graduated from; Q 89—Truant; Q 90—Taxpayer; Q 91—Meter; Q 92—Federal; Q 93—Commissioner of Accounts (For N. Y. City); Q 94—Veteran; Q 95—Appeal; Q 96—Citizen; Q 97—Telephonic; Q 98—Payroll; Q 99—Receiver hook or receiver holder; Q 100—Five (for N. Y. City); Q 101—Westches-

ter (For N. Y.); Q 102—New Jersey; Q 103—D. C.; Q 104—Budget; Q 105—Correction (For N. Y. City); G-men; Q 106—Ambulance.

Q 107—Letter writing. Civil Service examiners rate letters submitted in tests by the process known as "breaking them down." You may rate your own letter in the same way by judging it as to these factors: (a) form and style, (1) command of good English; (2) proper grammatical structure; (3) spelling; (4) neatness; (5) coherence of thought, unity and ability to express yourself; (6) use and knowledge of the elements in a letter. (b) Content (as applied to subject given), (1) your rights as to (a) voting; (b) free speech; (c) protection of life and property; (d) freedom of worship; (e) education; (f) trial by jury. (c) Your obligations and duties, (a) respect for and obedience to duly constituted authority; (b) prompt payment of taxes and obligations; (c) proper use of right to vote; (d) your attitude with respect to aiding in enforcement of law and order; (e) your duties in defense of your country; (f) an understanding of civics and your activities in connection therewith; (g) your participation in charities; (h) respecting rights of others; (i) attitude toward children. In rating your own letter check it against the above.

RATINGS: In order to arrive at your rating on the entire examination, bear in mind that to pass in the test of General Understanding and Mental facility (Questions 1 to 66), you must attain at least 80% to pass. Thus allow one point for each correct answer to questions 1 to 63, and for each correct answer to the multiple questions, 64 to 66 (74 separate problems, allow $\frac{1}{2}$ point or 37 points in all. In the Duties and Letter Writing test (questions 67 to 106), allow 2 points for each correct answer and 20 points for a letter which conforms in every respect to the requirements set forth in key answer Q 107. To pass, a minimum mark of 75 per cent must be attained. To obtain final average add ratings in both sections of the test and divide by two. This is not the official method used in marking papers, but it will suffice to provide a means of checking

yourself. Three hours is the time limit for completing the test. In the actual test the highest man attained a final average of 98%.

A TEST IN AERONAUTICS

From Albert Le Boutilier of Chicago comes a query as to what a candidate for civil service appointment as a teacher of aviation construction and mechanics may expect in the way of a test. While we cannot provide key answers, we submit the following samples of questions asked in a recent test, and reader Le Boutilier may judge for himself as to whether he is qualified to answer them.

(1) In the course of his work a teacher does a variety of things which are classified as (a) educational; (b) administrative or managerial; (c) instructional. Explain and illustrate each of the above as applied to instruction in aviation mechanics.

(2) Show briefly how a teacher of aviation construction and mechanics should endeavor to have his pupils attain any one of the following aims, (a) command of fundamental processes; (b) worthy use of leisure; (c) ethical character.

(3) Prepare an outline course of study in practical and theoretical matter for first-term boys in (choose one only): (1) airplane engine mechanics; (2) airplane mechanics.

(4) From the fitting enclosed in envelope, prepare a job sheet showing the fitting's development through the use of sketches and in detail explain, step by step, the job procedure.

FEDERAL VACATIONS

In a Congressional bill recently signed by President Roosevelt, annual vacation leave for permanent employees has been extended from 15 to 26 days, for temporary employees 30 days. Another bill provides 15 days' sick leave instead of 30 days but the new bill permits a total of 90 days accumulative sick leave and as many as 30 days over the basic 15 days in case of serious illness.

Next Week—A Job-Seeking Test



They're Swindling You!

Mail Order Divorces

By

Frank Wrentmore

This is the forty-third of a series of articles exposing business rackets that cost you billions of dollars every year! Mr. Wrentmore is an authority on swindles and frauds, well known to legal, financial, and commercial associations.—The Editor.

