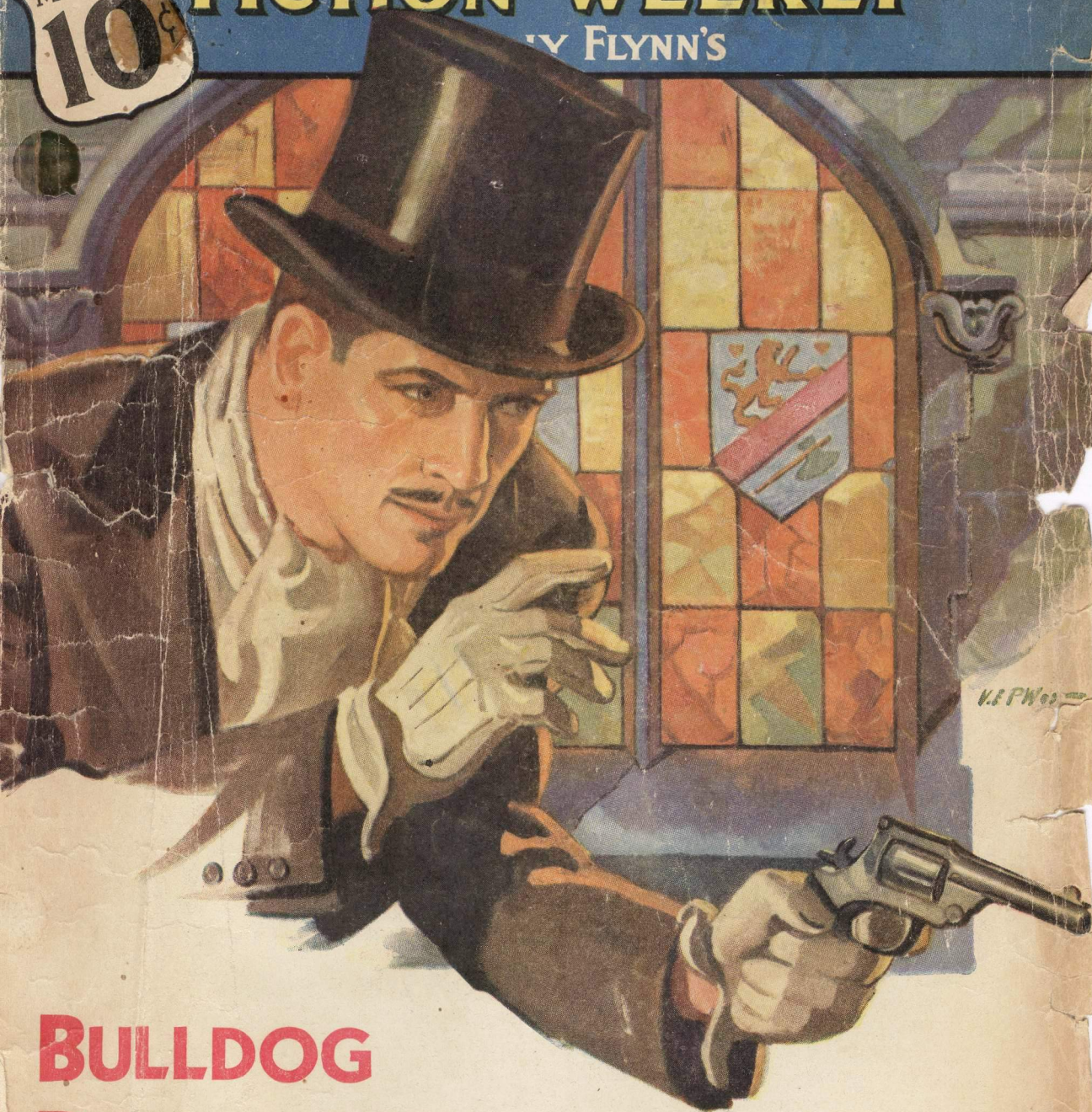


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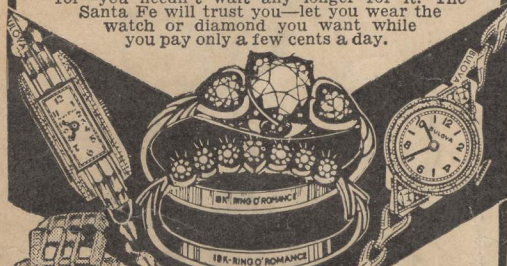


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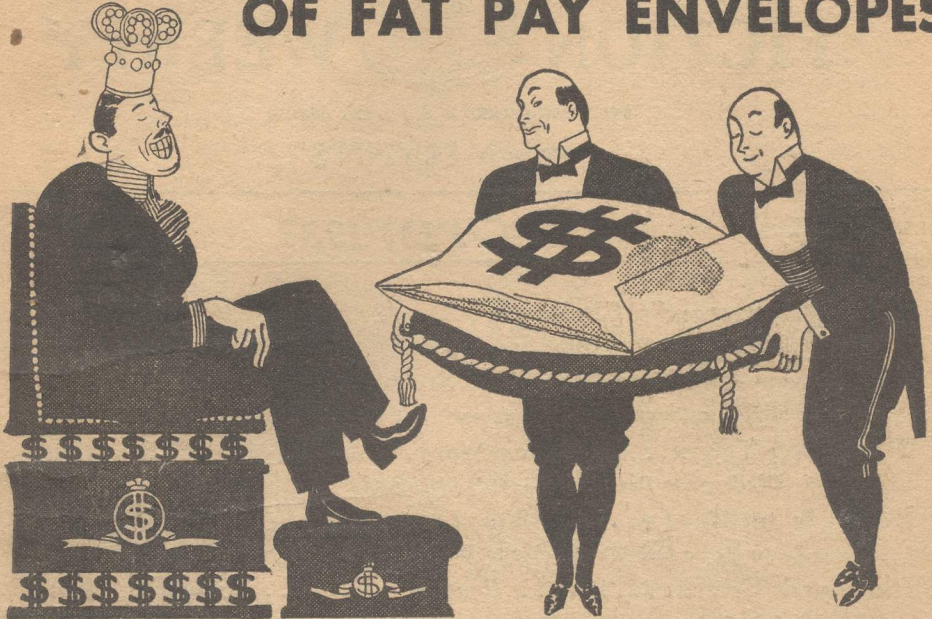
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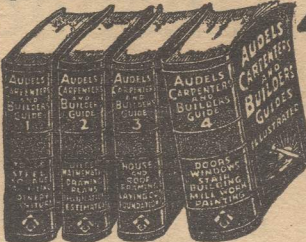
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# Bulldog Drummond's Challenge

## CHAPTER I

### The Step to Murder

COLONEL HENRY TALBOT, C. M. G., D. S. O., pushed back his chair and rose from the dinner table. His wife had gone to the theater, so he was alone. And on that particular evening, the fact caused him considerable relief. The lady of his bosom—beloved as she was—was no believer in the old tag that silence is golden.

He crossed the hall and entered his study. There he lit a cigar, and threw his long, spare form into an easy chair. From the

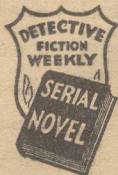
dining room came the faint tinkle of glass as the butler cleared the table; save for that, and the ticking of a clock on the mantelpiece, the flat was silent.

For perhaps ten minutes he sat motionless, staring into the fire. Then he pulled a sheet of paper from his pocket and studied the contents thoughtfully, while a frown came on his forehead. And quite suddenly he spoke out loud:

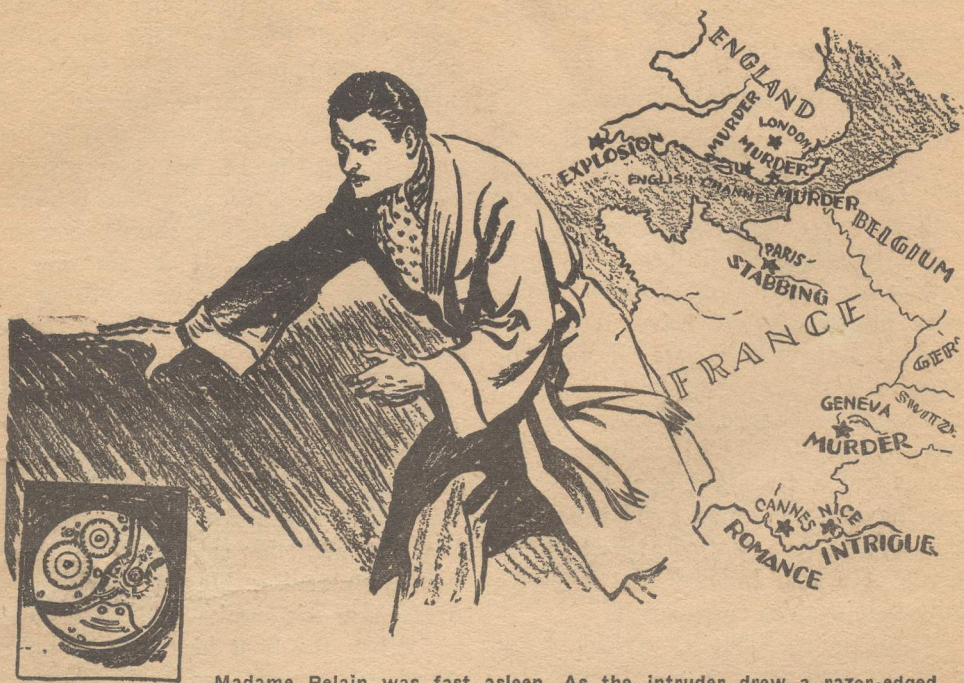
"It *can't* be coincidence!"

A coal fell into the grate, and as Talbot bent over to replace it, the flames danced on his thin, aquiline features.

"It *can't* be!" he muttered again.







Madame Pelain was fast asleep. As the intruder drew a razor-edged stiletto, Bulldog Drummond tensed to leap . . .

By "SAPPER"

The clock chimed nine, and as the final echo died away, a bell shrilled out. A murmur of voices came from the hall; then the butler opened the door. "Captain Drummond and Mr. Standish, sir."

Colonel Talbot rose as the two men came into the room.

"Bring the coffee and port in here, Mallows," he ordered. "I take it you two fellows have had dinner?"

"We have, Colonel," agreed Drummond, crossing over to the fire. "And we're devilish curious to know the reason of the command."

"I hope it wasn't inconvenient to either of you," stated the Colonel.

"Not a bit," answered Standish. "Not only are we curious—but we're hopeful!"

The Colonel laughed; then he grew serious again.

"You've seen the evening papers?"

"As a matter of fact, I haven't," replied Drummond. "Have you, Ronald?"

"I only got back to London at eight," said Standish. "What's in 'em?"

There was a short pause; then Colonel Talbot spoke deliberately.

"Jimmy Latimer is dead."

"What?" The word burst simultaneously from both listeners. "Jimmy—dead! How? When?"

"Put the tray on my desk, Mallows,"

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ordered the colonel. "We'll help ourselves."

HE waited until the butler had left the room; then, standing with his back to the fire, he studied the faces of the two men who were still staring at him incredulously.

"A month ago," he began, "Jimmy put in for leave. Well, you two know what pleasantries our leaves frequently covers! But in this case, it was the genuine article. Jimmy was going to the south of France, and there was no question of work. I got a letter from him about a fortnight ago, saying he was having a damned good time, and that he'd made a spot of cash at Monte Carlo. He also implied that a pretty lady helping him to spend it.

"Last night, about ten o'clock, I got a frantic call from Paris. Jimmy was at the other end. He told me he was on the biggest thing he'd ever handled—so big that he could hardly believe it himself. He was catching the 8:57 from the St. Lazare station and crossing via Newhaven. After arriving at Victoria at six o'clock in the morning, he was coming direct to me here. His business couldn't even wait till I got to the office.

"As you can imagine, I wondered a bit. Jimmy was not a chap to go off the deep end without a pretty good cause. So I ordered Mallows to have some breakfast ready, and to call me the instant Jimmy arrived.

"He never did; when the boat reached Newhaven, he was dead in his cabin."

"Murdered?" asked Bulldog Drummond, quietly.

"My first thought, naturally, when I heard the news," the Colonel replied. "Since then, we've obtained all the information available. He got on board

the boat at midnight, had a whiskey and soda at the bar. Then he turned in. He was apparently in perfect health and spirits, though the steward in the bar seems to have noticed that he kept on glancing towards the door while he was drinking. Ordinarily, that is a piece of evidence which I should discount very considerably. It is the sort of thing that—with the best will in the world—a man might imagine *after* the event.

"But in this case, the steward actually mentioned the occurrence to his assistant last night. So there must have been something in it. And the next thing that was heard of the poor old boy was when his cabin steward called him this morning. He was partially undressed in his bunk—and quite dead.

"When the boat berthed, the police were, of course, notified. Inspector Dorman, who is an officer of great ability, was in charge of the investigation, and very luckily he knew Jimmy and Jimmy's job. So the possibility of foul play occurred to him at once. But nothing that he could discover pointed to it. There was no sign of any wound, no trace of any weapon. His kit was apparently untouched; his money and watch were in the cubby hole beside the bunk. In fact, everything seemed to indicate death from natural causes.

"But Dorman was not satisfied; there still remained poison. Since that would necessitate a post mortem—and it was clearly impossible to keep the passengers waiting while that was done—he sent one of his men up in the boat train with instructions to get everybody's name and address. Meanwhile, he had the body taken ashore, and got in touch with a doctor. Then he went on board again, and cross-examined everybody who could possibly throw any light on the mystery.



"He drew a blank. Save for the evidence of the bar steward, which I have already told you, no one could tell him anything. One sailor *thought* he had seen someone leaving Jimmy's cabin at about one o'clock, but when pressed, he was so vague as to be useless. And so, finally, Dorman gave it up, and taking all the kit out of the cabin, he sat down to await the doctor's report."

THE Colonel pitched the stub of his cigar into the fire. "Once again, a complete blank. There was no trace of any poison whatsoever. The contents of the stomach were analyzed; all the usual tests were done. Result—nothing! The doctor was prepared to swear that death was natural, though he admitted that every organ was in perfect condition."

"I was just going to say," remarked Drummond, "that I've seldom met anybody who seemed fitter than Jimmy."

"Precise!" agreed the Colonel.

"What do you think, yourself, sir?" asked Standish quietly.

"I'm not at all satisfied, Ronald. I know that the idea of poisons that leave no trace is the novelist's stock in trade. I admit that on the face of it. The doctor must be right. And still—I'm not satisfied. If what that barman said is the truth, Jimmy was afraid of being followed. We know also that he was onto something big; we know that his health was perfect. And yet he dies. It can't be coincidence, you fellows!"

"If it is, it's a very strange one," agreed Standish. "And if it isn't, it must be murder. And if it was murder, the murderer was on board. Have you a copy of the list of the passengers?"

Colonel Talbot walked over to his desk and handed Standish a paper.

"As you will see," he remarked, "the

boat was nearly empty. Most of the passengers were third-class."

"It's not a particularly popular boat, I should imagine," added Drummond. "I mean, I can't see anybody who didn't have to—for economy or some other reason—crossing by that particular route."

"Precisely," remarked the Colonel gravely, and the two men looked at him.

"Something bitten you, Colonel?" queried Drummond.

"Something so fantastic, Hugh, that I almost hesitate to mention it. But what you have just said has struck me also. Run your eye down the list of first-class passengers—there are only eight—and see if one name doesn't strike you."

"Alexander Purvis; Reid; Burton—Charles Burton. The millionaire bloke who throws parties in Park Lane. Is that what you mean?"

Colonel Talbot nodded. "That is what I mean."

"But, damn it, Colonel! What on earth should he want to murder Jimmy for?" Drummond rapped.

"Not quite so fast, Hugh!" cried the other. "As I said, the idea may be fantastically wrong. But we've all heard of Charles Burton. We all know that even if he isn't a millionaire, he's extremely well off. But *who* is Charles Burton?"

"I'll bite," said Drummond.

"So would most people. Where does Charles Burton get his money?"

"I gathered he was something in the City."

"That covers a multitude of sins. All I can say is: his name jumped at me out of that list. Why on earth should a man of his position and wealth choose one of the most uncomfortable Channel crossings?"



"It's a goodish step from that to murder," mused Standish.

## CHAPTER II

### Watch Your Step!

COLONEL TALBOT smiled. "Agreed, my dear fellow. But sitting in my office this afternoon, the question went on biting me. And at length, I could stand it no longer. So I rang up the Sûreté in Paris, asked them if they could find out in what hotel he was staying. Of course, I knew he'd left, but that didn't matter. A short while after, they got back to me to say that he had been staying at the Crillon but had left for England last night. So I got through, to the Crillon, where I discovered that Mr. Charles Burton had intended to fly over here to-day—but that he had suddenly changed his mind yesterday evening, and decided to go via Newhaven and Dieppe."

"Strange," said Standish, thoughtfully. "But it's still a goodly step, Colonel."

"Again agreed. But having started, I went on. And by dint of discreet inquiries, one or two small but interesting facts came to light. For instance, I gathered that on his frequent journeys to the Continent, Burton *always* flies. He loathes trains. I further gathered—or rather failed to gather—from various men I rang up, what his business was. He has an office, and the best I could find out was that he is something in the nature of a financial adviser—whatever that may be. No one seems to know who he was or where he came from. He just blossomed out, suddenly, about two years ago. One day he was not; the next day he was. But the most interesting point of all was a casual remark I heard in the

club this evening. His name cropped up and somebody said: 'I sometimes wonder if that man is English.' I docketed that comment for future reference."

"Look here, Colonel," cried Drummond. "Let's get this straight. You started off by saying your idea was fantastic, but unless I'm suffering from senile decay, you're playing with the theory that Jimmy was murdered by Charles Burton?"

"You could not have expressed it better, Hugh, *playing* with the theory!"

"And you want us to play too?"

"If you've got nothing better to do. I haven't a leg to stand on. I know that. But Jimmy, who was in possession of very important information, died. Traveling in the same boat was a man whose origin is, to say the least, not an open book. Further, a man who, if he did change his habitual method of transport, would surely choose the Golden Arrow, don't you think?" Colonel Talbot paused a moment as if deep in thought. "You both of you go everywhere in London: all I'm asking you to do is to—"

"Cultivate Mr. Charles Burton?" asked Drummond with a wide grin.

TALBOT returned that grin. "Exactly, Hugh! For if there is anything in my suspicions, I think you two, acting unofficially, are far more likely to get to the bottom of the matter—or at any rate to get on the trail—than I am through official channels."

"It's a date, Colonel!" cried Standish. "But before we push off, there are one or two points I want to get clear. In the letter you got from Jimmy a fortnight ago—was there any hint he was on to something?"

"None at all."



"Have you heard from him since?"

"Not until he telephoned yesterday."

"So you don't know when he left the Riviera?"

"Haven't the ghost of an idea. But we could find that out by wiring the hotel."

"Which was—?"

"The Metropole at Cannes."

"I wish you would find out, Colonel." Drummond interposed. "In your position, you can do so more easily than we can—and it's information that may prove important."

"I'll wire or phone tomorrow, Hugh."

"Just one thing more. I assume some reliable person has gone through Jimmy's kit and papers with a fine-tooth comb?"

"Dorman himself. There was nothing; nothing at all! But if our wild surmise is correct, that is what one would expect, isn't it? The murderer had plenty of time to examine all the kit himself."

"True," agreed Standish. "And yet a wary bird like poor old Jimmy has half a dozen tricks up his sleeve. Shaving soap, tooth paste—"

"I know Dorman. He's up to every trick himself. And if he says there's nothing there—then there is nothing."

"By the way," put in Drummond thoughtfully, "was Jimmy engaged?"

"Not that I've ever heard of."

"Who is his next of kin?"

"His father—Major John Latimer. Lives at his club—the Senior Army and Navy."

"A widower?"

"Yes. His wife died about three years ago."

Drummond rose and stretched himself.

"Well, Ronald, old son, it seems to me that we've been handed out what

dope there is. Let's go and kiss dear Charles good-night."

"One second, Hugh!" called Standish. "I suppose you've got no idea, Colonel, what tree Jimmy was barking up?"

"Absolutely none. It may be a spy organization; it may be a drug gang; it may be anything. But whatever it is, it's something big or Jimmy wouldn't have said so."

"No hint, of course, of the possibility of foul play will be published?"

"Of course not!" exclaimed Colonel Talbot. "No hint, in fact, that he was anything but an ordinary army officer with a job at the War Office."

He strolled into the hall with his guests. "I'll let you know what I hear from Cannes," he assured them. "And you have my number here and at the office. I've got a sort of hunch, boys, that the less we see of one another in the near future, the better. And my final word—watch your step!"

### CHAPTER III

#### What Is He?

A SLIGHT drizzle was falling as Drummond and Standish reached the street, and they hailed a passing taxi.

"United Sports Club," ordered Drummond. "We may as well get down to this over a pint, Ronald."

Standish lit a cigarette. "A funny business," he remarked. "Damned funny. And the annoying part of it is that it's impossible to find out from Burton whether he had a good sound reason for crossing between Newhaven and Dieppe. He may have had, and in that case, the chief's theory goes smash. But if he didn't have—"

"In any event, he'd manufacture one," Drummond pointed out.



"If it weren't true, it might be possible to discover the fact. But the trouble is that it would immediately arouse all Burton's suspicions."

The taxi pulled up at the club, and they went inside. The smoking room was practically empty. Drawing two easy chairs up to the fire, they sat down.

"Let's pool resources, Hugh," Standish began. "What, if anything, do you know of Charles Burton?"

"I've seen him, in all, about six times," answered Drummond. "I accidentally stepped on his foot at a ghastly cocktail party old Mary Wether- spoon threw at the Ritz, and we had a drink over the catastrophe. Save for that, I don't think I've addressed three sentences to the man in my life. He seems a reasonable sort of individual—though he ain't the type I'd choose to be shipwrecked for long on a desert island with."

"How did that remark about his not being English strike you?"

"It didn't—particularly. So far as I remember, he speaks without the faintest trace of accent. If he didn't, I would have noticed. But to be perfectly candid, Ronald, I don't know the man nearly well enough to form any opinion of him. He is the most casual of casual acquaintances."

"Have you ever been to his house in Park Lane?"

"Once. Another cocktail party. I don't think I even spoke to him. The place rather gave one the impression that he had issued an ultimatum: 'Let there be furniture; rich, rare furniture. Let there be pictures; rich, rare pictures.'"

"Precisely the criticism I had heard," agreed Standish. "It also rather confirms what the chief was saying. One day he was not—the next day he was."

DRUMMOND finished his drink. "Yes," he agreed doubtfully.

"But I don't see that it takes us much further. I can think of three or four men who have suddenly made money, and promptly bought a large house with instructions to furnish regardless of cost."

"Do you know when he bought that house?"

"I went there about a year ago, and he'd been in it several months then."

"So, presumably, he took it when he first blossomed out in the City?"

"Presumably."

"It would be interesting to know his history before that."

"I expect Burton would say that was nobody's business."

"D'you see what I'm getting at, Hugh? If by some lucky speculation he made a packet in the City before he burst on society, it is one thing. If, on the contrary, he just arrived out of the blue, it is quite another. In the first event, Talbot's question as to where he got his money is answered; in the second, it isn't."

"It should be easy to find out," suggested Drummond.

"The Chief couldn't and he can ferret out information from a closed oyster. Of course, he's had a very short time. But I can't help feeling that our first line is Mr. Charles Burton's past. Did he have a father who left him money? Did he make it himself—and if so where? Or—"

"Or what?" asked Drummond curiously.

"Or has he been installed there for some purpose which at the moment is beyond us?"

"And Jimmy was on the track of it."

"Exactly! I believe that's what was at the bottom of the chief's mind. And



if so, the sorest man in England was our Charles when his name was taken going up in the boat train."

Hugh Drummond lay back comfortably in his chair, lit a cigarette. "First line settled," he remarked. "But it's the second which contains the snags, I think. I hardly know the blighter; you, I gather, don't know him at all. How do we set about attaching ourselves to his person—with a view to extracting his maidenly secrets? Charlie will smell a rat pretty damn' quick."

"Sufficient unto the day, old boy. It'll have to be worked through mutual friends. By the way, has he got any other house besides the one in Park Lane?"

"Ask me another. Not that I know of, but that means nothing."

**D**RUMMOND sat up suddenly. "An idea, by Jove! Algy. Algy Longworth! He knows Burton fairly well. Waiter! Go and telephone to Mr. Longworth. Tell him to come round to the club at once under pain of my severe displeasure."

"I remember now," Bulldog continued as the waiter left the room. "Burton has a house in the country somewhere. Algy went there last summer. Crowds of people; swimming pool; peacocks-in-the-grounds type of thing."

"However he got it, the money is evidently there," said Standish drily.

The waiter paused by Drummond's chair. "Mr. Longworth is coming round at once, sir."

"Good! Then repeat this dose—" gesturing to the empty glasses—"and bring one for Mr. Longworth. A driveling idiot is our Algy," he went on as the man moved away, "but there is a certain shrewdness concealed in him which may prove useful."

"At any rate, he gives us a point of contact with Burton," agreed Standish. "And that's all to the good."

Ten minutes later, Algy Longworth arrived and Drummond swung round his chair. "Come here, you pop-eyed loafer. What the devil are you all dressed up like that for? And you've dribbled on your white waistcoat. You look awful."

"Thank you, my sweet one! Evening, Ronald." The newcomer adjusted his eyeglass, smiled benignly.

"Evening, Algy. Take a pew."

"You wish to confer with me—yes? To suck my brain on some deep point of international import? Gentlemen, if I may be permitted so to speak, I am at your service!"

"Look here, Algy," began Drummond, "there may be big trouble in the air. Only *may*; we don't know yet. So this conversation is not to go beyond you. What do you know about Charles Burton?"

"Charles Burton?" Algy Longworth stared at him. "What's he been doing? Watering the Worcester sauce? As a matter of fact, it's darned funny you should ask that, Hugh. I'm going to that place of his tonight. Hence the glad rags."

"What place? His house in Park Lane?"

"No, no! The Golden Boot."

"The new one that's just opened? Burton's behind it, then?"

"Entirely. He found all the others so ghastly boring that he decided to have one run on his own lines. More than likely, he'll be there himself. However, what is it you want to know about him?"

"Everything you can tell. What sort of a bloke is he?"

"He's all right. Throws a damned good party. Stinks of money. Clean



about the house and all that kind of thing."

"D'you know where he got his money?"

"Haven't an earthly idea, old boy. Why?"

"Where is his house in the country?"

"West Sussex. Not far from Pulborough. I went and stayed there last July."

"I remember you telling me about it," said Drummond. "Algy, would you say he was English?"

## CHAPTER IV

### Invitation

ALGY stared at him, glass half way to his mouth. "I've never really thought about it," he said at length. "I've always assumed he was—especially with that name. He speaks English perfectly, but for that matter, he speaks about six other tongues, equally well. I'd put it this way: he isn't obviously *not* English."

"That I know," agreed Drummond.

"And I should think Sir George would have satisfied himself on that point," continued Algy. "You know old Castledon—the greatest bore in Europe?"

"His wife is the woman with a face like a cab horse, isn't she?"

"That's it. Well, Molly, their daughter, is an absolute knockout. When you see the three of 'em together, you feel you need to have the mysteries of parenthood explained to you again. However, Burton met Molly at some catch-'em-alive dance during Ascot week, and as our society writers would say, he paid her marked attention. So marked that Lady Castledon—who was attending the parade as Molly's chaperone—had a fit in a corner of the room,

and was finally carried out neighing. She already heard the Burton doubloons jingling in the Castledon coffers, which, by all accounts, sadly need 'em."

"What's the girl's reaction?" asked Drummond.

"Definitely anti-click. After all she's young. She's one of this year's brood of debs. But what I was getting at is that though Sir George can clear a room quicker than an appeal for charity, he's a darned fine old boy. And he's not the sort of man who'd let his daughter marry merely for money, or get tied up with anyone he wasn't satisfied about."

Algy drained his glass. "Look here, chaps," he said, "it seems to me I've done most of the gossiping to date. Why this sudden interest in Charles Burton?"

"We've got your word you'll keep it to yourself, Algy?"

"Of course," was Longworth's answer.

"Good. Then listen."

He did—in absolute silence—whilst they put him wise.

"Seems a bit flimsy," he remarked when they had finished. "Though I agree that it's not like Burton to cross via Newhaven."

"Of course it's flimsy," insisted Drummond. "There's not a shred of evidence to connect Burton with Jimmy's death. It's just a shot in the dark on the chief's part. If we find out nothing, no harm is done. On the other hand, it is just possible we may discover that it was a bull's-eye."

"I must say that he's not a man I'd like to fall foul of," remarked Algy, thoughtfully. "I don't think he'd show much mercy. He sacked the first manager he put into the Golden Boot at a moment's notice—for the most trivial



offence. But murder is rather a tall order!"

"My dear Algy," said Standish, "the tallness of the order is entirely dependent on the largeness of the stake. And if Jimmy was on to something really big—"

STANDISH shrugged, and lit a cigarette. "Perhaps you're right," said Algy. "Well, boys, I'm afraid I haven't been of much assistance, but I really know very little about the fellow myself. Why don't you come round to the Golden Boot with me now?"

"Tuxedo all right?"

"Certainly. Burton insists on evening clothes, but tuxedos will do. Of course I can't guarantee that he'll be there. And even if he is, I don't see that it will do any good. But you might stumble on something, and you're bound to find a lot of people there that you know."

"What about it, Ronald?" asked Drummond. "It can't do any harm."

"It can't. But I don't think we should both go, Hugh. If anything comes out of this show, it would be well to have one completely unknown bloke on our side—unknown to Burton, I mean. Now he knows you and he knows Algy; he does not know me. So, for the present at any rate, we won't connect you and me. You toddle off with Algy. As he says, you might find out something. Let's meet here for lunch tomorrow, and I'll put out a few feelers in the City during the morning."

Drummond nodded. "Sound idea. You've got a girl with you, I suppose, Algy?"

"I'm with a party. Why don't you join up too?"

"I'll see. It's one of these ordinary bottle places, I take it?"

"That's right. Same old stunt in

rather better setting than usual, that's all. Good night, Ronald!"

## CHAPTER V

### A Lady of Mystery

AS Algy Longworth had said, it was the same old stunt. After a slight financial formality at the door, Drummond became a guest of the management for the evening with all the privileges appertaining to such an honored position. Though unable to order a whiskey and soda, he was allowed—nay, expected!—to order a whole bottle. To consume one drink was a crime comparable to murdering the Archbishop of Canterbury; to consume the entire bottle was a great and meritorious action.

Bulldog Drummond gave the necessary order and then glanced round the room. Since it was barely midnight, there were still many empty tables. Even so, he saw several faces he recognized. It was a long, narrow building, and a band, in a fantastic red-and-green uniform, was playing at the far end. But the whole furnishing of the place was, as Algy had said, distinctly better than usual.

Algy's party had not yet arrived, so he and Drummond sat down at an empty table, near the microscopic dancing floor, and Drummond ordered a kipper.

"I'll wait, old boy," said Algy, when asked if he wanted anything, and at that moment, a girl paused beside their table.

Algy scrambled to his feet. "Hello, darling! You look simply ravishing. Hugh, you old stick-in-the-mud, this is Alice. Around her rotates the whole place. She is our sun, our moon, our stars. Without her we wilt; we die. Hugh—Alice."



"You blithering imbecile!" said the girl, with a particularly charming smile. "Are you his keeper, Hugh?"

Drummond grinned—that slow, lazy grin of his which made so many people wonder why they had ever thought him ugly.

"Lions I have shot, Alice," he said. "Tigers; even field mice. But there is a limit to my powers. When this palsied worm joins his unfortunate fellow guests, will you come and kipper with me?"

"I'd love to," the girl answered simply, and with a nod, she moved on.

"I'm glad you did that, Hugh," said Algy. "She's a peach, that girl. Name of Blackton. Father was a soldier."

"What's she doing this job for?"

"He lost all his money in some speculation. But you'll really like her. There's no nonsense about her, and she dances like an angel." He lowered his voice. "No sign of C. B. so far."

"The night is yet young," observed Drummond. "And even if he does come, I'm not likely to get anything out of him. It's more the atmosphere of this place that I want, and sidelights from other people."

"Alice might help you there," remarked Algy. "She's been here since it opened. Oh, there comes my crowd. So long, old boy. Don't forget if anything does emerge, the bunch are in on it."

He drifted away and a smile twitched round Drummond's lips. How many times in the past had not the "Bunch" been in on things? And they were all ready again if and when the necessity arose.

If and when—The smile had gone from Bulldog's lips now and he was conscious of a curious sensation. Suddenly the room seemed strangely unreal; the band, the women, the hum of

conversation faded and died. In its place was a deserted crossroads with the stench of death lying thick like a fetid pall. Against the darkening sky, green pencil-lines of light shot up ceaselessly, to turn into balls of fire as the flares lobbed softly into No Man's Land. In the distance, the mutter of artillery; the sudden staccato burst of a machine gun. And in the ditch close by a motionless figure in khaki, with chalk-white face and glazed staring eyes, that seemed to be mutely asking why its legs should be lying two yards away, being gnawed by rats.

"A penny, Hugh!"

WITH a start he glanced up; Alice was looking at him curiously.

"For the moment I thought of other things," he explained quietly. "I was back across the water, Alice; back in the days of the madness. I almost seemed to be there in reality it was so vivid. Funny, isn't it, the tricks one's mind plays?"

"You seemed to me, Hugh, to be staring into the future—not into the past." She sat down opposite him. "The world was on your shoulders and you found it heavy. . . . This is the first time you've been here, isn't it?" she continued lightly.

"The future?" He stared at her gravely. "I wonder. However a truce to this serious mood. Yes, it is the first time I've been here; I've been up in Scotland since the grouse season opened. As such places go, this one seems good to me. I gather that one Charles Burton is behind it?"

"Do you know the gentleman?" Her tone was noncommittal, but he glanced at her quickly.

"Very slightly," he confessed. "You do, of course?"



"Yes, I know him. He is in here most nights when he's in London."

"Do you like him?"

"My dear Hugh, girls in my position neither like nor dislike the great man. We exist by virtue of his tolerance."

Drummond studied her in silence.

"Precisely what do you mean?" he inquired at length.

"Exactly what I say. Caesar holds the power of life or death. There is no appeal. If he says to me: 'Go!' I go. And lose my job. Which reminds me that you'll have to stand me a bottle of champagne for the good of the house. Sorry about it, but there you are."

Drummond beckoned to a waiter and glanced at the wine list.

"Number 35. Now tell me, Alice," he said when the man had gone, "do you like this job?"

"Beggars can't be choosers, can they? And since secretaries are a drug on the market, what is a poor girl to do?"

"Does he expect you to—?"

"Give him personal favors?" She gave a short laugh. "So far, Hugh, I have not been honored."

"And if you are?"

"I can think of nothing I should detest more. I hate the swine."

"Steady, my dear." For a moment he laid his hand on hers. "The 'swine' has just arrived. And I don't think you'll be honored, this evening, at any rate."

A sudden silence had fallen on the Golden Boot. Headwaiters, waiters, under-waiters were prostrating themselves at the door. And assuredly the woman who had entered with Charles Burton was sufficient cause. Tall, with a perfect figure she stood for a moment regarding the room with an arrogance so superb that its insolence was almost

staggering. Her shimmering black velvet frock was skin tight; she wore no jewels save one rope of magnificent pearls. Her eyes were blue and heavy lidded; her mouth, a scarlet streak. And on one finger there glittered a priceless ruby.

## CHAPTER VI

### Shadow!

AS if unconscious of the effect she had created, the woman swept across the room behind the obsequious manager whilst Charles Burton followed in leisurely fashion, stopping at different tables to speak to friends. At length he reached Drummond's and the eyes of the two men met.

"Surely—!" began Burton doubtfully.

"We met at a cocktail party, Mr. Burton," acknowledged Drummond with a smile. "I stepped on your foot and nearly broke it. Drummond is my name."

"Of course! I remember perfectly. Ah, good evening, Miss Blackton!" He gave the girl a perfunctory bow, turned back to Drummond. "I don't think I've seen you here before?"

"For the very good reason that it is the first time I've been here. I've only just back from the North."

"Shooting?"

"Yes. I was stalking in Sutherland."

"Well, now that you've been here once, I hope you'll come again. It's my toy, you know."

With a nod, he moved on and Drummond watched him as he joined the woman. Then he became aware that a waiter was standing by him with a note.

"From the gentleman with the eyeglass, sir."



Drummond opened it, and saw a few words scrawled in pencil:

**Charlie B. He make whoopee. But what about: poor Molly C?**

Drummond smiled, put the note in his pocket.

"From the idiot boy friend," he explained. "Commenting on Mr. Burton's lady friend."

"She's an extraordinarily striking woman," purred Alice Blackton. "I wonder if he picked her up at Nice?"

Drummond stared at Alice, amazed. "Did you say *Nice*?"

"I did. He's just come back from the Riviera, you know."

"Has he indeed? That is rather interesting."

She raised her eyebrows. "I'm glad you find it so. I'm afraid that Mr. Burton's comings and goings leave me stone cold."

"Tell me, Alice, why do you hate him?"

"Hate is perhaps too strong a word," she said. "And yet—I don't know. I think it's because I don't trust him a yard. I don't mean only over women, though that comes into it too. I wouldn't trust him over anything. He's completely and utterly unscrupulous."

"Are you speaking from definite knowledge, or is that merely your private opinion?"

"If by definite knowledge you mean **do** I know that he's ever robbed a church—then no. But you've only go to meet him in a subordinate capacity as I have to get his number."

She looked at Drummond curiously. "You seem very interested in him, Hugh."

"I am," answered Drummond frankly. "Though the last thing I want is that he should know it."

"You can be sure that I won't pass

it on. Why are you so interested, or is it a secret?"

"I'm afraid it is, my dear. All I can tell you is that I'm very anxious to find out everything that I can about the gentleman. And though I can't say why, your little piece of information about his having been on the Riviera recently is of the greatest value. Do you know how long he was there?"

"I can tell you when he left England. It was exactly a fortnight ago, because he was in here the night before he flew over."

"I gather he always flies?" queried Drummond.

"He's got his own machine," remarked the girl. "And his own pilot."

"Did he go over in it this time?"

"I suppose so. He always does."

"Curiouser and curiouser," mused Drummond. "I know," he went on with a smile, "that this must all seem very mysterious to you. Really, it isn't a bit. But at the moment, I just can't tell you what it's all about. Your father was a soldier, wasn't he?"

"He was. How did you know?"

"Algy told me. Now I can let you in to this much. It is the army that is interested in Mr. Burton. I tell you that because I'm going to ask you to do something for me."

"What?" asked the girl.

"Keep an eye on him—that's all. Let me know anything about his movements that you can find out, however seemingly trivial."

"My dear man, I'm afraid I can't do much."

"You never know," said Drummond quietly. "As I've already told you, that piece of information about Nice is most valuable. Another thing. Not only his movements, but also the people he brings here. Now would it be possible to discover the name of that woman?"



"Presumably he's signed her in, but whether under her real name or not is another matter. I can find out if you like."

"Do—like an angel."

"All right. I'll go and powder my nose."

A GOOD girl, reflected Drummond as he watched her threading her way through the tables. Definitely an asset. Though ninety percent of what she could pass on would be valueless, the remaining ten might not be. Witness the matter of Nice. True that would certainly have come out in the course of time—Burton's visit there was clearly no secret. At the same time, it was useful to have it presented free of charge, so to speak. But the really important thing was the installation of a reliable friend in one of the enemy's camps.

"Okay, baby?" Algy had strolled over to his table.

"Very much so, old boy. A damned nice girl."

"That's a bit of mother's ruin our Charlie has got with him."

"Alice is just trying to find out who she is. Algy, Burton was at Nice while Jimmy was at Cannes."

Algy whistled. "The devil he was! Have you told Alice anything about it?"

"No. Safer not to at present. She doesn't like him, Algy."

"None of the staff do, old lad." Alice Blackton had returned. "Alice—my life, my all—this revolting man hasn't been making love to you, has he?"

"Not so that you'd notice, Algy!" laughed the girl, sitting down. "She is a Madame Tomesco, Hugh."

"It has a Roumanian flavor," Drummond commented.

"And mark you, boys and girls, I

could do with a bit of Roumanian flavoring myself!" declared Algy. "I could do that woman a kindness; yes, I could! Well, *au revoir*, my sweets. If Hugh plucks at his collar, Alice, its either passion or indigestion, or possibly both. You have been warned."

"Mad, quite mad," laughed the girl. "But rather a dear. You must give me your address, Hugh, before you go, so that I can send along the doings."

He scribbled it on a piece of paper together with his telephone number.

"Be careful, my dear," he said gravely. "I have a feeling that if the gentleman got an inkling that you were spying on him, he would not be amused. I'll go further. If there is anything in what we suspect, you'd be in grave danger."

Her eyes opened wide. "How perfectly thrilling! Promise you'll tell me sometime what it's all about?"

"Cross my heart. Waiter, let me have my bill. I've put my name on the whiskey; keep it for me for next time."

"Come again soon Hugh," the girl called.

"I certainly will! Good night, dear. I really am infernally sleepy."

The rain had ceased falling when he got outside, and refusing a taxi, he started to walk to his flat. Though the Golden Boot was much better ventilated than the average night club, it was a relief to breathe fresh air again. The streets were wet, glistening in the glare of the arc lights; the pavements were almost deserted. Every now and then, some wretched woman appeared from nowhere. It was while he was fumbling in his pocket for some money for one of them that his uncanny sixth sense asserted itself.

"Bless you! You're a prince!" said the girl. But Drummond hardly heard



her. He was staring back the way he had come. What was that man doing loitering about, some fifty yards away?

## CHAPTER VII

### To The Continent

**B**ULLDOG DRUMMOND walked on two or three hundred yards; then, on the pretext of doing up his shoe, he stopped. The man was still there; he was definitely being followed. With a puzzled frown, he strode on. How in the name of all that was marvelous could he have incurred anybody's suspicions?

He decided to make sure, and to do so, he employed the old ruse. He swung round the corner from Piccadilly into Bond Street. Then he stopped dead in his tracks. Ten seconds later, the man shot round too, only to halt, in his turn, as he saw Drummond.

"Good evening," Drummond greeted affably. "You are not, if I may say so, very expert at your game. Possibly you haven't had much practice?"

"I don't know what you're talking about," muttered the other, and Drummond studied him curiously. He looked about thirty, and was decently dressed. His voice was refined; he might have been a bank clerk.

"Why are you following me?" he asked quietly.

"I don't know what you mean. I'm not following you."

"Then why did you stop dead when you came round the corner and saw me? I fear that your powers of lying are about equivalent to your powers of tracking. Once again I wish to know why you are following me?"

"I refuse to say," growled the man.

"At any rate, we advance," Drummond said with chill mirth. "You no longer deny the soft impeachment. But

as it's confoundedly draughty here, I suggest that we should stroll on together chatting about this and that. And in case the fact has escaped your notice, I will just remind you that I am a very much larger and more powerful man than you are. Should the necessity of hitting you arise, it will probably be at least a week before you again take your morning constitutional."

"You dare to lay a hand on me," blustered the man, "and I'll . . .!"

"Yes?" questioned Drummond politely. "You'll what? Call the police? Come on, little man; I would have words with you."

With a grip of iron, he took the man's right arm above the elbow, and turning back into Piccadilly he walked him along.

"Who is employing you?"

"I refuse to say. Stop! You'll break my arm."

"Quite possibly."

At that moment, a policeman came round Dover Street just in front of them. "Officer!" cried the man. "Help!"

For a moment, Drummond's grip relaxed, and like a rabbit going down a bolt-hole, the man was across the road and racing down St. James Street.

"What's all this, sir?" inquired the constable as Drummond began to laugh.

"The gentleman was following me, officer," he explained. "I'm afraid I was rather hurting him."

"Oh! I see, sir!"

The constable looked at Drummond significantly and winked. Then, with a cheery "Good night, sir!" he resumed his beat.

But the smile soon faded from Drummond's face. It was replaced by a very grave expression as he walked



on. He had only got down from Scotland that day. Under what conceivable circumstances should he be followed? It was an added confirmation that the chief was right. It could be nothing else than the Jimmy Latimer affair.

But how had they got on to *him*—Drummond? That was what completely stalled him. For one brief moment, the possibility crossed his mind that Alice Blackton might have betrayed him. Then he dismissed it as absurd. What could be her object? She had his address: she knew his name. What purpose would it serve to have him followed home? But if it was not she, who could it be?

DRUMMOND reached his house and produced his latch key. The street was deserted; there was no sign of the man who had bolted so hastily.

But as Bulldog mixed himself a night cap, he was still frowning thoughtfully. He had suddenly realized that all the arguments applicable to Alice applied equally well to Charles Burton. Burton too knew Drummond's name, and even if he did not know the address, he could easily enough find it in the telephone directory. So again, what was the object in having him followed?

The problem was still unsolved when Drummond met Standish just before lunch the next day.

"There can be only one solution, Hugh," said that worthy, when Drummond had finished telling him. "They picked us up at the chief's flat. It was he who was being watched—and anybody who went to see him."

Standish sipped his sherry thoughtfully. "We ought to have been more careful," he went on. "However, the mischief is done now so it can't be helped. You see, we gave the club ad-

dress to the taxi driver, which made it easy to follow us here. Then you were shadowed to the Golden Boot. I was almost certainly traced to my flat. As a matter of fact, there was a loafer hanging about to open the door of the taxi who could easily have heard the address. And finally, your friend tried to follow you home."

"But if Burton is at the bottom of it, why worry about me? You, I can understand, but he knows me."

"True, old boy," agreed Standish, "but he doesn't know—or didn't know then—that you were mixed up in the matter. Assuming, for the moment, that Burton is at the bottom of it, what happened, as I see it, is this. He issued orders for the Chief's flat to be watched, and anything of interest to be reported to him today. So, by this time, he knows that I had an interview with the Colonel last night, and that a large man who left the Golden Boot in the early hours was also present at that interview. Which, I fear, points unerringly to you."

"There were a lot of people there, Ronald."

"Well, let's hope for the best. But we mustn't bank on it. We must play on the assumption that Burton knows we're both in the game."

"You are definitely converted to the chief's theory?"

"I am becoming more and more so. Would they have bothered to watch his flat if Jimmy's death had been a natural one? No. The cumulative effect of all this evidence, to my mind, is that Jimmy *was* murdered. And if he was murdered, there is a strong probability that Burton had something to do with it."

"I hope I've not put that girl in any danger," Drummond growled in a worried voice.



"Drop her a line. Tell her to watch her step."

"And this Tomesco woman means nothing in your life?"

"Not a thing. But a name is a matter of small importance."

"Did you find out anything this morning?" asked Drummond.

"Merely confirmation that there's nothing to find out. That in itself is very suspicious. Burton has an office in Fenchurch Street with a small staff. Frequently, for days on end, he is not there. He has very few clients and no one seems to know exactly what his business is. One line, apparently, consists of considerable speculation in foreign currencies."

A PAGE boy came up with a letter on a salver. "From the chief," Standish explained quietly. Let's see what he's got to say." He read the letter through; then handed it to Drummond.

Dear Ronald,

I have been in touch with the manager of the Metropole at Cannes. Jimmy died(?) on Wednesday night; he left the hotel most unexpectedly on the Tuesday and caught the Paris Express. It came as a complete surprise to the manager as, only that very morning, he had booked his room for another week.

That was all I could get over the phone. Evidently, something happened on Tuesday which caused this sudden change of plan. But there is still another peculiar feature. Jimmy must have arrived in Paris early on Wednesday morning. Why did he not cross earlier—or fly over? What was he doing in Paris all that time? If the matter was not so very urgent, why didn't he wait till Thursday and cross in comfort?

I can't help thinking that one or both of you should go to Cannes, to see if you can pick up any threads there. Possibly also a few discreet inquiries at the Hotel Crillon would help.

Yours,  
Henry Talbot

P.S. Am sending this from my club. I shall be here for the next hour.

"I agree," said Drummond, laying the note down again. "Since we know we've been shadowed, the objection to our being seen together no longer exists. I suggest that we both go."

"Okay by me," answered Standish. "Just one moment. I'm going to drop a line to the chief. Then we'll discuss plans."

He went to a writing desk, while Drummond lit a cigarette and ordered another glass of sherry. Undoubtedly the chief was right; they were at a dead-end here in London. And in Cannes, they might stumble on something.

"Read what I've said, Hugh. I'll send it round by hand to his club." Standish said when he returned.

Dear Colonel:

We will both go, as you suggest. Do you know that Burton was in Nice while Jimmy was at Cannes?

Your flat is being watched; we were both shadowed last night when we left you. Hugh caught his tail, who admitted the fact. This looks to me like a strong confirmation of your theory that Jimmy was murdered.

Have you a line of a Madame Tomesco? She was with Burton last night, and according to Hugh, she knocked even the habitués of the Golden Boot—which is financed by Burton—quite flat.

Yours sincerely,  
Ronald Standish

P.S. The messenger will wait for an answer.

It came in five minutes, scribbled characteristically on the back of the note itself.

Good. Was he now? That's interesting. I'm not surprised. But if it continues, they will be! Of course he was murdered. Afraid not. Will make inquiries.

H.T.

"How shall we go?" asked Standish as they sat down to lunch.

"Since there are no papers or triptyques required for France, I suggest



we go by car," remarked Drummond. "It takes a little longer I know, but once we're there, it gives us much more freedom. Shall we do Paris before or after Cannes?"

"After," Standish decided. "Let's begin at the beginning, if we can, and work forward."

"And when shall we cross?"

"As soon as possible. What about the 4:30 service via Folkestone? The boat leaves at 6:30. We can be alongside by a quarter to six."

"What's the distance from Boulogne to Cannes?" queried Drummond.

"Seven hundred miles, odd."

"We can do that tomorrow, driving turn and turn about, if we start early."

"Right. All settled. And I for one, old boy, am taking a gun."

"You stagger me," grinned Drummond, as he inspected the strong Stilton cheese. "Personally, I think a piece of this would be just as efficacious!"

## CHAPTER VIII

### Madame Pélain

THE lounge in the Metropole was full of middle-aged women knitting incomprehensible garments when Bulldog Drummond and Standish arrived there at ten o'clock the following night.

"What a galaxy!" muttered Drummond. "I wonder why Jimmy stopped here?"

"I shouldn't think he was in very lively company," laughed Standish.

They were standing by the concierge's desk, registering. The management had been enchanted to give them rooms on the third floor facing the sea—and as they signed their names, the manager himself approached with the air of a high priest.

"You are staying long, gentlemen?"

"Probably three or four days," Standish said.

The manager sighed. Extras were his life, and these two Englishmen did not look of the type who made a small bottle of *vin ordinaire* last a week, like most of his visitors.

"I wonder if we could have a little private talk in your office?" Drummond queried. "Perhaps you will join us in a bottle of wine, and we could have it sent in there?"

"But certainly!" cried the Frenchman. "Henri! *la carte des vins. Messieurs, vous permettez? Une bouteille de dix-neuf, et trois verres. Au bureau.* Follow me, gentlemen!"

He led the way along a passage, and opening a frosted glass door he gave a brief order to a girl who was immersed in a vast ledger. She left the room, and having sat down at his desk, the manager waved Drummond and Standish to two chairs.

"Now, gentlemen, what can I do for you?"

"You have recently had staying here, m'sieur," Drummond began, "an English officer called Latimer—Major Latimer."

The Frenchman nodded. "I had guessed, gentlemen, that that was your business. Only yesterday I was on the telephone to London about him."

"You know, of course, that he is dead?"

"Dead?" The manager sat up with an amazed jerk. "Dead! *Ce n'est pas possible!* How did he die?"

"We can rely on your discretion, m'sieur?"

A superb gesture indicated that they could.

"Major Latimer was found dead in his cabin in the Dieppe-Newhaven boat on Wednesday night. We are not quite certain what caused his death. On the



face of it, it appears to have been natural, but he was a singularly healthy man. We know that he was in possession of certain information which he was bringing back to England, and we are very anxious to find out what that information was.

"Now, in view of what you said over the telephone to London, we cannot help thinking that his abrupt departure from this hotel has some vital bearing on the case. What we, therefore, would like to find out is what Major Latimer's movements were on last Tuesday, after he had renewed his room for another week. Because it seems clear that it must have been then that whatever it was that changed his plans took place."

The waiter paused in the act of pouring out the wine. "*Pardon, m'sieur. Dites-vous mardi? M'sieur le Major était avec Madame Pélain dans l'auto. Il est sorti à onze heures.*"

"*Merci, Henri!*"

The manager dismissed the man, and he himself handed the wine to his guests.

"Gentlemen," he cried, "I go—how do you say it?—wool-gathering. One must be of a discretion, *naturellement*, but since the poor fellow is dead, one may be permitted to speak. As you will understand, most things in a hotel like this come to my ear sooner or later, and it would not be an exaggeration to say that the Major and Madame Pélain saw much of each other during his stay here. He seemed to prefer her company to that of the other charming ladies whom you saw in the lounge as you passed through."

HIS mouth twitched slightly behind his mustache, and with one accord, Drummond and Standish burst out laughing.

"Precisely, messieurs," continued the manager, also laughing. "In fact, though perhaps I should not say it, if Madame had not been here, I fear your poor friend would not have remained. It was reported to me by Henri that at dinner the first night he did nothing but call ceaselessly for divine deliverance."

"Do we understand," asked Bulldog, "that Madame Pélain is still in your hotel?"

"*Mais, oui, m'sieur!* It is for that I say I go wool-gathering. For it is she who can tell you far more than I. But almost certainly will she be at the Casino now. It will be a great shock to her. I will swear that she has no idea he is dead."

He lit a cigarette, looked curiously at the two men. "Is it permitted to ask, gentlemen, what it is that you think has happened? Is it that you fear he was the victim of foul play?"

"You have struck it, m'sieur," answered Standish. "We think it more than possible that he was somehow murdered."

"*Mon Dieu! c'est terrible.*"

"But please keep that to yourself," Drummond begged. "All that has appeared in the papers is that he died in his sleep on board the boat. Have you any idea when Madame is likely to return?"

The manager shrugged his shoulders.

"*À minuit, peut-être.* You would wish to talk to her tonight?"

"The sooner the better, Ronald, don't you think?"

"Certainly. Unless she is too tired. Tell me, m'sieur, of what—er—type is Madame?"

"*Très chic; très élégante.*"

"Is there a Monsieur Pélain?"

"I understand Monsieur Pélain re-



sides in Paris," said the manager diplomatically.

"And you think we can rely on anything she may tell us?"

Once again the manager shrugged his shoulders. "If I knew enough about women, m'sieur, to be able to tell that concerning any member of their sex, I would be President of France. She has a sitting room; if she consents to receive you—as I am sure she will—you must judge for yourselves. You are not, are you, from the famous Scotland Yard?"

"No. We are just two friends of Major Latimer's."

"And what would you wish me to tell Madame? That he is dead?"

"No," said Drummond decidedly. "Just that we are two friends. And please impress upon her that if she is at all tired, we would much prefer to wait till tomorrow morning."

A telephone rang on the desk, and the manager picked up the receiver.

"*Certainement, Madame! Toute de suite!* Madame has returned," he explained as he replaced the instrument. "She orders Evain water. I will go to her at once and inquire if she will receive you."

"A nice little man," said Drummond as the door closed behind the manager. "Very helpful and obliging."

"I wonder if we'll get anything out of this woman," remarked Standish thoughtfully. "I shall be interested to see her reaction when she hears that Jimmy is dead. Who's going to do the talking—you or I?"

"You do it," said Drummond. "You're better at adroit conversational fencing than I am."

The door opened and the manager returned. "Madame will receive you, gentlemen. I have told her nothing save that you are two friends of Major Latimer's."

Will you come this way? Her rooms are on the same floor as yours."

## CHAPTER IX

### "It was Pilofsky!"

THE lounge was deserted as they crossed it to go to the lift. Drummond glanced at his watch. It was just half past eleven, and he was beginning to wish that the interview had been postponed till the following morning. They had started from Boulogne at five o'clock, and though each of them had had an occasional doze while the other drove, he was feeling distinctly weary. At the same time, he was conscious of a little tingle of excitement: would they find out anything worth while, or would they draw blank?

The manager knocked at the door, and a woman's voice called: "*Entrez!*"

Madame Pélain was standing by a table in the center of the room with the fingers of one hand lightly resting on it. She had not yet removed her cloak, which was open, revealing her evening frock underneath. Her hair was dark and beautifully coiffured; her nails were red—though not outrageously so. Attractive, decided Drummond; more attractive than pretty. But emphatically a charming woman to look at.

As the manager introduced the two men, she gave each of them a keen, searching glance; then sinking gracefully into an easy chair, she lit a cigarette.

"Do smoke," she said. "Monsieur Lidet tells me that you are friends of Major Latimer's."

Her voice was musical; her English almost devoid of accent.

"That is our excuse, Madame," said Standish, "for intruding on you at this hour."

With a murmured apology, the man-



ager left the room, and she leaned forward in her chair.

"You have a message for me from him?" she asked.

"I fear, madame," answered Standish gravely, "that you must prepare yourself for a shock. Jimmy Latimer is dead."

She sat staring at him speechlessly, her cigarette half way to her lips. It was obvious to both men that the news had come as a complete shock to her.

"Dead?" she stammered at length. "*Mais c'est incroyable!* How did he die, m'sieur?"

Briefly, Standish told her and she listened in silence. And when he had finished, she still did not speak; she sat in a sort of frozen immobility with her eyes on the carpet. At length she drew a deep breath.

"I wonder?" she whispered.

"Yes, Madame?" asked Standish quietly.

"You think poor Jimmy was murdered?"

"I think nothing, madame. But something must have happened on Tuesday to make him change his plans so suddenly. Since you were with him all that day, we thought you might know what that something was?"

For a space, she stared at them without speaking. "How am I to know you are what you profess to be?" she demanded at length. "How can I be sure that you are Major Latimer's friends?"

"I fear, madame," said Standish frankly, "that you can only take our word for it."

Once again she studied them thoughtfully; then, rising, she began to pace up and down the room.

"I'll trust you," she said suddenly. "I will tell you all I know, though I fear it is not very much. On Tuesday,

Jimmy and I lunched Chez Paquay, a restaurant on the Corniche road between here and St. Raphael. Our table was laid in a covered balcony with no window. It was almost a room from which the window had been removed, with a red brick wall along the side that faced the sea. Another table was laid but it was empty, and so we had the place to ourselves.

"**S**UDDENLY there came a gust of wind. The dust outside swirled in eddies; we gripped the table cloth to keep it from blowing away, for it was fierce—that gust. And even as it subsided, two sheets of paper blew in and settled on the floor. Quite casually, Jimmy bent down and picked them up. He glanced at them, and in an instant, m'sieur, his face changed. To my amazement, he crammed them in his pocket. Even as he did so, we heard footsteps rushing down the stairs.

"'Not word!' Jimmy breathed to me.

"The glass door was flung open, and a man dashed in. 'Pardon,' he cried, 'but have you seen two pieces of paper? They blew out of my bedroom window in the wind, and fluttered in here.'

"Jimmy made a pretence of helping him to look. 'I'm afraid they must have fluttered out again,' he said. 'What size were they?'

"'The size of a piece of note paper,' answered the man, and he was staring hard at Jimmy. 'And they did not flutter out again.'

"'Then they must still be here,' Jimmy countered indifferently.

"He sat down, poured me out some more wine, while the man stood hovering by the other table in a state of the most obvious indecision. He was, of course, in a quandary. It was clear to



me that the papers were important, otherwise Jimmy would not have acted as he had. It was clear also that the man was convinced that they had not blown away. But what was he to do? Twice he made a step forward as if to speak; twice he drew back. And then he made up his mind.

"'As a mere matter of form, sir,' he said, 'I wonder if you would mind turning out your pockets? The papers are of the utmost importance, and—'

"'What the devil do you mean, sir?' interrupted Jimmy, slowly rising. 'Your suggestion is the most monstrous piece of impertinence I have ever heard. Emphatically, I will *not* turn out my pockets. Why, damn it, it's tantamount to accusing me of having taken your two confounded pieces of paper! Get to hell out of here!'

"And then the lobster arrived, and Jimmy resumed his seat, the picture of righteous indignation, while the man, with one last, vindictive look at both of us, left the room.

"'Jimmy,' I said, when we were once more alone, 'that was very naughty of you. Why have you stolen the poor man's papers?'

"He looked at me, and I had never seen him so serious. 'I've only had one fleeting glimpse at them,' he said, 'and I don't propose to do more than that here. But that glimpse was enough to make me wish I could steal all his other papers as well.'

"And it was then, messieurs, he told me that he was in your secret service, and not, as I had thought, just an army officer *en permission*."

"Just one moment, madame," said Standish. "This chap—was he English?"

"No. He spoke well, but with a strong accent."

"I see. Please go on, madame; you are interesting us profoundly."

"We finished our lunch," she continued, "but Jimmy was *distract*. All the time, I could see that he was itching to be gone so that he could examine the papers at his leisure. But he was far too clever to show he was in a hurry.

"'When one comes,' he said, 'to a restaurant where the food is as famous as here, one takes one's time. It is over little things like that that mistakes are made. And mistakes in my trade are apt to be dangerous.'

"So we had our coffee and liqueurs, and it was while we were drinking them that the man again came in, this time with a woman of most striking appearance. They took the other table, so that I had ample opportunity to study her. She was tall, slender, and very made-up, with an expression of insolent arrogance. But her expression did not ring true. It was a pose; a mask—the woman was *bourgeoise*.

"They talked in French, but again that was not their native language. The man's was better than his English: the woman's very good. But they were neither of them French. I tried to listen, but could hear nothing of any interest.

"When our bill was brought, the man came over to our table. I saw Jimmy stiffen, but this time it was only to apologize for his apparent rudeness. He again stressed the importance of the papers as his excuse, and there the matter ended, except that as we got into the car, escorted by the *patron*, Jimmy inquired their name. It was Pilofsky."

## CHAPTER X

### Sealed Fruit Tins!

MADAME PÉLAIN paused, took a sip of Evian water. "On the way back," she continued, "we examined the papers. The first was cov-



ered with writing in a foreign language which Jimmy told me was Russian. It was numbered three, and was evidently one of a series. I couldn't read a word of it, and was more interested in the second which, at any rate, was intelligible.

"It was a map of England and Scotland in outline. Jimmy said it was what you would give to children to fill in the counties. On it were a large number of red dots—I should say thirty or forty. In some places, they were closely grouped together; in others they were scattered. And against each dot was a number.

"These numbers varied considerably. The lowest was 50; the highest, 2,500. It was in your manufacturing districts that the dots were close together; in the agricultural areas, they were few and far between.

"I asked Jimmy what he made of it, and he shrugged his shoulders. 'When I get back to the hotel,' he said, 'I'll make a rough translation.'

"He left me the instant we got back, and went to his room whilst I awaited him here. One hour passed; two—and then he came."

Once again Madame Pélain paused and the two men craned forward eagerly. "M'sieur," she said deliberately, "I have never seen anyone in such a state of suppressed excitement.

"At length he calmed down a little, and threw himself into a chair. 'A plot,' he said, 'more fantastic than Jules Vernes. And I'm only on the fringe of it. Or is it the wild raving of a diseased brain?'

"Once more he began pacing up and down, talking half to himself. 'It's possible. Given the organization, it's possible. And the will to carry it through. . . . Listen, Marie, I have made a rough translation of that paper. I cannot tell

even you what it is; the whole thing is too gigantic—too incredible. It might put you in great peril. But I must leave for Paris tonight, and then return to England.'

"Naturally," she continued, "I was very disappointed, but I made no effort to dissuade him. To do so would have been wrong, for with a man, duty must always come first. But I went with him to the station to see him off. And as he was stowing his baggage in the sleeper, I happened to look along the train. Getting into another coach were the Pilofskys.

"'I wonder if that means he still suspects me,' he said.

"'I don't see how he can,' I answered, though I was wondering the same thing myself.

"And then, just as the train was starting, he leaned out of the window. 'If by any chance something happens to me,' he said, 'will you remember one thing? *Sealed fruit tins.*'"

"Sealed how much?" ejaculated Drummond incredulously.

"Sealed fruit tins," she repeated. "M'sieur, I was as amazed as you. I stared at him with my mouth open, almost wondering if he'd taken leave of his senses. And then the train steamed out, and I returned here. Which is all, messieurs, that I can tell you." She sighed. "Poor Jimmy!"

FOR a space there was silence, while Drummond stared at Standish and Standish stared at Drummond. The same thought was in both their minds: was the woman jesting?

"You have no idea what he meant by this strange remark, madame?" asked Standish after a moment.

"*Mais non, m'sieur,*" she cried. "It was as incomprehensible to me then as it is to you now."



"There was no little joke that had arisen between you during your acquaintanceship which could account for it?" he persisted.

"Monsieur Standish," Madame Pélain said with a certain hauteur, "is this the moment I would choose to mention little jokes?"

"I apologize, madame. But you will, I am sure, agree that the remark seems so meaningless that I had to be sure there was no commonplace explanation."

Madame Pélain lit a cigarette. "Both of you are also in the secret service?" she asked quietly.

"Something of the sort," admitted Standish with a smile.

"Then you realize that it is tantamount to signing your death warrant if you proceed?"

"Our death warrants have been signed so often in the past, madame," said Drummond cheerfully, "that we keep carbon copies to save trouble. As a matter of interest, however, why are you so very pessimistic?"

She looked at him gravely. "If it was worth while murdering one man because he was in possession of certain information, it is worth while murdering two."

"That is true, madame," agreed Standish. "What alarms me, however, far more than that is the possibility that you may be in danger."

She shrugged her shoulders. "Fortunately, m'sieur, I am a fatalist. I don't know if you have been out East; if so you will understand. *Tid apa*. Nothing matters. Jimmy was a dear; I liked him immensely. And if I can do anything to bring his murderer to book, you can count on me."

"Good for you, madame!" cried Drummond approvingly. "At the same time, speaking on behalf of all my sex, please be careful."

She flashed him a swift smile. "*Merçi, m'sieur*, she murmured. "*Vous êtes gentil*. But what," she continued, becoming practical again, "do you propose to do now?"

"That requires a little thought," said Standish, "At the moment, it doesn't seem to me that there is much more to be found out here."

"I suppose, madame," put in Drummond suddenly, "that you have never met a man called Charles Burton on the Riviera? He was staying at Nice recently."

She shook her head. "I do not recall the name," she said. "Burton . . . no. Do you know at what hotel he put up?"

"I have no idea," answered Drummond. "Though one should have no difficulty in finding that out. He is a gentleman of great wealth, who would certainly stop at one of the best."

"Is he involved in this matter?"

"We do not know," said Drummond. "We think that possibly he may be. He was at Nice while Jimmy was here."

"Jimmy never mentioned him to me."

"There was no reason why he should. I doubt if he even knew the man. Well, Ronald," he said now, "I think we have kept Madame up quite long enough. What about bed?"

## CHAPTER XI

### Cold Steel

THE two men rose. "One minute before you go," said Madame Pélain. "With regard to this Mr. Burton: There is a man in Nice—an Englishman—who has made his headquarters there for years. He is a strange character; very intelligent, very cultured, very cosmopolitan. But if anybody can give you information about any well-known visitor, he can. His name is Humphrey Gasdon, and he



lives at the Negresco. If you like, you can easily meet him."

"It must be done with great discretion, madame," said Standish. "The last thing we want is even a hint that Charles Burton is anything but what he professes to be."

"But why should there be any hint? Go, tomorrow, and lunch at the Negresco. Humphrey is invariably in the bar before lunch. Equally invariably does he talk to all and sundry whom he meets there. Mention that you come from this hotel in the most casual manner, and he will almost certainly ask if you know me. . . ."

"Which we don't, madame," cut in Standish. "Don't forget that. So far as is humanly possible, we wish to keep you out of this. Tomorrow we meet as strangers."

He paused suddenly, staring at Drummond, "What is it, Hugh?"

Moving with the silence of a cat, Drummond was crossing towards the door that led to Madame Pélain's bedroom. Crouched double, he flung it open. Even as he did so, there came the sound of the door leading into the corridor being closed.

He darted across the room, opened it. The corridor was empty, but just opposite, the splash of water proclaimed that someone was turning on a late bath.

Drummond returned to the sitting room and his face was grave. "Too late for that pretence, Ronald," he said. "Someone has been listening."

"It's obviously a guest or an employe of the hotel," said Standish thoughtfully. "Have you noticed anyone particularly these last two or three days, madame?"

She shook her head.

"Because it is clearly you who are being watched. The same as in London,

Hugh. They got on to us there through the chief; they've got on to us here through Madame."

"But, m'sieur," she cried, "have you no inkling at all as to who 'they' may be?"

"Not the faintest, madame," he answered. "But they are thorough in their methods—to put it mildly."

"In any case, it simplifies one thing," she said quietly. "Since they know you have met me, I shall come with you openly to Nice tomorrow for lunch, I do not like being spied upon from my bedroom."

She rose and held out her hand. "Good night, *messieurs*. You must assuredly be tired after your long run."

With a nod and a charming smile she dismissed them, and for a moment or two they stood talking in low tones outside her door. The bath was still occupied and Drummond eyed the door. "I would greatly like to see the occupant," he muttered.

"So would I," agreed Standish. "What do you make of her, Hugh?"

"Genuine," said Drummond promptly. "I believe every word she said. I hope she's in no danger."

"She is sure to lock her door," answered Standish. "Anyway, old boy, I'm practically asleep on my feet. We'll make discreet inquiries from Monsieur Lidet tomorrow, and see if we can get a line on the listener. Good night!"

He opened his door, and Drummond went on to his own room, where he unpacked his bag. Then he undressed and got into bed, to find that all desire for sleep had left him. Light was streaming into his room through a frosted glass window over the door, and he grew more and more wide-awake. And then the light went out; save for a faint glimmer from a street lamp outside, the room was in darkness.



FROM across the coastal road came the low murmur of the sea; except for that, the night was silent as the tomb. Occasionally, the leaves of an acacia tree outside his window rustled in a fitful eddy of wind, and once a belated motor speeded past the hotel. Cannes slept; at length, even Bulldog began to feel drowsy.

Suddenly he sat up in bed. A dim, flickering light was illuminating the glass above the door. It moved jerkily, increasing in power; then it died away again. In a flash, Drummond was putting on his dressing gown. Somebody was moving in the passage outside carrying a torch or a candle.

He crossed to the door and, with infinite care, he opened it and peered out. What he saw made him draw in his breath sharply. Some way along the corridor, a circle of light was shining on a keyhole—a keyhole into which a hand was inserting a key. And the keyhole was that of Madame Pélain's bedroom!

Not for an instant did Drummond hesitate. He dismissed as absurd the possibility that his appearance on the scene might prove embarrassing. If

Madame were entertaining someone, she would hardly expect him to pick the lock. And so it came about that the owner of the hand, though blissfully unconscious of the fact, had behind him, two seconds later, a foe far more dangerous than any he had imagined in his wildest dreams.

At length the key turned, and inch by inch the hand pushed the door open. Then the torch illuminated the bed, and there came a sigh of relief. Madame, breathing a trifle heavily, was fast asleep. . . .

The torch moved forward; still she did not stir, even when it halted by the bed. The hand which had held the key before now held a stiletto. It raised, ready to plunge the cold steel into that warm, sleeping body. . . .

**Death hovers over Madame Pélain while Bulldog Drummond and Ronald Standish are still puzzling over the mystery of Jimmy Latimer's death. Was he murdered because of three apparently meaningless words: "Sealed fruit tins"? What powerful organization is even now ready to take Madame Pélain's life? What rôle does the mysterious Charles Burton play in this fiendish business? Next week's swift installment brings a thrilling chase and a smashing surprise!**

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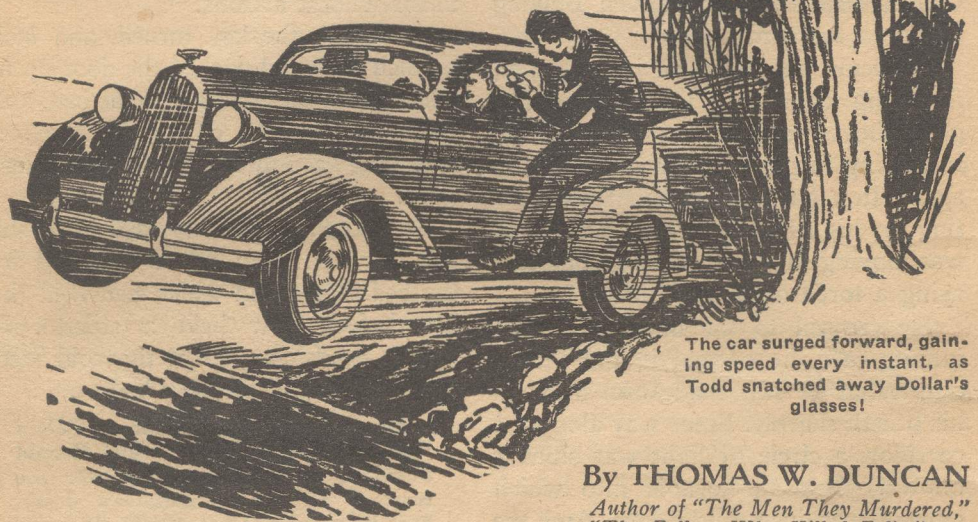
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# Still Waters— but Deep



The car surged forward, gaining speed every instant, as Todd snatched away Dollar's glasses!

By THOMAS W. DUNCAN

Author of "The Men They Murdered,"  
"The Fellow Who Killed Felix," etc.

*Only a Fool Waits for  
Blind Justice to Crack His  
Neck in the Hangman's  
Noose.*



SOMEBODY said: "Howdy!" Mike Fagan, who had about five and a half minutes left to live, turned and beheld a customer. He was a hard customer and, instead of entering the café from the front, like an honest man, he stood in the rear door. Tennis sneakers encased his big feet, and he held an automatic pistol trained on Fagan's bulging stomach.

Mike Fagan exclaimed: "Don't point that thing at me!"

A grin made the man's mouth a curly gash of thick lips. His hair was a black wilderness above his broad face, and

his dark eyes, distorted by the heavy lenses of steel-rimmed glasses, focused on Fagan.

"Take it easy, Doc," he murmured, "and you won't get hurt—anyone out front?" he indicated the partition separating the kitchen from the rest of the café.

"No—no one's out there."

"That's fine. You've got a customer now. Business picking up, eh?" The man chuckled at his own joke. busy. Take an order."

Fagan swallowed. Faintly, he could hear the throb of a motor car in the June darkness behind the building.

"Okay," he whispered. "Glad to—"

"I want twelve ham sandwiches and three milk bottles full of coffee. Put plenty of cream in it. What kind of pie you got?"



Automatically, Fagan reeled off, "Lemon, custard, apple—"

"Apple'll do. Three apple pies. Got any meat roasted?"

"I got a beef roast."

"Why, Doc, you're a good egg! Only good egg you ever served, huh?" Again the man chuckled, and again that flow of mirth ceased abruptly. "Wrap up that roast. Now make it snappy and you won't get hurt."

Fagan made it snappy. Never in his forty-six years had he worked so diligently. On his red forehead, a chill dew of sweat stood. Fervently, he hoped that this customer would depart before Hank Scrawner, town marshal of Millville, arrived for his midnight cup of coffee, and before Texas Todd came to the café to begin, at twelve o'clock, his ten-hour shift. There might be trouble, and Fagan desired peace. There might be shooting, and Fagan wished gunpowder had never been invented.

On the counter beneath the cupboards, Fagan spread out a newspaper, and on this he stacked the sandwiches. But before wrapping them, he caught sight of a photograph in the paper that caused his Adam's apple to lift and tighten against the skin of his throat. . . .

THE photograph showed a man in convict-gray; a man with mussed black hair and steel-glasses. Above the picture, the caption warned:

Believed Hiding In This State! Paul (Four-Eyes) Dollar, bank robber and killer, who escaped last month from the Tennessee State Prison, and whose bloody trail has led through five states, was believed Friday by authorities to be hiding out with two companions—

Instead of wrapping the food, Fagan turned to the stove and carried the roast to the counter. Then, procur-

ing more newspapers, he wrapped the roast and the sandwiches. He filled three milk bottles with creamy coffee and wrapped the pies.

He did not use the newspaper containing the photograph of Four-Eyes Dollar. He wanted to show that to Town Marshal Hank Scrawner. For Fagan did not believe he was going to die. Why should he die? He had obeyed this man's commands.

Could he have talked with the ghosts of a prison guard, and two Memphis policemen, and an Arkansas constable, and an Oklahoma bank cashier, and a Kansas watchman, and two Missouri sheriffs, he would not have been so sure of continued life. Those bullet-ridden shades might have told him that Four-Eyes Dollar enjoyed killing.

"There you are!" Fagan pointed to the neat bundles. "And I think you'll find everything okay!"

Very low, almost endearingly, the man muttered between locked teeth: "Yes, sir, Doc, you're a good egg." He moved from the door. "Don't be afraid—I ain't goin' to shoot you—turn around—that's it—face the wall."

Four-Eyes Dollar kept his word: he did not shoot Mike Fagan. Instead, he transferred his automatic to his left hand, and from his jacket pocket plucked a rock.

It was a sky-blue rock, freckled with little black dots, and it was about the size of a duck-egg. Gripping it, he brought back his hand to give the blow plenty of power. Then he crashed the rock hard against Fagan's skull.

Fagan dropped soddenly.

Carelessly, Four-Eyes Dollar tossed the rock under the sink, pocketed his gun, and rolled Fagan face-up. From the counter, he picked up a slender butcher-knife and ran it through Fagan's heart.



For a couple of watch-ticks, with a brooding smile on his face, he stared down at the man who had been the proprietor of the only all-night café in Millville. With the toe of a tennis-sneaker he nudged Fagan's body. Then, unhurriedly, he gathered the food into his arms and went out the back door.

THE man's name was Charley Todd, but because he had drifted into the town of Millville from Texas, everyone called him "Tex." They liked him, mostly. Fagan had liked him at first—till he started going with Nancy Connor. But because Nancy was the daughter of Denny Connor, Fagan's ancient enemy, Fagan had ceased liking Tex Todd, and that was bad. Nor did Town Marshal Hank Scrawner like him, either, and that also was bad. Very.

Tex Todd was not tall, but tall men of good judgment did not cross him. His shoulders were wide and superbly muscled; his nose turned up, and his stomach turned in. He had a grin, a missing front tooth, and hair the color of an airedale's.

Tonight, he whistled as he strode along Garfield Street toward work. A while ago, when he suggested to Nancy Connor that he buy a license—and not a dog license either—she had said, "Well—maybe," in that way of hers that made him know she meant yes.

As he reached the alley that left Garfield Street to run behind the stores facing Main Street, he paused. An unlighted car was purring in the blue-black shadows behind the café. This roused his curiosity, and he thought he'd have a look. Starting down the alley, he saw a man carrying bundles from the rear café door. About the man's eyes there was a momentary flash of reflected light—he wore glasses.

Why was the customer leaving by the back door? Todd squinted at the shadowy figure descending the wooden steps that led from a little landing. He heard the car door slam, and then a blinding blaze of headlights poured over him. The car growled from low gear into screaming second; Tex side-stepped and flattened himself against a store-wall; the car shot by so close that it grazed his toes.

"You drunken—!" Todd shouted after it. For the driver of that car—with its Missouri license glimmering in the tail-light—had almost seemed eager to smear Tex Todd against that rough brick wall.

"Must have been bleary drunk," Todd muttered, climbing the steps to the café kitchen.

He halted in the door, called: "Mike!"

A corpse is a silent thing.

"Mike!" Surprise was in his voice—a trace to horror.

Tex scurried across the kitchen and knelt, then stood up and glanced about the room. Everything was in order; no relics of a fight. But it wasn't natural that Fagan should have greeted death without a struggle. Scowling, he closed his palm about the haft of the knife. The blade gleamed like rain-wet cherries.

"So it came to this, did it?" a voice yapped.

Todd stood up and faced Hank Scrawner. "Somebody's killed Fagan."

"I got eyes."

"They had a car. It was waiting out back. When I came along the alley they tried to run me down."

HE leaned over and put the knife on the floor. When he straightened, he was looking into the barrel of Hank Scrawner's revolver.



"What's the idea?" he demanded then.

In his narrow face, the marshal's eyes were grim. "In case you won't come peaceful.

"In case I—*what?*"

"The jail's empty, but it won't be for long. Think I'll phone the sheriff over in Canfield. Better jail, there. Not that you could get out of this one, but it's hot weather and folk's tempers is short. They might try to get at you. When you stretch hemp, it's going to be legal stretching."

"Have you gone crazy, Hank?"

"Don't 'Hank' me. Put up your hands."

Todd stared at the lanky old man. Bitterness smoldered in his eyes—a few months ago Todd had participated in a prank that some of the boys had played on him.

"Now wait, Hank. Listen to reason. Why would I kill Fagan?"

"Ain't up to me to answer that. Probably you and Mike got to arguing about Nancy, or something. Oh, I've heard you two arguing—everyone knows he didn't like it because you went with her. But that don't matter now. All that matters is getting a murderer into a cell. Put 'em up, or you'll need a lawyer *and* a doc. . . ."

"Hank, you old coot! If I *had* wanted to kill him would I've done it knowing you'd be in at midnight for your coffee?"

"I'm counting three. If your hands ain't up then—"

So Todd lifted his hands.

"That's more like it. Now you walk ahead, and by Old Nick, I'll put lead into you if you try any cute stuff!"

It was ridiculous—absurb. But it was, nevertheless, a fact. He, Texas Todd, was under arrest for the murder of Mike Fagan. And there was no use trying to reason with Hank Scrawner;

after all these years of petty arrests, of chasing boys on Halloween, he thought he had caught a killer red-handed; his small brain had fastened to that idea, and he'd never let it go.