MRS. BRADFORD was bubbling over with news when her husband came home to dinner the other evening.

"George," she said, "what do you think, Mrs. Parks has a divorce from her husband and she said you told her she couldn't get one."

"I did," George replied as he seated himself in the easy chair and opened the evening paper. "She came to see me about two months ago. Told me a lot of imaginary troubles and left in a huff when I said she had no grounds for divorce in this state. Told me she was going to get a lawyer who *would* get her a divorce. She's a giddy thing anyway and Henry Parks is far too good for her. Where'd she get her divorce?"

"Mexico."

"Mexico? Why, she hasn't been to Mexico. I've seen her around town regularly."

"I know it. She got it by mail. She said it was the easiest thing she ever saw. All she did was to write to a lawyer in Fort Worth, Texas, and he got her a Mexican divorce."

"What was the lawyer's name, do you remember?"

"Yes, I copied it down. I thought I'd give it to you so that you could get divorces through him for people who can't get them here. It's awfully easy. Here it is, 'Jenaro Cenicerros, Fort Worth, Texas.' Mrs. Parks said it cost her only a hundred dollars."

"Thank you, my dear. It was very thoughtful of you. Now the next time you see Mrs. Parks, and I'd see her tomorrow if I were in your place, tell her this. On April 21st, the Post Office Department issued a fraud order against Mr. Cenicerros, and if you should write him a letter today it would be returned to you marked 'Fraudulent.' This is the first time, that I know of, where Uncle Sam has officially taken cognizance of the heavy traffic in 'mail-order' divorces originating in Mexico.

"It appears, from the memorandum

"I am glad to endorse the program of *Detective Fiction Weekly* which will bring to its readers the truth about rackets and racketeers. No man can be swindled if he knows in advance what the swindler is going to do—and nobody *wants* to be swindled."—Edward L. Greene, General Manager of the National Better Business Bureau.

prepared by the Solicitor for the Post Office Department, that the order is predicated on very firm grounds and that persons in the United States who are buying their divorces in Mexico by mail are really the victims of a fraudulent scheme and the piece of paper they get for their money hasn't the value of a cancelled postage stamp. The stamp may be of some value some day, but the divorce will always be worthless.

"In the first place, the Solicitor says, 'A careful search of the cases arising in the courts of the several states (in the United States) does not disclose a single case wherein the question of the validity of Mexican divorces, obtained in absentia, in which such divorces have been declared valid.'

"He then goes on, 'The reported cases show that the laws of the several states with respect to divorce have been uniformly interpreted by the courts as requiring that persons resident within and subject to the jurisdiction and authority of the state shall not be permitted, by means of a legal fiction created by a foreign legislature, to attempt to deprive the state in which they live of the right to enforce its laws with respect to marriage and divorce and transfer that right to a foreign court without any actual removal thereto of the parties seeking divorce.

"*'Such divorce decrees issued by a foreign court wholly lacking in jurisdiction over the interested parties are uniformly held to be absolutely null and void.'*

"Then, just to pin it on Mr. Ceniceros, the Solicitor says, 'The evidence before me indicates that this promoter is well aware of the fact that these so-called divorces are not recognized as valid by the courts of the United States.'"

"Then, George," his wife remarked, "that must mean that Mrs. Parks has wasted her hundred dollars, doesn't it?"

"Not only that," said her husband, 'but if she proceeds on the assumption that she is divorced and marries that young snip she has been running around with, she can be arrested and prosecuted for bigamy—and it would serve her right."

"I'm so glad. When she was here today she was so uppity. Insinuated that you were a half-baked lawyer and didn't know your business. I'll show her."

THIS appears to be the beginning of the end of the Mexican divorce racket which has done a flourishing business all over the United States. Small want ads in the "Personal" columns of many newspapers serve to introduce the victim to the lawyer who promises an "easy" divorce.

The interest of this department is confined to the racketeering features of the industry. The individual states have, as the Solicitor says, long denied the validity of these so-called divorces in estoppel actions where they have been questioned, but now that Uncle Sam has stepped in and branded them "Frauds" through his Post Office Department, it looks as though we will have to resume patronage of our home industries and become familiar with the time-tables to Reno.