It might be absurd, but it was also serious, Todd realized, as he marched through the café and along the deserted Main Street. There was a healthy chance that the townspeople would believe Hank Scrawner. After all, it was well known that he and Fagan had argued hotly. And he would be locked up in jail. That would further stigmatize him. Meanwhile, the car with the Missouri license would be rapidly carrying the real murderer far away. And in tomorrow's cold daylight, wouldn't his story of a car waiting behind the café sound grotesque, the weakest of weak alibis?

Worry had deeply wrinkled his forehead when they reached the town hall.

"Get on in," Hank snapped.

The front room of the concrete-block building was used for council meetings, while the back room was equipped with steel-barred windows and three stout cells.

"You're going back there," Hank proclaimed with vast self-importance, "but first I'm going to call Sam Dunshee."

Sam Dunshee was the mayor. "Just keep those hands up. I'll be watching you every minute."

Revolver in hand, Hank sidled to the old-fashioned wall telephone and vigorously turned the crank.

"Central?" he shrilled. "Get me Sam Dunshee, and get him quick. It's important!"

THERE was a long wait while Dunshee's telephone roused him from slumber. Hank impatiently tapped a foot. Texas Todd stood a few



paces away, his brain seething. Every moment the seriousness of his plight impressed him more deeply. To march meekly into a cell and rot there while Hank Scrawner entangled his good name with cobwebs of circumstantial evidence—he could never do that.

"Hello? Sam?" Hank yapped. "This is Hank Scrawner. I say this is Hank—yeah! Why say, Sam, something's happened. Yep, you'll never guess. Mike Fagan's been killed. Huh? Course I'm certain. He's lyin' cold in his own blood in his café. And I been on the job, Sam. Sure have! I got the fellow who done it. I—"

Texas Todd was standing relaxed—apparently. But his muscles were growing taut; the cords in his legs tightened and he gradually rose to tiptoe. He didn't like to attack an old man, but he liked even less the prospect of jail.

Suddenly, with the swiftness of a whip-lash, Texas Todd broad-jumped toward Hank Scrawner. His fists shot out with deadly accuracy. One instant, the marshal was standing at the telephone; and in the next, a cluster of knuckles had knocked the receiver flying from his ear and another hard cluster had abruptly loosened his grip on the revolver. The gun clattered to the floor. Yelling, Hank Scrawner found himself pinned to the wall, steely fingers at his throat.

"Shut up, Hank! Stop that noise and listen!"

Hank snarled into silence.

"Now get this. I didn't kill Mike Fagan. What I said about a car behind the café is true."

"Attackin' an officer of the law—"

"All right: you asked for it, Hank. If you're such a fool that you won't listen to reason, I'll have to put you where you won't interfere with me while I try to find out who did it."

"You young — murderer — I — I!"  
"Okay. Come on."

Tex Todd's left fingers clutched the marshal's shirt collar and his right fingers grappled his belt. Smoothly, he pulled Hank from the wall and backed him through the jail entrance. A cell door was ajar. Before he comprehended fully the shame of this final indignity, Hank Scrawner found himself shoved backward into the steel cage. The door clanged shut.

"Tex Todd!" he yelled. "You'll live to rue this. You'll rue it on the gallows' steps—you'll—"

Todd waited to hear no more. In the front room, he replaced the receiver on its hook, pocketed the marshal's revolver, and trotted into the night toward the café.

He estimated that he had about five minutes in which to decide on a course of action. Right now, Mayor Sam Dunshee was probably jumping into his clothes; he'd be downtown soon to see what was wrong.

Nothing had changed in the café kitchen; Mike Fagan's eyes glittered sightlessly at the ceiling. Todd went to the rear door and stood surveying the room. He lashed from his consciousness all thought of the peril hanging over him and concentrated on the question: Who killed Fagan, and why? Foot by foot, almost inch by inch, his gaze moved over the room.

What was that beneath the sink?

He picked up the rock, scowling at the black specks dotting its sky-blue surface. A flare of memory brightened his brain—there was one place in this vicinity—and only one—where such rocks were to be found. Carefully, he laid it on the counter, and then he saw the newspaper photograph of Four-Eyes Dollar. "Believed hiding in this state. . . ."



WITH excited fingers Todd snatched up the paper and read the legend beneath the photograph. Dollar's most recent crime was the killing of a Missouri sheriff, and he had been last seen near the Missouri-Iowa border, tearing northward in a stolen car. That was two days ago. Since then, his trail had vanished.

But why would Four-Eyes Dollar, who looted rich banks for big hauls, deign to rob and kill a small-town restaurateur like Fagan? Well, why did anyone visit a café? For food, of course! Todd strode to the oven. The roast which usually was cooked during the evening had disappeared.

But again, why hadn't Dollar entered the café like an ordinary customer and bought food? Why hadn't he indeed! Because he was afraid of being recognized! Doubtless he had thought it safer to steal and kill, silencing forever any alarm that might pass Fagan's lips.

A picture of the crime was rapidly forming in Todd's imagination: Dollar hadn't wanted to shoot Fagan, for fear of rousing the town. He had chosen a stealthier means of death. . . .

Todd knelt and, entangling fingers in Fagan's hair, lifted his head. The sight which met his eyes was not pleasant. Under the blow of a rock, Fagan's skull had been fragile as an egg-shell.

On Main Street, a car raced to a halt before the café, and Tex Todd rushed to the front door. "Sam! I've just stumbled onto something hot. I—"

Mayor Sam Dunshee had a leathery horse face which fifty-odd years had seamed. "Hank Scrawner called me," he said. "He stopped takin' all of a sudden. Did he call from here?"

"No—from the town hall. I'll tell you about that later. But now I want to show you—"

Todd led the mayor to the kitchen.

At the sight of the dead man, Mayor Dunshee drew a long breath. "Poor Mike!" he murmured. Then he stared at the newspaper which Todd thrust into his hands. "What's all this?"

"That's the man who killed Mike."

"What? Four-Eyes Dollar? Oh, now listen, Tex. This has got you excited. That couldn't happen. Dollar wouldn't fool around a place like Millville. He's a big-time crook—"

"But he's hiding out—don't you see? He and his cronies got hungry. They waited till midnight, when almost everyone would be in bed, and then came here and—"

"Where they hiding?"

"I've a pretty good hunch I know where. Paradise Park."

"Paradise Park? What makes you think that?"

Tex Todd explained. He recounted his theory of the crime. Paradise Park, he suggested, would be an ideal hide-out. It was an amusement park six miles north of town which had flourished for a few years and had then gone broke. It covered a score of hilly and wooded acres bordering the Wild Turkey River. Often, for days on end, no one set foot there.

"There's lots of these rocks out there on the river beach," Tex concluded. "You don't find them anywhere else around here. I was noticing them just the other afternoon. Nancy and I went on a picnic all by ourselves out there. . . . That's an ideal place for a hide-away."

"But if it was Dollar, and if he used a rock on Fagan, why would he leave the rock here?"

"Don't you see? He picked it up in the park tonight when it was dark. He didn't notice it was a special kind of rock. And if he had noticed, he



wouldn't know that Paradise Park is the only place where there are rocks like that. It was just a rock to him—like any other. He had his arms full when he left, so he tossed the rock under the sink. He never thought it'd be a clue."

MAYOR DUNSHEE shook his head. "You're just excited, Tex, as I said. It couldn't be Dollar—he wouldn't hide out around here. Besides, Hank told me he knew who'd killed Mike. Fact is, he said he had him in custody. Who is it?"

Tex laughed shortly. "Oh, that. That was me."

"You?"

"Pretty crazy of Hank, wasn't it? He came in here and found me and—"

Frankly, Tex Todd told the whole story.

But Mayor Sam Dunshee did not respond as he should have. He did not seem to think it was so funny that his marshal was locked in jail. As he listened, his eyes narrowed and his mouth hardened, and when he spoke, his voice was cold:

"Todd, you were very rash. I don't like it a bit."

"But surely you—you don't think that I really—?"

"I'm not accusing you, Todd, understand that. I know how Hank is. He's self-important, and he doesn't like you, and all that. But just the same, he represents law and order in this town, and you used force to lock him up. I don't like it."

"But, Sam! Don't you see? If I was locked in jail, I couldn't do anything to help clear up Fagan's death."

"Are you sure you want to clear it up?"

"What do you mean?"

"Just this. You and Fagan had had

several pretty warm arguments lately, everyone knows that. I'm not saying which was at fault; I'm just mentioning that he didn't like it because you were friendly with the Connors. He hated Denny Connor and you went with Denny's daughter. . . . I don't think you'd kill a man premeditatedly, Tex, I really don't. But you and Mike might have had an argument tonight, and your temper might have got the best of you. You admit yourself that you were at Paradise Park a few days ago. Well, you might have brought that rock in here, and left it, and when you were mad at Mike you saw it and picked it up and hit Mike. When you realized what you'd done, you stabbed him with that butcher knife to make it look complicated, and then you invented this cock and bull story about Dollar—"

"Sam Dunshee, listen to me! I wouldn't kill a man and you know it. I swear I didn't kill Mike Fagan."

"Well after all, Tex, it's your word against Hank's. Hank has his faults, but he isn't a liar. I'm afraid it's my duty to take you to jail. Come on."

Instantly, Todd made his decision. He pulled out Scrawner's revolver.

"Put up your hands."

"Todd! Do you realize you're talking to the mayor?"

"I realize I'm talking to a fool. Put 'em up! I mean it!"

Mayor Sam Dunshee obeyed. Todd jerked his head at a door. "Get over there into that closet."

Dunshee flushed. "I tell you I'm mayor of this town and you can't do this to me!"

"They can't," Todd said evenly, "hang a man more than once. If they're going to frame me and hang me for a killing I didn't do, I'd about as soon give them a killing I really did. And



it might as well be you—unless you step fast—”

Dunshee marched to the narrow closet and stood among the mops and scrub-pails. Todd slammed and locked the door.

“I’m going out to Paradise Park,” he called into the closet.

A worried scowl stamped his face as he left the café, climbed into Dunshee’s car, and drove north out of town. Twice he had resisted arrest and imprisoned officials. Technically, he was now stealing a car. And he was suspected of murdering Mike Fagan. If he failed now, he guessed they would surely hang him by his neck till he was dead. . . .

HE turned off the concrete turnpike and raced along a weed-lined dirt road. There was no moon and the countryside was black except for the white tunnel which the headlights carved in the darkness. After the first mile, along an upland, the road dipped into rougher country; the trail grew rutted and narrow, fringed by thick brush.

A worry coiled like a rattlesnake in Todd’s brain: suppose that Missouri car had not returned to Paradise Park? Under cover of night, Dollar and his companions might have fled. . . .

On the other hand, peace officers all over the Middle West were looking for them, and in this timber country they would be safer than on a naked highway.

Then Tex Todd spied something gleaming in the road, and he slammed on the brakes and jumped out. He carried it to the front of the car and in the headlight rays examined it. It was a milk bottle.

A trace of golden-brown liquid still rimmed its inner base—coffee. More-

over, lettered on the bottle were the words: PROPERTY OF AND FILLED BY MILLVILLE DAIRY.

Fagan’s Café bought its milk from the Millville Dairy. . . . Todd’s palm caressed the bottle, and he put it by his side in the front seat. Fagan had evidently supplied coffee to the man who murdered him, and the Missouri car had returned along this road, its occupants gulping the fluid and then discarding the bottle.

He drove on, more cautiously, for another mile; then pulled to the side of the road and killed the motor and lights. The entrance to Paradise Park was a quarter of a mile ahead. He would walk.

But he did not walk. He dog-trotted, pausing occasionally to listen and to stare into the darkness. He heard only the myriad insects singing in the black watches of early morning. Sometimes he thought of the men he had left behind in Millville. Hank Scrawner couldn’t get out of jail, but probably, by batting the closet door with mops and brooms, Sam Dunshee could extricate himself. Sam would be good and mad. He would release Hank and they would spread the alarm: Mike Fagan murdered by Tex Todd!—Tex Todd had run away! Ought to string him up!

Todd’s mouth tightened and he touched the revolver in his pocket. There was no time to waste. Fagan had lived his whole life in Millville and he was popular there, whereas Todd’s popularity had had only a couple of years to assert itself. Yes, a posse would certainly come tearing along this road.

But if danger lay behind, a nest of hazards waited ahead. Tex Todd did not underestimate the cunning or the strength or the depravity of Four-



Eyes Dollar. A bad Indian, a man whose name was rapidly climbing toward the top of the public enemy list—that was Dollar. He liked to kill, enjoyed it. Yes, it looked as if Tex Todd's eyes would never behold another red sunrise or another glimpse of Nancy Connor. The breaks had been tough: he had blundered into the no-man's-land between law and outlawry. But if die he must, he would die kicking.

The road curved darkly, and dropped into a hollow, bringing him to the wooden pillars, worm-eaten and awry, which marked the entrance to Paradise Park. Two rods further on, the Wild Turkey River flowed, a treacherous stream with noisy shallows and deep holes. He passed between the pillars and stopped, yearning for the eyes of a cat. The weed-grown trail into the park ran for a little distance over level ground, then swung round the shoulder of a river bluff before dipping into a glade where the concrete swimming pool, now frost-sprung and nettle-choked, was situated near the time-rotted boards of the dancing pavilion. Stealthily, he followed this trail, his ears alert; but all he heard was the lonely chorus of river-frogs and the hunting hoots of an owl.

Then he froze in his tracks. . . .

**T**WENTY yards ahead, where the trail curved, a tiny triangle of flame cut the night. The match-flare washed redly over a man's rat-face . . . died . . . replaced by the scarlet dot of a cigarette.

A lookout. But he had been watching for cars, not foot travelers; and he had cat-eyes no more than Tex Todd. His heart knocking, Tex turned off the trail and circled widely to the right, moving with infinite care, tentatively testing the

ground before trusting his weight to each step, always fearful of the tell-tale snap of a twig. It was slow labor, but it carried him at last up the rising ground to a point above and behind the rat-faced man. Then began the most ticklish work of all.

He gripped the revolver barrel: he would use it as a club. Down the hill, scarcely daring to breathe, he picked his cautious path toward the point in the darkness where occasionally red sparks dripped from the live cigarette. A step. A pause. Another step . . . He was so near the lookout that he could have touched him.

The man cleared his throat, spat, and took a final deep drag on the cigarette, and this outlined his head against the dim red blur. He was wearing a cap. Tex Todd lifted the revolver and brought the butt crashing against the man's head.

He fell and with him something fell that made considerable noise. Too much noise? Had his companions heard?

Todd waited a minute. Only the frog-croaking filled the night. Then, groping on the ground, he found what had fallen with the man: a sub-machine gun.

Breathing easier, Todd lugged it up the hill and left it in a heap of last year's leaves at the base of a tree. Then he ventured down the hill toward the glade where the pleasure-seekers of by-gone years had danced in the now-rotting pavilion.

The valley was a cup of blackness. There was brambles and saplings to impede or betray him; sometimes he spent a whole minute in traversing a single yard. But finally, he made out a pile of blacker darkness—the car? He stepped forward, his toe contacting something that rattled softly—an old tin can.

Texas Todd halted and stood more



motionless than a tree. In his pocket, his hand gripped the revolver. Had he been detected? Sixty seconds slipped by, and he was almost ready to believe that he was safe when suddenly he found himself nakedly exposed, a wide-open target in the full white flood of the car's headlights.

Texas Todd knew that he had never been nearer death. To whirl and run—that would bring him to earth with a bullet in his heart. Four-Eyes Dollar was a dead shot.

From the darkness beyond the headlights' glare a voice drawled: "I don't like callers who come in the night—reach up your mitts."

Todd's hands slid skyward.

"All right, Fritz," the voice growled.

From the car, an underslung man who walked like a Russian bear approached Todd and, roughly patting his clothes, fished out the revolver.

"Say, Four-Eyes," he called, "why not let me burn him right now wit' his own rod?"

"Keep your shirt on," Four-Eyes gruffed.

Fritz scratched his jaw, blue with a two days' stubble. "I'd sure enjoy shootin' him. I never did like guys wit' red hair."

"I'll be the one to shoot him," Dollar's tennis sneakers carried his big frame into the headlights rays. "But first, I got some things to ask him." He halted with his pistol staring at Todd's stomach. He commanded: "Talk."

A PLAN flashed through Todd's brain. "Mr. Dollar," he said, "I'm sure glad to meet you!"

"Listen, guy. Cut out the goose-grease. Talk."

"I've been reading about you," Texas Todd declared in an admiring voice. "And I want to join up with you."

"Huh? You—?"

"I live on a farm a half-mile down the road. I was cutting through this park yesterday afternoon and I saw you. I knew who you were from your pictures in the paper."

Four-Eyes Dollar smiled. "Guess I'm kind of famous, at that," he admitted.

"Famous? I should say you are. You're the best-known bandit since Jesse James."

Dollar's chest expanded slightly. "Well, I don't know. Jesse was pretty well known too. But I guess I ain't done so bad, either."

"I saw you through those bushes at the top of the hill. I wanted to join you right then, but I was kind of scared and I sneaked away home. I came back about midnight, but you were gone. Then I saw your car driving in—and I waited a while—an—and here I am."

Four-Eyes Dollar nibbled his lip. "Well, I don't know. We weren't figurin' on taking anyone else on. . . ."

Fritz said: "I don't like this guy, Chief. There's somethin' about him I don't like. I don't think he's honest."

Dollar pursed his thick lips. "Shut up, Fritz. I'm trying to think."

"Don't you go thinkin'," Fritz said. "This guy ain't a square guy. I don't like him. What I'd like to do—I'd like to plug him."

"It's just your prejudice against red hair, maybe."

Fritz wrinkled his forehead. "Naw, Chief, it ain't altogether that. It's just—just that I don't like him."

Todd said, "If I hadn't been on the square, I'd have called the cops, wouldn't I, when I saw you in here yesterday?"

"There you are, Fritz," Dollar said. "He'd have called the cops, wouldn't he?"

"I don't know. I just don't like him."



Dollar spent several moody minutes in thought. Finally, he said: "We might use you. We'll stay here a day or two. Maybe you could bring us grub from your farm."

"Sure," Todd said. "Glad to do that—"

"But," Dollar added, "Fritz is goin' to keep your rod for a while yet. How come you had a rod on you, anyway?"

"Well, I thought if I was going to join you—"

Todd didn't finish. For, through the darkness that was beginning to be diluted by the gray light of early summer daybreak, a man came stumbling from round the car. He was a man of slight build, and he reeled a little, as if drunk. His features were sharply-pointed, like a rat's, and he wore a cap.

"Some guy," he called, "slugged me. Some guy batted me on the head and stole my mill and—" He paused. "Who's that?"

Dollar's eyes, distorted by their glasses, never left Todd, but from the side of his mouth he addressed the man in the cap.

"Come here, Ratty. Was this the guy?"

"I didn't see him. He hit me from behind. But—but I have seen this guy before—somewheres. . . ." And Ratty added: "I got it, Chief! This is the guy that was in that alley!"

Dollar's lips parted in a grin that was not mirthful; and an odd light glinted in his eyes. In a flat cold voice he said: "Fritz, keep this guy covered."

**T**HEN he swung a big palm and slapped Todd hard across the mouth. "What did you do with that machine gun?"

Todd's lower lip was cut open. "I—hid it."

"Where?"

"Up on the hill. I can't tell you just where. But I could find it."

Fritz begged, "Let me plug him, Chief."

"I'll do the plugging. But first we've got to find that gun." Dollar waved his automatic. "Get going."

Todd led the way. He remembered the tree where he had left the machine gun, but he did not walk directly toward it. Playing for time, he circled and zig-zagged, taking his captors through hazel-brush. The eastern sky was graying rapidly, now, and light the color of dishwater was filtering into the park. Once, he caught the sound of cars on the distant highway, and immediately, to drown out the dim noise, he spoke loudly:

"I thought I could find it. But it was dark when I hid it, and—"

Dogged by the three men, Todd walked around the shoulder of the hill to a point overlooking the level ground that swept to the park entrance. He halted. On the road, a few rods away, cars were stopping, and men were getting out. Men with guns.

"I wonder," Todd said innocently, "what those fellows are doing?"

An exclamation broke from Dollar's mouth. "That's a posse!"

"Listen, Chief," Fritz gasped, "we'd better beat it—"

"Where's that mill?" Ratty queried. "If I had that mill—"

"I've been *trying* to find it—"

"Oh, Chief, it's this guy—this guy wit' red hair! He's crossed us—! Let me plug him, Chief—"

Dollar said, "Wait. Now don't get rattled, you guys. We've shot our way out of tougher spots than this."

"But Chief—!"

"I've got an idea. No time now to look for that gun. Listen: we'll drive through that posse. And we'll perch



this guy on the running board, and they'll have to shoot him first!" Dollar's automatic prodded Todd's spine. "Back to the car!"

"And then, Chief, kin I plug him?" Fritz yelled as they crashed through brush. "Kin I plug him *after* we've run through that posse?"

"We'll all plug him then."

An icy sweat broke out on Todd's forehead. He was going to die. But it was not the thought of death that he dreaded—death had threatened him all this night. He recoiled from dying with a shadow on his name—always there would be people who would say, "Well, if Tex Todd was innocent, what was he doing with those bandits?" They would say that to Nancy Connor. . . .

Fritz clambered into the back seat and held his gun on Todd while Dollar slid behind the wheel and Ratty leapt nimbly into the seat by his side.

"Got him covered, Fritz?" Dollar shouted.

"You bet!"

"All right, you guy! Hang onto that runningboard right by my side! We're goin' to travel!"

Dollar tramped the starter.

"Listen! Dollar!—listen!" Todd yelled, a wild plan leaping into his mind. "I know a way out of here—so we won't have to run through that posse!"

"Way out—?"

"Down to the river! There's an old ford there. I'll guide you to it. And there's a trail on the other side that'll take us into the hills and through a cornfield—"

DOLLAR'S foot was racing the motor, and his hand nudged the the gear-lever into low. "A ford you say—?"

"Pioneers used it. There's a good

gravel bottom. If you'll step on the gas we'll go through like nothing at all."

At that instant, from the bushes on the hilltop, a rifle cracked. Something zinged against the car's hood.

"Okay!" Dollar bawled. "We'll try it!"

The car jumped.

"See that cottonwood?" Todd yelled, clinging to the wildly lurching machine. "Head into the river to the right of that! And give 'er the gun or we'll be stuck sure!"

Bumping and careening, gaining speed every instant, the car pitched downward at a breakneck pace toward the cottonwood.

"More speed!" Todd commanded.

Dollar pressed the gas harder.

Todd had a last glimpse of the big cottonwood rushing toward the car. Then he turned his attention to the car's occupants. Despite himself, Fritz's attention wandered from Todd to the swift landscape blurring toward the windshield. As the cottonwood loomed, Todd crouched and shot his free hand inside the car, his fingers snatching Dollar's glasses and ripping them from his near-sighted eyes.

Dollar roared blindly.

The car left from the bank. There was a split second when it hung in thin air, its wheels spinning, before it dropped into the deepest hole in this part of the river. And just as it splashed, Todd snapped open the door, closed his fingers round Dollar's throat, and jerked with all his strength.

There was an eternity of black water, water that shut out the sky and stung the nose, but Texas Todd's fingers never released their grip. There was fresh air again, and Texas Todd treading water. Only then did his hands leave Dollar's throat. His left fingers clutched Dollar's mop of drenched hair



and his right fist smashed against the man's jaw. Then, like a lifeguard, he swam to shore, pulling Dollar behind him.

"WELL boys," Sam Dunshee said an hour later, after the cell door clanged shut on Four-eyes Dollar, "we'd better go out and dredge for those two bodies. . . . But first, there's a little point to be decided."

The dozen men in the town hall waited expectantly.

"There's the matter of the reward. The paper says there's a thousand dollars on the head of this fellow. Now of course, we could divide it, but that wouldn't make a whole lot for any of

us. . . . Myself, I've got another idea. I kind of think that since Tex here actually had Dollar in tow, that reward ought to go to him."

A murmur of approval passed over the company.

"Well, then, if that's decided, we'd better get back out there—say, where you goin', Tex?"

Texas Todd halted in the door. He grinned.

"These clothes," he said, "aren't any too dry yet. Think I'd better change them."

"Then will you be back with us again?"

Slowly Texas Todd shook his head.

THE END

## *The "Finest"*

WHEN Franklin Delano Roosevelt was inaugurated, on January 20, 1937, for his second term as President of the United States, one hundred and sixty-three members of the New York Police Department went down to Washington, D. C., to help. They were selected principally from the midtown squad for appearance and courteous manner. Not one of them had been on the force more than fifteen years; not one was less than five feet eleven inches tall. Mayor Fiorello H. LaGuardia, giving the officers their send-off from New York, cautioned them against giving street directions in the Capital. He confessed that after living there fourteen years as a Congressman, he was not always sure of his bearings!

—Dickie Swift

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Suddenly Nadia was swaying. The end had come—and the audience was getting more than its money's worth

# The Living Target

By ROBERT W. SNEDDON

*Author of "Death in the Cards," "Vidocq the Great," etc.*

ONE morning in May, 1934, the citizens of Salonika, that city which marks the meeting place of two civilizations, awakened to find the advertising stations plastered with the brilliant colored posters of the famous Europa Circus.

Featured on many of the posters was a star act calculated to appeal to the polyglot population.

It was that of Wassili, Caucasian sharpshooter, and his beautiful, glam-

orous partner, Princess Nadia Baranikoff.

Everywhere crowds stood gazing at the picture. The master marksman was apparently firing point blank at the girl who stood facing him with a fearless smile.

She was billed on the program as "The Living Target."

When the circus opened, the great amphitheater was packed. The bazaars and markets were thinned of their usual



masses, and for a time the universal passion of gambling was forgotten.

The program started. The bareback riders, the trapeze artists, the clowns and animal acts all received their share of applause, but everyone was waiting for the shooting act when for a moment or two the woman would hear the rustle of the wings of death above the hiss of the bullets.

The moment came. The ringmaster in his staccato bellow proclaimed the entry of the marksman. The band swung into the waltz, the red curtains parted, and superb in his tightfitting scarlet uniform Wassili stepped out to bow his acknowledgments. Behind him two men in livery carried a table with rifles.

One of them tossed a copper coin into the air. Quick as a flash the marksman snatched up a rifle and fired. The coin was pierced. Other objects thrown up were as accurately riddled. An apple placed on a clown's head was split in two.

There was a fanfare of silver trumpets and all eyes turned to the entrance of the ring. The curtains parted slowly and a girl in her early twenties, graceful in form and lovely to look at, stepped out. Her white, powdered shoulders rose out of a knee length black velvet dress. She curtsied with a charming grace and there was a babble of admiring exclamation.

As she came forward the ringmaster, trim in white britches, high boots and blue tail coat met her, bowed and led her into the center of the ring.

The ringmaster swelled his chest and in several languages made his brief announcement of the act supreme—Prince Wassili the Caucasian master shooter, the world's marksman and his lovely living target, Princess Nadia Baranikoff, in the challenge to death.

Several ring attendants wheeled in

a platform. On it was a canvas background with an iron backing. Wassili directed its placing with the utmost care. He stepped back, then paced the distance between the table with his rifles, motioned the grooms to set the table back a foot, paced the distance once more, then nodded his head. By now all eyes were glued to him. He was an expert in showmanship.

He nodded to Nadia and with a bow she mounted the platform, placed her back against the canvas, adjusted her dress and stiffened rigidly as though carved from marble.

The drums began to roll with that vibration of taut sheepskin which has such an exciting effect on the pulse of those who hear it.

Wassili raised his rifle. At once the drums ceased. He took aim and without a moment's hesitation pulled the trigger. The shots followed each other in rapid succession with scarcely a moment's interval.

Gradually a line of bullet holes appeared on the canvas following the outline of the living target. Not once did the bullets vary by the fraction of an inch, so unerring was the aim of the shooter.

Erect and dauntless, the Princess faced this shower of death, never betraying by as much as the flicker of her lashes the knowledge of the danger in which she stood should something go wrong with her partner or his weapons.

The fusillade ceased. Wassili with a smile laid down his last rifle, stepped forward, kissed Nadia's hand and assisted her to the ground. Then and then only, released from the spell of tension, did the audience go frantic. They whistled, yelled and shouted.

Wassili nodded carelessly. He was used to enthusiasm. He was looking



"past his partner to the entrance to the ring. A group of girls in dancing costume were waiting for the signal. One of them smiled to him then looked sharply away as the Princess passed her, head erect.

The three days' stay of the circus was prolonged to a week. After that came Athens, and then a tour of South America. For the farewell night the big amphitheater was again packed to capacity.

THE performers as well as the audience were keyed up to a high pitch. The artists were to have a supper and a dance after the show. There were several new acts. Excitement gathered as the show went on until with the appearance of the star act the tremendous welcome of applause was succeeded by a strange quiet.

Twice before in his lifetime of circus experience, the ringmaster had known such a strange silence, and each time there had been an accident. He looked superstitiously at Wassili. He was reassured by the marksman's poise and nerve. He was going through his routine with the utmost confidence. Now he was bowing. The ringmaster's heart resumed its natural beat. Here was the applause. Nothing had happened. And here advancing with her little set smile was Nadia.

He met her and led her to Wassili. She laid her hand on his scarlet arm and patted it as though to say—"Good arm. Never a miss." Then, leaving her partner, she stepped up and faced him. She smiled, stiffened to attention as the drums rolled then ceased.

Wassili saluted his audience then picked up the first rifle and set it to his shoulder. Four rapid shots in succession and then with a strange incredulous look on his face he took his finger from the

trigger. Swaying slightly the slim figure in black velvet suddenly slid to the level of the platform.

For an instant Wassili stood, then throwing down the rifle he darted forward. The ringmaster was equally prompt. He took one look at the crimson welling over the edge of the gown, straightened up and emitted a bellow which rose above the hubbub—"Is there a doctor present. A doctor. A doctor!"

A man came stumbling down the aisle of seats. "Here, gentlemen." He examined the girl and shook his head. "She's gone. The bullet went through her heart."

"It is impossible, impossible, I tell you—" stammered Wassili.

"I knew something was going to happen," said the ringmaster dismally. "This is the third time."

"I can't believe she is dead—it's some trick she's playing."

"It's no trick—she's dead, and go easy, Wassili, here come the police. Watch what you say."

"It was an accident."

"Well, you tell them that."

The police were polite, but they insisted on taking the body of the dead girl and the sharpshooter to headquarters. He went with them almost as if in a dream.

There questioned by a magistrate he said he could not account for what had gone wrong. He swore his aim had been as steady and sure as ever. There was nothing wrong with his rifles—he was willing to have them tested. He had never had an accident in the twelve years of his experience, and in the four years Nadia had been his target she had never moved even the merest trifle. This time she must have moved as he fired. It was an accident pure and simple.

He disclosed the fact that his passport bore his real name—Leo Gavorin,



no Prince from the Caucasus, but a tradesman's son born in Esthonia, and that the dead girl was a farmer's daughter from the same town, with the plain name of Lydia Luidner. He admitted they had been living together as man and wife for some time.

THE manager of the circus stated that Lydia had told him that after the South American tour she and Leo were going to retire and buy a farm in Esthonia. He was positive the death was accidental.

The magistrate had a different idea and held to it obstinately. For some reason or other Wassili had killed Lydia or Nadia in a crime of passion, and so he held him charged with her murder. The trial, so the circus witnesses might be available was set for the last week in June, extraordinarily hasty procedure for continental Europe.

Testimony was taken by the magistrate. It appeared to him that from it Wassili could not help but be found guilty of murder. Even though, like a bolt from the blue just a week before the trial, there came a cable from Ceylon addressed to the prisoner. The magistrate took it and read its message.

ANSWER IMMEDIATELY. ANYTHING HAPPENED LYDIA? LOOK OUT FOR SUICIDE SOME WAY OR OTHER. REPLY COLLECT, PAUL LUIDNER.

Wassili was brought from his prison cell and shown the cable.

"What do you know about this?"

He looked at it perplexed.

"Nothing, except that Paul is Lydia's brother. He is on a tea plantation in Ceylon."

"Why should he send this cable?"

"I don't know," said Wassili sullenly. "I never met Paul."

The magistrate at once cabled an inquiry to Ceylon but no reply had come by the day of the opening of the trial.

It was at once apparent that the prisoner stood in the shadow of the gallows, and that what he termed an accident was capable of the most sinister interpretation.

The state called witnesses to prove Lydia Luidner's death was one contrived with the utmost deliberation. The murder bullet had been sped with but one purpose, to get rid of an obstacle, a burden.

The Europa's leading circus clown, Toto, testified that he occupied the room in the Modest National Hotel next to the couple.

He had heard them quarreling and fighting for days, and on the forenoon of the fatal day the quarreling had been so violent, punctuated with blows and screams, that the hotel proprietor came up and made a protest.

He could not help hearing what was being said. The walls were thin as paper, and the two were all but shouting at each other. Wassili finally said he was sick of Lydia and that after the South American tour he was through with her. He would get another partner and she could get on the best she could without him. He did not love her any longer.

"I admit all that," said Wassili. "It is quite true I threatened to leave her—but as for killing her, *no, no*. That is another matter."

Toto continued. He heard the door slam and Wassili rush along the corridor and down stairs. He waited a little, hearing the sobs next door, then when they ceased and there was silence, he became alarmed. He felt very sympathetic towards the girl. In fact had things been different—had she been less devoted to Wassili—he would have



gladly assisted her. Her death was a great blow to him. She was very brave—she knew that Wassili was attentive to one of her friends, a Greek dancing girl, Hermione Precoupoulos.

Other testimony to the fact that matters had come to a head with the couple clinched the guilt of the prisoner. The motive for killing had been a strong one. The dead girl had stood in the way of Wassili's happiness with another girl. It was the easiest thing in the world to despatch a bullet just a trifle off the mark and then claim it was an accident.

THE blood receded from Wassili's face as he listened to the merciless last speech of the prosecution. In an hour or less his fate would be deliberated on. An end to life, to the applause of the public, to the soft clinging arms of the girl who sat staring at him with distended eyes and convulsive straining of her fingers. What would become of Hermione? To what man's arms would she go after he had dangled at the rope's end?

He scarcely knew that the Prosecutor had stopped speaking, that there appeared to be some disturbance in court, that a police officer was handing something to the judges and that they were putting their heads together, that his lawyer was making his way up to the bench, that suddenly as though by some miracle the wheels of justice had ceased to grind.

He did not know that by airplane mail there had come from Ceylon, the delayed reply to the magistrate's inquiry. In the hands of the judges was now a letter, certified by her brother to be in the handwriting of Lydia Luidner. From the post mark on the envelope it was plain to see the letter had been mailed in Salonika about noon of

May 24, the day of the girl's unhappy death.

It read:

*Dear Paul,*

*I can stand it no longer. Life is worth nothing to me without Leo and he has ceased to love me, and I adore him, adore him. Oh what can I do! He is mad about my friend Hermione. She is younger than I, sweet and lovely. She will make him happy. I have no right to hold him if he wants to go. We are not married, though I told you we were. So I must set him free.*

*I have courage enough to do that, but not to go on living and seeing him with another. Will you ever forgive the pain I am going to bring you and the sorrow, but I can't help myself. All my fine dreams are gone. I know now they were just the promises of the Devil.*

*Tonight I mean to move in the act and I hope that his bullet kills me at once without pain. It won't be his fault—he can never blame himself, and when the first shock is over he will soon forget me. And for you, forget and forgive me, Paul, and good-by.*

*Farewell*

*Lydia.*

Someone was forcing Wassili to his feet. The presiding judge was addressing him—something about a voice from the dead—a letter. And gradually his senses returned to their normal acuteness. There was a letter written by Lydia in which she had set down her plan to deliberately seek death at his innocent hand.

"You have had a narrow escape, Leo Gavorin," said the voice of justice, "and in view of this testimony the court can do nothing now but dismiss the case. You may leave the city. Also the woman, Hermione."

Wassili came down the court steps, out of the shadow of death, into the brilliant sunshine. He felt a cold hand glide into his and someone get in step with him without a word. He walked with Hermione silently as though still in a prison yard where jailers listened



for each revealing word. And then abruptly as the warmth penetrated, as passers-by jostled and vendors plucked at them to look at their wares, he knew he was free, free to go back to the old life, the flattering feel of his tight uniform, the touch of the sawdust and matting under his feet, the music of the band, sounds of stable and menagerie, the volleys of excited applause

and the strange still silences he could command.

And suddenly he stopped, smiled down at the girl.

"Tomorrow we rehearse," he said, throwing out his chest, "and I must arrange for new billing. See Wassili's New Lovely Living Target. Come, what are you standing still for. We must celebrate."

THE END

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### *New York City Clamps Down on Another Racket*

FOR many months New Yorkers owning cars have been pestered by street gamins of the Times Square District who have been in the habit of offering to "watch" parked cars. These urchins hang around the cars, while their owners are attending the theater or concert hall, fully expecting a tip. But certain New Yorkers, either annoyed by the practise or unwilling to hand out tips, have found on returning to their cars that tires have been punctured and radiator caps missing.

A few weeks ago the New York Police Department called a halt to this petty racket. Car-watching and excessive speed are banned under New York's new traffic code. These new provisions also empower the mayor to name a commission to keep New York's regulations in tune with those of other communities.

Drivers in the city will not be permitted to make right turns on red lights, except upon direction of a policeman or by directional signs. This brings local driving practice into line with that of other American cities.

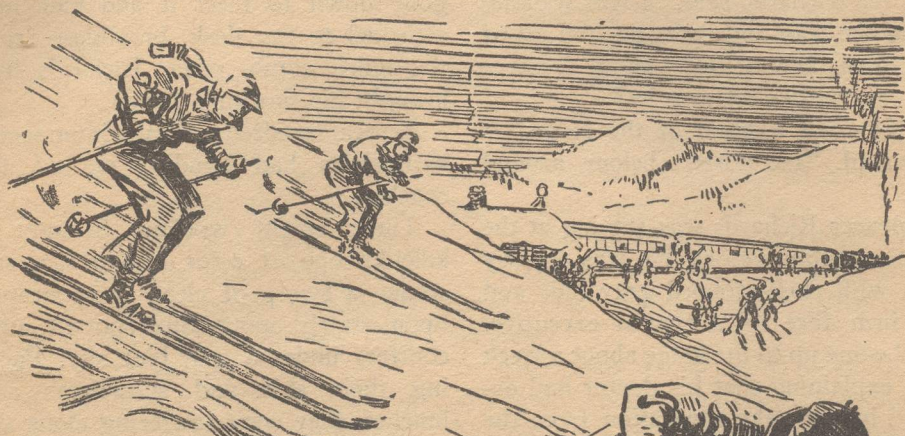
Mayor LaGuardia vetoed provisions of the same measure which were directed against jaywalking, contending that success of similar enactments in Europe did not indicate that they would be acceptable in a democracy.

—Joseph J. Connelly





# Excursion to Murder



Snow drifts were half-hiding a ghastly corpse

By **FREDERICK C. DAVIS**

Author of "Mad Dog!" "The Eye In the Wall," etc.

*Aboard That Sports-  
men's Snow Train  
Was an Innocent  
Man with a One-Way  
Ticket to Doom*



## CHAPTER I

### Death's Stop-Over

**T**HE dead man lay huddled in a white mound, dusted and caked with snow. His forehead was broken by a bullet hole and his neck was ripped by a second bullet just above the knot of his tie. His lax face was smeared; his ghastly stare came through reddened icy flakes packed around his eyes.

Evidently he had fallen or been

thrown from a higher point on the steep hillside, for he was sprawled at the end of a broken swathe that ended at the edge of the frozen pond which the guests of Evergreen Lodge used as a skating rink. Apparently he had been dead before his plunge began, because the path made by his drop was marked by a series of scarlet blots.

The dead man's clothing wasn't suitable for mountain country in midwinter. His overcoat was a Chesterfield with a velvet collar. A battered derby



lay beside him. His lifeless hands were limp in thin mocha-colored gloves.

"That's just the way I found him," Spencer Richards said. "I was walking along the trail and came on him all of a sudden. It's a nasty sight. I never saw him before. Who is he?"

"He's not a guest at the lodge," I answered. "He doesn't belong around here."

Spencer Richards was staying at the little mountain resort. He was a burly man with close-cropped gray hair and the firm face of a typical executive. He'd come up to the lodge about a week ago, explaining that his doctor had ordered him to take a vacation from the grind of Wall Street. This thing had shaken his gruff poise. Only a few minutes had passed since he'd hurried in to the desk, tramping big white footprints across the lobby, with the startling message that he'd found a dead man lying in the snow at the edge of the lake.

"A nasty sight," he repeated. "It looks like this man's been murdered, Mr. Moore. Hadn't you better call the police?"

As desk clerk at Evergreen Lodge it was my job to smooth over the guests' complaints. They were capable of complaining endlessly about an amazing variety of trivialities. I was expected to please them promptly, including changing the direction of the wind and producing a snow-fall according to individual specifications. I had to take it all with a smile.

It was plain enough that the man in the snow *had* been murdered.

"One thing we'll have to do," I answered, "and that is keep that crowd away from here."

Richards looked around in surprise. "Where the devil did they come from?" he asked.

"From the snow train."

The snow train had come panting into Pine Lake station, below Evergreen Lodge, just ten minutes ago. I'd gone down to meet it and had just returned to my desk, breathless from the quick climb, when Richards had brought his shocking news.

Several hundred zestful winter sports enthusiasts had bundled out of the coaches.

Their bright woollens brought a kaleidoscope of color into a majestic scene—a sweep of clean snow heaped upon stately mountains spotted with conifers under a cold blue sky. Packing their skis and snowshoes and lunches, they were scattering along the trails, eager to enjoy every minute until the train, all too soon, would start back to the city.

ONE of these special trains came to Evergreen Lodge every weekend. Early in the morning the passengers piled into it in Grand Central, loaded with their trappings—clerks and debutantes, bankers and bartenders, all escaping from the grime of New York for a day of stimulating exercise.

On the way up they busily waxed their runners, chattered over the proper kind of wax to use for the prevalent snow condition, exchanged pointers and acted eager as youngsters at play. During their five hours at Pine Lake they swarmed into Evergreen Lodge to dry off a lather of snow, or to thaw themselves, all laughing and glowing with sheer health and enjoyment, and all famished. Taking care of them at the lodge meant a big enough day, without having a murder added.

Two men on skis, I noticed, were already crossing the slope to the spot where the dead man lay.

"We'd better not move the body,"



I said, "until Sheriff Wigand has a chance to look at it. Do you mind staying here while I make the call, Mr. Richards?"

"Go ahead."

I turned away to find that the two skiers had poled to a stop directly behind us. They were taking in the bloody scene with what seemed to be a briskly business-like manner. The smaller of the two looked like a football player. The other had the same tough physique, with an odd smile continually quirking at the corners of his lips. They looked up at me sharply.

"Bad business, isn't it, Philip Leath?" the second said in a low tone.

"My name's Philip *Moore*," I answered. "I'm the desk clerk at the lodge. Did you come up on the snow train? If you don't mind, please leave this to us, and don't mention it to the rest of the party. I've got to notify the police."

"We happen to be cops," the man with the queer smile replied. "My name's Donegan—Nat Donegan. This is Bob Cleary. We work out of Centre Street with the Homicide Squad."

"Apparently trying to take a vacation from murder doesn't pan out so well," the detective named Cleary put in. "We no sooner get away from headquarters than we bump right into it again. You say your name is Moore? I could have sworn you're Philip Leath."

I insisted, "You're confusing me with someone else. But this is good luck. I never expected to find a couple detectives on the snow train. You can tell me whether or not it's all right to carry the—the body inside, to keep a crowd from collecting. I'll have the sheriff here soon."

Nat Donegan seemed not to hear; his odd smile tightened. "No, you're

mistaken, Bob," he remarked to his companion. "This chap can't be Philip Leath. He's Leath's height and weight, but Leath's a blond and clean-shaven and doesn't wear glasses. There's that difference. But it's funny, though—the coincidence."

They stood there with their eyes penetrating so sharply that an innocent babe would have felt guilty.

"It's funny as hell," Cleary agreed.

"What do you mean?" I asked. My breath was coming faster. "What coincidence?"

"This chap we spoke of — Leath," Donegan explained quietly, "is wanted in New York for killing a crook named Aleck Paysick. Before Paysick was bumped off he was thick with another slick mugg named Tony Baltz. Both of them were working for a high class crook named Renwick, and Leath was supposed to be in with them too. The queer part of it is, that dead man, there in the snow, is Tony Baltz."

They peered at me again.

"I don't know anything about that," I said. "But if you'll keep an eye on him until I get back from phoning the sheriff—"

I went off at a slippery trot, filled with a crazy impulse to run past the lodge, on into the mountains, on into hiding. My heart felt like it might burst—because the two detectives had recognized me. My name *was* Philip Leath.

For a year the New York police had been searching for me on a charge of first degree murder.

**I** SAT there at the switchboard behind the desk in the lodge, the telephone call to Sheriff Wigand completed, as chilled as though I'd been caught in a mountain blizzard.

Spencer Richards hurried in a mo-



ment later. He went into the little rustic bar, swallowed a hooker of straight Scotch, gazed at me strangely, then disappeared up the stairs. I kept telling myself I had to go back to the body—but I kept thinking of those X-ray eyes of Donegan and Cleary. I'd had contact with both of them in the District Attorney's office; they were the shrewdest sleuths on the Homicide Squad. And I kept remembering—everything that had conspired to burn the brand of a murderer upon me and turn me into a hiding fugitive.

A year ago Philip Leath had been an Assistant D. A. in Kings County, New York, with a future which his friends had considered brilliant. My trouble began when my chief handed me the folio of a felonious assault case. It was full of unusual elements, hinting something much bigger behind it. I began investigating with ambitious enthusiasm.

The victim was Martin Clayburn, a young and wealthy broker, prominent socially. The complaint stated he had been beaten up by one Joe Hurst, a doorman at an address in a low-class apartment district. Clayburn had been rushed to a hospital with a fractured skull and Hurst had disappeared. I went to the building in front of which the attack had occurred in the early hours of the morning and found it a shabby place where a doorman seemed inappropriate to say the least.

In the building I found a suite of rooms which had been vacated since the assault. Nothing remained except the gaudy decorations. I surmised it had been a secret gambling room. Our office had been trying to find evidence against one Wyatt Renwick, a powerful figure in the underworld, who was suspected of running a series of such dens. We knew Renwick's game rooms

were milking thousands from the gullible, by means of crooked tables, every night, but he kept himself so closely covered we couldn't get anything on him. Now I had a lead, and I was on fire to make it good.

A room at the rear of the garish suite looked like an office. Going over it for fingerprints, I found a large number on the woodwork. They might be Renwick's, but we had none of the big shot crook's in the files to compare them with. Keeping them as evidence to use later, I began tracing the lease on the suspicious rooms.

The lease had been juggled through fictitious names. The names were not in the Alias Files at headquarters. Next I looked up several men who were thought to be lieutenants of Renwick. Several had records: Aleck Paysick and Tony Baltz.

I found a sample of Paysick's handwriting in the folder of a blackmail case several years old, of which Paysick had been acquitted. There were similarities between it and the signature on the lease. I was sure that Paysick had rented the place that had been used as a gambling room, and that through Paysick I could reach the powerful Renwick.

**I** MANAGED to get acquainted with Paysick, and then became friendly with him, concealing my real identity. I did this by haunting his hang-outs and buying him plenty of rye. Sometimes, when we had too many drinks, he talked—not much, but enough so that I was convinced Renwick was operating a closely knit gambling ring.

I learned that when Renwick's "clients" failed to pay their gambling debts promptly he resorted to intimidation, strong-arm force and even mur-



der. This accounted for Martin Clayburn's getting beaten up, the disappearance of Joe Hurst and the sudden vacating of the leased rooms.

I was handling all this strictly on my own. So far I didn't have one whit of admissible evidence, but I was determined to get it. I saw the case as something truly big, promising a proud achievement. Instead, Renwick's ruthless power broke me.

One night I found that my safe at home had been rifled. All my notes were missing. It meant that Renwick, somehow, had spotted me. Immediately I went to my chief. He heard me through, looking cold and stony, saying nothing. Then he handed me a letter. It stunned me. It was an unsigned tip-off, charging me with being on the inside of the gambling organization with Renwick, and saying that this was the reason the chief had never been able to reach the big crook—because I was spying for Renwick inside the D. A.'s office.

Before I could protest, the chief showed me a copy of my savings account statement. I had put a small amount in a midtown bank, but this statement showed deposits totalling \$30,000 within the past few weeks. The chief said he knew I hadn't put that money into the account myself, but he'd checked a description of the man who had, and it was Tony Baltz. He accused me of accepting bribes from Renwick in this way. He gave me twenty-four hours to hand in my resignation.

Arguing was useless. I had to have facts that I was being framed—that Renwick was framing me. The truth was that Renwick, having learned I was on his trail, was taking this means of getting rid of me—but I had to prove it to save myself. And I couldn't waste any time. My whole future was

at stake, and I had only twenty-four hours.

First I got to work on that tip-off note. There were fingerprints on it. Several matched with some of the prints I had found on the woodwork in the empty office of the abandoned gambling room. I put the note and the photographs in a safe deposit box, hoping they would help establish the fact that Renwick was behind the frame-up. Then I went after Aleck Paysick.

Paysick had an apartment in a brownstone front in the Murray Hill section. It was evening. Just as I went in the entrance I heard two thumping reports, like shots. Running into Paysick's room, I found him sprawled out on the floor with his head under the bed. Blood was still draining from the wound in his side, but he was dead. The window behind him, which looked across a court, was open; obviously the killer had slipped out that way. An automatic was lying in the middle of the room.

It was my gun.

I had a permit for it, but I never carried it. I kept it in a drawer of my dresser at home, unloaded. Plainly enough, it had been stolen at the same time my safe was rifled. Someone had filled the clip with cartridges and used it to kill Aleck Paysick. Its serial number was on record in the permit files and it could be connected with me directly.

CERTAINLY this was more of Renwick's work. He was getting rid of me as a potential danger; he had executed a henchman who had shown a tendency to talk and was framing me not only for bribery but for murder. I knew too well how this would look. It would serve as further proof



that I was connected with Renwick's ring. As I stood there in that room, stunned and desperate, with Paysick lying dead at my feet, I could think of only one thing—I had to take that gun and get out of there.

I slipped the automatic in my pocket, using my handkerchief so as not to smudge any fingerprints that might be on it. Then I hunted for the empty shells that had been ejected. One had flown into the wastebasket and another was under the bed. I had to crawl down beside Paysick to reach the second. Using the point of my gold pencil to pick them up, I kept them in my handkerchief. I was on my knees when two men came tramping down the hall and burst in the door. They were prowling patrolmen.

It was a nightmare. I kept demanding to see my chief. Two hellish hours passed before they took me into his office. By that time I'd been frisked of the gun, but I still had the two empty cartridges in the handkerchief in my pocket. When I was led into the chief, the automatic was on his desk, all silvery with fingerprint powder. In five minutes I heard enough to realize I was doomed.

The only fingerprints on the automatic were mine. The chief had been questioning other tenants of Paysick's building. A woman had told him of seeing me going into Paysick's room; then she'd overheard a violent quarrel about money. She'd grown afraid, she'd said, that something might happen and had phoned for the squad car. All this, according to her fabricated story, had happened *before* the shots were fired. The chief asserted I'd been caught red-handed.

As a lawyer I could see that the framed case against me was open and shut. The woman witness was evident-

ly in Renwick's pay, but it was impossible to prove. There wasn't a single iota of tangible evidence to back up my defense. I kept arguing with the chief, pleading with him hopelessly, until he brusquely ordered me to be locked up. I must have gone crazy. I remember hitting him on the chin, slamming a detective out of my way, then running out to the street.

Twenty-four hours later I was still hiding in the city—holed in, in a stinking, cheap hotel. I was being tried in the newspapers. Black headlines were burying me under an avalanche of incrimination. I saw that I had only one chance. I had to keep out of reach of the police and attempt to vindicate myself *before* I was ever brought to trial. If I had to face a jury with the case as it was then, I would certainly go to the electric chair.

I became a fugitive.

Both the tip-off note, and the photographs of the fingerprints found in the deserted gambling room, I was obliged to leave in the safe deposit box where I had put them. But I still had the two empty shells. Once I was out of town, I bought some mercury-and-chalk from a druggist, an atomizer and some clear shellac. The powder brought out fragments of fingerprints on the shells. Those prints, made by the man who had loaded my automatic, matched the others. Preserving them with a spray of shellac, I carried them with me on my flight.

THAT they were the prints of Wyatt Renwick I was mortally certain. They were proof that Renwick, and not I, was guilty of murdering Aleck Paysick. But they were utterly worthless unless Renwick was found.

A week later, dodging from town



to town in upper New York State, I reached Evergreen Lodge. Mr. and Mrs. Leland, the two kindly old souls who owned the charming little hotel, gave me odd jobs to do in return for my meals. By that time the search for me had subsided somewhat, and my hair was dyed black, and I was wearing thick-rimmed eyeglasses with lenses so weak they were almost clear glass. Before long I was made desk clerk. I welcomed the job—for a reason.

Going to Evergreen Lodge was part of my plan. Once, while I was at Paysick's apartment, he'd received a telephone call from Renwick. It had come from Evergreen Lodge. Renwick often spent a week there, Paysick had hinted. Sometime, I reasoned, he might return. If I could spot him, and get his fingerprints, it would exonerate me. I scrutinized every one of the hundreds of guests who came to the lodge during the following months, always hoping that each was Renwick.

But I made no headway—none whatever.

In the meantime Renwick's gambling organization crumbled. My former chief, acting on some of the information I had given him, began checking up on leases signed by the same false name I had found. The result was a series of raids. A score of gambling rooms were axed to pieces. Half a hundred of Renwick's henchmen were arrested, but the big shot himself escaped the net. Stripped of power, and with his huge funds confiscated, he was forced to decamp. He vanished—and with him my only hope of clearing myself seemed to disappear.

But suddenly a whisper about a dead man had come across the desk of Evergreen Lodge. There in the snow I had found the corpse of Tony Baltz, who had been Aleck Paysick's side-kick in

crime and Wyatt Renwick's chief lieutenant! What did it mean?

I couldn't know. But I was destined, within a few hours, when the snow train chugged away from the little white-banked station at Pine Lake, to be aboard it for the return trip to New York as a prisoner of the law riding on a one-way ticket to the electric chair.

## CHAPTER II

### Snatch Tie-Up

THE snow train crowd was turning the slopes surrounding Evergreen Lodge into a winter carnival. Unaware of the discovery of the corpse so close at hand, they were tramping through the groves, tracing new ski patterns on the hillsides, attempting slalom races and spilling themselves frequently. Soon they would be mobbing into the hotel, eager for warmth and clamoring for food—while I wondered how soon the hand of the law would grip me.

A hush came. The radio on the desk had stopped playing. An announcer's voice ended a moment of silence.

"We bring you a special news dispatch, ladies and gentlemen. The New York police are concentrating on the kidnaping of little Judith Gateley, daughter of Gerard Gateley, the prominent banker. Although the little eight-year-old child, who is a cripple, was abducted several days ago, officials were not notified by her father until last night.

"She is being held by abductors who demand a ransom of one hundred thousand dollars. The kidnapers communicated with Mr. Gateley by letter and sent, as a means of identification, one of a pair of woolen mittens which the little girl was wearing at the time she was carried away.



"It is reported that Mr. Gateley hurriedly left New York City a short while ago, probably in an attempt to establish contact with the kidnapers."

I heard this half consciously as a red light flashed on the switchboard. I plugged in and heard the querulous voice of Spencer Richards.

"Mr. Moore? What the devil is going on around here? I just found a sneak-thief rifling my room. You'd better come up here and take this matter in hand."

"A thief? Certainly, I'll come right away."

I wasn't prepared to find the sneak-thief to be the loveliest girl who had ever come to Evergreen Lodge.

She was standing against the wall in Spencer Richards' room, clad in a ski suit, the trousers bright blue and the jacket creamy. Her violet eyes were frightened and her wavy hair was in attractive disarray.

Richards was holding one of her wrists in a tight fist.

"When I came in here a few minutes ago, Mr. Moore," he said, "I found this young woman ransacking the room. She ought to be turned over to the police."

The condition of the room bore him out. A suitcase lay open on the bed, its contents in a state of upheaval. The dresser drawers were drawn out and also showed signs of a search. The fearful light in the girl's eyes confessed she had done this. It was bewildering; she had come to the lodge only yesterday, alone, driving a costly car. She had registered as Alice Clark.

"Did she take anything?"

"Offhand, I don't see anything missing," Richards answered. "Maybe something will turn up when you search her. I'll leave the rest of this to you, Mr. Moore."

"Please come with me, Miss Clark," I said.

Shaken and white-faced, she hurried into the hall.

As soon as the door closed she asked quickly, "What are you going to do with me?"

"If you've stolen something—"

"But I haven't!" She was studying me warily. "Please," she said softly, "let me explain, before you call the police."

I SAID, "All right, we'll go to your room." She hurried to a door at the end of the corridor. As soon as she went in she turned to the window. The snow train was at the station, with the locomotive panting out steam, waiting to take its frolicking passengers back to the city, but she didn't look down at it. She gazed into the sky and listened. Turning back anxiously, she said:

"Please believe me. I'm not a common thief, but I'd rather not tell you why I did it."

"You'd better. I'll have to check up with all the guests to see if anything's missing, and if there is—"

"If there is," she broke in, "I didn't take it, I assure you." She was becoming angry. "I didn't go into that room to steal. I want to leave it to my father, whether or not to talk about it. I'm expecting him at any minute, by air. He's flying up from New York in a chartered plane."

At that very moment a steady drone blended out of the sky. The girl turned back to the window quickly. The silver ship was clearly visible against the cold blue heavens, winging Northward. It was already sliding downward, as though preparing to land at the nearby field in Whittier.

"That's my father," the girl said.



"You'd better talk to him about this."

As the plane sang on, I saw that a car had drawn off the road leading to the lodge. It was the sheriff's sedan. He had left it and tramped up to the lake and was gesturing orders over the corpse. Donegan and Cleary were lifting the body out of its bed of snow. They began carrying it toward the rear of the lodge while the girl watched over my shoulder. The sight seemed to catch at her throat.

"Who is the man who—who's hurt?" she asked.

"Never mind that," I answered sternly. "Do you want to explain to me or to the sheriff?"

Her eyes followed mine. She had brought only one suitcase with her. It was spread open on the rack. The initials on it did not match the name she had written on the register. They were J.G.

"All right," she said with a suggestion of defiance. "I'll tell you. I believe I can trust you. My name is isn't Alice Clark at all. I wrote that name in the book because I didn't want anyone to know who I really am. Perhaps it was a crazy idea, coming here, but I was so—so terribly anxious about—" Then: "I'm Janet Gateley."

The name didn't connect immediately; but then I remembered the news dispatch on the radio.

"My little sister Judy was kidnaped four days ago. It's been horrible, because Judy can't walk. We had a letter from the kidnapers warning us not to go to the police. Father didn't notify them, for Judy's sake, but waiting for another letter, to tell us how to pay the ransom, was more than I could bear. I was so worried I had to do something—so I came here."

"What? Did you expect to find your sister at Evergreen Lodge?"

"Not—not exactly. I've been here before. Father used to come often. That's why the letter the kidnapers sent set me to thinking. It's a letter-head with the printing torn off—just ordinary paper—but it reminded me of Evergreen Lodge because of the pine scent."

THE girl whisked a sheet of hotel stationery off the desk. It gave off a faint odor of balsam. It was a promotion idea of mine; the paper was kept stored in a box filled with pine needles. It absorbed the scent of the woods, characteristic of the lodge, and carried its own message into the stuffy city. I asked in surprise:

"You mean the kidnap letter smelled of pine?"

"Yes. When father came here last spring he wrote Judy and me several notes. I remembered the scent of balsam. I compared the kidnap letter with Father's. It's the same stationery. Perhaps the kidnaper wasn't aware of the odor—it's scarcely noticeable here because there's so much of it in the air anyway—but that's why I came. I felt sure—I'm still sure—Judy was taken to some place near here."

My heart began accelerating. Janet Gateley went on:

"Father would have stopped me, so I slipped away, leaving a note for him. This morning on the radio I heard he'd called in the police at last, so I phoned him. He said he was going to fly up. He'll be here from the field in a few minutes."

"I realize why you want your name kept quiet," I answered. "If the kidnapers know you're here, it might—might go hard on Judy." That was the easiest way of putting it, but Janet Gateley knew—she was fearful for her little sister's life. "But why were you



searching the rooms? Do you think the kidnaper is here as a guest?"

She was thinking straight. "Strangers don't come in here and use your writing room downstairs. Someone connected with kidnaping Judy is staying here. I've been hunting for the type-writer the ransom letter was written on, or for something belonging to Judy—perhaps the mate of the mitten they sent to prove they really had her. I *know* she's somewhere near her."

"Do you suspect Spencer Richards?" I asked.

"Is that the name of the man who turned me over to you? I didn't know. I couldn't tell who to suspect. There are at least thirty men here as guests. I had to watch my chance and search any room I could get into." Suddenly tears were glimmering in her violet eyes. "It was wrong—I shouldn't have come here." She covered her face with trembling fingers. "If they find out—they may kill Judy."

Her sobs stopped abruptly as she looked out the window. A car was climbing the road to the inn. It was a dilapidated sedan with one tire-chain rhythmically banging a fender—Lafe George's taxi. Evidently he'd been waiting for the plane at the airport in Whittier. Janet Gateley glimpsed a huge fur-coated man in the front seat beside the knife-nosed Lafe.

"It's Father."

She ran from the room and down the stairs. She flashed colorfully across the lobby, out to the car as it rattled to a stop and rushed into the big man's furry arms. She talked rapidly until lean Sheriff Wigand approached Gerard Gateley and introduced the two detectives, Donegan and Cleary.

Sweet old Mrs. Leland and her kindly white-haired husband, the owners of the lodge who had befriended me, were

at the desk. As I explained what had happened, the four men and the girl outside conversed earnestly. Soon they tramped into the lobby. Wigand signaled me.

"We've brought the body into one of the downstairs rooms, Mr. Moore," he drawled—significantly emphasizing the *Moore*, I thought. "These gentlemen and me 've got to have a private talk. One of the other rooms 'll do. I'll hear your part of it later."

Gerard Gateley frowned at me with eyes pouched by prolonged worry. Donegan drew Cleary aside and they spoke together in low tone; then Cleary went out. He tramped up toward the lake. I conducted the group to a room on the lower floor. The girl went in with her father and the sheriff. Donegan hung back, eying me piercingly.

"No vacation for me," he announced succinctly. "I've had Centre Street on long distance and I'm ordered to keep busy on this case. Cleary's taking a look around, because that body had to come from somewhere. You haven't any idea about that, have you?"

At my low negative he resumed: "I thought not. A swell chance we have of picking up any clues with a trainload of skiers cutting capers all over the landscape. Stick around, Mr. Moore. But you're probably not intending to go anywhere anyway, are you?"

"Of course not," I answered, forcing my voice to be steady. "I'll be right here when you want me."

Donegan said, with that queer smile, "Fine, that's fine."

After he closed the door a low, ominous rumble of tones began. I went back to the desk, my pulse pumping hard. Some of the snow train crowd were beginning to come in, ice-caked and breathless, and the dining room was getting busy. Attending to perfunctory



duties during the eternity while Donegan and the sheriff were closeted with Gerard Gateley, I tried to reason it out.

A definite, tangible clue had brought Janet Gateley to the little hotel. The kidnap letter and the violent death of Tony Baltz indicated that Wyatt Renwick was behind the kidnaping of the crippled little girl. The logical conclusion, one that put wild hope into my heart, was that Renwick, exactly as I had gambled he would, had secretly returned to Evergreen Lodge.

### CHAPTER III

#### The Clue Fits

I WAS studying the register, numbly asking myself over and over, "Which is Renwick?" when Gerard Gateley and his daughter reappeared. They went to chairs near the fireplace and sat without talking. Donegan came to the desk, smiling tartly, his eyes shining with a strangely grim humor.

"I'd like to type out my notes, if I may, Mr. Moore," he said.

"Certainly. Use the machine on the desk back here. There's plenty of paper in the top drawer."

He said, "Thanks!" and perched himself in front of the ancient typewriter used for the lodge's correspondence. He tapped off a few lines, leaning with intense concentration to read what he had written; then he tore out the page and began again, using a letterhead. Presently he paused and asked, without glancing up:

"I hear you'd just come in, from a tramp through the woods, before Tony Baltz's body was found. You didn't happen to see it."

"Naturally not," I answered uneasily.

He hit the keys again, then paused

again. "We'd been hearing rumors about Baltz and Wyatt Renwick down at Centre Street. Renwick was cleaned out of a fancy string of gambling rooms he was running. This is about the time he'd be needing something more to use for money. A hundred grand for snatching a crippled little girl is a hundred grand."

"That's a dirty job to pull," I said with some heat. "She needs care and attention. God knows what neglect she's been suffering. Rats like that deserve the death penalty. The trouble is they can go to the chair only once."

"That's the way I feel about it," Donegan said quietly, looking up for the first time, his eyes narrowed. "Frying is too good for that kind. But since it's the best we can do, we're more than anxious to see 'em get it."

Then he stood up, slowly, his pupils gleaming like the points of sharp drills. He had in his hand the sheet he'd typed on the old machine. For a moment he was grimly silent while I inwardly wilted under his scrutiny. At last he said: "It's no use, Leath."

I began quickly, huskily: "I told you—"

"You told me your name is Philip Moore," he broke in dryly, "but you're Philip Leath. Don't argue about it—you'll only be wasting your breath." He paused briefly while I stood there, wordless and filled with panic. "I sort of had a feeling you didn't really pull that Paysick job, Leath, but now I've changed my mind."

It was hopeless. Donegan and Cleary hadn't been fooled for a minute. They'd recognized me through my disguises, up there at the lake, beside Baltz's body, and they'd merely played me along. I realized it now. I was caught.

"All right," I answered. "I came here hoping to find a lead that might



help me prove I didn't kill Paysick, that's all. It was a shot in the dark, the only thing I could do, but it didn't pan out. I used to wonder, when I was in the D. A.'s office, how those poor muggs felt—the ones I helped convict for murder and sent to the death house. I guess it won't be long before I know."

CONTEMPT was burning in Donegan's eyes. "I reported you to Centre Street when I phoned this morning. My orders are to bring you back, but it looks like a toss-up whether it'll be the State or Uncle Sam that gives you the works. I hope you get a Federal trial—hanging's not so quick."

The sting in his words made me say, "Thinking I bumped off a crook like Paysick wouldn't make you hate me like that, Donegan."

He snapped out, "Snatching a crippled little kid is what make me hate your guts, Leath. Good God, if you had to snatch somebody, why pick on a poor little girl who can't even walk?"

"That—that's crazy!" I blurted. "I didn't even hear about the snatch until this morning, just before—"

"I'll show you proof you're in it up to your filthy neck, Leath," Donegan interrupted with biting scorn.

He caught Gerard Gateley's eye across the lobby. Gateley came to the desk with the girl. Donegan flattened out the sheet he had typed. It began:

DEAR MR. GATELEY—

WE HAVE YOUR DAUGHTER JUDY  
IN A SAFE PLACE. YOU ARE TO PRE-  
PARE \$100,000 IN BILLS OF SMALL  
DENOMINATIONS—

Gateley scanned it grimly and carefully brought a folded sheet from his big wallet. He unfolded a paper which

was shorter by two inches than the letterhead Donegan had used, but otherwise the same. A strip at its top had been torn off. It was a letter, also typed. It read:

DEAR MR. GATELEY—

WE HAVE YOUR DAUGHTER JUDY  
IN A SAFE PLACE. YOU ARE TO PRE-  
PARE—

"The type faces are pretty well worn, you see, Mr. Gateley," Donegan said. "Notice the capital letter 'L.' It tips to the left. The loop of the small 'g' is nicked. There are plenty of other similarities, but that's enough. The letter you received and the copy I typed here show exactly the same defects. Both of them were written on the same machine, the one on that desk. Philip Leath, alias Philip Moore, wrote the ransom note."

Janet Gateley's violet gaze turned wide upon me. Her father glared as though about to drive his fist into my blanched face. Donegan's mouth was down-drooped with wry triumph. I was too stunned for a moment to manage a single word. Then I blurted:

"It's not true. I can see what you've pointed out, Donegan, but that isn't proof I wrote the kidnap letter. Someone used that typewriter, maybe during the night when nobody was around."

"Cut it out, Leath," the detective retorted. "I told you at the beginning, it's no use—and I guess we're ready for the rest of it now."

The rest?

SHERIFF WIGAND was coming down the stairs. He paused with his face set into hard, tomato-red creases. Donegan promptly took my arm. Janet Gateley and her father followed without speaking. I was firmly



led up the stairs, along the corridor and into my room.

Some one had already been in here—it showed signs of a search. Donegan held me by the door while Sheriff Wigand stepped to my dresser. He removed a drawer, placed it on a chair, then probed under a pile of shirts. Beneath them lay a small woolen mitten.

Gateley growled an epithet. From his inner pocket he removed a second tiny mitten. Its size, its colorful knitted pattern, even the small smudges made by little grasping fingers, proclaimed it to be the mate of the one lying in the drawer.

Gateley declared grimly, "That's final, gentlemen—absolutely final. That glove there was being worn by my little girl when she was abducted."

"That's not all, sir," Sheriff Wigand added. "Lord knows Leath has enough on him now, but there's something else that makes it tighter."

Wigand was removing a second drawer from the bureau. As he placed it on another chair, Donegan shouldered me against the wall. The sheriff fingered under a stack of underwear and disclosed a metallic glitter. It was an automatic.

Janet Gateley gave a little cry of horror. Her father stiffened. Donegan's reaction was an acrid snort. Sheriff Wigand's aquiline gaze fixed me as he told the others:

"It's the same caliber as the bullets pumped into Tony Baltz this morning. It is the same gun. It smells of burned powder—he didn't have a chance to clean it after killing Baltz. Ballistics experts will be able to clinch it. We've got your kidnaper cold, Mr. Gateley."

And Donegan said throatily, "Mr. Gateley, just leave the rest of this to us."

The banker glared at me as he

turned from the room. The girl shrank past me. I was too dumfounded even to move. I'd never seen the mitten and the glove before. Dazed as I was, I couldn't explain even to myself how they'd come to be in my room. My throat was burning and my eyes were full of acid. Suddenly Donegan whirled on me, catching me by the neck and forcing me hard against the wall.

"All right, Leath, you filthy rat!" he growled. "Where's the kid? Where're you hiding little Judy Gateley?"

"I'm not hiding her," I choked out. "I don't know anything about it. For God's sake, give me a chance to—"

Donegan's open hand cracked across my face. It was a sharp, vicious, stinging blow. My fists jerked up instinctively, but instantly my wrists were gripped by Sheriff Wigand. I was pinioned against the wall with my breath hot and fast, my heart battering my ribs. I felt trapped. It was Donegan's blow that made me realize protests were worse than useless. And that slap, I knew, was only the beginning of a merciless third degree. I went wild with desperation.

Somehow I tore my wrists loose from Wigand's grasp. Two blows tottered Donegan backward. Wigand was grabbing at his revolver when my jab slammed him back across the bed. A tight hook to Donegan's chin staggered him again, so that he lurched against the hallway door, blocking the way out. Suddenly I found myself scrambling through the window.

I dropped into banked snow, bounded out of it, flung myself into a blind run. Hoarse voices barked through the window. Slipping and reeling, I dodged into the grove of spruce that reached behind the lodge. The frozen lake, where Baltz's corpse had



been found, was soon behind me. Seeking shelter, avoiding being seen by any of the skiers, I dodged into a white-matted clearing on a ledge high above the little hotel. There I stopped, laughing crazily.

I couldn't escape like this—coatless, hatless, at the mercy of the bitter cold. I saw my attempt then as hopeless—mad.

## CHAPTER IV

### Rolling Corpse

THE next moment I ventured out of the clearing. I'd sought a remote place unwisely, for the tracks in the snow would surely lead a search to me. Cutting across the slope, shivering under the penetrating wind, I followed old ski tracings, hoping they would make my footprints more difficult to follow. While I climbed breathlessly I tried to reason.

It was a certainty now that Janet Gateley's deduction had led her straight to the center of a maze of intrigue. She was right in thinking her little sister must be hidden somewhere not far from Evergreen Lodge—she *must* be right! But where? Houses were comparatively few in this mountain region. Renwick wouldn't have chosen a hide-out where he might attract the attention of neighbors. No; he'd pick out some isolated spot. Yet it had to be near the lodge too so he could continue his damnable kidnapping negotiations. *But where?*

Suddenly I remembered the place called Lookout House. It was a cabin perched high on the mountain, owned by someone in New York, rarely used in winter. A single winding, private road, difficult to negotiate, led to it. There was no other such place near by; it *had* to be Renwick's secret headquar-

ters. I began scrambling up the rugged slope toward it.

It was a dangerous climb over rugged rocks made slippery with ice, with their sharp edges concealed by the snow. My hands were already stiff and numb. Every strain on my chilled muscles was painful. Long effort brought me to a spiralling road. There were tire-tracks in the white—old grooves, partly dusted over by the wind, showing that a car had pulled its way up to Lookout House days ago. I began a breathless, skidding run toward the cabin—

A tumbling movement caught my eyes. Something was spilling down the slope above the road. It was a dark mass rolling loosely—a man. His lax arms and legs threw out as he hurtled. Snow sticking to him as he descended at a crazy speed made him almost a ragged ball. He bounced off a rock, then struck the road with a sickening crunch, with packed white bursting off him. He sprawled loosely on the edge of the bank, slowly being pulled by gravity into a farther plunge.

I sprang toward him, intending to keep him from spilling over. Stooping to grip his arm, I slipped. My heave overweighted our delicate balance. I dove headlong, one feelingless hand still gripping an icy wrist. The limp body wrenched against me. Bushes crackled under us. It was a nightmare moment, with mountains and sky spinning. A shock wrenched the breath from me—stopped us both. We had struck a pine. I dazedly disentangled myself, staring down at the man I had tried to save.

HIS ski suit was plastered white—except for ugly red stains around several long rips in his jacket. Something sharp had gashed through it into his body again and again. The



fall had torn off buttons, exposing horrible lacerations on his chest and back. His face was a ghastly thing stuck over with white blotched with red. It was the face of Bob Cleary.

He was dead.

"Take it easy, Leath," a hard voice said behind me.

Donegan was standing on the trail two yards away, aiming a rifle. He'd taken the weapon from the lodge for his man-hunt; it belonged to Mr. Leland. It was cocked and his finger was on the trigger. My lungs were shaken with a spasm; I could only stare at him. Vaguely I saw someone running farther back on the trail—Sheriff Wigand.

Donegan stepped closer, to look down at Cleary. His face became a sickened grimace of revulsion and grief. He might have shot me on the spot, through sheer hatred, if Wigand hadn't loped to a stop at that moment, mouthing an epithet. Donegan straightened, his eyes filled with cold fire.

"Take—take Bob down to the lodge, sheriff," he ordered tightly. "I'll handle this rat."

I found my voice. "Good God, do you think I did this, too? How could I have done it? *Why* should I have done it?"

Donegan's eyes were contemptuously telling me what he thought. That Cleary had tried to stop my get-away, and this was what I had done to him. This time my fists couldn't get me out of it. Perhaps nothing could. But as I stood there covered by Donegan's rifle, unsteady from the shock of the fall, I couldn't help making a breathless protest.

"For God's sake, believe me, just once! I was going up to Lookout House. I thought Renwick might have taken Judy Gateley up there. All at once Cleary came falling down the

hillside. I tried to stop him, that's all. Can't you see what this really means, Donegan? Cleary found the place—the place where Judy is being kept. That's why he was killed. It's Lookout House—we've got to go up there!"

Donegan's eyes had no trust in them. He was profoundly shaken by his brother detective's death. He said again to Wigand, "Take Bob down to the lodge, sheriff." Then to me: "Go back up there, Leath. All the way."

Still dazed, I obeyed that order. Donegan followed me with his rifle constantly ready. Cutting across the private road, at a point above the swathe marked by Cleary's plunge, was a line of footprints. Big galoshes had made them. They circled from above and descended toward the lodge. This bore out my theory that Renwick was using Lookout House as a hide-away while making Evergreen Lodge his headquarters, but I was too breathless then to speak.

We paused gazing at the cabin, a log structure banked with white. A thin wisp of smoke was curling from its stone chimney. A sedan was sitting behind it, thinly heaped with blown snow, which testified that it had not been moved for days. The path of galosh tracks led from its front door. There was no sign of life about it. Donegan's rifle poked my back; we cautiously approached it.

**H**ALFWAY to the door Donegan growled, "Stay here, Leath." In the open he could pick me off with a bullet at the slightest move. He turned his weapon upon the cabin. At the door he listened. He suddenly kicked; the door slapped open, with Donegan crouched, ready to fire. An exclamation broke from his lips.

He turned the rifle on me again. A



jerk of his head signaled me inward. The same sight that had startled Donegan stopped me short.

The little girl was tied in a hickory chair—tied and blindfolded! A white handkerchief was banded across her eyes. She was clad in a woolen playsuit, with her pitifully thin little legs dangling. She made no sound at the noise of our entrance. At once I sprang toward her.

"It's all right, Judy. Don't be afraid," I reassured her as I slipped the blindfold off. "We've come to take you home."

Her beautiful face was white with fear, but her bluish eyes—soft and deep as Janet's—were clear. There was not a suggestion of a tear in them—she was a game little kid.

Rapidly as I could I loosened the rope from her arms. She wriggled up painfully.

"Can I go home now, really?" she asked.

Donegan came to her smiling, and she answered with a friendly reach for his hand.

"Yes, you're going home now, Judy," he told her quietly. "Your daddy and your sister are waiting to see you. In just a few minutes you'll be with them."

I was seeking some sign of the men who had been here with Judy. The cabin showed evidences of a struggle. A chair was toppled over and the rag rugs were kicked up. Near the fireplace there was a blot of fresh red. Then, circling the table, I caught sight of a knife on the floor. It was a kitchen carving knife, its edge dark and wet.

"Look at that, Donegan," I said. "That was used to kill Cleary. He found the cabin—he was stabbed here. Maybe he managed to break away, but he didn't live long enough to get far—

he fell down the hillside and—there's a glove, Donegan."

The little girl sat quietly while the detective turned to the glove lying on the other side of the table. It was pigskin, a large size. A gash gaped straight across its palm, and the leather was darkly stained. Donegan gingerly picked it up.

"You know what that means, Donegan," I said quickly. "The glove doesn't belong to Cleary. It was worn by the man who attacked him with the knife. Cleary put up such a fight that the other man was cut across the palm. The man you want is marked. Doesn't that let me out?"

I extended both my hands. They were white as ice with the cold, skinned at the knuckles and bruised, but neither of them was cut by the blade that had sliced through the pigskin glove. To my mind that was complete vindication; but Donegan didn't even comment. He raised Judy Gateley gently in his arms. As she clung to him, he pointed the rifle at me.

"Go back down to the lodge, Leath. I'll have you covered all the way. If you make one funny move. I'll give it to you."

## CHAPTER V

### Mountain Dragnet

JUDY GATELEY was greeted jubilantly when Donegan brought her into the lobby of Evergreen Lodge. Her father caught her up in his strong arms; her sister cried over her in sheer joy. Guests crowded around them chattering with delight. Judy's little voice couldn't be heard in the babble. Donegan kept covering me with the rifle, keeping Mr. and Mrs. Lealand, my only friends, away from me. I couldn't believe anyone could still



think me guilty. But in a few minutes—

Gerard Gateley hurried little Judy into Janet's room. Donegan steered me after them. The huge-framed banker bent over Judy as she sat in a comfortable chair, smiling. He directed the little girl to look at me, then asked quietly:

"Do you recognize that man, darling? Is he one of the men who took you up to the cabin?"

"I didn't see any of them, daddy," she answered. "They kept the bandage over my eyes all the time. They didn't take it off once. I don't know whether he was there."

"But do you remember his voice?" Gerard Gateley insisted. "Can you tell in what way whether he was one of the men?"

"I was scared, daddy," the little girl confessed. "I don't remember, really. And they didn't say much, either. Most of the time there was only one man, and when he was alone with me he didn't say anything."

"How many men were there in all, Judy?"

"Two men took me away, daddy. Then just one of them stayed with me, but sometimes the other one came back for a little while. But this morning *both* of them went away and then when one of them came back, it was the second one. After that I was alone, until just a while ago, until a third man came in, a strange one. Then, all of a sudden, there was a fight, and afterwards I was left alone again."

"But this man here—*that man*—wasn't one of them?"

"I'm not sure, daddy. I was so scared most of the time I didn't know what was going on."

I listened with sinking heart. Judy Gateley had told the truth as she knew it, but it had not helped to vindicate

me. Suspicion still blazed in Donegan's eyes. I was determined to make them see the truth.

"Hear me through, Donegan. I came to Evergreen Lodge hoping to get a lead on Renwick. He's been here often, in the past, under a false name. He's come back—he's here now. He's used this place, and Lookout House, for the kidnaping. Maybe he didn't know about me when he came, but somehow he found out. He framed me for murder a year ago, and now he's done it again."

Janet was listening intently—with, I thought, hope in her violet eyes.

"Renwick used the typewriter downstairs to write the kidnap letter. He planted the mitten and the automatic in my room. All that was part of his plan to recoup and to frame me—a man already wanted for murder. It ought to be perfectly clear what happened today, except for a few details. You've got Renwick, if you'll only play it right, Donegan. Can't you realize that?"

Donegan said, "You still have to answer to that murder charge in New York."

I went on. "Renwick and Baltz snatched Judy Gateley. Maybe Renwick put Baltz out of the way so he wouldn't have to split. Maybe Baltz tried to back out and Renwick stopped him. Anyway, killing Baltz left Renwick in the snatch alone. Then, besides playing his part as a guest here at the lodge, he had to keep an eye on Judy. He must have spotted Cleary going into the shack. He silenced Cleary, then had to get out of sight. But Renwick is still within reach—he can't get away."