The Solicitor in his well-considered memorandum adds an almost final argument when he says, "Even their validity in Mexico appears to be open to question." In other words, the Mexicans don't use them. These mail-order divorces are apparently for American consumption only.

Next Week—The Installment Gyps

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
"Sunyam"

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.

OUR *Inner Circle Club*, which is composed of solvers who have submitted 1,000 or more solutions to this department, now claims its forty-ninth member! The newcomer is Joseph E. Conklin, Riverhead, N. Y., whose solving total reached 1,002 answers with the April 25 issue! Congratulations, J. E. C.! You are now a life member of our top-solvers organization! Members who qualified in May will be named next month.

Which reminds us, there are still five months ahead on this year's cryptograms! Remember, any solver submitting 100 or more answers this year (these do not have to be consecutive) will be listed in our *Honor Roll for 1936!* All solutions are also credited in our *Cipher Solvers' Club*, which is published monthly. Keep your answers coming, cryptofans!

Several new recruits to our Solvers' Corps have asked the meaning of "inner circle cipher," as applied to the final cryptogram each week. The five regular cryptograms in each issue are alike in construction, but are graded in difficulty according to the words used, the last one merely being the hardest, thus testing the skill of the "inner circle" of solvers.

The last cryptogram each month is called a "challenge cipher" because of the par rating, which is an estimate of the answers that will be submitted. Thus, "Punch-drunk Numskulls" by Abacus, No. 102 of April 25, having a par of 100 solutions, elicited answers from 180 fans. This novelty construction, using but one vowel, u, won high praise from our solvers!

In last week's "inner circle" cipher, No. 180 by Magi, the telltale -L-, tried as -s- provided an entering wedge. Next, MZYOL (- - - -s), following a word list, suggested *words*. And this, of course, unlocked HYZDKO (-ro- -d), *around*, leading to DLTQ (us-d), evidently *used*. UPK-TYL' VHUFL (-ners' -a- -s), *miners' camps*, would then follow.

George Davis (age, 13 years) opens the current cryptic spread. His division uses a two-word key-phrase, numbered 01234 50789. As a suggested solution, first find *zero* by inspection. Then link the sequences together; etc. In Captain Kidd's construction, compare ZRO and ZRKZ: KUN and UTUO; LCZ and KLTCZ. Then look to UTXO and OGOK.

Identify the initial phrase AB DEF, noting the ending -ABN, in Scheherazade's cryptogram. Then substitute in PEFVDFKFS and EAVVP, and fill in the missing letters. Ciphermit good-naturedly pokes a bit of fun at us in his No. 184. Compare the affixes -VHR and -KVUHN, for entry. Follow with NUExKVUHN, NYKN and UHY, KZUXNLHS and ZYLS; and so on.

Ah-Tin-Du uses a 24-frequency D in her 131-letter alliterative message. Note DFSSRM, DFS'M, and DFM for entry. Harry R. Bell holds the "inner circle" spot this week. Nine XG's and one GX are a feature of the construction. A solution of No. 186 and the answers to all of this week's ciphers will appear next week. Asterisks indicate capitalization.

No. 181—Cryptic Division. By George Davis.

CSI)UDASCE(AUD
URUQ

USKC
QDQR

RCRE
RCRU

A

No. 182—Gross Neglect. By Captain Kidd.

YTOZX VRKYXTNSHO KLTCZ PEKXRSUQ OGOX, VCLG
ESYX, XROEE-ESBO OKVX, KUN PEKFOU RKSX; LCZ UTUO
OFZTE ZRO DSVZCOX TP ZRKZ VTAKUZSM TVQKU, ZRO
UTXO!

No. 183—Midsummer Musings. By Scheherazade.

"AB DEF GHKLEABN *HONOPD RABS, LTKBUAFVSP XTR
DEF EFHS, PEFVDFKFS AB KTOBS YHVVFX SFGDEP, TB
VTR EAVVP TODPGKFHS."—*KTPPFDDA.

No. 184—A Modern Legree. By Ciphermit.

OUTFYTED, ATDBKUOLHN NKTUPY OUT ZXHSTYS NUE-
XKVUHN BYT DYLT. HUG, SYFUH SYBLTKFYHK ZYLS
NYKN HYG RULE OUT XHKVTVHR KDTUN—UHY KZUX-
NLHS LHNGYTN!

No. 185—Placed in a Pen. By Ah-Tin-Du.

DRQ DRUUFON DFM DFLZYM DFMDYXSZ DFMEXOCN.
DYXBA DRSMBTQMLRLNUH DUFXTN, "DFSSRM DFODBO-
FMB DFM!" DRQ DFUTUH DRRQN DFMDYBO. DFM DFS'M
DRSMXSLB DFQMOXSZ DFMEXOCN.

No. 186—High Jinx. By Harry R. Bell.

SXGLO, ZXGHTKO, GYDXGHO KXGS-EXGLO, PZGKO, NGBK
GKVGRNUGLO; DUSXGKRK; USXGKRK EXGS EXFULRS.
VGXHO KOR, "RYXGLO!" PTYUZR: LUXZ.

LAST WEEK'S ANSWERS

175—Key: 0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9
J U L Y N I G H T S

176—"Baseballer" and "baseballist" are dictionary terms for a baseball player. But have you ever seen them on the sporting page?

177—Zephyr, blowing dust, came gently down village street, lifted gentleman's new white panama. Rolling along dusty road soon ruined ornate headgear.

178—Unusual diet irritates goat. Bereft of tin cans, he runs amuck, swallowing vacuum cleaner, shoe trees, radio condenser, tin snips, jam jar, swizzle-stick.

179—Deformed reformer informally affirmed forger defamed *confirre*. Uniformed official, formerly uninformed, confronted felon. Confused falsifier formally confessed.

180—Brob, cage, adit, bank, crib, apex, spud, curb, arch, goaf, lode, rake, stulm, sprag, plumb, thurl, squib—words used around miners' camps.

First call, cryptofans, for our August *Cipher Solvers' Club!* To enroll, merely send us your answers to any of this week's puzzles! Address: M. E. Ohaver, DETECTIVE FICTION WEEKLY, 280 Broadway, New York, N. Y.



WE didn't really expect such a flood of answers when we published those letters from people who like serials, from the novelette faction, and from the pro-short story contingent. But we have been very pleased with all the messages from our good friends, and very gratified to learn that the majority of them like DETECTIVE FICTION WEEKLY just as it is now, more or less. That is what we had hoped, of course, but we were mighty glad to know for sure.

The gentleman from Iowa has the floor.

DEAR SIR:

I read your letter in the June 20 number of DFW and will comply and state my views regarding whether or not I prefer all short stories or both serials and short stories, and my opinion is that they are all needed to make a good magazine and I for one vote to continue as you have done, but the two serials you now have running in the magazine are so good that I can hardly wait for them to come. They sure are fine stories.

This number is one of the best. Only there is one story that I do not like so very well, although it may suit other people, and that is the story of *The Lady from Hell*. I did not like the true story of *Broadway Jack* or the one that you had some time ago on the same basis. You have some stories that are not as good as I think they

should be, but as a whole the magazine is very good.

I will not mention the authors I like best as they are all generally good. I like the stories about *Battle McKim*. I don't remember who the author was, but he was sure a good writer. Wishing you all the success possible, with lots of good luck,

Yours truly,

D. RUNDBERG,
Yale, Iowa.

An old-timer and a staunch, loyal friend.

DEAR EDITOR:

I have been reading DETECTIVE FICTION WEEKLY for about ten years now. I began reading it when it was formerly FLYNN's.

I shall always remember the first story I read and how very interesting it was—*The Crimson Clown*. Have not read such a thrilling story since, but think *The Lady from Hell* is a close second and it leaves me breathless after reading about her.

I enjoy all the stories, features and articles and have no objections to your serials, as I never miss one book and don't read the serial until I have one complete story. My hubby complains sometimes when more than one serial is run at one time, but only because he is impatient. He likes the ones with three or four chapters.