"Can't he?" Donegan asked flatly.

"No. He came in the sedan that's still up by the cabin. He can't use *that* car to escape in. Trying to get away



from here on foot would be too suspicious. Maybe he'll wait for the next train, because he's got to get clear now—his snatch has failed. But in any case, Donegan, don't forget that man is marked—Cleary marked him. He has a bad gash across the palm of his right hand."

**D**ONEGAN'S lips curled. "Everything you've charged Renwick with, Leath, applies to you just as well. You could have put Baltz out of the way for the same reasons you say Renwick did. You slammed me down and beat it out of here, and the most likely place for you to go would be the cabin where you were keeping the kid. You bumped into Cleary there. I told you at the very beginning, Leath, it's no use."

I was hot with anger. "Hunt for a man with a cut hand, Donegan! Listen! That man knows the cut is damning evidence against him. He knows he has to keep it out of sight or he'll go to the chair."

"He must be desperate to get away from here, at this very minute. We've got to find him before he has a chance to clear out."

Janet Gateley turned quickly to the detective. "Mr. Leath sounds sincere," she said earnestly. "I don't believe he had anything to do with kidnaping Judy. I'm sure he's telling the truth."

Donegan smiled wryly. "Miss Gateley, I'm just a detective taking in a prisoner on a serious charge. It's my job to report this new evidence, not to weigh it. Leath's going back to New York to answer for murdering a man a year ago."

At that moment a long, mournful hoot shivered through the air. It was repeated three times, slowly. It was the whistle of the snow train signaling its

passengers that their brief period of play in the snow was at an end.

Gerard Gateley was regarding me gravely. "I'm anxious to return to the city as soon as possible with Judy. The best way is for us to go back on the snow train. It'll get us there sooner than any other. That arrangement is all right with the police, isn't it, Mr. Donegan?"

"It certainly is," the detective answered, "because I'm taking Leath down the same way. Get your hat and coat, Leath."

A new thought had flashed through my mind. "The snow train! If it's the best and quickest way out for the rest of us, it's the same for Renwick. Then let's check up on the passengers. Don't let that train leave the station until every passenger is accounted for."

The detective smiled tartly. "I know what to do. Don't worry—the snow train won't pull out of here until every passenger is checked. You heard me. Get your hat and coat."

A violet glance from Janet Gateley told me, somehow, that she hoped I was innocent. As I went to my room, Sheriff Wigand came to Donegan's side and talked in low tones in the hall, discussing the passenger check-up. Presently Wigand strode away. Steering me back down the corridor, Donegan looked into Janet Gateley's room to say:

"It'll take a little while to make sure about the train. I hope it won't be held up long, though. I'll let you know when we're ready to pull out."

**D**ONEGAN armed me down into the lobby. He evidently reasoned there was greater safety in numbers. Guests moved about, eying me. They had once been friendly; now they were hostile and contemptuous.



Mr. and Mrs. Leland murmured their belief in me, but even their doubt was strong. I was made to sit where all might see, like a captured beast.

The continued hooting of the train whistle was calling the snow train crowd from the jump and the trails. Happily weary, they were trudging toward the station with skis and snowshoes shouldered. Slowly the brightly woolened figures disappeared from the landscape. Sheriff Wigand, I knew, was already at the train, arranging for five special tickets and tallying the passengers.

My only hope now—my single, long-shot chance—was that Wyatt Renwick might attempt to escape the scene on the snow train. My mind kept drumming that once I stepped from that train in New York, without having identified him, my last chance would be lost.

I rose quietly, while Donegan watched, and went behind the desk. A small black safe sat behind it. This I opened. From one of the compartments I removed a sealed envelope. It contained the evidence that I had saved for a year, the evidence that was utterly worthless without Renwick, but which would damn him with murder once he was caught, if he ever was—the two empty shells, ejected from my automatic in Paysick's room, bearing fingerprints which I hoped were Renwick's.

At last, after an interval that was interminable yet all too brief, Sheriff Wigand trudged into the lobby to hand the tickets to Donegan. He also passed a bit of paper to the detective; it bore figures. Eying me with intense concentration, he said loudly:

"All passengers are accounted for. The same number are going back as came up. They're all aboard now. The

train's been held up half an hour, so you'd better take your man, Donegan. I'll tell the Gateleys."

Donegan, smiling sourly, signaled me out. We started down the winding white road. The snow train was snoring in the station half a mile below, its frosted windows shining through the deepening dusk—the train I was destined to ride on a one-way ticket to doom.

A DARK flutter of motion caught my eye. I'd learned to watch for guests who remained out after sunset, for it was easy to get lost in the rugged mountains. The moving flicker came across a ski-tracked slope. It was someone poling along at a frantic speed. The figure fell, then dragged itself up painfully. As it tottered closer I tried to tug away from Donegan's hard hand on my arm.

"That man's evidently been hurt," I pointed out. "He hardly knows what direction he's going."

I hurried down the slope toward him, with Donegan. The young chap, catching sight of us, swerved close. His stop was awkward; he caught me for support. Donegan uttered an exclamation, lifting the young man's head. It was streaked with blood, from a broken welt across the forehead.

"Somebody hit me," he muttered. "Somebody hit me."

The last spark of my failing hope kindled. "Who did it?" I asked quickly. "Did you see him? Why did he hit you?"

The injured chap—evidently a Norwegian—gaspd for breath. "He jumped on me all of a sudden. I was starting back to the train and he—slugged me. I didn't get a chance to see him. He knocked me out. I sort of remember him going through my pockets, but when I came to he was gone. I



don't know why anybody should do that."

Even Donegan's eyes had acquired a grim sparkle.

"What did he take?" I insisted. "He knocked you down in order to rob you of something. What are you missing?"

"My ticket," he gulped. "And my gloves."

That was it! That clicked!

The young chap, realizing the train was waiting, began poling toward it. He was dazed, but not seriously in need of medical attention. He could be fixed up from the first aid kit on the snow train. As he skied off I peered at Donegan. The detective's face was set icily. He growled.

"Don't figure on too much, Leath. This doesn't let you off at all—certainly not from the New York indictment."

"You know what it means," I answered. "Renwick did that. He couldn't simply go down to the train and buy a one-way ticket. That would immediately differentiate him from the rest of the passengers. Then one look at his hand would be enough to pin the whole thing on him. The snow train tickets are special round-trips. He got hold of the unused half of one of them, figuring on covering himself."

"I get it," Donegan said throatily. "But you're still coming along with me."

"You couldn't keep me off that train now," I answered with grim jubilation. "Renwick's on it. He'll be on it all the way, because it's non-stop back to Grand Central. It gives us more than three hours to find him. You're taking me back, are you, Donegan? All right—come on!"

Donegan said nothing as we tramped to the station. The chap who'd been slugged was already clambering aboard. The sheriff's sedan was winding its

way down from the lodge. When it pulled up alongside the train, Gerard Gateley and Janet alighted from it. The big man gently lifted little Judy in his arms. They climbed into the coach, and Sheriff Wigand started back. The conductor waited outside impatiently, glancing at his watch, while Donegan and I trudged up. We were the last to reach the snow train.

"Mr. Donegan?" the conductor asked as we paused. He was so thin and frail it seemed the night wind would gust him off his feet. "My name's Hess. Everything checked up perfectly until a minute ago, when that boy with the bloody face got on. He makes an extra passenger, not including the five one-ways. There's one more going back now than came up."

"We've got to find that extra passenger, Donegan," I declared.

He pushed me onto the steps and climbed up after me. The wizened conductor signaled the engineer. The locomotive emitted a long blast. Couplings clashed and the wheels ground. The train creaked into motion. As a prisoner of the law, my one-way trip began.

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## CHAPTER VI

### Ticket to Doom

EVERY coach in the snow train was crowded with confusion. Skis poked up like an ancient army's javelins; they were hoisted into the baggage racks, laid across the backs of seats, leaned against the windows, scattered in the aisles. A pair of poles for every pair of skis made it a jungle of hickory and spruce and bamboo. Numberless snowshoes added to the clutter. Besides, jackets and mufflers and caps and toques and gloves and even trousers were hung from every-



where and draped over everything to dry. The whole train was a tangle.

Passengers were crammed into every seat. Exhilarated by their day in the open, they were climbing over and around the scattered equipment, wiping, polishing, waxing, oiling. Scores of them were seeking friends, forming new groups, parading from one coach to another. In such turmoil I despaired of ever being able to locate one man; but with the train clicking on its way, an intelligent check-up would soon be possible.

There were no drawing rooms, so the Gateleys were sitting in a double seat at the end of one of the coaches. Donegan steered me toward them. The banker sat little Judy on his lap—she seemed as carefree now as though she had not had that terrifying experience—while I sat facing Janet. We rode silently a while, waiting for the conductor to come. At last I ventured to say to Janet:

"Somehow I have a feeling you believe in me."

She answered softly. "Yes—I do. I can't think you've done the horrible things you're accused of. When we were alone together, in my room, you were genuinely concerned—you wanted to help me." Impulsively she reached to take my hand. "I hope you get out of it!"

I loved her for that. She was the only one who didn't doubt me. Her sincerity made Donegan's head wag, but it impressed her father.

"Look here, Mr. Donegan," Gerard Gateley said gravely. "Assume Mr. Leath has told the truth. In that case he was instrumental in returning Judy to me.

"It was a highly commendable act. He should be rewarded for it. Even if the New York indictment should

stand, shouldn't this entitle him to be treated with some leniency?"

Donegan smiled dourly. "That's strictly up to the jury, Mr. Gateley," he answered. "But the best he can hope for, in any event, is life imprisonment."

We rode on silently. I burned with impatience to begin a hunt for the extra passenger, but the coaches were still filled with such bewildering confusion that it was not yet possible. I wanted to explain to Janet. I said quietly, "You see, the basis of this whole thing is that a crook named Renwick used to like to go to Evergreen Lodge occasionally. He must have seen Judy there once, and that planted the idea of the kidnaping in his mind. His going there is why I went. And my being there is why he deliberately framed me a second time, with a shrewd plan for shielding himself."

"You *are* telling the truth," Janet answered. "It couldn't be that you're so honest about this and not about what happened in town a year ago. Isn't that true, Mr. Donegan?"

DONEGAN'S acrid smile grew. "I'm not the judge or the jury," he reminded the girl. "I'm just a cop doing my job. If I thought Leath was as innocent as a new-born babe, it wouldn't make any difference—which I don't."

Again we rode in silence. My impatience was almost unendurable. Each click of the wheels over the rails seemed an irretrievably lost opportunity. Almost a whole precious hour passed before the confusion in the coaches began to subside. There was only one reassuring thing about that trip—the train was keeping up a steady roll, and it would not stop until it reached the city. Until then there would be no chance for the hidden Renwick to leave it.



Conductor Hess paused at our seats to say, "It still checks up the same way. Not counting you five one-way passengers, there's one more going back than came up. Looks like it's going to be a job to find him, all right."

I grasped Donegan's arm. "We can go through this train like a comb—begin at the first coach and work backward. We won't let anyone past us. We're looking for a man whose right palm is gashed—he's the murderer we want. No matter how guilty you think I am, this is a job you've got to do perfectly."

"Don't read me the book of regulations!" the detective snapped. "When you come right down to it, this is as simple as an ordinary collection of tickets. There's a way to make doubly sure of it. We'll give a special stub to every person we take a look at. That'll let us check again, because everybody will have to have a stub to get off this train. How about that, conductor?"

Hess obliged by producing a pack of stubs. None had already been provided the snow-trainers; their tickets had been collected as they boarded. Armed with a fistful of the colored rectangles, Donegan rose. He ordered me to stay at his side, and we worked our way to the head of the train, with Hess following. Reaching the front door of the first coach, I realized that if this search should fail it would clinch the damning case against me.

Donegan began operations quickly. He leaned over to a young man in a bulky windbreaker with a stub and ordered, "Keep that or you can't get off." As the chap reached for the ticket, I glanced at his right hand. Of course it was unmarked by a gash. But that was the procedure—to warn every passenger, male and female alike, to hold onto their stubs, and as each accepted

the colored bit of pasteboard we seized the opportunity to scrutinize the extended hand.

PASSING through the first coach was laborious work. It was like trolling for big fish or hunting for dangerous game—but this was a man-hunt supremely important because my own life hinged on the result. We did not overlook the lavatories. They were empty. Hands—they were a nightmare in my eyes, reaching, reaching—and none of them branded as a murderer's.

At a point halfway through the train a stocky, cruel-faced man reached for his stub with a right hand that was gloved. Instantly I commanded, "Take that off!" He argued about it, which sharpened our suspicions—but he removed the glove. His horny hand was unblemished. I felt nauseated with disappointment. We proceeded, allowing no one to pass us, being careful not to miss a single passenger. Hands, hands, rising empty, lowering with their tickets—none of them gashed!

Then another shock that speeded my heart. In the next to the last coach Donegan tried the door of the men's cubicle to find it bolted on the inside. He knocked; there was no answer. He rapped again, ordering, "Open up! Open the door!" The lack of response made me sure Renwick was in there—Renwick, concealing himself and the wound that would damn him as a murderer. But, when Donegan was about to throw himself against the door, it opened.

The chap inside was the victim of Renwick's assault, whose ticket Renwick had stolen. The attack, on top of his exertion and the swaying of the train, had made him sick. He was white-faced, wavering—but we looked



at his hands. Of course he was not the man. We went on. My hope began to gutter like a burned out candle as we entered the last of the string of coaches.

One by one we handed out the stubs, looking at every responding hand. Seat by seat we worked our way to the end of the car, taking the utmost care to miss no one. A door that looked out upon a double line of track streaming into the dark distance ended our search. We had not missed a single soul. We were positive we had made a flawless job of our check-up. But we had found no man with a slashed hand.

Donegan, weary from climbing over the jungle of skis and snowshoes, observed laconically, "Looks like that's that, Leath. Something's wrong somewhere, but it's damned certain your theoretical murderer isn't on this train."

I was too heartsick to speak for a moment. Then, "We *know* he's aboard," I insisted. "We missed him somehow—we must have. We've got to find Renwick before we pull into New York."

Donegan's hard head wagged. "There's only one thing left to do, Leath. Re-check on everybody as they get off. Look for somebody who hasn't got a stub. But we won't find him."

"Wait!" I exclaimed, turning to the conductor. "How many stubs did you pass out, Mr. Hess? You counted them, didn't you?"

"Sure," he mumbled. A frown darkened his forehead. "It's funny," he remarked. "The number of stubs and the number of snow train tickets is the same. But we gave out one extra stub to that boy we found sick in the men's room—the one who was hurt."

"That means the man who stole the ticket from that chap hasn't got a stub, then," I said quickly. "It means we *did* miss Renwick somehow. We slipped up

somewhere, Donegan, and you've got to admit it. Somewhere on this train there's a man with a gashed hand."

"He's not in any of these coaches," Donegan reiterated stubbornly. "I'm positive of it."

THEN a new thought struck a spark in my mind. It wasn't possible that our man was in the cab of the locomotive. There was no baggage or mail car. Only coaches made up the train. It could not be that our man was "riding the rails" underneath, because he had surrendered his stolen ticket when boarding the train—he had come inside. Then—my conclusion was a wild idea that sent me stumbling across the trappings in the aisle to the forward end of the coach.

There I tried the vestibule doors. They were fastened. Donegan was coming after me, determined not to let me out of his sight, but I went on. In the next coach I tried four more doors, and found all of them latched. In the third it was the same. Then Donegan grimly gripped my arm.

"What the devil are you up to?" he snapped.

"If the man with the wounded hand isn't *in* this train, he must be *on* it," I insisted. "I tell you, he's desperate to keep out of sight. Suppose he saw us, coming through to check up. There's only one place he could put himself where he wouldn't be spotted. Outside—on top of one of the coaches."

"Leach, you're crazy," Donegan retorted. "These cars are covered with snow and slippery. It's freezing cold. There may not even be any way of climbing up to the top of the coach from one of these doors. But *if* he's up there, he's going to stay put until we stop in New York."

"Not necessarily," I protested. "The



train may slow down enough somewhere to give him a chance to jump off. He'll take it, the first chance it comes. Listen to reason, Donegan! *Now's* the time to find out. I'm going up on top to see—"

"Like hell you are!"

At that moment the couplings clashed. The train, for some reason none of us could know, was gradually slackening speed. I was galvanized with fear that the slow-down might continue long enough to give Renwick his opportunity to escape in a few moments. Arguing with Donegan was futile. At least, *words* were hopeless. But *fists* stood a chance.

I gave Donegan my knuckles swiftly, squarely between the eyes. He grunted, lifting his arms like a bird's wings, stiffening and swaying back. I followed with a clicking swing to the point of the chin that collapsed him against the opposite door. The conductor was there; he babbled something and made a grab for me. One strong shove was enough to send him spilling into the vestibule of the next car.

**T**UGGING open the door, I was struck by an icy blast. I leaned out into wind that tore with frigid teeth. The sky was spangled black. Sparks from the locomotive stack were flickering past on the slipstream. The only light glowed through the frosted windows, giving scant illumination to the curved roof of the coach. Donegan was already stirring and mumbling blasphemy. I reached far up, groping blindly—and found a hand-hold.

I swung in the biting wind, kicking to lift myself. My fingers were gripped upon ice that became slippery with the heat of my blood. My shoe caught another purchase, and I heaved over. Lurching flat on the top of the car,

with the swift wind whipping at me and the fumes of the stack stifling me, I glanced along the snaky length of the train. The gloom yielded not the slightest suggestion of anyone clinging to the top of any of the coaches.

Bringing myself up to a crouch, tottering as the train swayed, I hunched my way along.

"Leath!" Donegan's wrathful voice bawled up from the open door. "You crazy fool—Leath!"

I poised at the end of the coach, then reached one leg out and climbed across. Faint starlight glistened over the icy back of the next car. I stumbled along it with every waver of the roadbed threatening to pitch me off. The bitter sting of the wind brought cold tears to my eyes, blurring my sight, adding to the confusion of the gloom. I fought my way along, shuddering, staggering, trying to see.

And I saw—saw a black shape flattened down before me.

"Renwick!"

The shadow reared up like a phantom. I braced to balance myself as it heaved upon me. The driving momentum of the black figure threw me backward. Sharp nails drove into my throat as I writhed in an effort to roll myself over. The breath that souged into my face was hot and pungent with liquor. A fist pounded into my face. I felt myself slipping on the slope.

I wrenched to my side, striking with all my strength.

The other man tore away. I struck again and—

My blow toppled the other man backward. He sprawled down, a wild yell breaking from his throat, gripping my wrist. His downward twist jerked me off balance. I found myself diving into black emptiness. Instinctively I



grabbed at the body hurtling beside me. I hugged it close, ducking my head, waiting for the rending shock that would mean death. Suddenly it came—a jarring impact that snapped every nerve and plunged me into suffocating coldness.

Next I was conscious of steel brake-shoes screeching against steel wheels. The train was grinding to a stop. I'd been out a few minutes; I was still unable to move. Dimly I realized that I had plunged into a deep bank of snow built by the wind. The man with whom I had fallen lay at the edge of it, his head resting against a black wall. The wall was a stack of ties that the snow bank had grown against. I could only kneel there, staring at his face, listening to him mutter deliriously. I was still crouched over the man I had known as Spencer Richards when Donegan stopped breathless at my side.

"Can't—can't get out of this now," Richards, or Renwick, was muttering. "Won't let you—pull that on me, Tony." Then: "Detective—detective. He won't do any talking—not now. God—my hand!" He was gesturing fit-

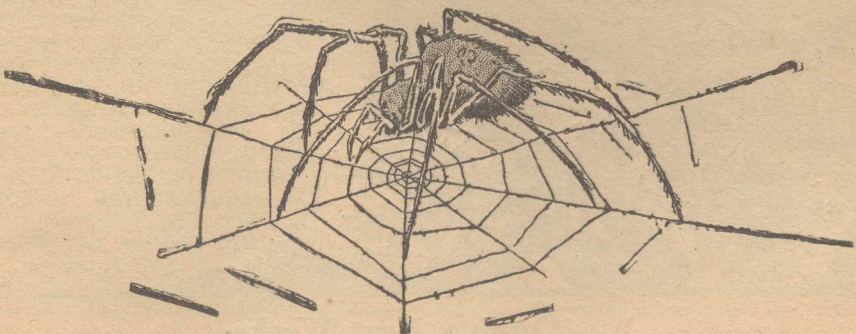
fully with a hand bound with a red-dened handkerchief.

"We're safe, you fool—safe. We've got Leath framed for it—framed so he'll never clear himself—the same as a year ago—when we framed him for Paysick."

The rest of that trip to New York was like a triumphant approach to a citadel of freedom. Center Street lost no time getting to work on Renwick. My former chief still had my automatic, with which Paysick had been killed. Ballistics experts proved that the empty shells I still had were marked by it. The fingerprint men matched up the prints on the shells with Renwick's own. That clinched the case—Renwick's confession wasn't long coming out, and the indictment against me was promptly quashed.

It was like living in a new world, after that year of fear and hiding like a hunted animal. In this land of wonders I received several flattering offers. The one I accepted was an enviable post as legal advisor to the chain of banks of which Gerard-Gately is president.

Tomorrow night Janet and I will be honeymooning at Evergreen Lodge.





# ILLUSTRATED CRIMES

by *HOOK* *ALLEN*

## THE MYSTERY SNIPER

PETER KOUTEYNIKOFF AND HIS WIFE, TATANIA, — WITH HER STEPSON, VICTOR, WERE RUSSIAN EXILES, LIVING IN AN UPTOWN NEW YORK CITY APARTMENT HOUSE. ON JANUARY 20, 1932, TATANIA WAS DRESSING FOR DINNER WHEN SHE SUDDENLY SCREAMED FOR HELP. "PETER, I'VE BEEN SHOT!" SHE GASPED AS KOUTEYNIKOFF RUSHED INTO HER ROOM. HE FOUND HIS WIFE ON THE FLOOR, DYING. BLOOD GUSHED FROM A BULLET WOUND IN HER NECK.

VICTOR PHONED THE POLICE. ALTHOUGH THERE WERE BULLET HOLES IN THE TWO PANES OF THE BEDROOM WINDOW, IT SEEMED IMPOSSIBLE TO DETECTIVES THAT A SNIPER SHOOTING FROM THE OUTSIDE COULD HAVE SCORED A HIT. AS NO BULLET WAS FOUND IN THE WOUND OR IN TATANIA'S ROOM, THE SLEUTHS WONDERED IF THE SHOT MIGHT NOT HAVE BEEN FIRED FROM WITHIN SO THAT THE BULLET SPED OUT THROUGH THE WINDOW. THE MYSTERY OF THE BULLET WAS SOLVED WHEN AN AUTOPSY REVEALED IT HAD DROPPED DOWN TATANIA'S THROAT AND INTO HER STOMACH AND THAT PARTICLES OF GLASS WERE IMBEDDED IN IT. THERE WAS LITTLE DOUBT THAT THE SHOT HAD COME FROM OUTSIDE.

DETAILS OF MME. KOUTEYNIKOFF'S EARLY LIFE DISCLOSED THAT SHE HAD ESCAPED A BOLSHEVIST FIRING SQUAD AFTER THE RED REVOLUTION AND HAD FLED TO TURKEY. THERE SHE HAD MARRIED KOUTEYNIKOFF, A FORMER CZARIST OFFICER. SHE HAD EMIGRATED TO AMERICA WITH HER HUSBAND AND STEPSON. KOUTEYNIKOFF FEARED THAT A BOLSHEVIST SEEKING VENGEANCE HAD SNIPED HER FROM THE NEAREST BUILDING — WHICH LAY 200 YARDS AWAY.

Coming Next Week—





MME. KOUTEYNIKOFF,  
HER HUSBAND AND  
HER STEPSON

**HIS** FEARS, HOWEVER, PROVED UNFOUNDED WHEN MONTHS LATER THE POLICE BALLISTICS BUREAU, FOUND THE GUN USED IN THE SHOOTING. IT HAD BEEN TAKEN FROM ONE GEORGE SANDOVAL, A YOUTH ARRESTED FOR A HARLEM STICK-UP. SANDOVAL AT FIRST DENIED ALL KNOWLEDGE OF THE SHOOTING. BUT WHEN POLICE FOUND PRESS CLIPPINGS ABOUT IT IN HIS ROOM, HE TOLD HIS STORY.

**SANDOVAL** EXPLAINED THAT HE HAD BOUGHT THE GUN ON JANUARY 20, AND HAD TAKEN IT UP ON THE ROOF TO TEST IT.

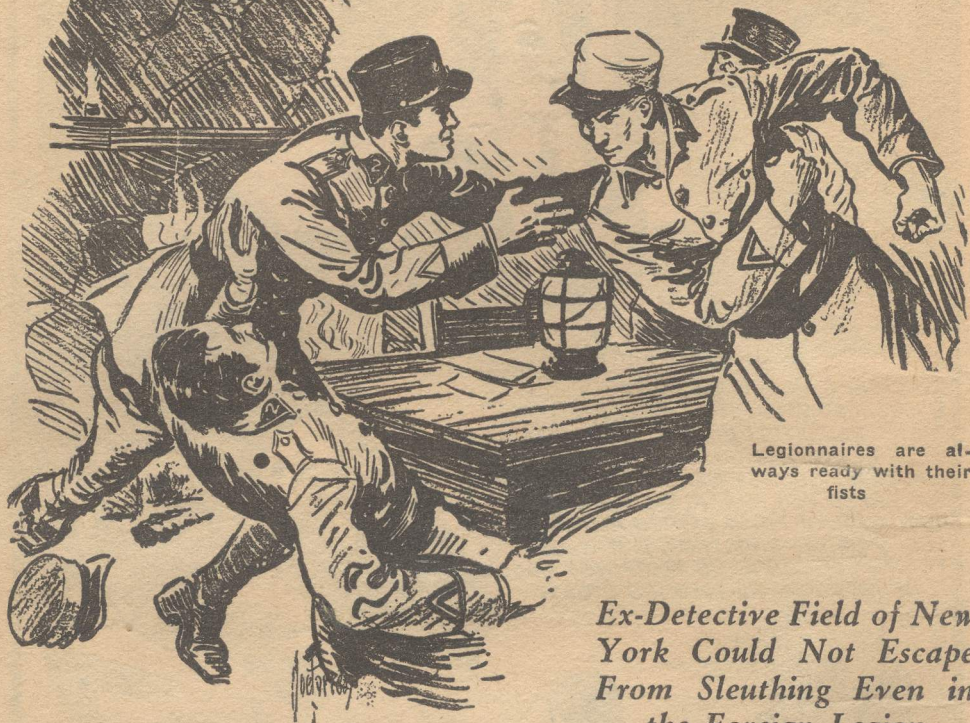
**SANDOVAL** WAS CONVICTED OF THE HOLD-UP AND SENTENCED TO A LONG TERM IN SING SING. HE ESCAPED TRIAL ON A MURDER CHARGE, BECAUSE THERE WAS SCANT EVIDENCE TO CONTRAVERT HIS CLAIM THAT THE SHOOTING WAS ACCIDENTAL.

**HE FIRED SEVEN RANDOM SHOTS, FEELING SURE NONE COULD FIND A MARK BECAUSE THERE DID NOT SEEM TO BE ANYTHING TO HIT. NEXT DAY, TO HIS SURPRISE, HE SAW IN A NEWSPAPER THAT HE HAD KILLED A WOMAN.**

## The Missing Mission Worker



# The Missing Men



Legionnaires are always ready with their fists

*Ex-Detective Field of New York Could Not Escape From Sleuthing Even in the Foreign Legion*

By ROBERT CARSE

## CHAPTER I

### A Legionnaire's Past

FIELD HALTED and saluted smartly as soon as he was inside the door of battalion headquarters. The major sat at a desk across the room. He was a small and tough man with a scrubby gray mustache and thirty years of service in the Legion. He sent his glance in a keen scrutiny over Field's face and tall, powerful young body before he spoke. "At ease, sergeant," he said. "The patrol seems

to have done a pretty good job on you."

Sweat was on Field's bruised cheeks and his head throbbed evilly from the liquor and the beating he had taken last night. He looked down for an instant at what had been his best tunic. Three of the buttons were gone, the material was splashed with dried blood and liquor, his medal ribbons soiled. "Yes, sir," he muttered. "Some of those *tirailleurs* in the patrol are pretty handy boys."

For a moment it seemed as though the major was going to smile. "It was just the same in the old Legion," he said. "One Legionnaire always had the idea he could take a dozen men from any other outfit. I understand last night you almost did. But do you think you



can pull a job like that and keep your stripes?"

Field's face darkened beneath its deep tan. He cleared his throat hoarsely.

"All right," the major said. "I'll tell you. Your name is not Field. You're an American, and not English, the way your enlistment papers read."

"The Major—" Field said, staring hot-eyed with anger.

"Stand easy," the major said quietly. "Have a cigarette. I've taken the trouble to find out about you, because you're one of the best noncoms in the battalion and I've been thinking of you for officers' school. You used to be a police detective in New York City. You got into some sort of trouble with your superiors, resigned and came in the Legion after you went broke in Paris. Is that right?"

"Yes, sir," Field said, his mouth lines taut.

The major leaned a bit forward across the desk and his voice was grave. "The one thing I don't understand," he said, "is why you got so drunk and put on so much hell here last night. You were beginning two weeks' leave. You could have gotten out of Morocco and over to Marseilles or Toulon for a few days. But you picked this dirty little mountain town, where every officer you knew couldn't help but watch you."

Field took a deep drag on the cigarette and then fumbled out from an upper pocket of his tunic a crumpled newspaper clipping. He placed the clipping on the edge of the desk before the major. "There's the answer," he said simply. "That's from an American paper I got when I came in here yesterday to start my leave. I was attached to the Homicide Squad when I was a detective, back there in New York. I

went all out on a big murder case and brought into court the guy I was convinced had done it. He beat the case, and I was forced to quit. A couple of weeks ago, though, that guy died, and left a confession saying he'd done the murder. It's all in the clipping there."

The major rubbed a thumb along his blunt jaw. "You want to get out of the Legion now?" he asked.

"I've got about a year more to go on my hitch here," Field said slowly. He was trying to smile, and his gray eyes met the major levelly. "That confession is four years too late for me. I got drunk yesterday because I figure I'll stick with the Legion."

THE MAJOR lifted his hand and held it out. "I'm glad," he said.

"But getting soused isn't your style. Here's a little job I've got for you. Do it right, and I'll see you go to officers' school at Saint Maixent and get your commission. Fail on it, and you'll lose your stripes and won't like the Legion any better than you liked New York when you quit. Do you know the Ait-Bakla sector?"

"I was in there with the mobile group a year ago when we cleaned the place up."

"Right," the major said. "I'm cancelling the rest of your leave now. I'm sending you up to take command of the post at Ait-Bakla. But that's not all; that isn't the job. Four men have disappeared from the post there in the last few months. You know Morocco and his High Atlas mountain country. You understand how hard it is for any man to get through the passes South and out into the Sahara, or over the other way into Spanish Morocco. But those four are gone, and there's no sign of them anywhere.

"The *gendarmes* haven't found them,



or the Legion patrols from the post. The native clans of the Ait-Bakla are friendly to us now and wouldn't take the chance of hiding a deserter. I've talked with their chiefs myself, and they swear they haven't seen anything of the lot.

"So go ahead. Find those missing men, and you will keep your stripes and in another year will have a commission. Do it your own way; you've been a detective, and you're a Legionnaire. Just don't bother me."

Field wanted to laugh, and curse. Then he said, "Yes, sir," and saluted.

"Wait a minute," the major snapped, grinning at him. "That isn't all. The sergeant who's been in command up there all along is in town. His name is Grossner and he's a German who has done fifteen years in the regiments.

"He's a good non-com, but the kind who's used to being commanded when things move fast. He says he's entirely puzzled and doesn't know how or why those men disappeared. He'll go back up with you to the post, and tell you all about the men in the detachment and the men who disappeared. You'll find him hanging around outside."

Field saluted again, but did not move. "The major," he asked quietly, "could tell me a little more about Grossner?"

"Yes," the major said. "He'll be watching you all the time, and be distrustful of you. So will the men. That post only needs one sergeant normally. But I think Grossner is all right, although I told him this morning he could be transferred to an outfit going out to the Tonkin, and he refused. He wants to stay at Ait-Bakla, he says, until the missing men are found."

"That's a bit funny in itself," Field said. "He'd get more pay and a lot better post out in the Tonkin than here in Morocco."

"Talk to him about it," the major said, and nodded towards the door. "Good luck. When you find out something that makes sense, come back and tell me."

The sunlight outside made Field blink. He stood still while he finished the major's cigarette. An odd, new elation and excitement ran through him, and his head was clear. A man's past was strictly his own in the foreign regiments, he told himself. The major had violated an old Legion tradition and rule when he had looked into all that back there in New York.

Yet the major was giving him a chance, returning him to work he really loved and knew best. Up there at Ait-Bakla was a job worth all he had ever learned as a detective and a Legionnaire. He pulled down his rumpled tunic hem and stepped off across the parade ground with wide strides.

GROSSNER was squatting against the wall of the supply sergeant's office. He straightened as Field came towards him and stood silently. He was a thickset man with a heavy neck and ruddy, square face. The real Legion old-timer, Field thought, noticing the man's ribbons and campaign badges, the immaculate cut and quality of the faded khaki uniform. Field smiled at him. "You're the *chef* at Ait-Bakla?"

"So." Grossner was watching him with a guarded, almost sullen glance. "You're the guy I'm supposed to take with me." He jerked his head around and pointed to the group of squealing, kicking pack mules being loaded at the supply shed. "We're about ready to pull out. Where's your gear?"

"Down in town," Field told him. "I was bound on leave yesterday when I got soused and tangled with the pa-



trol. How about having a drink with me at the Armenian's joint. Your lads can pick us up there on the way through."

Grossner pulled the worn visor of his *kepi* lower over his eyes. "A drink wouldn't hurt," he admitted. "But aren't you pushing it kind of hard?"

Field was already in motion towards the gate, and the old German strode with him. "No, I only got enough for one drink left. I did big things for myself last night."

They walked in silence past the guard at the gate. Then in the narrow and muddy street, Grossner wheeled and grasped him by the arm. "Listen," he told Field. "Don't start wrong with me. I know why they're sending you to Ait-Bakla. You won't get anything more from me than I told the major this morning."

"Those four guys just disappeared up there at the post, and that's all. I don't think the natives knocked them off any more than I think they got safe away into the Sahara or Spanish territory. Where the hell they went, nobody knows. And if I couldn't find out, you won't."

"Still," Field said quietly, "you want to go back to the place. You just refused a transfer to the Tonkin to stay on here."

"The hell with the Tonkin!" Grossner's deep voice sharpened, and the grip of his fingers tightened on Field's arm. "You think I'd take a transfer and leave a thing like that behind me?" He released his grip and stood a pace or so away from Field, his big fists closed and half raised. "What are you—a lousy spy for the major? Some slob who's going up there with the idea already formed that I knocked those four off myself?"

Field shrugged and smiled. "Let's

forget the questions and the hard words for now," he said. "I left all my gear with this Armenian quick-change specialist when I came in from the block-houses. Watch him while I ask for it back."

The greasy-bearded owner of the drinking joint moaned and waved his arms as Field cursed him. Then, almost weeping, he went to the back of the place and emerged with Field's kit bags. Grossner had momentarily lost his sullen scowl and was laughing. He poured Field's and his own glass full. "Here's one on your pal here," he said. "I'm glad you're going up with me. That job has got me worried. . . ."

"Let's go," Field said. "We'll be able to take care of it between us." In the street beyond, the Legionnaires in charge of the little mule train had halted the beasts and were waiting. The five men who were from the Ait-Bakla post, stared hard-eyed at Field as he walked with Grossner to the riding mules held for them.

Legion gossip spread fast, thought Field. None of these men had any false ideas about him and his reason for joining the detachment at the mountain post. The entire force at Ait-Bakla would be suspicious of him, despite what Grossner had just said to him now. They would distrust him naturally; in his eyes, as they saw the situation, any or all of them might be the probable murderers of the four missing men.

GROSSNER led the column out of town. He rode a few paces ahead of Field, a Lebel carbine at his thigh, his heavy body balancing easily to the motions of the long-legged mule. At the edge of the corn fields, where the trail rose steep and narrow, the men and mules strung out in single



file and Field reached down again to make sure of the big automatic pistol he carried.

He had taken the holstered weapon from one of his kit bags in town, hooked it onto his garrison belt. Now he tried the action, moved back the butt slide to see if the magazine was loaded and in place.

This precipitous and wild country ahead was completely pacified according to all reports at headquarters. But from time to time raiding parties from some of the further and still undefeated Chleuh clans slipped into the area and took great satisfaction in killing anybody within range of their high-power rifles.

It was barely possible, he pondered, that one or two of the men missing from the post at Ait-Bakla had met their deaths that way. For all four of them to be accounted for in such a fashion, though, was giving the Chleuh too much credit.

The answer was more complicated, far more difficult, or the major would not have sent him here.

He raised his glance and studied Grossner's broad back. The sturdy old sergeant was intent upon the trail and the green, deep gorges and rocky slopes of the mountainside. It was quite impossible now, Field thought, to connect Grossner with the mystery at Ait-Bakla. The man's attitude was no more surly than those of the other Legionnaires here.

Grossner had refused to take a transfer to the Tonkin, and that in itself laid him open to suspicion. Yet back in the town Grossner had said with what seemed to be blunt, honest anger that he would not leave Ait-Bakla until the fate of the missing men had been solved. As a noncom with long years of an excellent record, his state-

ment was logical, if not wholly convincing.

Field turned in his saddle and looked obliquely at the men in charge of the pack animals. They were all of German and Central European blood, he decided. They moved with the easy strides of trained soldiers, their tanned, hard faces lifted as they watched the trail and the far peaks lying stark against the sky beyond.

Right here, Field knew, he had an excellent chance to learn a good deal about the group he would meet above at the post. This detail had been personally picked by Grossner to make the trip in to the battalion base. That fact alone marked them either as exceptionally good soldiers or favorites of the sergeant. A chance to break the monotony of the life in the bleak, small blockhouse and get down into the town with the supply train meant a lot to every man at Ait-Bakla.

These men walked confidently beside the laden mules. They carried their rifle slung from their shoulders, and one big fellow towards the rear held an automatic-gun in the crook of his arm. He caught Field's glance and gave him an openly mocking grin, said a short sentence in the harsh German *patois* of the Legion to the others.

They all stared at him then, their expressions sombre and savage. The big man with the automatic-gun spoke again, this time to Field. "Watch the trail, sergeant. Maybe you won't see it so well, coming down."

A SLIGHT, swift chill ran along the back of Field's neck and spine. He could remember off-hand the names of half a dozen noncoms who were unpopular with their men and had lost their lives along some mountain trail like this. It was all too



easy to slip and fall, go crashing down over the trail edge onto the sharp rocks in some gorge below.

On the records, it would be listed as an unforeseen accident which no one could explain, and soon forgotten by everybody except the men who knew how it had happened, but never voiced their knowledge aloud. . . .

He kicked the sides of his mule and started the beast into a trot, pulled up abreast of Grossner. It might be better for the time being, he thought, to stay as close as he could to the sergeant. "It's pretty country like this in the Spring," Grossner said. "For about a month after the snow is off, and before the sun—"

"Sure," Field broke in on him. "I just got through serving a year over in the Tinin-Bazig sector. And I was here with the mobile group. But who's the big, blond guy you got back there with the auto-gun?"

Grossner shifted in the saddle and laughed. "You go to work fast, hey?" he said. "That's Yebrof, the crazy Russian. He's the best auto-gunner in the outfit. The guy is smart enough to go up for corporal or sergeant, but he'll drink anything he can lay his hands on and discipline is a laugh to him. He runs all over this mountain like a goat.

"Last Fall, he found some woman over in the Chleuh village whose man had been killed fighting against the mobile group. He started to chase after her. He used to duck from the post at night and meet her out in the snow somewhere.

"I caught him one night and gave him plenty, and he stopped. But he's a fine fisherman and these brooks are full of trout. All Spring, he'll be bringing in big batches of them for us. So I put him in the detail this time, and if he—"

Reports of shots came rapidly, locked together in a crash of sound. Field and Grossner ducked and slid simultaneously from their mules. Beside the trail, close to Field as he crouched, was a liveoak tree. He could see clearly the ragged puncture in the bark where one of the four or five bullets of the volley had struck.

He swung around, his knees gathered under him, the pistol up in his hand. Grossner was the only man in his vision. The rest of the detail were masked from him by the jutting shoulder of rock behind in the trail. Then he saw Yebrof—and whipped his pistol high to cover the man.

The Russian had left the trail, clambered somehow up onto the jutting rock wall above. His big body was bent beside a scrub juniper tree and the flaring noon sun brought a glint of light from his blue eyes and the dark barrel of the automatic-gun.

Without warning, the automatic-gun threshed livid jets of flame as he sent a fusillade along the valley. He fired perhaps fifteen rounds before he stopped the gun and called down to Grossner: "Nothing doing. I thought I saw a guy on the next slope. But if I did, he's gone now."

Grossner cursed in German and in French. "Get down off there, you thick slob!" he barked. "Tell the others to bring the mules along. If you fire again without asking me, I'll drill you!" Then he wheeled, staring at Field.

FIELD had risen nearly erect, stood before the liveoak tree. He had taken his sharp-bladed knife from his pocket and was quietly and expertly working out the bullet in the tree trunk. "Down!" Grossner called at him. "Get down, man! You can be seen there all along the valley."



"I know that," Field said, still working at the imbedded bullet. "But maybe this will tell me a lot when I get it out."

"Like hell," Grossner said flatly, pulling the carbine strap tighter about his wrist. "You can figure that blast was meant for you, not for me. If any guy up in this country wanted to knock me off, he could have done it a lot easier than this most any time in the last couple of months. Come on. We're going out of here."

Field did not bother to answer him. It was as the major had told him down at headquarters this morning: Grossner was a man who would never be noted for his powers of logic and deduction. Whoever had directed that volley of shots had meant it for Grossner, not for him. Just by chance he had been close to Grossner when the attempt was made. Obviously, Grossner was the man wanted.

The old German sergeant was returning to Ait-Bakla after making a personal, detailed report of the strange events at the post. Grossner knew this country and every man at the post. He was the logical man to be put out of the way by anybody here who feared discovery.

To kill Field would mean little or nothing, and the hidden sniper must have known that. His death would have the effect of bringing a new and a far larger and more complete investigation of this sector.

Patrols led from headquarters would comb the mountainside and gorges from end to end, eventually and without fail discover the reasons for the disappearance of the missing men. Grossner's death would deepen the mystery; his own would hasten its solution.

Still, Field told himself, to get killed

here was no part of his own plan. He wanted to break this case now more than he had wished to do anything for a long time. This sudden bit of action simply heightened his desire. He brought the bullet clear from the hole he had made about it in the bark, tied the heavily scored pellet in the end of his handkerchief and put the handkerchief in his pocket.

Later on, at the post, he would examine that closely. It was his belief now that almost without doubt it came from Yebrof's automatic-gun. At the post he would find time to examine that gun and every piece like it in the detachment's armament.

He looked aside at Grossner as he started to remount his mule. "All right," he said. "Let's see Ait-Bakla."

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## CHAPTER II

### Ait-Bakla

THE POST at Ait-Bakla was like a hundred others he had seen in this country of the High Atlas range. It was made of roughly blocked stone, with a few rusty strands of barb-wire stretched on the slope outside and a small watch-tower above the bastions topping the thick walls. Field entered through the gate after Grossner, dismounted in the courtyard beside the white-washed stone emblem of the Legion that the men of the detachment had fashioned there. "A nice-looking job," he told Grossner. "Have you got a place where I can bunk alone for a day or so?"

"Over here," Grossner said. "There's a spare room you can have all to yourself. Do you want to eat now? The cook has got chow ready and the men are coming in from the work details."

"Right away," Field said. "Tell your



corporals I want to see each man and look over his record book after chow. Send Yebrof in first, with that gun he had this morning."

Grossner's eyes widened. "You don't think the big guy tossed those shots at us on the trail?" he muttered.

"Let me answer that later," Field said. "I'm not saying anything—now."

Their picks, shovels and axes over their shoulders, the men of the various work details were swarming through the gate. They sang and yelled at each other and the cook. From the door of the barracks-room the suddenly released pack of dogs owned by the men leapt forth barking towards their masters. The beasts were all of the Chleuh breed of scrawny mongrels, Field noticed. But each one of them wore about his neck a bright collar made from old food tins and worked intricately with the Legion device and the owners' regimental and company numbers.

He walked through them and they jumped sniffing at his legs as he went across the courtyard with Grossner to the sergeant's quarters for supper.

The room Grossner furnished for him after the meal was small and dark, although there was a fireplace at the back and the rough furniture was sound. Grossner's orderly had built a big fire and put a lantern on the table. By their combined light, Field made a close scrutiny of the bullet he had taken from the liveoak tree and of the two other automatic-guns in the post's armament. Grossner had brought him the pair of guns a few minutes ago here, and asked if he wished to study also the gun Yebrof had carried with the supply party. He had cursed and stamped from the room when Field had told him Yebrof was to bring the third gun.

The bullet he had reclaimed, Field

found at once, was of the regular Legion issue supply for the standard Chatelleraut automatic-gun. He pitched the thing out before him onto the table as a knock jarred the door. "Come in," he said quietly, sitting back in the chair.

Yebrof entered stooping, carrying in his hand the automatic-gun he had used that morning. "The *chef* says you want to see me and this piece," he said huskily, his blue eyes hard.

Field stretched out his hand for the gun, expertly took it apart, held the barrel and firing mechanism close to the light. "You've cleaned this since you got back to the post, soldier," he said. "Weren't you pretty quick about that?"

Yebrof stood stiffly in the position of attention. His wide lips drew back and he cursed shortly. "Of course I did, sergeant. That's the prettiest little piece the Legion has. Some of these other guys knock them around. Not me. . . ." Suddenly, he smiled. "What are you trying to prove, this way? You'd have to make a microscopic investigation and all sorts of ballistics tests to prove that bullet there came from any of these three guns. Any guy in the post knows that."

Field tapped his wide tunic pocket lightly. "I've got a little microscope," he said. "I kind of fool around with one from time to time. It's an old habit of mine. What do you know about the disappearance of those four guys from here, Yebrof?"

"Nothing more than anybody else in the post. They just drifted off one by one, over a period of about three months, and didn't come back. You want their names?"

"I know their names; Grossner gave me their record books at chow. How about you? What's your record?"



The big Russian flipped his record book down onto the table. "Is that enough?"

"No," Field said, looking up from the pages. "I hear you're quite a fisherman, and quite a guy with the women over in the Chleuh village across the valley."

YEBROF grinned quickly. "That's pretty much right. . . . Before I hit the Legion, back in Russia, I was in a *sotnia* of Don Cossacks with Wrangel's army. Then I did a little time in the Spanish Foreign Regiment as a sub-lieutenant."

"Why did you get out of there?"

"Because they kept me in an infantry outfit instead of the cavalry, and the pay was rotten. I deserted."

"I guessed that," Field said. "Go to the door and call Sergeant Grossner, then stand over there."

Grossner was red-faced and sullen when he entered. "I thought you were running this yourself," he said.

"I am," Field said. "I want you here to check on some of the answers I get. Send in your corporals, will you?"

The first corporal was a bow-legged Bavarian named Moegen who had a double row of ribbons across his tunic and a sour wine breath. Field was quick with him, sent him back to his duties outside. The second man wearing the twin green stripes of a corporal entered with a strut and gave Field a flourishing salute.

"Yakim," he said; "first name Has-had. Corporal for three years, first class private for six. Three citations—"

"Fine," Field said sharply. Corporal Yakim was a stocky and handsome man with the swarthy skin of his Turkish blood. He wore an excellently cut uniform and a wide mustache with waxed ends. He had the bearing and

the assurance of the competent and ambitious noncom. "What do you know about the missing men?" Field asked him.

Yakim gave a sidewise glance over his shoulder towards Yebrof, silent and rigid in the corner. "Excuse me, sergeant," he said. "But what I've got to tell you I don't want to say in front of that man."

"Go on," Field commanded. "What don't you want Yebrof to hear?"

The Turk made a little shrugging gesture with one shoulder and stared over Field's head at Grossner. "Maybe it doesn't amount to much anyhow, sergeant. But when three of those four guys disappeared, Yebrof was out of the post. The fourth fellow drifted out in broad daylight, away from the wood detail."

"Yebrof was on the wood detail, too, you mean?"

"That's right, sergeant. He was in charge of it. Corporal Moegen was supposed to have it, but he got a bum foot. So Yebrof, because he was a good gunner—" Yakim's voice broke as he swerved. The strapping Russian had come charging from the corner. All the blood had gone out of his face, and his skin was transparently pale with rage. He rushed Yakim, his huge fists raised and flailing.

His second blow caught the Turkish corporal flat on the side of the jaw, sent the man hurling against the wall. Then Field and Grossner were in between the pair and Grossner was shoving the wild-faced Russian back.

Field helped pull the corporal to his feet. A dark stain from the blow was along the man's jaw, and his small eyes were fierce with rage. Then, though, he smiled at Field. "It's all right," he said. "I can understand why he socked me, sergeant. He thinks I'm trying to



blame him for all that. But most any other guy in the post will tell you the same thing."

Grossner had turned cursing. "This is the hell of a way to run an investigation," he snapped at Field. "These two fellows are about the best soldiers I got, but they just don't like each other. Can't you talk to them alone?"

FIELD nodded his head at Yakim. "That will do for now, corporal.

Thank you." After the Turk had saluted and gone out through the door, Field stared at the Russian. "I don't know," he said, "whether or not I'll stick you in cells for that, soldier. Smacking a corporal is never funny. Why did you do it?"

Yebrof spoke harshly and with difficulty. "The *chef* here just told you," he said. "I never did get along well with that Turkish slob, or any Turk. Yakim's always been riding me since I was assigned here. He fishes the same trout pools I do down in the stream in the valley. I caught him once putting dynamite in a pool and blasting to hell all the fish for miles."

"The lad is right about that," Grossner muttered. "Yakim is a guy who puts a little science in his fishing. . . ."

"You want to put this man in cells for striking a corporal?" Field asked.

"No," Grossner said. "Yakim will pay him off for that in his own way."

"All right." Field pointed to the door. "Get out of here, Yebrof."

The Russian slammed the door so hard bits of cement dropped down from the chinks in the stone walls of the room. Grossner laughed with his head back. "What a boy, hey? The real business between him and Yakim is something you haven't heard yet. Yakim went over to the Chleuh village and started to play around with

the woman Yebrof had lined up before I caught him. On his own time, though, and when he was free from duty."

"You think Yakim is a pretty good soldier?" Field said.

"Pretty damn' good. He's smart and he's going right on up. He laid out and built about half of this post. He's in charge of all the masonry work, and he keeps the boys busy."

Field bent to write some notes swiftly on a sheet of paper. "All right," he said. "Send the others in."

The fire had burned down to a bed of pale ashes and Grossner sat nervously picking his ear in the corner when Field was through. "What does it all add up to?" Grossner snapped as the last man closed the door.

"Not much," Field admitted slowly. "One of your men, a Wurtemberger named Mannach, disappeared about three months ago. His record was good, and so was Biozzi's, the next guy who went after him. Luen, who was a Belgian with a fairly bad record, was the third, about two weeks later. The final fellow, Antigue, went right after Luen, the next week.

"It seems that none of them were buddies here in the post.

"And there's nothing to indicate that they knew each other before they came to the Legion, or what happened to them then had part in what happened here. There are just two small facts about them that are interesting."

"Sure," Grossner said. "They're all missing, but they were all old soldiers who liked the Legion and this place."

Field shook his head. "No," he said. "Most of the guys you have here are old soldiers. But those four were the only ones who took their gear and went down to the stream to wash it. That's a native trick, and one Legionnaires don't use much."



THE OLD sergeant laughed at him. "I've seen hundreds of old-timers do that here in Morocco," he said. "It's a trick they pick up from the Chleuh women, washing out their clothes on the stones. What the hell; it's only a half mile walk down to the stream."

"Still," Field said, "the missing men all did it. . . ." He pushed back his chair and stood.

"Anything more you want of me?" Grossner asked. "It's my turn to take over the guard on the wall."

"Go ahead," Field told him. "If you want me to relieve you, call me later. I think I'm getting some of this figured out now."

Grossner gave him an odd stare as he stood in the doorway. "You got the idea those guys were murdered," he said.

"At least I got the idea they didn't sprout wings and fly out of here," Field said sharply, and turned to rebuild the fire.

He was almost dozing in the chair, his little microscope set up before him over the bullet he had retrieved, in the instant he heard the confused sounds outside. He thrust the microscope aside, was up on his feet and reaching for his belt and pistol as Corporal Moegen opened the door. The little noncom was very excited and his mouth twitched as he spoke. "Quick," he said. "Quick, please, sergeant. The *chef*—Grossner—is dead!"

### CHAPTER III

Marcel Antigüe

GROSSNER had been standing in the north bastion, at the foot of the watch-tower. Now he slumped back against the parapet, his long overcoat splattered with blood, his

eyes and twisted face blank with death. His mouth was gaping wide and the muzzle of the rifle still clenched in one hand was wet with saliva. Field did not bother to pull off the man's kepi or turn the body over; the whole top and back of the head had been blown away, he knew.

"I found him just like this, sergeant," Moegen mumbled. "I was across on the other bastion when I heard the explosion. I ran over right away, then down to you."

"Bring him down to my room," Field said. "Carry him carefully. Where did the sergeant get this rifle?"

"From the gun-rack in the barracks-room. He always took a rifle when he stood guard."

With a handkerchief about his fingers Field was freeing the rifle from the clenched grip. He stood it beside him against the parapet. Men in their drawers and shirts were out in the courtyard below now, and he distinguished Yakim, called the Turk to him. "Send up a flare, Yakim," he said. "I want to take a look over the wall."

The flare burned high, trembling beneath its little parachute and sending a whitish green glare over the exposed slopes outside the walls. The slopes were absolutely empty; there was no sign of anyone moving there. Field went down into the courtyard and checked the men individually, Moegen and Yakim behind him.

They were all present, and, except for the members of the guard, had obviously just come from deep sleep. "Get back to bed," he ordered them.

They started to shuffle off, but one man in the back of the crowd asked hoarsely, "Was it a suicide, sergeant? Did the *chef* do the job for himself?"

"It looks like it," he said, the rage at his own carelessness deep and bitter in



him. He entered his room alone with the rifle in his hand, closed and bolted the door after him. Grossner's body was stretched awkwardly across the bunk and he bent to examine the horrible wound.

Most of the cranial bone structure had been shattered by the impact of the bullet released within the mouth. But on the rear of the skull, close to the ear, he found a small, ridged bruise. That had been made with considerable force and by some blunt and heavy implement.

Grossner could not have struck himself in such a manner when he fell back against the parapet with the bullet through his brain. Some other man had delivered that blow.

Cursing in a whispering voice, Field moved back and lifted the rifle he had found in Grossner's hands. The weapon had been recently fired; one cartridge was exploded in the chamber, and obviously it had gone through Grossner's brain. Then on the walnut wood of the stock small and the steel of the trigger guard and barrel Field found the fingerprints he sought. Some of them, most of them, belonged to the dead sergeant. The rest were blurred and quite indistinct, but certainly those of some other man.

Field lowered the rifle to the table and lit a cigarette. He ran his hands over his aching eyes and temples as he thought of all the equipment and scientific knowledge which had once been at his command in Manhattan police headquarters. He laughed at the thought, but the laughter did not drive away the nostalgic aching desire which suddenly filled him.

For a time he shut his eyes and believed he saw and heard and smelled New York, drove through the shattering gray sheets of a Winter rain

along Broadway, the familiar sting of carbon monoxide, steam and wet macadam in his nostrils, the whining scream of the big Homicide Squad car in his ears.

He opened his eyes and looked at the smoldering cigarette he had perched on the edge of the table. He ground it out and got to his feet. "Come on," he told himself aloud. "You're going to break this one wide open—with no more than you got now. When you've done that, why then—"

He shook his head and cursed again, looked towards the dead man on the bunk. "They'll have me where that guy is now, unless I break it," he finished, and softly opened the door.

HE STOOD for an instant flat against the wall in the courtyard.

Above on the wall he could hear the tread of the sentries and the men's murmured exchanges to each other. A shrill and cold wind blew from the North in this hour before dawn, and a soggy mist lay low in over the post.

Field walked with measured strides to the far side of the courtyard. The little mule shed was there and the muffled stamping and whinnying of the beasts guided him to it.

He found the edge of the sheet steel roof with his hands, pulled himself up. The wall of the watch-tower abutted from the shed wall and he climbed the rough stone with quick movements, gained the ladder leading to the top.

A canvas-hooded heavy duty machine-gun and long wooden cases of ammunition for it were on the tower, and that was all. He began to breathe more freely again; he had not been certain if there was a sentry stationed in the tower.

He knelt and stripped off his strong woolen wrap puttees. He knotted them



and made one end fast to the machine-gun tripod. Then he shed his boots and tied them about his neck, slid over the wall and down the rope his puttees made.

He put his boots back on when he was on the ground, went along beside the wall there on his hands and knees. His spread fingers searched and smoothed over every inch of ground as he moved. He sought the marks made here by the man who had killed Grossner, the marks he had seen from the wall in the light of the flare.

The marks were small and shallow, widely-spaced. From the texture of their indentations in the soft soil and the length and width of the marks he knew that they had been made by a man wearing native Chleuh sandals. He turned and followed them out from the wall. They swung in a wide slant down the slope, then came back, to that place in the wall where he had descended. He laughed silently then. The man who had killed Grossner was a Legionnaire, was in the post right now.

Field kept awake for almost an hour more, after he returned over the wall into the post. He smoked cigarettes and recast in his mind the way in which Grossner had been killed. The old German had first been stunned by that blow behind the ear, delivered probably by a stone from a slingshot of native construction.

The killer had obviously decided to work from outside the wall because of the fact that the other sentries would have a firm belief in Grossner's ability to keep a sharp lookout himself. That part of the wall would be left alone except for Grossner's vigil.

For the killer to attempt to mount the bastions from inside the post would be far too dangerous. At any moment he might be trapped by someone below

in the courtyard or an alert sentry standing near the bastion ladders. Once Grossner had been struck and stunned by the slingshot stone, it was no difficult task for the killer to clamber up the wall from the outside, murder the sergeant with his own gun.

Only that small bruise on the dead man's skull and those faint tracks outside which would disappear from the soil before dawn had given any proof that the death was not suicidal.

FIELD YAWNED until his jaws cracked, remembering that two nights ago he had been drunk and sleepless, and in this night just past been far more busy if sober. He stretched his head upon his arms and dozed. When he awoke sunlight was in the doorway and the orderly stood beside him with a cup of coffee.

"Six o'clock, *chef*," the orderly said. "The corporals are waiting outside for their orders."

"Send them in," Field said, staring up heavy-eyed.

Moegen and Yakim saluted him at the regulation distance, their glances breaking away to Grossner's body. "You're going to prepare him for burial," Field told the little corporal. "Dress him in his best uniform and put him in his sleeping bag." He rose and gestured to the Turk. "Come on with me, Yakim. I'm going to call battalion headquarters, and I want you to put the call through for me."

Yakim established the connection swiftly, stood aside as Field talked with the major. "Suicide, sir," Field said clearly into the phone. "Sergeant Grossner killed himself last night shortly after two o'clock. Nothing more to report now."

The major's voice crackled back over the wire at him, and Field nodded



absently, repeating, "Yes, sir," before he hung up. He moved quickly from the instrument to the door of what had been Grossner's room. The men were clustered thickly there, craning to listen, and he could see Yebrof's haggard, pale face above the others.

"Get them going now," Field snapped at the Turk. "Send them out on the details Grossner usually assigns. The major says he will have a Spahi detail in this afternoon to take the body down. Move! I want every man except the cooks out of the post until chow-time."

The men of the details formed slowly and went straggling through the gate. Big Yebrof was one of the last and stepped out of line to come over to Field. "Listen, *chef*," he began, "if that was suicide last night—"

"You fool!" Field cracked at him. "I listened to enough from you yesterday. You're lucky you're not in the 'box' right now."

Yebrof nodded silently, hefted his axe higher on his shoulder and fell back into line.

For a while Field sat on the edge of the lime-whitened Legion emblem in the courtyard, watching the post dogs scratch at fleas and root up old bones. One clumsy-footed mongrel came close to him tentatively and at last rested his muzzle on his knee. Field looked down and caught his fingers about the dog's collar. It was old, badly worn and the usual bright plate shabby and discolored. He was forced to lean close to read the lettering on the collar and make out the name—*Marcel Antigüe*.

He straightened and released the dog from him. Antigüe was one of the four missing men, the last to go. The fellow was a cautious and thrifty Swiss, an old Legionnaire with a lot of pride, according to the men here now.

Antigüe was not the kind to have a shabby collar for his dog, instead would have the best. And he had only been missing two weeks; this collar could not have tarnished and all but fallen apart in that length of time.

Field swung into the barracks-room. The bunks of the missing men had been stripped clean since their disappearance and all their personal gear sent by Grossner down to headquarters. But over one of them Field found Antigüe's initials worked in curling script, pulled aside the thing and went to his hands and knees.

HE WORKED at the hard-packed earth of the floor with his knife blade. He came upon what he sought after about twenty minutes. It was what had been a new collar when Antigüe left it there, and the plate was made of soft, hand-worked gold. Beside the collar, in a rusty food tin, were six or seven ounces of loose gold dust.

"All of them, all four of the missing men," Field whispered aloud, "used to go down to the river to wash their clothes. . . ." He shoved the dirt back over the objects, pulled the bunk in place. It was an old story in Morocco, he remembered, that there was alluvial gold in some of these mountain streams.

"Perhaps in the beginning the four had gone there to wash their clothes, but then found gold. And both Yebrof and the corporal, Yakim, were men who spent a lot of time along the stream. Trout fishing was their explanation. "Trout fishing, hell!" Field husked. "If they didn't find gold they found the four boys who were working it. . . ."

He went at a jog trot through the gate, his big pistol bumping at his hip. One of the two details was below on



the slope, breaking and lugging stone to be used to repair the walls. That was Yakim's detail, Field thought, and slowed to a walk. The men blinked up at him and stopped working when he stopped beside them. "Where's the corporal?" he asked. "Yakim?"

One of the men spat and scratched his naked chest. "He went out of here about ten minutes ago, sergeant. He said he wanted some dynamite from the post to do a little blasting."

Field kept his hands quiet on his pistol belt, and his voice was level as he spoke. "Where's Moegen's detail—the guys cutting wood?"

"You'll find them down the slope there, in the pine woods. Go on a couple of hundred yards and you'll hear the axes. Anything wrong, sergeant?"

"No," Field said, moving on down the slope. "Everything's fine . . ."

He found the wood detail inside the fragrant green shade of the great pine trees. Corporal Moegen sat on the lopped trunk of a tree slowly filling his tin-lidded pipe. He jumped up and hid the pipe at his side as he saw Field. "I'm looking for Yakim," Field told him. "I thought he might have drifted down here for a moment."

Moegen frowned and shoved his kepi back. Field was no longer looking at him, was watching the men of the detail. "Yebrof," Field said, "went out with this detail. Where is he?"

"Out behind the others there, sergeant. *Hey, Yebrof!*"

But Field was already going on down the hill, running as fast as he could now. The stream clashed and roiled between big, dun-colored bowlders in the steep valley bed. Juniper and spruce and liveoak grew close, and he could not see more than a few feet ahead as he worked along its banks

with the current. He went with care and very quietly, carrying his pistol free from the holster. The man, he told himself, who had been expert and quiet enough to kill Grossner last night would make little or no sound here.

He scrambled up over a moss-sided bowlder where the stream widened to a sandy shallows when he saw the little splotch of white. He came close, bent and touched it. His breathing quickened and he grinned.

The stuff was quick lime, had dropped from the corner of a torn sack as the man carrying it had climbed over this bowlder.

HE needed both hands to shinny to the top of the bowlder and thrust his pistol into his pocket. Right on the other side, beneath the spread of a spruce branch, he came upon Yebrof. The big Russian was waiting for him, his feet set, the double-edged wood-axe poised. "Toss me the pistol, sergeant," he said. "I don't want to kill you, but I'm not going to military prison and I'm heading out of here now."

Field rested motionless, his eyes quite narrow. "Where are you headed for?" he asked softly. "Why are you pulling out? You aren't the guy who dropped that bit of lime back there."

"No. Yakim was the guy who did that. But I'm going to get Yakim. I finally know where to find him now. Give me the pistol, sergeant!"

Field grinned at him. "I'll shoot you before you can split my brains with that axe, soldier. Maybe you'd get me then, but you'd never find your Turk. Where is he? I want him as much as you do."

The big man stood panting and uncertain for a second. "I'm not sure," he whispered. "Somewhere along this



stream, at the place where he's put the gold he took from those poor slob."

Field's hand had gone to his pocket, clamped on the automatic. "I figured," he said, "you'd know that. But I figure too that you helped kill the four and grab their gold."

A strange and bleak smile came to Yebrof's face. "No," he said. "All I ever found here was trout. But, a month back, I found Yakim watching Antigie, and then I began to understand. Antigie used to go out to the mule-shed at the post after supper and work at the forge there. And Yakim used to follow him."

"I found," Field said, "the collar Antigie worked for his dog. The one he worked in gold. But if you knew about that, why didn't you tell Grossner?"

"I did, last night," the big man murmured. "I went up on the wall and told him what I thought. I told Grossner that I thought Yakim was the guy who fired those shots at you on the trail yesterday."

"You told Grossner that, instead of me."

"Sure. Because you seemed to suspect me instead of Yakim. What the hell, you wouldn't even listen to me this morning, when I tried to tell you Grossner's death wasn't any suicide."

"Because I already knew it wasn't," Field said. "And because I suspected Yakim of doing the job. But I couldn't tell you that this morning, and I still wanted Yakim to think I didn't know Grossner was murdered."

"Yakim was the one who fired at Grossner and me on the trail yesterday. He used one of the other auto-guns from the post, and I found fresh finger and powder marks on the gun. All I've been waiting for is to have Yakim move so I could get him."

"And me, too, hey?" Yebrof grunted.

"That's right, soldier. But I'm taking fewer chances now. I didn't figure Yakim was tough enough to knock off Grossner right in the post. I've got to catch him now and prove the job on him."

"Listen," Yebrof began, "if you think you're going to send me back—"

Field cursed him briefly. "Shut up," he commanded. "Come on. But remember I want this guy alive. . . ." He shoved past the Russian, went crouching forward under the scraping tree boughs. Beyond, where the river shelved into a high-walled gorge and the water rolled white spume, Field found his second trace.

A SMALL branch had been broken back on a tree, and beside it the moss dislodged under a swiftly moving heel. Field went flat there and pulled the Russian down next to him. From ahead in the thick underbrush on the steep bank Field could hear the sounds of a pick and then a spade, then catch the sharp odor of fresh quicklime. The sounds ceased. There was only the noise of the rushing stream.

Field lifted erect very gradually, parted the leaves with his left hand. Yakim was not a hundred feet from him, hunkered with a Lebel rifle raised at his hip. "I've got you, Yakim," Field called. "Put down the gun."

The Turk fired instantly as rapidly as he could pull the trigger. Bits of torn leaves and twigs stung Field's eyes; he fired almost blindly, throwing the bullets from the big automatic in a swift burst.

A thick, half audible curse came from where Yebrof stood. The Russian had been struck in the shoulder by



one of Yakim's bullets. He had dropped the axe, sagged to his knees with his hands clamped over the wound. "Stay here," Field whispered to him, then went forward after Yakim.

The Turk was wounded, could only move slowly. But he still used his rifle with energy and speed. Field was forced to circle around, come upon him from behind. Yakim wheeled and battered at him with the clubbed rifle. Reaching in, Field hit him hard across the side of the skull with the pistol barrel.

Yakim let the rifle slide from his hands; his knees gave and he dropped down. One of Field's first shots had torn his thigh and blood streaked his trousers. Field kicked the rifle away into the deep, freshly opened pit in the bank beyond.

Briefly, Field noted the bulging green sheepskin sacks in the pit, and the stench of rotting human flesh. "You're not fast enough," he said to Yakim. "Even in getting rid of your dead and your gold."

The Turk stared at him with eyes that were no longer quite sane. "So?" he asked hoarsely.

"So," Field said, "you're going to go back to face a military court for killing Grossner, and whoever that poor guy is there in the pit. I've got that on you right now. Where did you leave the others?"

"I got all four of them separately," Yakim said in a kind of high, feverish voice.

"With that same big sling-shot you used to kill Grossner."

Yakim almost laughed. "Did you think I was going to wake up the whole damn' valley and the post by shooting them? I kicked their bodies in the river here, and let them float on down.

You or anybody else won't find them until Summer when the river lowers."

"But you had to hurry the job with Antigie," Field said. "You knew Yebrof and Grossner were suspicious of you then."

"To hell with that pair of donkeys!" Yakim mumbled. "Antigie was watching me himself. It took me nearly all one night before I could get him. He sneaked out from the post and down here to see if the gold was still all right. He was a tougher and a quicker guy than all the others. I was afraid to throw him in the river, because the water was starting to go down. So I stuck him in the hole there, with the gold.

"And came down today with a few pounds of quick lime to get rid of him and the stink before Grossner or I got wise. Didn't you figure Grossner or Yebrof, or a guy like me would catch you in time?"

THE Turk twitched with the pain of his wounded leg and reared part erect. "I figured," he said, "that Grossner would take that transfer to the Tonkin and get out of here. I planned to pull out next week, anyhow, with some of the natives helping me through. But Yebrof—"

Yakim lashed his body swiftly side-wise and up, one hand catching Field a flat blow in the throat, the other bringing the long native knife from the back of his belt. He lunged past Field with a slashing sweep of the knife, crashed into the brush hobbling nearly upright.

Field brought the automatic level, then lowered it. "Yebrof!" he called. "Here's your man!"

Yebrof was slowly advancing. He still held the wide Legion wood axe. He lifted it and light flicked from the



double blades. With three more paces he and Yakim met. His downward blow found Yakim's skull and the man toppled heavily backward into the stream.

Field had little breath left as he climbed the last of the slope back to the post. It was hard for him to smile, to bring his glance to the staggering Russian at his side. "There it is," he said. "You going to stick with it now?"

"Sure." Yebrof grinned. "All the time. How about you?"

Field answered slowly. "I'm going back to my old job in New York," he said. "Even if I have to begin as a cop beating the pavement. This bit of stuff started me off again, and the business is in my blood deep. That's where I belong, and that's where I'm headed for as soon as I finish my hitch here."

"The major and the colonel will help you with that," Yebrof said. "But I'm going to be real happy here now. I never knew an axe was good for much until this morning. . . ."

## COMING NEXT WEEK

### DOUBLE GAMBLE

*A Novelette of the Gambling Rackets by*

**ROGER TORREY**

Undercover Agent Flynn plays the most dangerous game in the world—pitting warring gangsters at each other!



### THE MURDEROUS MR. COON

*A Surprising Mystery Novelette by*

**RICHARD SALE**

"I'll kill them," the mild-looking Mr. Coon promised lightly, "and you can try to catch me at it!"



**EDWARD PARRISH WARE**

**SAPPER**

**EDGAR FRANKLIN**

**JOHN KOBLER**

**FRED MacISAAC**

*And Others!*

## DETECTIVE FICTION WEEKLY



# A Left-Handed Conviction

By  
JAMES W.  
BOOTH



INTO the War Department, at Washington, D. C., there came one day ten years ago a former United States soldier, named William Turner, who had served in the Philippines and had been honorably discharged there, and who claimed he had lost the \$212 Government voucher, which had been issued to him at the time.

His record was checked and it was found that what he said was apparently the truth, for there was no record of the voucher ever having been cashed. Accordingly a duplicate voucher was issued to him, but first, as is the custom, he was required to give bond to insure the genuineness of his claim.

Seven years went by, and then a native storekeeper in the Philippines forwarded the original voucher to Washington for payment. He had cashed it for a soldier he believed to be Turner, although he had not seen him indorse the paper, and then had misplaced it.

It had only now come to his attention again.

Turner denied that the signature on the original voucher was his, and so, in time, this voucher, along with the

duplicate and the bond, found its way to the attention of Bert C. Farrar, Examiner of Questioned Documents of the U. S. Treasury Department, and the final authority on signatures for the Treasurer of the United States.

With minute care, Farrar examined the three signatures under his microscope. He saw that the one on the original warrant was strikingly different from the other two. He noticed that the up-strokes were shaded and that the "T" of Turner was crossed from right to left. Still, as he pondered the problem, he could not drive the idea from his mind that Turner had written all three of them.

But how he could have done so and had the first signature so vastly different from the other two, he could not explain, unless—

He summoned a United States Secret Service operative and gave him careful instructions before he sent him out to interview Turner again.

"Remember," he told him, "everything depends upon Turner's reaction to that one thing you are to ask him to do, and how he does it."

Turner was located in the West,



"It is about that warrant matter," the operative told him. "They want some more specimens of your signature."

"Sure. Glad to help you," the former soldier said, as he executed several of them.

The operative compared them with those on the unquestioned documents. They were identical.

"It's mighty strange about that other warrant," Turner said. "I wonder who signed it and cashed it."

"I wonder, too," the Secret Service man answered. "And I think I know how we might find out."

Turner looked directly and quizzically at him.

"How?" he asked.

"If you will sign your name with your left hand."

It was the question Farrar had told the Secret Service man to ask.

Turner shrugged. "What's the use," he said. "You've got me!"

Left-handed writing is easily detected. The left-handed writer, with his pen above his work, shades his upstrokes, as those on the original voucher were shaded, and crosses his "T" from right to left instead of the other way. Farrar knew this, of course, and knew therefore that if Turner had endorsed the first voucher it was with his left hand.

His hunch worked, and the former soldier went to jail.

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## *The Greatest of All Crimes at Sea*

**M**UTINY is the greatest of all maritime crimes. The law of the ocean makes the master of a vessel supreme, and there is no one to question his will. Redress may be sought in port, but at sea the word of the captain is the only law. In the Navy, in addition to the authority which all masters of ships enjoy, the captain, as a commissioned officer, has the right to the unquestioning obedience of the men under him.

The history of the American navy is singularly free from attempts to overthrow this double authority, although it has not been found necessary to maintain it by the iron, merciless discipline familiar to other nations. There have been numerous cases of petty insubordination and of bad temper, but only once was a real mutiny planned. Philip Spencer, the son of a Secretary of War, plotted to become a pirate and turn the United States clipper brig of war, Somers, into a pirate ship. But Spencer and two fellow-conspirators paid with their lives for the mutiny.

—*Spears Kennedy.*



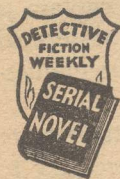


# The Murder Special



"Get in!" snarled Mike's guardian. "In ten minutes, you'll be feeding the fish!"

***Alive, John Jeffords Was Worth Millions; Dead, He Is Still Worth Murder!***



By FRED  
MacISAAC

*Author of "Mister Nobody," "The Mogul Murders," etc.*

## WHAT HAS HAPPENED—

AFTER serving an eighteen-year sentence for murder in San Quentin Penitentiary, Tom Garson is released. In New York, John Jeffords, president of Jeffords General Utilities—formerly Garson's partner in South Seas blackbirding exploits, and because of whose testimony Garson was convicted—knows his former associate will be seeking vengeance and decides to go into hiding at his lodge in the Adirondacks.

On the private car to Plattsburg are Jeffords, his wife, his daughter Barbara, and his three younger children. Mat Patterson, a society youngster in love with

Barbara, accompanies them, as well as Mike Morrison, a reporter who senses a big story in the Jeffords mystery, and Papeeta Pope, who, through young Patterson's influence, has been engaged as Barbara's personal maid.

At Plattsburg, Blakely, Jeffords' confidential associate, boards the train and discovers that the multimillionaire is dead. Police learn shortly that the death is murder.

Tom Garson, whom Mat Patterson had seen on the Albany station platform, now arrives in Plattsburg. He meets Papeeta, recognizes her as his long-lost daughter. Knowing that Patterson's testimony against him might be damning, Garson takes his daughter to the abandoned Jeffords lodge, kidnaps Mat and has him brought there too.

Papeeta frees Mat, hides him in her room. Meanwhile Monk Moscini, a mobster whose gang was hired by Garson, takes

**This story began in Detective Fiction Weekly for February 20**



control of the situation and threatens to turn Garson over to the law unless the ex-convict pays him a fortune as hush money.

During this time, Mike Morrison, with the true newspaperman's instinct, has figured out Garson's motives. He arrives at the Jeffords estate at night, kills one of Moscini's guards, and get inside the grounds. He overhears two hoods mention a girl in a guest house, and peering in, he is completely astounded. He was gazing at Barbara Jeffords, a prisoner!

## CHAPTER XXIII

### In the Toils

HER pretty little nose was swollen, her eyes were red from weeping, she was pale as a sheet, there was blood on her upper lip but it was Miss Jeffords.

Yet how could she be here? Mike Morrison had left her behind him in Plattsburg this morning—had talked with her only a couple of hours before he started for the mountains. Of course, she owned this place, now. She had a right to be here but she had spoken of going back to New York with the body of her father.

And she was here a prisoner and one who was being misused!

Mike began to scratch upon the screen but the window was closed and she didn't hear him. She stood like a statue for a moment, then pressed both hands to her face, threw herself face downward on the bed and he saw her slender shoulders shaking with violent sobs.

"Poor kid," he muttered tenderly. "Now how can I attract her attention?" To shout would bring the apes from the other cottage on the run with their shooting irons out.

Mike could usually think of a way to do things. He had a notebook in his breast pocket and a pencil. By the slight

illumination afforded by the lifted window, he scratched a message.

"I'm Morrison, the reporter. Ready to help you. Open one of the porch windows, if you can. I'll be there and you can tell me what's happened."

He went around to the front of the cottage, tore the sheet of paper from the notebook and pushed it under the door. Then he thumped on the door with his fist. He didn't think that sound could be heard down the line.

Having done that, he hastened around to the porch and again peered beneath the bottom of the curtain.

Barbara was sitting up and staring at the door. She sat, trembling for a minute, before she spied the note. Then she rose and rushed over and picked it up.

She turned and faced the window. Her face was suddenly transfigured. Her smile was like a bright light. She clasped the note to her bosom, then lifted it to her lips and kissed it. Mike felt his foolish heart doing flip flops. He wasn't in love with her. He loved Papeeta. Only this girl certainly was swell, too.

Barbara crossed over and lifted the curtain of the wrong window. She moved and raised the curtain of the window outside which he was crouching. Her eyes were big as saucers and bright as stars. Mike stood up and smiled at her. She made the gesture of shaking hands. He made signs to open the window. She shook her head. She showed in pantomime the business of driving a nail. That was a disappointment. He had to talk to her. He thumped with his fist against the screen hoping she would understand that he meant for her to break the window. She looked perplexed, then nodded. Rushing to the bed she secured a pillow, returned and placing it against the



window pane, pushed heavily against it.

The glass shattered but not with a loud noise, just a tinkling sound. They could talk now.

"Oh, Mr. Morrison! I'm so glad. How did you know? How could you get here so soon? Who are these wretches? How did they get possession of the Lodge? Where are our servants?"

"Lower please!" Mike warned. "Our voices might be heard. There are half a dozen men in a cottage just below. Looks like you were kidnaped, Miss Jeffords."

She nodded. "Shortly after I saw you, I went out to a drug store only a short distance down the street from the hotel. As I came out, a man came running and knocked me down. Another man picked me up. I felt something penetrate my arm. I heard him say, 'It's all right, I know her. She's hurt. I'll take her home in my car.' And I remember being put into a closed car and then I fainted."

"They gave you the needle, the dogs," Mike muttered. "What else happened?"

"When I came to, I was laying on a blanket, my knees pulled up, tape across my mouth, my arms and legs bound. I was in a trunk. I could tell because the top was up about an inch and it was light in there. I was being bounced around so I knew it was an automobile trunk—"

"Good night!"

"Think of me when I found myself lifted out and realized that I was at the Lodge!"

"When did you get here—how long ago?"

"Several hours ago. I was thrust into this room—"

"Got to go," Mike whispered quickly. "Somebody's coming. Don't let 'em get you down."

HE had heard footsteps approaching the cottage and, as he spoke, there was the sound of a key being thrust into the lock. "Pull down the curtain!" he cautioned, then went over the porch rail and fled down the slope toward the Lake.

He laid down on the grass at the water's edge to consider this amazing development. He knew now what Moscini was doing here and why he was doing it. Not having second sight, he could know no more of the Monk's motives than what he had discovered. That Mat Patterson was also a prisoner in this place and within a couple of hundred yards of him at that moment; that his original hunch had been right and Garson and Papeeta were here did not enter his consideration. Mike believed he had followed a wrong hunch and had blundered into a tremendous story.

He didn't think Barbara was in any present peril—she was too valuable to Moscini—he expected a huge ransom from her bereaved mother. Mike wondered if he should leave her here, make his own getaway, find his car and round up the State police from the nearest village? Or should he get the girl out of that cottage and try to escape with her? The latter idea appealed to him except that there were some tremendous difficulties.

The gate, of course, was heavily guarded. Thanks to the precautions of Barbara's late father, the wire fence which enclosed the estate was electrified. Alone, Mike might find a way of going over it. There must be trees growing near it on the inside somewhere along the line. He probably would have plenty of time to locate one which would serve—since his presence was not suspected. But Barbara's escape would quickly be discovered and the



mob would soon be on the trail of the fugitives.

There were many miles to tramp before reaching the car. By the time they located it, the Monk's henchmen would be outside in their cars patrolling the road clear to the main highway.