I have often thought of writing and saying how much we enjoy DFW but just kept putting it off. You will not find many brickbats among the letters from DFW readers and here is another fan wishing you worlds of success.

Lester Leith is our favorite character and so I wish we could read more about him.

A sincere reader,

Mrs. H. N. BETTS,
Carpenteria, Calif.

A bouquet for our old friend, Mr. Carroll John Daly.

DEAR EDITOR:

Detective stories are my weakness, and DETECTIVE FICTION WEEKLY one of my favorite magazines. I enjoy all the stories but do not hesitate to say I like those by Carroll John Daly best of them all.

"Truth is stranger than fiction"—they say—but after reading the daily papers filled with crime news and Daly's stories, I should say they run parallel. This author certainly knows the types of criminals that infest our city, and it is too bad we do not really have a *Satan Hall* connected with the police department to round up New York's worst.

I have found myself in such suspense at the end of his installments that I decided to save up all the issues till his serial is completed. But each week I yield to the lure, and read it as soon as I get the magazine in my hands. I hope you will publish plenty of them in the future issues of DETECTIVE FICTION WEEKLY.

Sincerely,

Mrs. I. G. SANKEN,
Brooklyn, N. Y.

As one editor to another. . . .

DEAR BRO. EDITOR:

Being an ardent DFW fan, I read with much interest the comment on the contents of your excellent magazine. Kindly number me among those who favor at least two serials at a time, two novelettes and the rest short stories. Most of your true stories could be condensed without affecting their value.

While I favor the narrative cross-word puzzle, there are no doubt many others who prefer the secret cipher problems. It is the same in publishing a country weekly, some readers like this and others that, hence we print a bit of both. But really, I can't understand how any fiction fan can have the heart to ask you to omit those grand serials—I'll just mention one—Fred MacIsaac. No short story, no novelette is able to bring such meaty food for the mind. Ergo: DFW suits me to a T in its present make-up, and I've long ago learned not to depend upon the news-stand for my copy, which comes to me by the year, paid in advance.

Fraternally yours,

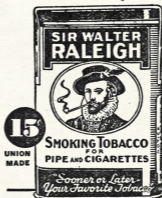
FRANK A. WERNER,
The Axtell Standard, Axtell, Kansas.

THE END OF A PUFF-ECT DAY



LIFE'S too short and marriage too sacred to spoil them with a foul pipe and unholy tobacco. So we urge husbands to keep their briars sweet and clean and filled with Sir Walter Raleigh's milder mixture. No woman ever recoiled from Sir Walter Raleigh burning fragrantly in a well-kept pipe. As a matter of fact, this gentler blend of better Kentucky Burleys makes men more attractive and women more yielding and admiring. Try a tin for the little woman's sake . . . and your sake . . . and our sake. We honestly feel it's the easiest-smoking, best-smelling blend ever offered for only fifteen cents!

SWITCH TO THE BRAND
OF GRAND AROMA



FREE booklet tells how to make your old pipe taste better, sweeter; how to break in a new pipe. Write for copy today. Brown & Williamson Tobacco Corporation, Louisville, Kentucky. Dept. MS-68



COMING NEXT WEEK!

THE NIGHT I DIED

A STRANGE, and unusual novelette brought to you under anonymous authorship because of the very fact that it is such an extraordinary departure from the expected and conventional. A powerful story of the luckless circumstances which changed a meek man into a ruthless killer. He was to be slaughtered—and then in a minute's time, he himself turned murderer, and played a lone, cunning hand against fate.

FOR THE DEFENSE

A Short Story by

T. T. Flynn

THE vices and treachery of Hollywood find their way to a Western dude ranch. *Lynn Brooks*, movie idol of millions, wanted to get away from the routines of studio work—not to relieve his jaded nerves, as so many people supposed—but for a secret purpose known only to him. Yet, secrets will out, and there are tricks of the open range which even a sophisticated screen star can hardly be expected to know.

A \$200,000 JAW BONE

A True Story by

Major C. E. Russell

NEW swindle rackets are forever being devised by the twisted brains of criminals—and it is the job of private and federal investigators to crack their operations wide open. In the case of the \$200,000 Jaw Bone, *Investigator Graham* was following a cold trail—until he warmed it with a special bait for crooks—bait which few hoods can resist.

Among other short stories, we present the latest fiction by your favorite writers. J. LANE LINKLATER, NORVELL W. PAGE, and others will entertain you with their gripping portrayals of crooks and crime and of the armed forces of law and order that combat them.

Also in this issue our regular features, "G-2," M. E. OHAVER'S "CRYPTOGRAMS" and an article by FRANK WRENTMORE on the swindlers' rackets. And the third installment of MAX BRAND'S latest mystery, "THE GRANDUCA."

Coming to You in the Issue of August 8th

DETECTIVE FICTION WEEKLY



**DO WE HAVE
TO ASK PAUL—
HE LOOKS
SO TERRIBLE**

**THE
GIRLS WERE
GIVING
PAUL THE
"GO-BY"
UNTIL—**



WE REALLY OUGHT
TO HAVE ASKED PAUL
TO COME — BUT —

I KNOW — HE'S GOT
SUCH AN **AWFUL** LOT
OF HICKIES YOU
SORT OF DON'T
WANT TO SEE
HIM —



OH, GOODY — HERE'S
PAUL — PAUL, CAN
WE FISH WITH YOU?

PAUL WHY
DIDN'T
YOU GO
OUT IN
THE BOAT?

OH — I DUN' NO—
WASN'T ROOM
ENOUGH FOR
ME, I GUESS



BUT PAUL—
DORA SAID
SHE WAS
GOING TO
ASK YOU,
I HEARD
HER

YES — AND
THEN SHE
SAID YOU
HAD HICKIES—
WHAT ARE
HICKIES
PAUL?