Mike was afraid, on the other hand, that Barbara would think he had abandoned her. He couldn't have that. He'd go back presently and explain everything to her. He waited half an hour, then went back up the slope and cautiously drew near the cottage in which she was imprisoned. As he approached, he saw that the light was out. Well, she must have put it out. He was on the porch—at the window.

"Miss Jeffords!" he called softly. No answer. Louder. Still no response. He risked calling in a tone she could not avoid hearing. Nothing.

With a sinking heart, Mike realized that they had taken her away. Probably they had decided she would be more easily guarded if imprisoned in the Lodge itself.

He should have smashed the screen and taken her right out of there. Why had he wasted time talking? He swore viciously and then realized that it would have done no good. It would have been very difficult to smash that strong wire screen. Had he succeeded and pulled her through the window, her absence would have been discovered before they had traveled more than a few hundred yards. They couldn't possibly have escaped from the estate. The motor cars had headlights, probably search lights. There was a mob of armed men who would have spread out and run them down. In which case he would have been taken with her and her only hope of rescue would have vanished.

Mike went down the steps of the porch and two figures rose in front of

him. A gun was thrust within a few inches of his face.

"Stick 'em up, Bo!" a gruff voice commanded.

Mike lifted his arms above his head. Caught! He'd never send his big story. Miss Jeffords' kidnaping would end in the payment of the ransom or her death—perhaps both. As for Mike, Monk Moscini would know, only too well, how to take care of a curious reporter.

## CHAPTER XXIV

### The Planet Buys a Story

MR. "Four" Fowler was in the office of the managing editor of the *Daily Planet* in New York. Frank Watson was the only managing editor with whiskers surviving in the city of New York. He was a grim citizen who asked only results. He gazed at Mr. Fowler with a hard smile as that worthy tore his hair.

"The biggest story in years," moaned Fowler. "And we had it practically sewed up!"

"And every afternoon sheet in town has beaten us to death," Mr. Watson reminded him brutally. "And you don't know where that worthless reporter Morrison is—drunk in some foul den, probably."

Fowler waved his arms in the air; his distress was pathetic.

"I've sent him forty wires. The last three told him he was fired and he didn't even answer those. Last seen of him was when he rented a car and drove away from a garage in Plattsburg. That was about eleven this morning."

Watson placed the ends of the fingers of his hands together.

"Let's figure exactly what he let us down on. First that Garson's daughter, this manicure, Papeeta Pope, so called, was planted as Miss Jeffords' maid.



Second that Miss Barbara Jeffords left the hotel to get some medicine for her mother, and never came back. Third that Garson, his daughter and this Matthew Patterson were seen with their heads together in a parlor at the Hotel in Plattsburg, which makes Patterson a possible accessory before and after the fact."

"Mike did report the disappearance of Patterson?"

"Patterson went off with the criminals. Oh, I know his father is an important man but the boy is probably infatuated with the young woman. We know that it was through him that Miss Jeffords engaged this Pope woman. If Garson left the train at Albany, as Patterson told the chief of police up there, depend upon it—the girl killed Jeffords. Morrison left us without any knowledge of the girl at all.

"Lastly, Morrison vanishes off the map, leaves us twelve hours without a word while this story is exploding in all directions. Garson, of course, kidnapped Miss Jeffords and is holding her as a hostage. The question is where? Cut Morrison off the pay roll. I won't employ people who let me down like that."

"Chief," said "Four" Fowler pitifully, "Mike is no drunkard. He's the best reporter in New York. He was on the inside on this story; he may still be on the inside. He wouldn't have rented a car and driven out of Plattsburg unless he was on a scent. Of course, he may have been knocked off by this tough Garson. If not, he may know where he's hiding. In that case, he'll come through with the news."

Watson smiled through his brown whiskers. "In that case, we'll put him back on the pay roll," he said. "Meanwhile, what—"

"I'm going up there. I'll put my assistant in charge of the desk. I want

to handle this story personally. It's too big for anybody on the staff except Mike Morrison."

"Do as you please," grunted the managing editor coldly. "I merely state that whoever succeeds Morrison must get us the news or he goes off the pay roll, too. Even you, Mr. Fowler!"

Fowler grinned. "I'll take the chance. I've pulled this Garson-Jeffords feud out of the air, so to speak. It was my foresight that put a *Planet* reporter on the train on which the murder was committed. We scooped the country yesterday."

"That was yesterday. Today, every country newspaper scooped us upon the disappearance of the Jeffords girl. Yesterday's paper is dead, Mr. Fowler. In this business, today is the only thing of importance."

Fowler rose. "You telling me?" he inquired. "I'll be back with the tomorrow's story or I'll resign by wire."

Watson grinned slightly. "Don't bother. Your resignation will take effect automatically."

"Going out to get some supper," Fowler told the assistant city editor. "I'm going to drive up to Plattsburg starting at midnight, so you'll have to carry on for the rest of the night yourself."

"Taking over the story?" asked the assistant. "Well, I hope we get a call from Mike before you come back from supper. This is quite a job and I'm in favor of you doing it."

"Four" Fowler returned in an hour. "Any word from Mike?" he demanded. He set his packed suitcase down beside his desk.

"No," answered the assistant, "but I'm holding a guy here who says he had important dope on the Jeffords case."

"Send him into my private office,"



ordered Fowler. He usually worked out in the city room where he could keep his eagle eye on the staff, but he had a cubby hole where he retired for confidential interviews. "It's a nut, probably, but does no harm to see what he has." He assured himself.

A MOMENT later, an office boy ushered in a thin, pale, white-haired man with slightly stooped shoulders and a generally uninspiring appearance. He twirled a golf cap in his hands. His pale blue eyes were shift and his grin was loose-lipped.

"Four" Fowler appraised him at a glance. "Two and two make four," he muttered. "Prematurely gray hair and pasty skin. Prison pallor. This is an ex-con." Fowler went on glaring at the man a few seconds, then demanded abruptly: "What do you know about the Jeffords case?"

The man helped himself to a chair, crossed his knees. "What I know is for sale," he stated calmly. "If the price isn't high enough, I don't know anything."

Fowler grunted. "Show your goods," he commanded.

"You got Tom Garson just the same as convicted of croaking Jeffords," he said. "I can prove he didn't kill him. What's it worth?"

"Why not take your 'info' to the police?" asked Fowler skeptically.

"They won't pay anything. I keep away from cops on account of having a prison record. You don't have to pay me a nickel if I don't convince you that Garson didn't kill this guy."

"I'd pay plenty if you could prove who did. What you have is negative information. One thousand dollars."

"Five grand."

"Two or I'll turn you over to the cops and let them get your information

out of you. They have ways. They'll give me the result for nothing," the cold-blooded newspaperman rapped.

"All right. Now, Mister, I've known Garson for years. I was in San Quentin with him. He and I were trusties. We were good pals."

"Well?"

"Garson left the train at Albany. Jeffords was shot on board the train just outside Plattsburg."

"Garson swung on the rear of the train. Read our paper yesterday afternoon."

"Nope. I can prove he didn't."

"How?"

"Because I met the train with a car at Albany and I drove him up to Plattsburg in the car."

Fowler, who had not been much interested in his visitor, suddenly grew intensely interested. "What's your name?" he grated.

"George Pendleton. They call me 'Whitey' on account my hair is white."

"You're a convict, probably a thief, perhaps a murderer, certainly a liar. Your word is worthless. How can you prove this?"

"I rented the car in Albany. I hired a chauffeur—I can't drive myself. The chauffeur works for the Buxton Garage in Albany. He can swear Garson was in the car with me and went to Plattsburg over the road."

"Chauffeur's name," snapped the city editor, pencil poised.

"Name of Moynahan. Regular chauffeur for Buxton. He's in Albany now."

"All right. You got to Plattsburg. Garson was with you all the way. Beat the train in?"

"She beat us by about five minutes. We see a crowd around the private car as we pass the station. Garson stops and sends me over to find out what the matter was. A train porter tells me that



Jeffords is dead. I go down the platform. By that time they've run the private car onto a siding. I see a doctor—he had a bag and whiskers coming along with a cop and as they pass me I hear the sawbones say, 'There's no question whatever but the man committed suicide. I could not be mistaken.'

"I go on down to where the crowd is milling near the entrance to the private car and check up. It's Jeffords who's dead, all right. I go back and say to Garson. 'What do you think? Your friend Jeffords committed suicide.' He takes it big. He says, 'Well anyway, he's out of the way.'

"I say, 'Now what do we do?'

"'Nothing,' he says. 'You go back with this car to Albany, and then take the train to New York. I'll be down in a day or so.' He takes his suitcase out of the car and the last I saw of him he was walking into the men's waiting room of the railroad station. Do I get the two grand?"

"Yes," said Fowler. "First you dictate a statement to a stenographer. Then you have your picture taken. Then you tell a reporter all you remember of your conversation with Garson in jail and since. He intended to kill Jeffords, didn't he?"

"He never told me so," answered Whitey cautiously.

"Why did he want you to meet the train at Albany?"

"He didn't tell me. I'm broke and Garson had dough and I just happened to run into him in New York and he slipped me some change. He gimme a hundred dollars for going up to Albany, getting the car and taking it back to Albany from Plattsburg."

"And I suppose you've no notion in the world where he is now?"

"Certainly I ain't! Anyway they got nothing on him. From what I've told

you—and the chauffeur will back me up—he wasn't on the train when Jeffords was killed."

"You'll be put in a hotel room in charge of a reporter for a couple of days. You don't get your two thousand until then. If you run out on the reporter, you never get it."

"Taking advantage of me because I done time!" whined Whitey.

"Saving your life, maybe. The murderer of Jeffords would prefer to have Garson take the rap for it."

HAVING placed Whitey in the hands of a reporter and stenographer Fowler went back to the managing editor. "We've an exclusive on the Jeffords case," he stated complacently. "Walked right into the office. Absolute proof Garson didn't kill Jeffords."

The managing editor looked annoyed. "But that torpedos the story!" he exclaimed. "Why the feud, the nationwide search for Garson—?"

"Make the story better," the city editor told him. "Garson leaves the train at Albany. Papeeta Pope, his daughter is on the train, as Miss Jeffords' maid. Garson thinks nobody knows she is his daughter. She fired the fatal shot. He goes from Albany by car, arrived in Plattsburg right after the train gets there, prepared to help his kid out in case anything went wrong. First the police think it's suicide. That's Okay with the Garsons, father and daughter. Then it's proved to be murder. Blakely gets wise the girl is Garson's daughter—she'll be jugged in no time, so Garson whisks her out of town and kidnaps Mat Patterson—"

"And Miss Jeffords and Mike Morrison," added the managing editor skeptically. "Our competing newspapers, which seem to know something about



this girl—we know nothing—say she is beautiful. And there are no pictures of her.

"I'm having San Francisco photographic studios combed for pictures of her. We'll dig some up. And, when she's pinched, we'll get all the pictures we want."

These two worthies continued to discuss the situation. The human equation meant nothing to them. They existed only for news values. A murder trial with a young beautiful girl as the defendant was worth ten times as much from a news standpoint as the trial of a once-convicted murderer like Garson for another killing. They agreed that the trial of Papeeta Pope would be the sensation of a decade.

George "Whitey" Pendleton, meanwhile, was telling his tale—making minor reservations for his own protection—to the stenographer. "Whitey" had obeyed an impulse in going to a newspaper. He knew, of course, that what he had to tell would get him a large check and that appealed to him. He was aware that Garson had a large amount of money, perhaps even a million as he once had boasted. Judging by what he had read, Garson was going to be convicted of killing Jeffords unless it could be proved that he had no opportunity to commit that crime. Garson, electrocuted, would be of no use to Whitey. If he were alive and free, Whitey hoped to sponge on him indefinitely.

Whitey had arranged a meeting between Monk Moscini and the supposed Sir Ronald Bothwell but what they had arranged privately was not revealed to him. Whitey was not aware that Garson had a daughter, that the daughter was Miss Jeffords' maid and was on the fatal train to Plattsburg. Garson had made use of Whitey because he was the only

instrument at hand but he had told him nothing that wasn't necessary.

Whitey had read in the late editions that Miss Jeffords' maid was Garson's daughter and he took no stock in the statement. It sounded like a newspaper fake. Anyway, he didn't care about possible consequences to her. He could prove that Garson was not on the train between Albany and Plattsburg and, if he wasn't on the train, he couldn't have killed John Jeffords. That information Pendleton had sold for two thousand dollars. By preserving Garson, he was safeguarding his own future—for he could borrow from, or blackmail, Tom Garson indefinitely.

Before "Four" Fowler left in his car for the north, the chauffeur, Bill Moynahan, had been found by the Albany representative, had identified a picture of Garson as the man he drove from Albany to Plattsburg, had received a sum of money and was preparing to accompany the *Planet* reporter to New York where he, as well as Whitey, would be kept from the other newspapers.

As "Four" Fowler drove through the night he was adding two and two to make four as usual. Garson was at the bottom of the disappearance of three people. Papeeta Pope, Miss Barbara Jeffords and Mat Patterson. No question of that. Three persons didn't vanish without a trace in a place like Plattsburg for three different reasons. There was one explanation: Garson.

His daughter had been taken under his wing after she had obeyed her dad's instructions to put a bullet in Jeffords. As Miss Jeffords' maid she had access to the private car. If she entered Jeffords' drawing-room, he wouldn't have been alarmed. She—and nobody else—had the opportunity.

Mat Patterson had been carried off



by Garson because of his identification of Garson on the station platform at Albany. And Miss Jeffords was taken as a hostage.

"Two and two makes four," Fowler muttered. Garson couldn't do wholesale kidnaping alone. He had confederates, probably rounded up a lot of ex-convicts, arranged a hide-away, perhaps across the Canadian line—deep in the Quebec woods. This story may string out for a month—which will be a great help to the *Planet's* circulation!

The *Planet's* exclusive in the morning would give the State police an awful headache, slow up their hunt for Garson, and give the *Planet* a chance to capture Papeeta and free Garson's prisoners. "Four" Fowler had a hunch that Mike Morrison was already on their trail which was why he hadn't been heard from. What he was going to do was to trail Mike Morrison.

And so, through the night, rode "Four" Fowler, often referred to on account of the length of his nose as the "Anteater." Very early in the morning he drove into Plattsburg and put up at the Best Hotel.

## CHAPTER XXV

### Prisoners All

**D**URING her father's absence, Papeeta had gone to his room and returned with clothing she had found in his closet. It consisted of the outrageous tweeds he had worn as Sir Ronald Bothwell. There was also clean linen. She opened a door which connected another chamber with her room.

"Go in there and dress," she commanded. "Come back as soon as you can. We've got to talk."

Mat returned in five minutes. Papeeta was laying on her bed weeping. She

lifted a tear-stained face to him. In her grief, she was even more beautiful, he thought.

"What's going to become of us?" she asked piteously. "You heard father say his hirelings had turned against him."

"Let me get away—I'll bring help!"

"To arrest my father—don't you realize?"

"That's right. It's a devil of a situation."

"Do you believe he is innocent?"

"I said so. I think he would have killed Jeffords if he had a chance but he was cheated out of his chance. By jove, Papeeta, Jeffords was killed by someone who knew that your father would be blamed for the crime—somebody else who had a grudge against Jeffords. But I don't see how it can be proved."

"Lots of people have wanted to kill other people—but it's not a crime unless they do it," Papeeta protested.

"Yes, but, in this case—"

"They'll convict him anyway, on his record. What are we going to do, Mat?" Unconsciously, she included him with herself and her father.

"Mike Morrison and I had figured it out that your father couldn't have killed Jeffords and, of course, you didn't. We were going to try to find the real killer.

"Dragging me up here, put me out of the picture. Mike is the only hope. He's a very clever newspaper man. He might—who can tell—?"

Mat didn't really think that Morrison had the slightest prospects of solving a crime so ingeniously committed. But the girl was in despair—a ray of hope was what she needed. She seemed a bit heartened by his remark. She was about to say more when Garson came into the room. He threw himself heavily into a chair.

"The situation is, Mr. Patterson,"



he explained dully. "All of us are at the mercy of a New York gangster named Monk Moscini. It is his intention to get as much cash out of me as possible and, when I'm bled dry, he'll turn me in for the reward. He has fifteen gunmen. He knows he won't be bothered here. If the police should pay a visit, they will find only what they will assume to be the caretakers. There are scores of places on this estate for the rest to hide out safely.

"It was my idea to capture the caretakers and impersonate them. The prospects were that we could remain here for months undisturbed. Moscini will follow my plan. Of course, I was a fool to do business with such rats but I was obsessed with my hatred of Jeffords. I paid high for the assistance of these crooks. When Jeffords died, it was necessary to have their help to capture this place. I never dreamed that Moscini would come up from New York with more of his bandits. Papeeta, we're absolutely helpless."

"Let me get away!" pleaded Mat. "I won't betray you. If we can find the real murderer, this Moscini will have to slink back where he came from."

"You'll give me your word not to try to escape or I'll turn you over to Moscini," Garson snarled harshly. "They think you're hiding out on the estate somewhere and that they can run you down at their leisure. Stay in your room. We'll get food to you. In two or three days, I'll think of some plan and ask your aid. I used to be ingenious. I won't let this bandit outsmart me."

Mat hesitated. "All right," he agreed. What could he do if he were able to get off the Jeffords property? As Papeeta had reminded him, he would have to go to the police and lead them here. It amounted to sending Garson and his daughter on their way to trial for mur-

der. And, if he didn't give his word, Moscini would lock him up or, being a New York gangster, shoot him out of hand.

"Papeeta, don't you wander round any more either," warned her father. "Keep out of Moscini's way. Postpone trouble as long as possible."

He gazed at her remorsefully. "I should not have brought you here, dear. I should never have carried off Mr. Patterson. What I should have done was give myself up."

She rushed to him, threw herself in his arms. "No, father! I'm sure we'll come through somehow. And I know Mr. Patterson is our friend."

Mat nodded. "You've made it pretty hard for anybody to help you," he told Garson.

Garson rose. "The game isn't over yet," he vowed grimly. "If this fellow were clever, he'd lock me up. In case I devise a plan, can I count on your help, Mr. Patterson?"

"You can," Mat assured him. He offered his hand. "I think you've gotten a mighty dirty deal, Mr. Garson." Tears came into the convict's eyes as they clasped hands. Papeeta was wiping away her tears with a wisp of lace.

"I expect that we won't be bothered much for a few days," Garson said after the moment of emotion had passed. "Moscini knows that, if I escaped, it would be to fall into the hands of the police. He has me in a hole and expects me to stay in it. He has disarmed me and apparently underestimates me. If I get half a chance, I'll turn the tables on him. Patterson, your presence in the house without his knowledge will be helpful perhaps. Don't let him discover you. I'm going to my room."

"You must hate us both for getting you into this," said Papeeta mournfully



when her father had gone. "You were very kind to me and this is how you have been repaid."

MAT smiled at her. "The situation has certain compensations. I wanted to know you better, Papeeta."

"Why should you want to know me better? You're in love with Miss Jeffords—probably engaged to her—"

Mat shook his head vehemently. "I wasn't in love with her. I liked her a lot. She's a great girl. I certainly wasn't engaged to her."

Papeeta stopped him. "Don't forget for a minute that I'm the daughter of a convicted murderer—a man accused of a new crime; that I may be accused of aiding and abetting that crime—"

Mat smiled again. "Somehow, those things don't seem to matter. I know you're absolutely innocent. I believe your father's story. I'm your friend, Papeeta."

"Well, she said, with a deep sigh, "I'm glad — we — I — need friends. What's that?"

They had heard a woman's scream.

"A servant?" conjectured Mat.

Papeeta was very white. "No, no, I'm the only woman on the place. Wait here. I'll find out."

She opened her door softly, stepped outside and closed the door behind her.

The rooms on the second floor opened upon a wide gallery from which one looked down upon the great living-room of the Lodge. There was a high railing. Papeeta crouched behind the railing and peered through the rails.

She saw Moscini in his chair by the fire. She saw the main entrance, the door of which had opened. She saw two men who had entered and who were forcing a young woman to accompany them. One of them had roughly twisted

her arm which had caused her outcry. She saw her father, who had been seated opposite Moscini and who had been invisible until that moment, step forward.

Papeeta grasped the rails. She was weak, faint, stricken with horror. The young woman struggling in the hands of two ruffians was Miss Barbara Jeffords!

On hands and knees, Papeeta crept to her door, opened it, rose and entered. She tottered to a chair and hid her face in her hands. Mat had closed the door. She had forgotten to.

"Who is it? What is it about?" he asked apprehensively.

She showed him her white face. Her great black eyes were like coals that had lost their luster. "I—I've lost my faith in my father," she murmured. "I don't believe anything he says any more. Maybe he murdered Mr. Jeffords. I don't know. I am so ashamed, Mat. I wish I could die!"

"Please, for goodness sake! What's the reason for this?" he pleaded.

"He—he's carried his vengeance beyond the grave. It's Miss Barbara Jeffords who screamed. He had her brought here, too."

"Babs, up here! It's absurd! I trust your father, Papeeta. Wait—I'll take a look." He opened the door softly and, following Papeeta's example, crouched behind the gallery railing.

Barbara had been taken across the big room to where Garson and Moscini were standing.

They released her arms. She drew herself up proudly, her little head held high. "What's the meaning of this?" she demanded. "Why have I been kidnapped? Why am I brought to my father's Lodge? Who are you? What are you doing here? What do you expect to gain?"



The girl's terror was tempered somewhat by the knowledge that there was a friend not far away—somebody who would go to any length to help her, who had already communicated with her at the risk of his life. At the moment, she was more angry than frightened.

Moscini grinned. He jerked his thumb toward Garson. "Ask him," he suggested. "I'm only a hired man."

"Who are you?" demanded Barbara sharply. Garson was staring at her, utterly bewildered.

"Name of Tom Garson," Moscini stated. "Maybe you heard of him?"

Barbara's courage oozed out of her at the sound of the terrible name. "The murderer!" she whispered. "The man who killed my father—"

"Take her up to one of the rooms on that side of the house, nail down the windows and one of you stand guard at the door," commanded Moscini. "Get going, you fellows!"

The men pounced upon Miss Jeffords, dragged her toward the stairs. Moscini had pointed to the wing opposite that in which the Garsons were located so Patterson held his post. His wrath was hard to control. He wanted to plunge downstairs, knock Barbara's captors flying and beat down Moscini under a shower of blows. But he had sense enough to realize the hopelessness of such an effort.

One of the mobsmen lifted Barbara, threw her over his shoulder. They mounted the stairs swiftly, turned left and disappeared down a corridor.

Garson was saying something. "This is what you meant, Moscini, when you said a lot of things could get blamed on me?" he said bitterly.

The Monk grinned. "Yeah. Kind of cute, ain't it? You snatch this Patterson on account he could identify you and knows you're the father of the Jeffords

girl's maid. I go you one better. I snatch the Jeffords girl. I send the family a note with your name signed to it, that if they don't call off the hunt for you, you'll cut the kid's throat."

MAT saw Garson's hands open and close. Then he quietly went back and sat down out of the range of vision of the young man on the gallery floor. Mat heard what he said, however: "In short, a hostage?"

"Yeah. Of course, they offer a big reward for her, see? And some of my boys just accidentally find her and cop the reward. A side line, see. Very profitable. Nothing to do with our business."

"You're making things very sweet for me if they do happen to pinch me," observed Garson. Mat, understanding the situation, now, marveled at the self-control of the unfortunate man.

"What you don't understand, Moscini, is that she's not Jeffords' daughter. She's his step-daughter. I have no animosity against the child at all."

"Well, you're a swell post to hang things on," stated the Monk complacently. "Do as I say, and they won't lay hands on you. Now about the details of the hundred grand? How do I get it? Who gives it to me? You have it covered so you can draw on it even if the cops are after you. I know that."

"You'll get it thirty days from now. As for my arrangements, I won't reveal them. I warn you to treat that young woman decently. It would take very little for me to decide to let you turn me in and thumb my nose at you."

"When I turn you in, your kid gets turned in. She'll do a long stretch, you know. She ain't got a chance."

Garson didn't answer. Mat knew what emotions he must be experiencing.

There was an interruption. Through the front door came two others of Mos-



cini's band with another prisoner, also known to Patterson.

And the watcher in the gallery gasped with astonishment at recognition of this prisoner. Mike Morrison, his friend, the newspaperman he supposed to be back in Plattsburg hard at work upon the developments in the hunt for Garson!

A rope had been wound round Mike's torso pinioning his arms to his sides. Inside the door, one of his captors kicked him savagely and he measured his length upon a huge fur rug. The other caught him by the collar and dragged him to his feet.

"So you got Patterson?" cried Moscini, jubilantly. "Where did you get him?"

"Found him on the porch of the cottage where we had the girl locked up, Chief," stated one of the captors.

Moscini had stepped forward. "But that's not Patterson!" he shouted. "Say, I know you. Damn you, you filthy newspaper sleuth—!"

"How are you, Monk?" asked Mike impudently. "How about a drink, a cigar and an exclusive interview for the *Planet*?"

Moscini stepped forward, closed his fist and struck Mike brutally in the face. "How did you get in here?" he snarled.

"That's for you to find out." Mike stared at the other man who had risen from his chair. He grinned with satisfaction. "So my hunch was right!" he exclaimed. "You're Tom Garson. Say, I should have figured it out that you couldn't have taken this establishment single-handed. So Monk Moscini and his gang are working for you, eh? They charge high prices. You must have a lot of dough, Garson."

Garson, to whom Morrison was a complete stranger, kept his lips tightly closed. Moscini laughed loudly.

"You're a wise guy," he sneered.

"You figured pretty good to land up here. Your paper is going to miss you, Morrison."

"The difference between you and me is that you won't be missed," replied Morrison boldly. "Well, enjoy the comforts of a millionaire's estate while you may, you two murderers and kidnapers. Where's Mat Patterson, Garson?"

"Where he won't make any trouble at all," stated Moscini with a warning glance at Garson.

"I suppose you only brought Miss Jeffords up so you could say she was the hostess and you were invited guests," sneered Mike. "You understand, Monk, that my paper knows where I am and very shortly five or six reporters and cameramen will arrive accompanied by all the police in this part of New York State."

Moscini grinned. "We'll be here to welcome them. But you won't, brother! I never liked you, anyway. And nobody knows you came up here. You're trying to get a scoop for your rotten newspaper. Well, you got the scoop, feller. Garson came up here with Patterson and Miss Jeffords. The cops will find them both with their throats cut—if they come—which they won't. This was a swell idea Garson had. He kills Jeffords and carries off the daughter for a hostage. Carries off the State's principal witness. Gets Monk Moscini and his mob to keep everything sweet and pretty. I got fifteen good men up here, Morrison. Now I got you!"

Mike laughed insolently. "In that case, Patterson and I and Miss Jeffords and Miss Pope—I presume she's here—can while away the time playing some bridge."

"Got anything to say to this fresh mug, Garson?" asked Moscini.

"No," said Garson dully.

"You wouldn't like to land on his



jaw once or twice, just for the satisfaction?"

"No," said Garson.

Monk Moscini shrugged his shoulders. "That sort of leaves it up to me." He took a step forward, set himself. He brought up his big fist. Mike tried to avoid the blow but the two gangsters, grinning broadly, held tight hold of him.

The blow landed upon the point of the reporter's jaw with terrific force. Mike went out like a light and his captors released him and let him crash to the floor.

"Take no chances with this mug, boys," the Monk ordered cheerfully. "Take him down to the lake. Get a big stone and tie it around his neck, take a boat and row out into the middle and drop him in."

"I won't have that!" shouted Garson, no longer able to contain himself. "What's the sense of murdering this boy? Keep him a prisoner. He can't possibly get away."

"If anybody could get away, it's this egg," Moscini contradicted. "Garson, he was smart enough to dope out that this was where you'd come. He got over that electric fence. How do I know he wouldn't get over it again?"

Garson shook his fist in the other man's face. "I won't have it!" he belted. Moscini whipped out his revolver and covered his titular boss. His upper lip drew back—he looked like the wolf that he was.

"I won't shoot to kill," he warned tensely. "But I'll wing you. If I didn't need you in my business, I'd send you to hell along with him. Now, boys, take that rat out of here!"

Mike had recovered from the blow and was trying to sit up, something almost impossible because of the rope around his body. Moscini leaned over.

"You're going to pass out like a drowned rat," he jibed viciously. "A weight around your neck, feller. The fishes in this lake are going to have a swell meal."

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## CHAPTER XXVI

### An Overturned Canoe

GARSON sat down again and buried his face in his hands. But Mat Patterson had not waited to see that tableau. He had slipped into Papeeta's room. The girl sat like a stone statue, her face steeped in woe, her little hands clasped and laying in her lap. She looked up. Her eyes asked the question.

"Your father knew nothing about the kidnaping of Miss Jeffords," Mat assured her. "I found that out. Papeeta, they have Mike Morrison. They're going to drown him—"

"Drown him?" she gasped. "How did he get here?"

"He's here. Put out your light. I'm going down on that rope. I've got to do something, don't you see?"

"But you're unarmed!" she protested.

"I have these." He lifted his fists. As she didn't move, he went over and turned off the light switch.

He encountered her on the way to the window. Her arms were outstretched. And then she was in his arms and his lips pressed against hers. They said nothing. Words were not needed.

Mat tore himself loose, crossed to the window, threw his legs over the sill and began to lower himself upon the knotted rope. Papeeta leaned over the sill.

"Be careful!" she whispered—the warning women who love always give to their men going into danger.

She saw him dimly making his way down. Heard his feet touch ground. Then the rope hung loose. She strained



her eyes and saw a shadow creep away and vanish. She hesitated for a moment and then the daughter of the islands swung her feet over the sill and went down the rope like a monkey.

Mat moved away a short distance and hesitated. He and Papeeta had arrived at this window after a run in wet clothes from the pond in which they had taken refuge. He hadn't observed the lake and did not know in what direction it might be. A hundred yards away, however, he saw the sparkle of stars reflected upon the smooth black surface of the broad watery expanse and moved in that direction down a gentle slope.

He reached the water's edge. He was wildly excited. He didn't know what he was going to do—how he could interfere with the purposes of two armed men? And where were they? Was he too late?

A flashlight a little distance to the left revealed their presence. He set off in that direction. After a short distance, he almost stumbled over a canoe pulled half way out of the water. The flash was turning in his direction. He dropped down behind the canoe. And the flashlight picked it up.

"That's the canoe!" he heard a hoarse voice exclaim. "Can you paddle a canoe? Tony?"

"Sure. I takka the dame in canoe on Central Park Lake."

"Well, we'll pack him in that. Get a big rock, will you, Tony, like Monk said?"

Feet were approaching—Mike shuffling along, propelled by one of his guards. The other, evidently, was looking for a sufficiently heavy rock. Mat had no means of concealing himself. In a moment he would be discovered. He crawled hastily into the water, which was bitter cold. He lay flat in less than a foot of water—partly under the bot-

tom of the canoe. He grasped hold of its stem with both hands.

"Get in, you so-and-so!" snarled Mike's guardian. Mat heard the sound of a cruel blow.

The canoe shook as poor Morrison stumbled in and sat down. Thump. Mat could feel the canoe quiver as a large boulder was dropped into it above him.

"Get in and take the paddle, Tony," commanded the hoarse-voiced thug. "I'll shove this thing into the water."

The canoe moved with difficulty. Mat was clinging to the bow with both hands. In a jiffy, the second man leaped aboard. The canoe was afloat, moving slowly out onto the lake.

And still Mat Patterson didn't know what to do. The chances were that he would drown with Morrison. He had a wild idea of diving after Mike when they tossed him in and then realized that, if he found his friend at all beneath the inky waters, neither of them could break the surface with a heavy weight tied to Morrison's neck. But he had to do something!

The canoe was perhaps a hundred feet from the shore when Mat decided to take a long gamble. He changed his grasp, slid his hands along the gunwale a short distance, and, with a tremendous downward thrust, tipped the frail craft over. The three occupants were tumbled headlong into the icy water.

The man who had been paddling clawed his way to the surface. "Help!" he squalled. "I can't swim! Help!" The other mobsman was swimming awkwardly, cursing furiously. Of Morrison there was no sign and Mat felt cold fingers kneading his stomach until he remembered the thugs had not yet affixed the weight to Mike's neck.

Ignoring the fellow who had proclaimed that he couldn't swim, Patter-



son looked for the other hood. Mat swam close to him, placed both hands on top of the killer's head and forced him under. Something kicked Mat viciously in the shin and he realized that it was Morrison, who was endeavoring to keep afloat.

"It's Patterson, Mike!" he called softly. "Can you manage?"

"Sure, I'll float on my back," replied Morrison. "Mat, old boy, much obliged."

THE man beneath Patterson was attempting to grapple with him.

With powerful leg strokes, he was trying to get his head above water. His fists were beating against Mat's chest—the water making their force very feeble. He changed his tactics and tried again to grapple with his unknown enemy. Mat released him in time to avoid an embrace. As the man's head broke water, Mat, kicking forcefully, lifted himself for a second a foot out of the water. He drove a savage blow against the gangster's face and the man sank.

And then, far below, Mat's right ankle was grasped tightly by a pair of hands and he was pulled under. Desperately, he tried to kick himself loose. Down, down—there was a ringing in his ears—he couldn't breathe.

And miraculously, the death grip loosened and Mat shot to the surface again. He was alone on top of the water. The canoe had floated out of the way. Both his antagonists and Mike Morrison had vanished.

A dozen feet away, a white face appeared. There was desperate splashing and the face disappeared. Mat, instinctively, swam toward the person who was drowning, then turned toward the shore. It was the fellow who couldn't swim. It was he whose hand had

grasped his ankle. In his wild struggles, Mat must have kicked the hand loose with his other foot and broken the grasp.

He saw a figure on the beach—a woman's figure. And then he saw a man wading ashore. Mat struck out for the shore. He was weighed down by his clothing and fresh water is not as buoyant as salt but he made good progress nevertheless.

"Mat, Mat darling!" called the woman on the beach joyfully. She ran toward the wader. Mat's foot touched bottom. He splashed the water aside as he hurried toward the dry land. He saw Papeeta stop, draw back. The wader was out of the water. He grasped one of her arms. And then Mat was on the sand and bounding furiously toward the pair.

This was the fellow Mat had tried to drown—where Morrison was, Mat didn't know. At the moment, he had thought only for Papeeta, struggling vainly in the hands of the ruffian. The man holding her with one hand was trying to get a weapon out of his water-soaked pocket. He had it!

He presented it at Mat's breast as the youth came charging in. He pulled the trigger. There was no explosion—the waterproof cartridge, apparently, was not waterproof. Before he could snap another shot Mat had wrenched the weapon from his hand. The fellow swung at him with his left fist. Mat ducked the blow, brought down the butt of the heavy revolver on top of a thick skull.

"Papeeta darling!" he cried and made to embrace her. Then, remembering that he was soaking wet, he attempted to withdraw but Papeeta was in his arms nevertheless. "Where's Mr. Morrison?" she asked eagerly.

Mat, conscience-stricken, tore himself



loose. He rushed to the water's edge and saw a ripple.

"Mike!" he called softly.

"Coming!" came back in the tones of a welcome voice.

Morrison, laying on his back, able to move the palms of his hands slightly but having the full use of his legs, was propelling himself slowly but surely toward the beach.

Patterson rushed into the water to help his friend. In a moment he was pulling Mike ashore. Morrison was breathing heavily but grinning contentedly. In her exuberance, Papeeta threw her arms around him and kissed him also.

Mat had a sudden inspiration. He was searching the man he had knocked senseless. He found a clasp knife in his trousers pocket. With a few slashes, he cut Morrison loose and Mike stretched his arms gratefully.

## CHAPTER XXVII

### The Island

"**M**UCH obliged," Mike said, "to both of you. Mat, I presume you were under the canoe.

How you got there is a mystery to me. Miss Pope, you're even more beautiful than I thought you were. This was the worst fix I ever got into. I couldn't figure an out. And I'm frozen. Mat, you were in the water longer and must be still colder. By the way, our friend, here, is coming to. I'll fix him."

Mike bent over the mobster who was trying to sit up. He courteously assisted him to his feet and then smashed a terrific right against the side of his head—which dropped him like a fallen tree. Papeeta emitted a stifled cry of protest.

Mike grinned at her. "You didn't hear him ordering his pal to get a nice

big rock to tie round my neck, Papeeta. Mat, what became of his sidekick?"

"Drowned, I expect, poor devil," said Mat soberly. "I heard him yell he couldn't swim."

"We ought to drown this one, too," stated Mike grimly.

"Oh, no! It's too awful!" moaned Papeeta.

"Well, what shall we do with him?" the newspaper man retorted. "We're in a bad spot—at least Mat and I are!"

"Tie him with the rope that they bound you with," the girl suggested eagerly. "There is an island over there—and several boats at the landing below—"

"Genius!" asserted Mike, who had taken charge of the situation automatically. "Give me a hand, Patterson. Exercise will warm us up."

They lifted the unconscious man, carried him nearly a hundred yards down the beach and away from the house. They lowered him into a row boat, climbed in and Mat took the oars.

"Go back to the house, Papeeta," he commanded. Her answer was to jump into the boat.

"In that case, take the steering lines," requested Mike. "I don't quite get it, Miss Pope. You're in no danger at all—Moscini is acting in your father's interests. When these two don't check in, there's going to be a lot of excitement at the big house—"

"Mike," Patterson explained earnestly, "Garson is Moscini's prisoner. I was in the gallery above the main room of the Lodge and heard what Moscini said to you. Garson protested when the mobster ordered you dropped into the lake and Moscini drew a gun on him. But I don't think any harm will come to Papeeta if she gets back in her room—"

"You're going to hamper us, Miss



Pope," Mike pleaded earnestly. "Mat and I are going to do a lot of scampering to keep out of their hands."

"All right," agreed Papeeta meekly. "I'll try to get back in."

"Good girl!"

As he spoke, he was rowing lustily and the boat was well out toward the nearest island, which was about a quarter-mile distant from the shore. Mike was in a position to watch the lights of the Lodge. He listened for shouts which might indicate that the gangsters had discovered things had gone wrong—but no sound was wafted to his ears.

And presently, the nose of the boat was thrust against a grassy bank. Their prisoner had returned to consciousness but gave no indication of objecting to the proceedings.

Mat jumped ashore with the bow line, tied it to a tree trunk and returned to give Morrison a hand with the hefty captive. They carried him a few rods inland and laid him in high grass. Papeeta remained by the boat.

"Look!" she called. "The canoe." There was on the dark water a blacker streak. The lazy currents of the lake had caused the overturned canoe to drift toward the island.

"Let's get it," suggested Morrison. "I have an idea." He jumped into the boat and in a moment returned with the canoe in tow. Patterson drew it up on the shore.

"Now, Miss Pope," said the reporter. "Can you scull back—I mean using a single oar?"

"I can do anything with a boat," boasted Papeeta.

"Then get back into the house. Mat and I will remain here. If we have to leave, we can use the canoe and an oar. If we're alone on this island, we can get the wet clothes off and box or wrestle ourselves dry. Hurry, young

lady. Pretty soon they'll be wondering what became of the boys."

"Hadn't you better stop this one's mouth somehow?" asked the practical young woman. "I wouldn't be surprised if his shouts could be heard at the Lodge."

"Of course—much obliged," answered the newspaperman. "Mr. Patterson will gag the gentleman with a nice wet handkerchief. Oh, well—"

For Papeeta had drifted into Mat's arms and he was kissing her. "Darling, I'm so frightened for you," she whispered.

"Mike's worth ten good men," he assured her. "We're going to get out of this mess, somehow, and get you and your father out with us. Be careful, dear. And look for us to start something as soon as we work out a plan."

She offered her hand to Morrison, who helped her into the boat. Standing in the stern, she skulled away skillfully and in a few minutes was completely invisible.

MAT was stripping off his wet clothing. "Let's go nudist," he said gaily.

"I'll be with you when I gag this thug over here." Mike called.

The pair rubbed their bare skins fiercely with their hands and secured a little warmth. Mosquitoes arrived speedily on the scene and they had plenty of exercise slapping at them. They were inconsiderate enough not to remove the clothing of the captive, which was equally watersoaked. The man had snarled viciously and had tried to bite off one of Mat's fingers when he was gagging him. Having eliminated him, for the time being, as a menace, they moved out of his earshot, found two small boulders and sat down.

"Well," said Mat. "So what?"



"Wise me up to the situation. You've only hinted at it."

Patterson explained what he had learned in full detail. He also explained what had puzzled the reporter—how he came to be in the lake and able to overturn the canoe.

"I told my city editor when he got wind of the Garson-Jeffords feud," Mike said, "that Garson was a modern Monte Cristo. Not content to plug his enemy—wanted to break his morale first. Moscini would have sent a hop-head to burn Jeffords for a few grand. Now, Garson has involved his daughter; he's under the Monk's thumb and there isn't a thing he can do."

"And Moscini has fifteen gunmen," Patterson stated dismally.

"Had! Now he has twelve." Morrison reminded.

"We've only accounted for two!"

"There's one of them dead in the woods outside the estate. I—er—just happen to know," Mike explained reluctantly. "Well, I'm sort of short of ideas. Naturally, we can't stay here. Tomorrow or the next day they'd decide to look over this island. We're unarmed. I had two guns but those birds who nabbed me took 'em away from me."