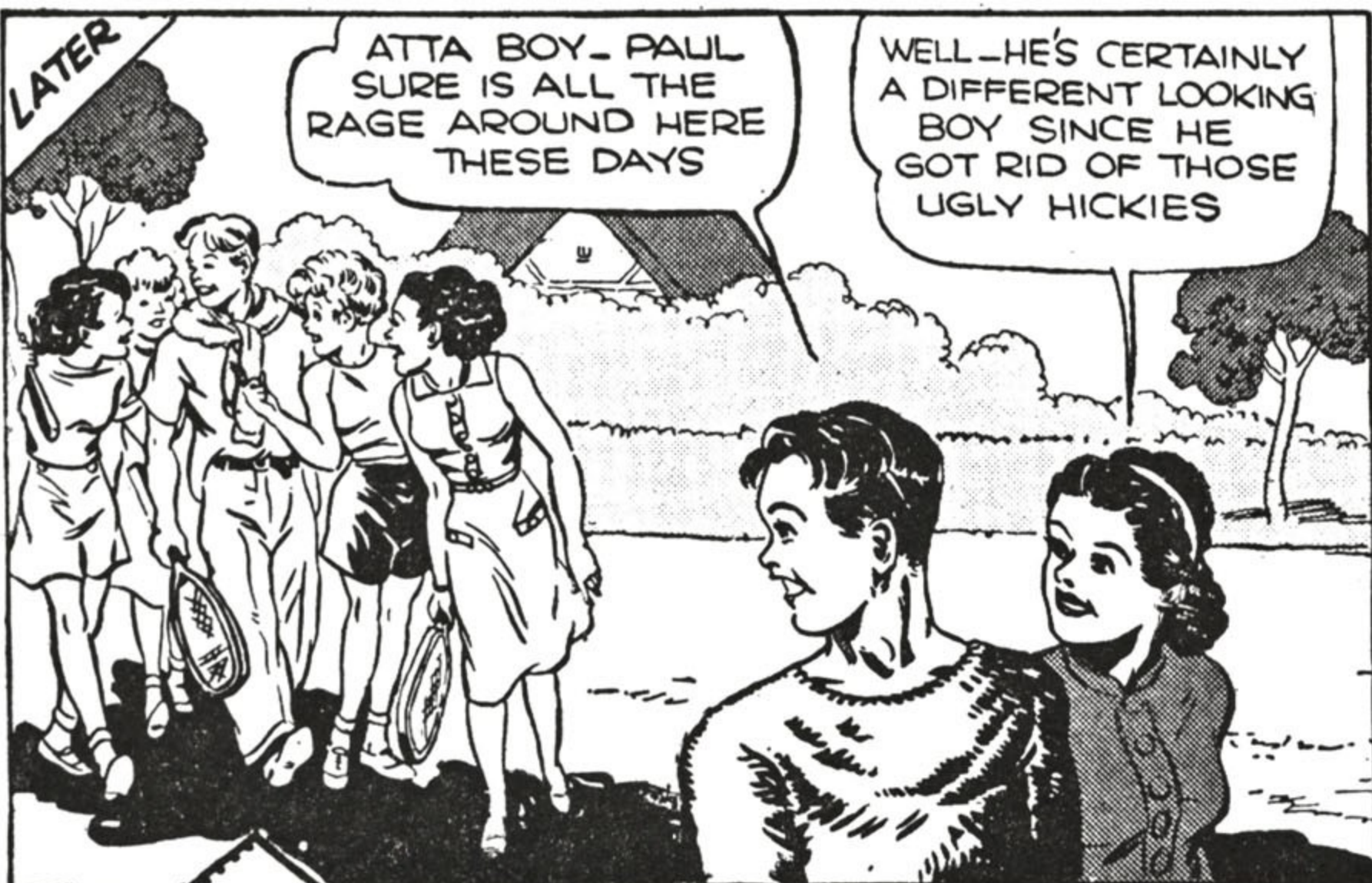
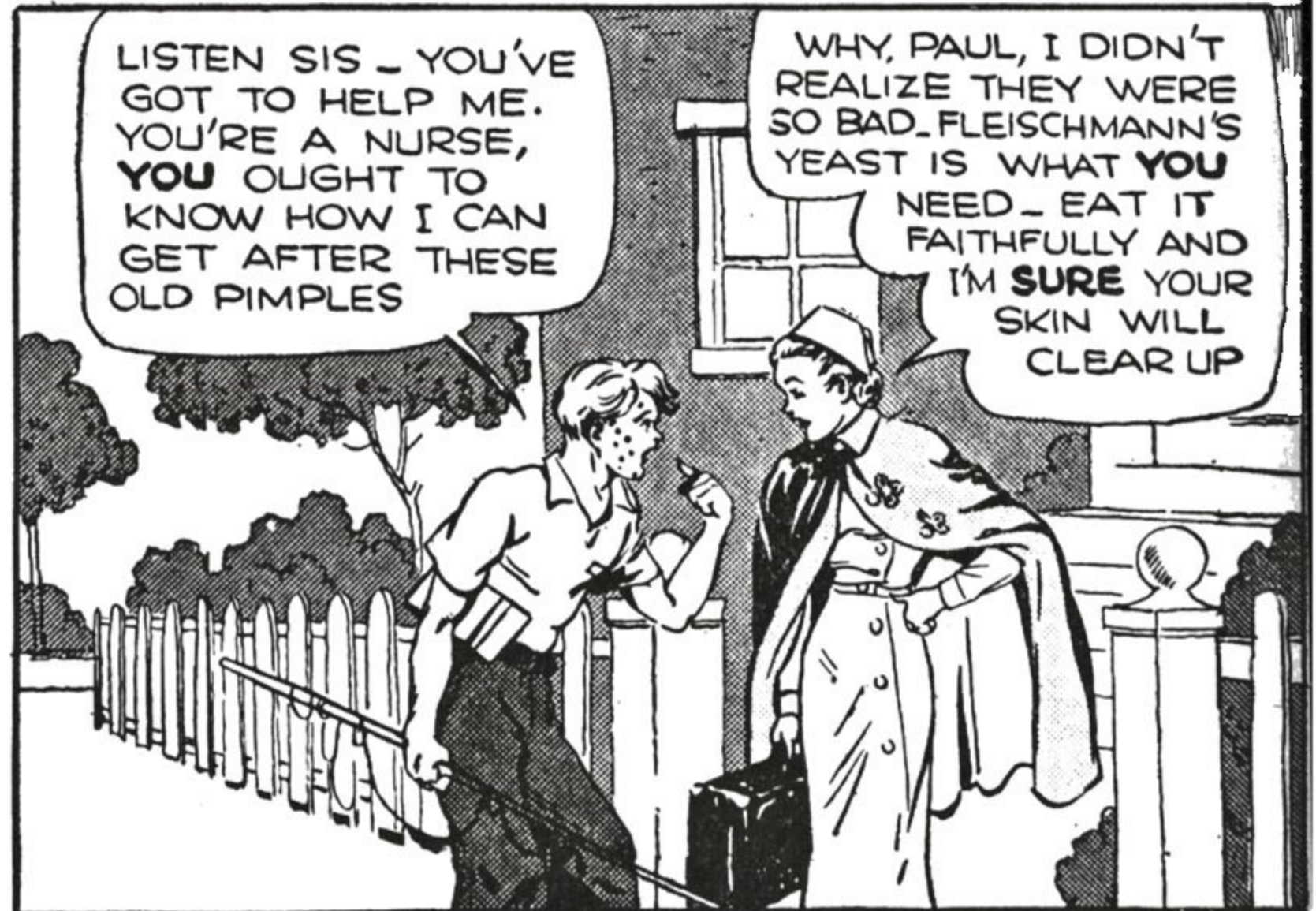
WELL I'LL BE
JIGGERED —

SO THAT'S
WHY I'VE
BEEN SITTING
AROUND WITH
ONLY MYSELF
FOR COMPANY!



LISTEN SIS — YOU'VE
GOT TO HELP ME.
YOU'RE A NURSE,
YOU OUGHT TO
KNOW HOW I CAN
GET AFTER THESE
OLD PIMPLES

WHY, PAUL, I DIDN'T
REALIZE THEY WERE
SO BAD. FLEISCHMANN'S
YEAST IS WHAT **YOU**
NEED — EAT IT
FAITHFULLY AND
I'M **SURE** YOUR
SKIN WILL
CLEAR UP



ATTN BOY — PAUL
SURE IS ALL THE
RAGE AROUND HERE
THESE DAYS

WELL — HE'S CERTAINLY
A DIFFERENT LOOKING
BOY SINCE HE
GOT RID OF THOSE
UGLY HICKIES



—clears the skin

**by clearing skin irritants
out of the blood**

**Don't let Adolescent Pimples put
a stop to YOUR good times**

YOUNG PEOPLE are often plagued by
unsightly pimples after the start of ado-
lescence—from about 13 to 25, or longer.

Important glands develop at this time, and
final growth takes place causing disturbances
in the body. The skin gets oversensitive. Waste
poisons in the blood irritate this sensitive skin
—and pimples break out!

Fleischmann's fresh Yeast clears these skin
irritants out of the blood. Then,
the pimples go. Eat 3 cakes *daily*
—one about ½ hour before meals
—plain, or dissolved in a little
water—until your skin clears.
Start today!

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"PARIS IN LOS ANGELES!" So the world of fashion and of Hollywood calls the Victor Hugo Restaurant. And, as the diners pause to enjoy Camels, Hugo nods approval. "Our guests know fine tobaccos as well as fine foods," he says. "They have made Camels the favorite here."



— for Digestion's Sake — Smoke Camels

GOLD-CUP WINNER! Geo. Reis won 3 times in a row! He says: "I smoke Camels and enjoy good digestion."



**Camels stimulate
digestion...
increase alkalinity**

The human digestion responds unfavorably to nervousness, hurry, and strain. It is definitely *encouraged* by smoking Camels.

Scientific studies show clearly the manner in which Camels aid digestion. Using sensitive scientific apparatus, it is possible to measure accurately the increase in digestive fluids — alkaline digestive fluids — that follows the enjoyment of Camel's costlier tobaccos.

Make Camel your cigarette. They never get on your nerves. They are gentle on your throat.

**COSTLIER
TOBACCOS!**

Camels are made from finer, **MORE EXPENSIVE TOBACCOS** — Turkish and Domestic — than any other popular brand.