"I've this fellow's revolver. The water must have ruined the cartridges. He tried a shot at me and the gun didn't go off."

"The others may be all right. Let's hope so. Ah, something stirring in Eden!" exclaimed Mike. "Moscini's decided to have a look for the boys. It's a break that he doesn't know you were in the house, Mat. He thinks when you got out of that storehouse you headed for as far away from the Lodge as you could get. He probably doesn't suspect that you made trouble for those two murderers. So he's not likely to come over here tonight."

"When they give up hunting—if they do—we can take the canoe and paddle to the other side of the lake. What we should do, of course, is to get away and come back with the State Troopers."

"Which means turning over Papeeta and her father to them," said Mat quickly.

"Yep." The newspaperman was silent for a moment. "One or the other will get convicted sure as shooting. If you testify Garson was left in Albany, they'll send Papeeta up for trial. And the public mind will be poisoned against her. Their insolence in selecting the estate of the murdered man as a hiding place will hurt them badly in the eyes of a jury. On the other hand, Moscini will get all the money out of Garson he can and then turn him in for the reward. Suppose we wiped out the whole Moscini gang—what then? Leave Garson here in peaceable possession of the place and keep our mouths shut?"

"Yes," Mat said firmly. "You can do as you please, Mike, but I'd say we ought to keep our mouths shut until we discover who really did kill Jeffords."

"My boy, you don't know much about crime. The police are lucky to get one suspect. It's very rare that they have two possible murderers. The cards are so stacked against Garson we'd have to have about four witnesses who saw somebody else kill Jeffords. Listen! Oars! They're on the water. Collect our clothes and get into the canoe. They may come here. We'd better paddle down the lake—just in case."

A moment later, the canoe—with Mike using the oar as a paddle—glided silently away from the island.

It was a wise precaution for the light in the boat was approaching. Shouts were plainly heard. They were calling out the names of the two missing men.



At a safe distance, Mike drew in his oar and let the canoe drift. The boat moved steadily toward the island. It did not land, however. Its occupants set up a loud halloo, and got no response. Presently their bobbing lights were seen moving toward the mainland.

"I'm not as cold as I was," remarked Morrison. "It's safe to go ashore again, I should say."

"Let me have the paddle. I'd like to warm up," requested Patterson. "I suppose we'd better go back to the island. Papeeta had time to get to her room, don't you think, before they started the hunt?"

"Yes. Of course. She had lots of time. That's a wonderful girl, Mat. You've got the inside track, I notice."

"We love each other," admitted Patterson. "We've been together for hours—she took some awful chances for me."

"You bet. Well, probably I don't love her as much as I thought I did," his friend said ruefully.

"I'm sorry, old man."

A MOMENT later the canoe touched the shore of the island and the two nudists leaped out, pulled it out of the water and carried it inland to a point where in daylight it would not be visible from the Lodge. After that, they resumed their rocky seats. They fell silent. Each was thinking that their prospects were bleak—the situation desperate.

"Know anything about this place?" asked Morrison.

"No."

"Well, I read a description of it at our office when we learned Jeffords was coming up here. About four thousand

acres. This lake almost bisects it. The other side is pure wilderness—no roads out, only trails, if you can find them. I don't suppose the electrified fence marks the boundary over there. Nature does that. We could paddle over to that side and they'd have a heck of a time finding us—"

"But Barbara Jeffords and Papeeta—"

"Oh, sure. That's a last resort. Concentrate, will you? Think of something."

After a few moments of silence Mat said, "All I can think of is that if I'm horribly uncomfortable, imagine how that murderer must feel, tied, bound and gagged as well as soaking wet. I'm going to take the gag off. Threaten to put it back if he utters a squawk."

"All right—I doubt if he could be heard a quarter of a mile anyway."

They rose and walked to where they had laid the man down. There was no man there. He was gone. They found the ropes with which he had been tied and the gag and they found most of his clothing but not the prisoner.

They gazed at each other in dismay.

"How could he get loose?" muttered Patterson.

"I did an amateur job, of course. He took his clothes off. That means he's swimming ashore—probably there by now. We're a fine pair of saps."

"Yes," admitted Patterson. "It means he'll tell Moscini that Papeeta helped us. I'm sorry, Mike, but I've got to go back there. You've had a sample of what a fiend he is."

Mike nodded. "All right," he agreed. "We'll put on those wet clammy garments and paddle back. After that, it's in the hands of Fate."

What can two men do against a dozen thugs? How can they clear away the cloud of suspicion which hangs over Garson and Papeeta? Answers to these questions, and a thrilling surprise, will come in next week's smashing conclusion!



# Bottled-Up Alibi



Orner flung the bottle. It struck Trant in the face

*They Went Fishing—Trant For a Big One—Orner For Riches And a Beautiful Wife. But He Had to Commit the Perfect Crime First.*

By Ray Cummings

THE idea of murder came to Carl Orner quite suddenly. He was always one to go after what he wanted, despite any obstacle. And John Trant was the obstacle. Orner had decided, almost as soon as he met Trant's sister, that he wanted to marry her. Why not? She was easy to look at—and rich. She and her brother John, just a year ago, had inherited this big orange plantation in Florida. And there was also considerable money and other real estate.

Orner had only been here a week. He

represented a New York City fruit commission house; he had come to get Trant's business. But Trant's sister was bigger game. He saw at once that it wouldn't be hard to make her fall in love with him. She was, after all, only a backwoods girl, having spent most of her life on this plantation. And Orner was a New Yorker with the sheen and aura of the great city upon him. A dapper exceedingly handsome fellow in his own opinion, so debonair, so sophisticated, that all girls got a thrill when they looked at him.

He gave Maida Trant her first thrill this afternoon. He had planned it carefully; he did that with everything. He and Maida were sitting on the river bank, close beside the plantation dock.

"I like it here," Orner was saying. "It's so different from New York. I like everything about it—you particularly—"



He stared at her meaningly, with that intense dark gaze that always fascinated women. She was a slim, brown-haired, pretty little thing—just seventeen—half child, half woman.

Her eyes turned away. "That's nice—" she murmured.

Then suddenly he took her in his arms. She fought his bold caresses, as though she were frightened. A roaring voice disturbed them. Orner looked up. John Trant was standing on the dock ten feet above him—a rugged, handsome young fellow with blond curly hair.

"You damned city slicker—what d'you think you're doing?" he said.

He leaped at the New Yorker, missed. Orner jumped up.

"Now—now—" he said. "Don't get excited—no harm done—"

It was a nasty situation. Orner never liked fighting; but now he didn't dare run; in half a dozen jumps the angry Trant would have had him. But Orner was clever. Placating. He laughed it off, promised he wouldn't do it again—

And John Trant grinned. "I reckon you won't—you'll be leaving tomorrow."

It was then that Orner decided upon murder. A year here with Maida—they'd be drawn together by the tragedy. He'd be very sympathetic. She'd be a really rich girl; there were no other relatives—with Trant dead she'd inherit everything. After the marriage they'd live in New York, of course, and to hell with the plantation. Even at auction it would bring a neat sum.

ORNER had everything planned within an hour. Trant was a good-natured fellow; Orner had no trouble in jockeying him back to good humor. He agreed to take Orner

for an hour or two of fishing at sundown.

Twilight was coming as they loaded their tackle into the little rowboat.

"We'll be back by dark," Trant said as he kissed Maida.

"All right," she nodded. "I'll be waiting." She stared at him; then almost clung to him. Orner had seen all week how much she loved this brother—how gentle and affectionate he was with her. Was it woman's intuition now that made her cling to him as though she were afraid to let him go? She stood alone on the dock, watching them row away—slim, brown-haired figure. . . . Orner waved his big hand jauntily, and smiled.

"We'll bring some big ones back," he called. He sat in the stern while Trant on the center seat rowed with lusty strokes. Then, Trant waved at his sister, his last farewell, though he didn't know it.

Two miles down the dismal river, past cypress swamps. Then they were on the open ocean. Not a breath of wind so that the surface here was like glass. The sun had set; the swift, subtropic night was coming. Trant headed straight out until they were a full mile off shore. The flat coastline already was fading in the twilight; the mouth of the little river out of which they had come was blurring, mingling with the sodden gloom of the cypress swamp.

That shore was deserted. Not even a negro's shack was anywhere in this vicinity; on the dark ocean not a craft was in sight. Orner was tense and cold with excitement. Solid darkness would come presently. There wouldn't be a single human being to see what happened in this little rowboat, out here on the black empty ocean. . . .

Orner decided that this was the best place.



"My idea," he said suddenly, "is to stop right about here. Pretty big ones, they tell me, are off shore here."

Trant shipped the oars. "I'll rig the lines," he said. He baited the hooks with the white pork rind which would be visible to the fish in the darkness. The rods were short, with big heavy reels and three or four hundred yards of very strong linen line.

"You want to use a cork or fish deep?" Trant added.

"Eh? Oh, I don't care." Orner hardly heard the question. . . . A knife in Trant's back. . . . Trant was rigging his own line now; Orner tried to look interested as Trant tied an ordinary bottle cork on the line a few feet from the hook.

"Why the cork?" Orner said.

Trant grinned. "Holds the bait up near the surface. The big fish often come up to chase the little ones about sundown. Especially when it's calm like this." He added: "We've only got half an hour—but a big one would be nice for supper."

Nice for supper! But Trant, though he didn't know it, had already eaten his last meal on earth!

They tossed out their lines. Trant's little cork floated on the glassy surface, barely distinguishable now in the gloom. It was possible to get very big fish here. Trant seemed to expect it. A belt around his waist had a deep leather pocket, and into it he thrust the butt of the short, heavy rod, fastening it securely. The tip of the rod stuck up hardly above his shoulder so that he had no need to hold it at all but could sit smoking his pipe waiting for what luck might come.

ORNER'S heart was pounding his ribs. Now was the time to do the job! But he was wary; Trant mustn't see the knife coming—a fight

in this little boat would be horrible. Inwardly Orner was shaking with nervousness. He had a quart bottle of rum in his jacket pocket. He reeled in his line; dropped his rod to the bottom of the boat.

"Have a drink?" he suggested.

But Trant waved it away. The big bottle was nearly empty—just a drink or two left. Orner drew the cork; tilted the bottle at his lips. Heaven knows, he needed a bracer. The fiery liquid steadied him. Narrowly he was watching Trant who now was reeling in to inspect his bait. If only he would turn his back—

The knife was in Orner's pocket, but he did not dare reach for it. Trant was jovially talking of a big fish he caught near here a week ago.

"Eh? Oh, yes—" Orner said. He was still clutching the bottle. He realized suddenly he mustn't sit staring like this—Trant would wonder what was the matter with him. He took another drink. This horrible nervousness—his fingers were shaking so that he dropped the cork. But Trant didn't seem to notice. He had tossed his line to the bottom of the boat. He half turned to reach for a new strip of bait.

Now for it! Orner stooped for the cork he had dropped; he shoved it into the bottle; and when he straightened, the knife was in his hand. One lunge—

"My idea, Orner—" Damnable luck! As Trant turned to say something, despite the gloom he saw the knife. For that second he stared. It was a second of horror to Orner; his mind flashed with the realization that he must kill Trant now—or never. With his left hand, he flung the bottle. It struck Trant full in the face, bounced overboard; and before Trant could recover, with a snarl like a pouncing puma, Orner was on him. The blade sank,



Would it reach his heart? What difference! Shove it to the hilt—beyond the hilt—drive it like a nail—

It seemed that Trant only grunted—a choking gurgle. Hold him! He'll die in a second or two . . . the body lunged and twisted—a ghastly few seconds while Orner clung to the buried knife. The little boat rocked, almost overturned with its gunwale touching the water so that the panting Orner relinquished the knife and flung himself back, leaning against the opposite gunwale, breathless—but triumphant. The thing was done! Trant's body lay still with the knife buried to its hilt in his chest. . . .

For a moment Orner crouched, gathering his wits. Just a few things to do now—then he could go back and tell little Maida of the horrible accident that had happened to her beloved brother . . .

The iron anchor weighed thirty or forty pounds. It lay in the bow of the boat, with a rope coiled on it. The rope was fastened both to the anchor and to a ring in the bowpeak. Orner untied it from the ring; lifted the rope and anchor, lugged them to Trant's body.

Trant was lying face down, his rod still in his belt socket; the rod had cracked as Trant fell on it. Orner put the anchor against the legs, and lashed it firmly with the whole length of rope. No chance for it to get loose. Above everything, he made sure of that, winding the rope tightly around the anchor and the legs and tying it securely.

Then carefully he shoved the body over the tilted gunwale. He balanced the boat by leaning backward. The body was like a huge inert sack of meal. Entangled with the wreckage of the broken rod, it rolled over the gunwale, hit the water, sank and was gone, with the anchor dragging it down into the deep ocean.

HOW easy! For a moment the breathless Orner crouched in the rocking rowboat. Simple job! The blackness of the sullen ocean was solid now. No one could have seen what happened in the little rowboat poised in that vast empty black silence. Unbroken silence—there had been no sound save Trant's dying gurgling grunt, and the faint splash as his body went down . . .

All Orner's excitement was gone now. A wariness was on him—this was when murderers so often made an error that rose later to trap them. He must make no error now! A flashlight was in the boat. He lighted it; searched the interior of the boat carefully. Trant's tackle had gone down with him. No splintered piece from the broken rod was here! Orner made sure of it. Had the hook of Trant's line caught on the gunwale as Trant's body pulled it overboard? Orner made sure it had not.

No error! Trant and everything connected with him had gone down into the ocean depths forever.

Was there blood here in the boat? Orner found none. He leaned over the gunwale and washed his hands. He took off his shoes and his coat and let himself down over the stern until he was wholly immersed. He climbed back, dripping, sodden and cold. But warm with triumph.

Nothing lay ahead now but little Maida . . . rich and beautiful . . . her budding love for Orner would be even stronger now in her bereavement. He'd hold her close, telling her how he had tried to save her brother . . .

Orner seized the oars; rowed swiftly for shore; rowing with all his strength up the river, past the cypress lowlands, around the bend to the little plantation dock where the frightened Maida and some of the men stood with torches. At the end he rowed frantically. Well



before he landed he stood up in the boat, waving his arms and shouting the tragic, horrifying news of the accident to Trant.

Amazing how swiftly the plantation hands gathered by the little dock where the muddy, sullen river came around the bend. Like fire in the underbrush of the piny woods, the news spread that John Trant had been drowned.

In his sodden clothes, shoeless, Carl Orner stood on the palmetto-strewn rise of ground behind the dock, surrounded by awed horrified men, negroes and whites; and gasped out his story of the tragic happening.

"We had started to fish," he was saying. "I was fixing my tackle. Suddenly I looked up. Trant was standing up on the center seat—he'd seen a fish jump or something. Then all of a sudden he lost his balance—went overboard—it was dark, I didn't see him come up. I'm not much of a swimmer. I didn't dive after him right away—thought I could save him better if I stayed in the boat—"

Incoherent. Clever! He just babbled it out. And here was little Maida beside him. Her first burst of weeping was over. Shivering and cold, shocked and numbed she stood beside Orner. He put an arm protectingly around her.

The group stood gaping, jabbering questions. Annie Jeffries, the plantation cook, stood near. Her big husband, the foreman, stood flashlight in hand shoving the crowding frightened negroes away. He stared at Orner. Damn nasty stare. Jeffries was like that anyway. Orner had told him where he got off, only yesterday.

SO plausible a story. They believed it, of course. Somebody had rushed to another dock to get a big power boat. It had a searchlight. They'd go at

once; maybe Trant was still floating out there in the ocean, not yet drowned. Or they could recover his body? Orner chuckled to himself. With that anchor lashed to him Trant was down deep. They couldn't grapple so deep and discover the body . . . The end of Trant forever. . . .

"Let's hurry," Orner said. "Maybe he's still alive. Maybe I should have stayed out there—but I got rattled, I guess—all I could think of, after ten minutes or so, was coming for help."

Orner could feel little Maida shuddering against him. "I—I tried so hard to save him, Maida."

Rowley, one of the underforemen, said: "Well, he damn sure was a fair swimmer—"

The jostling ring of men murmured. Antagonism. Were they suspicious? A vague thrill of apprehension shot through Orner. What the devil was the difference? Nobody could find anything.

But could they? Green, the plantation manager, was down alone in the rowboat now, poking around with a flashlight. But he wouldn't find anything. What was there to find? Orner hadn't made any mistake.

A fair swimmer, Rowley had said. And despite Orner's swift flow of thoughts, he instantly retorted:

"Was he? Well, he was fully dressed—he had on a pretty heavy jacket—and big lumberman's boots, you remember? It was all dark. I never did see him, but I heard him yell once. A sort of gurgling cry—it sounded like pain. I guess maybe he was taken with a cramp—"

They couldn't disprove any of this, whether they believed it or not. Orner added:

"I got my shoes off. I dove after him. I'm not much of a swimmer. I never did see him or hear him, after that one cry—"



So easy!

Orner felt now that he was in no danger. Nobody could ever prove what he had done to Trant . . . But could they? Could some little tell-tale bit of evidence be found in the rowboat? Against all reason the thought startled Orner so that his mind swept off upon a tide of wild theories. Blood! That would be fatal. But he knew that wound hadn't spurted blood . . . Or had just a little got on his hand?

His shoes! He had left them in the boat. They were there now; undoubtedly Green was examining them with his flashlight. Blood on his shoes? He had taken off his shoes—his hands had touched them—blood from his hands, remaining now on his shoes! No, he had washed his hands *before* he touched his shoes.

**O**RNER'S heart leaped wildly into his throat, for out of the darkness Green suddenly called:

"Hey, where's the anchor? Trant had an anchor in this boat!"

Anchor! Horror surged over Orner. He'd forgotten that the anchor would be missing! But he steadied himself, as he answered:

"Anchor? I didn't see any . . . Oh, I remember now—when we got out there I suggested that we anchor. He said, no chance—he had no anchor."

From up the river came the speeding motor boat, its powerful white searchlight darting before it. Everybody forgot the anchor.

"I can show you pretty close to where we were," Orner said. "Come on everybody—let's hurry. Maybe he's still swimming."

Green came out of the rowboat and joined them as they all climbed into the big powerboat. Green sat in the stern with Orner beside him, and a group of

negroes around them. To Orner it seemed that Green looked queer. Had he found something in the rowboat to make him suspicious? Something more than that the anchor was missing?

The power boat swept down the river at railroad speed. Several men were in the bow, handling the big searchlight. The cypress swamps of the river bank were a dark blur sliding past . . . Then they were out on the black glassy ocean, the surface undulating with slow ground swells.

"Just about a mile, straight out—that what you said?" Green demanded.

Orner nodded. He sat holding Maida. He whispered to her.

"I do hope we get him, dear. I—I did my best—you'll always believe that?"

"Yes, Carl. Of course I will."

They'd sell the damn plantation . . . live in New York . . . Orner's thoughts were abruptly ended by a shout from one of the men in the bow:

"A floating bottle! Was this about where he went overboard? Cut off the engine!"

A floating bottle! The rum bottle disclosed now by the powerful searchlight! Orner remembered—he had jammed the cork back; and then had flung the bottle at Trant. The bottle had gone overboard. Of course it would be floating around. What difference did that make?

The engine died. The big boat swung. The men in the bow were fishing up the bottle. The big searchlight was swinging. No sign of Trant. Of course there wasn't. How could there be? Orner sat inwardly chuckling. Trant was down deep; they'd never find him. . . .

What were the men in the bow doing with the bottle? There was a commotion; the murmur of excited voices. Orner couldn't see anything because they were all in shadow behind the glar-



ing searchlight. Then a sudden new frightening thought swept him. The bottle had a New York distributor's label. They'd guess it was Orner's bottle.

Green ordered Orner to sit still and rushed the length of the boat to join the men at the bow. Maida went with him, but he shoved her back. Annie Jeffries was holding her. Then over the babble of confusion, Orner heard someone say:

"Poisoned liquor? You s'pose so? There's a little left—we can have it analyzed."

It calmed Orner's terror. They could have it analyzed and be damned to them. There was no poison in that rum.

FROM the bow came Green's voice, breaking a sudden stricken silence:

"Ye Gods—look—get Maida away—keep her back, Annie!"

Then Jeffries' voice roared: "Hey, bring that damned Yankee up here—"

The negroes pounced upon Orner. He fought. "Let me alone. I'm going. What—what is it?"

He reached the bow. His senses reeled . . . Why—why—it couldn't be. Trant's body had sunk with a forty

pound anchor tied to it . . . gone forever.

In a flash Orner knew what had happened. Damnable mischance! His mind swept back. He had dropped the cork into the bottom of the boat; in the gloom he had fumbled, found the cork and jammed it back into the bottle. But it wasn't the right cork! Trant's line and hook—six or eight feet of the line—had been lying in the dark bottom of the boat.

It was the cork tied to Trant's reel which Orner had shoved into the bottle! And Trant's body still had the rod and reel fastened to the belt socket. The body had sunk like a stone—gone down, down. But the strong fishline, a line capable of landing any fighting fish weighing hundreds of pounds, had reeled out a hundred yards of line or more with the rum bottle floating near the end of it.

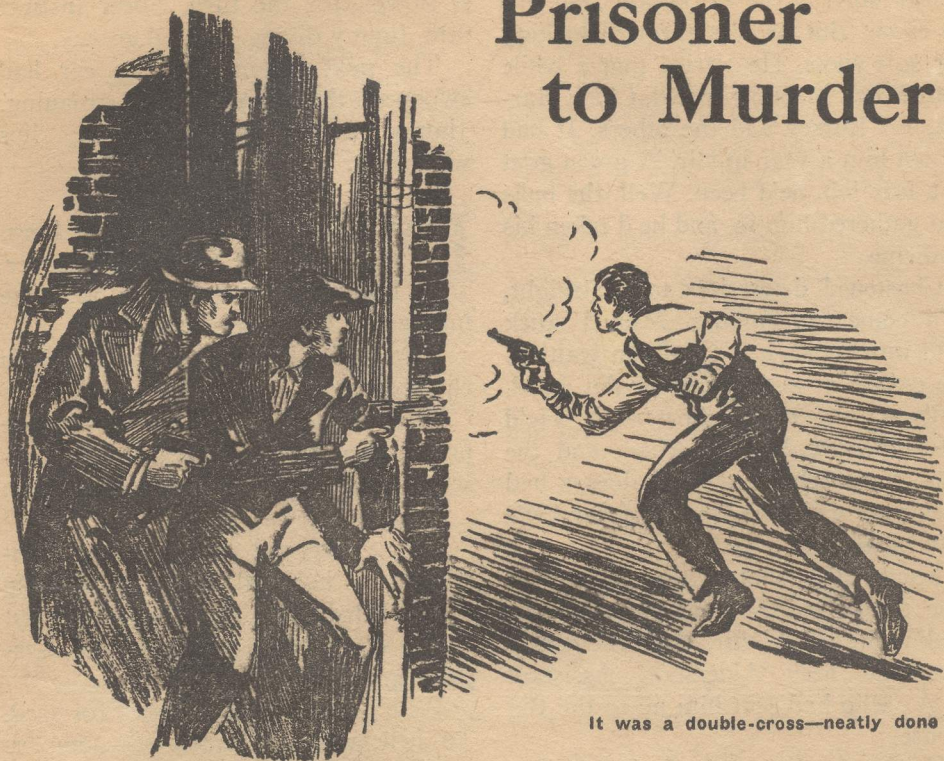
A marker! A buoy that marked Orner's crime. And the line lifted his victim up to the sight of all!

Numbed, pallid, shaking, Orner stared down at the gruesome, sodden thing before him—the body of Trant, with the anchor lashed to him, and the knife buried to its hilt.





# Prisoner to Murder



It was a double-cross—neatly done

By EARL W. SCOTT

*Author of "A Touch of Silver," "Kato Cries Kill," etc.*

*The Frame For That Kill Wasn't Complete Until Jimmy Spears, Reformed Ex-Con, Came Into the Picture Against His Will*

THE city lay, a sleeping monster, half-drugged by enveloping fog.

It was midnight. Few cars were on the boulevard, and the back streets were empty tunnels, where sullen street lights watched.

Jimmy Spears, greasy cap tugged low, was hurrying down Clark, whistling "Annie Rooney." He was thinking time was when that spreading curtain of wind-swept fog would have been welcome. That was over now.

A big copper pounded past, club

swinging, heavy chin tucked low in moist tunic collar.

Jimmy grinned at him. Why not? He was no longer a number but a citizen. A worker in unionalls, with a wife and a three months' old kid.

The spreading grin wiped the lines of weariness from his lean, earnest face.

Hard to get used to, that. Him a dad, lugging home ipecac and a rubber rattle—he nuzzled the package under his aching arm.

He was tired, sure—that eight hour



janitor shift at the Buckhorn Club was no cinch. But he was through looking for soft spots. He'd tried that a while with Mitch Marlin's crowd, Chick Harbin, Ed Bursey and the others. It had drawn him a year in stir. A green goat in a loft job, he'd been. Well, the bulls had gathered him in, and he'd taken his medicine.

Chastened, determined to go straight, he'd come out smiling. Milly'd stuck with him through it all—been waiting. He gulped at memory of it. An angel, Milly was—nothing short of it. He'd often wondered about Mitch and the boys. Ugly echoes of their doings had risen now and then, but he'd carefully avoided the old haunts.

Seeing Aldershot getting out of his blue coupe, ten minutes since, at the Club entrance had stirred his memory.

It had been Aldershot, Assistant D. A., who had sent him up to the Big House.

He shrugged away the dark thoughts, pausing at the corner of Fourth to fumble for a smoke. He glanced up, idly conscious of car lights approaching. A small coupé. Then, eyes narrowing, his fingers stilled. A second car, bearing no lights, was doggedly following—a lean, gray sedan.

"Hell," breathed Jimmy. "A stick-up." The words had scarcely left his mouth, when, gears surging to a roar, the tailing car leaped forward.

The coupe seemed to hesitate, then to gather speed.

For a long moment the machines raced parallel, jostling fenders. Then it came—wicked yellow flame darting savagely from the sedan's lowered window.

The coupe veered wildly, slowed, plunged forward again, nosing with a swerving lurch toward the curb. On rushed the sedan, brakes screaming as

it slowed for the turn. Sheer instinct sent Jimmy diving for a doorway.

The next instant the big car had swooped the curve, tires groaning. Jimmy caught quick breath, lips whitening.

**L**IKE a ghost from the past, the long, white face of the sedan's driver had sprung momentarily from the mist under the street light glow.

It was Muley Gates—Mitch Marlin's chauffeur.

That would be Marlin's car on the prowl. Staring after it, he was conscious of a choked, desperate cry. "Help—help—"

Jimmy stepped out, peering cautiously. A hundred yards up Fourth, crazily tilted lights glared unwinkingly.

The cry lifted again, agonized, despairing.

With a curse, Jimmy leaped forward. To hell with consequences,—someone was hurt, dying.

His thudding feet sounded hollowly as he approached the wreck, noting the blue colored coupe had leaped the curb, straddling a lamp post.

Belated caution veered his course to the building shadow and he slowed, panting heavily, eyes raking the scene. There was only wind-swept silence—no shrill of a cop's whistle or pound of approaching feet.

A choked groan lifted over the pulse of the still running motor. Grimly, Jimmy broke across the sidewalk.

Leaping to the running board, he stared down at the thick-set form inside. A man in a light top coat. Limp arms draped the wheel. The head, twisting sideways, exposed a pale, white face, nose glasses gleaming in the dash-light glow.

It was Attorney Aldershot. Blood bubbled at his lips' corners. The eyes



were closed. A growing ugly smear showed on his shirt front. Even as Jimmy watched, the thick form slid slowly sidewise, settling into the further corner. "Dead," gasped Jimmy. "They've done for him!"

A stealthy, scuffling sounded from behind. Jimmy stiffened, heart chilling.

"Stretch," snarled a husky voice, one he knew only too well—Chick Harbin's.

Something heavy slid into the pocket of his unionalls. Automatically his hand fell, closing about a warm-handled gun butt.

Behind lifted a hoarse chuckle. "Sure, it's a gat, bo—it ain't loaded—now."

Jimmy cursed bitterly, whipping round. The white blob of Chick Harbin's face leered up at him.

"Planted!" gritted Jimmy. "It's a dirty frame!"

Chick's breath sucked softly between his teeth. "Well, well," he hoarsed. "If it ain't the little stir bird, Jimmy Spears. How are y'u, Jimmy?"

Jimmy wet dry lips, answering nothing.

"COME off a-that," snarled the other, seizing his arm and jerking him to the cement. A second man rounded the coupe's rear, hat tugged low over a hatchet-thin face.

"Got him, eh?" he lipiped.

"Sure, Ed," Chick grinned, "And will you pipe who it is?"

"Spears!" grated Ed, squinting hard. "The two-timer."

"And with the goods on," grunted Chick, "hoverin' the stiff in the coupe—murder gat in his jeans. Don't forget that, Ed."

"I ain't forgettin' nothin'," growled the other.

Jimmy lunged forward. "You palukas are nuts!" he choked. "Whatever your quarrel was with Aldershot, I

claim no piece of it. I saw the chase—the sedan blasting lead—"

He broke off, gasping, as Chick's gun muzzle socked his ribs.

"The judge'd love that," he snarled. "Like you loved the guy there that sent you up."

Sweat stood on Jimmy's temples. He wet his lips, heart sinking. The enormity of the set-up paralyzed speech, carrying as it did, for him, every earmark of a grudge kill.

A car with doused lights was rolling the turn—the sedan. It braked down beside them. A door opened.

Chick said, "Climb in, bo."

Jimmy hesitated.

The boring gat's nose crowded harder. He stumbled up into the rear seat, still dazed by the swift turn of events.

Shadowy figures crouched in front. The driver let in gears, wheeling west.

Flanked by Chick on one side, Ed on the other, Jimmy huddled there, brain whirling, haggard eyes staring into the night. They'd turned the tables neatly, these two. Haunting the shadows, waiting for the pick-up. They'd spotted the lonely intruder—nailed him as a sucker.

He had been that sucker.

Cruel chance had tossed him neatly into their laps. Once more he'd been made the goat—this time for murder.

What a fool he'd been, nosing into the thing. Tough to ignore that cry for help—but he should have known better, laid off.

His thoughts flew to Milly, waiting beside the crib. He wouldn't be back now with the medicine or the rattle bought at the Cut Rate Drugstore after leaving the Club.

A sob tore at his throat—she'd stood enough already and now there was this!



MISERABLY, he noted they'd turned down Sixteenth, just short of the Precinct Station. Hot rage burned at the pit of his stomach. If he could only yell, attract a cop's attention. But what percentage in that? True, he might implicate Chick, Ed, and these other guns—but his was the pocket that carried the murder weapon—his prints were even there to point the finger. It meant months in jail, a trial—with Mitch's money greasing the skids.

Through that swift ride, the others had stayed silent. Savagely, he turned on Chick.

"What's it all about?" he choked thickly. "You've stuck the goods on me—so what?"

The hoarse chuckle rumbled Chick's gross throat. He shrugged heavy shoulders. "That's up to Mitch, but he'll say it's sweet, won't he, Ed?"

Ed grunted, spitting on the floor.

Jimmy thought. Small mercy he could expect at Mitch Marlin's hands. He hadn't minced matters at that trial of his. Told a straight story, but Mitch would call it squawking. In some mysterious manner, Mitch had been whitewashed. Two years ago that had been, but Marlin's memory was long.

The car rolled up a side street, curbing at a familiar door. The old hangout—Sladen's Pool Parlor.

Jimmy's heart sank as Chick crowded him out onto the sidewalk. They went through the side door, mounting dusty, uncarpeted stairs. Still crowding Jimmy between them, Ed rapped on the door with his gun butt. A voice answered and they went inside.

With a sinking heart, Jimmy's eyes swept the room. The same chairs, the worn rug, the pictures of box fighters plastering the dingy walls all brought memory back with a rush.

The place was blue with smoke. Brilliant light glared from a low-dropped mazda over a corner desk. And in the shadow beyond, like an evil sphinx, sat Mitch Marlin.

He showed squat, powerfully built, well dressed in powder blue. A big solitaire glittered like an evil eye as a pudgy hand lifted to remove the long cigar from between his lips.

"Huh," he grunted, lurching forward, eyes narrowing under the drooping rim of his hat brim.

"Where'd you pick up the rat?"

Jimmy tore free of Chick's clawing fingers, strode swiftly forward.

"You can sign off on that, Mitch," he grated. "Your guns here pulled an up-town kill and planted the hot rod on me—but they can't get away with it!"

His hand flashed for the sagging pocket, but a gun muzzle boring his kidney froze the action.

"Nix," hoarsed Chick in his ear, fishing the rod out delicately with a handkerchief-covered hand. "The rod that killed Aldershot," he stated, tossing it to the desk. "Guess Jimmy here figured a grudge kill, you know, on the shyster that sent him up?"

He paused suggestively as a slow smile grew on Mitch's heavy face. "Me and Ed just happened along and found him prowlin' the Aldershot coupe after it hit a lamp post," Chick concluded.

"THAT'S a damn lie!" Jimmy choked desperately. "It was these rods that ironed Aldershot—I was at the corner when the sedan crowded him into the curb—heard him hollerin' for help, and ran up. I'd been a sap to kill Aldershot. I've been washed up on the rough stuff for a year—married—got a kid—" he choked on that, his tumble of words slowing, dying in his throat. What was



the use, spilling your heart out to these red hots?

Ed spit noisily, and Chick laughed low in his throat. Without thought, Jimmy's fist flashed out, hard knuckles smacking like a pile driver on the scoffer's chin.

Chick pivoted, sagging to his knees; cursing bitterly, his gat swept up.

Mitch's swift words rattled like shots. "Stow it, you punk."

Muttering savagely, Chick glared a moment, then slowly lowered his weapon. "Later, rat," he growled, staggering to his feet.

"So?" Mitch settled his heavy body, big head nodding affirmatively. "You killed Aldershot, eh? Damn good rid-dance, Jimmy—I could shake your hand on that."

Fuming inwardly, hot words bitten off at his lips, Jimmy straightened. His face glowed whitely, granite hard. What use making denials? It was an air-tight frame. For the moment he was helpless. It was unquestionable that Mitch would hold the murder club over his head, but what use he'd make of it remained to be seen.

Mitch sucked noisily on the cigar. In the shade's shadow his eyes gleamed speculatively.

"Sort of neat, eh, Mitch?" Ed spoke from his slash of a mouth. "We thought—"

"Who the hell cares what you thought?" snarled Mitch. "You birds ankle on outa here." He waved a thick arm.

Ed stared, shrugged thin shoulders, turning toward the door. Chick followed, nursing his swelling jaw, muttering under his breath. The door slammed. Their footsteps died away.

Marlin blew a smoke ring, eyes slowly running down over Jimmy's stained, worn unionalls.

Jimmy's chin came up. "Well?" he said.

Mitch smirked, spoke softly. "Tough sledding, stokin'—with a kid to support?"

Jimmy swallowed. "It's honest—I'm not complaining."

"Sure, sure." Mitch Marlin was being nice. It spelled trouble. He jerked a thumb toward the gun lying on the desk before him. "The cops'd like to see that," he breathed, "but they won't, if you're sensible."

Jimmy gulped. "I never killed Aldershot. They can't make it stick—"

MITCH creaked forward, heavy face gone wolfish. "That's a myth and you know it. Some choice words in the right place and you hit the hurdles—but you've done me a service, kid." He pursed thick lips. "Aldershot was poison to me. I don't forget favors. I'm cutting you in on a job tomorrow night."

Jimmy said, white-lipped. "The answer's *no* before you start!"

Mitch frowned, boring on. "I'm guessing five hundred would set pretty well with the wife, eh, Jimmy—buy a few things?"

"Not your kind of dough," gritted Jimmy.

"Stow it!" Mitch's fist crashed the desk top. "You talk my way—or else—" his hand flashed out toward the cradled phone.

Jimmy's haggard eyes followed that movement. Bluff? Maybe—maybe not. After all, it might prove some simple job. Bitterly, he thought, what chance had a guy to go straight under the heel of a scum like Marlin? It sickened him to think of how easily a year's straight living might be erased by a half hour's crooked work. Still, there seemed no alternative—perhaps with this off his



chest, Mitch ~~might~~ relax. He and Milly could slip away to some distant town—"Well?" Mitch whipped out.

Jimmy's shoulders drooped. He spoke hoarsely. "What's on your mind?" he found himself saying.

Mitch laughed, pressing a worn bell at his elbow. A door opened at the rear, and a girl drifted in, wearing gaudy satin pajamas. Beyond her shoulder appeared well furnished living quarters.

"Yes?" she spoke throatily, heavily mascaraed eyes whipping over the pair.

Jimmy looked at her as if he'd never seen her before. She had wavy, taffy-colored hair, and pouting lips. She was high breasted, with bare pearl-white arms.

"Scotch and soda, Lil," Mitch tossed over a shoulder.

Lil turned without closing the door, grass sandals scuffing over the thick-piled rug.

Mitch lit a fresh smoke, pawed in the desk drawer, fishing out a city map.

Thick fingers raced over the finely drawn lines.

"Here," he grunted. "Finnister Street—the Lang Canning Factory—know it?"

Jimmy nodded dumbly.

Lil shuffled in, preceded by a wave of jasmine perfume.

She set the tray on the desk, splashed out whiskey and fizzed the soda.

Mitch tossed it off, reached over, absently patting her rounded thigh. Jimmy, watching, surprised a swift look of loathing in her swiftly dropped glance. Then she smiled. Circling the desk, she sank to Mitch's chair arm.

Mitch said, "Old Lang has taken to sneaking his pay roll in at night. Too many daylight knockovers." He grinned crookedly. "We've fixed to grab the pay car tomorrow night."

His glance lifted, boring Jimmy's. His lips slowly smiled. "The knockover's in the bag," he said, "but you blowin' in here with the boys set me thinkin'. You know the dick, O'Toole?"

Jimmy started.

Mitch laughed. "Sure, you know 'm. He framed the dope that sent you up on that loft job. And plenty else. Happens to be the joker in my deck right now. Somebody in the know has been stoolin' to that louse—but we'll let that ride. Thing is, he's *another* guy we can both do without, eh, Jimmy?"

JIMMY'S face blanched. He wet dry lips. Already he was guessing Mitch's ultimatum. Lieutenant O'Toole—sure, he'd worked his old case—but Jimmy held no venom for that. O'Toole was his parole officer. A good guy, with a nice smile. Bucking you up when things got tough.

And now Mitch was saying, "That bird's got to go, Jimmy. Tomorrow night you iron him."

Icy eyes stared out from the low-pulled hat brim. Behind him sat Lil, quiet lids lowered, one sandaled foot swaying gently.

Body rigid, mouth dry, Jimmy breathed, "Murder O'Toole?"

The girl caught her breath. Mitch nodded grimly.

"Two birds with one stone, kid. The knockover and the scalp of a nosy copper. Sweet, eh? Listen: Finnister is the one street that pay car can roll in over. The rest're blind alleys. The boys'll be parked at each end, plenty heeled."

His thick forefinger thudded the spread map. "Make this spot—it's just west of the factory. O'Toole comes runnin' in past that point. How do I know? Skip it. There's four high tension light poles grouped there and



you'll be behind 'em. Whichever way the car comes in, the boys will pocket it.

"They'll grab the loot and drop it off at the west corner there in the dark. Any bulls on the job will be drawn off by the knockover cars fakin' a run for it. Lil here," he squeezed her supple waist, "will slide up in her roadster, lights doused, and pick up the swag. But forget that."

He waved an arm. "Your job's to get O'Toole when he blows in past those light poles. Then fade, and to hell with you—our account's squared."

For the moment silence ticked ominously. Then Jimmy said through stiff lips.

"Murder's out—I won't kill O'Toole."

Sweeping the girl aside, the other was on his feet, eyes glittering with fury.

"You damn yellow moocher! Think I'm spillin' my guts for a bedtime story? No, you say? That's a laugh, with the chair hanging over you—think they'll believe your fairy tale, findin' Aldershot, already a stiff—you with a grudge and a printed gat? But you won't even get that far. Listen—" he lurched across the desk, his voice lowering to brittle monotone, "you're pullin' this job and liking it."

He thumbed twice at the bell.

Lips parted, face inscrutable, Lil crouched by the desk end, watching. A haunted, beaten look crept into Jimmy's face. For the moment he was licked. There seemed no out.

Feet sounded in the hall. The door opened. Chick and the hatched-faced Ed entered.

Mitch swung, clawing for his kicked-back chair. Chick's glance clashed the girl's, warmed. He winked slowly. Lil smiled.

MITCH was speaking. "The kid here's seen ligh. He's handling the O'Toole end tomorrow night—show him into six and see he sleeps well."

Wordlessly, Jimmy turned, urged into the empty hall. Prisoner to murder—that's what he was. They'd guard him well till the job was done.

He thought of Milly waiting patiently for his return in the basement flat—he wouldn't come back tonight or maybe any other, for that matter.

With his knowledge of the knockover and refusal to kill the copper, he was meat for the morgue—even ironing O'Toole—what then? A quick fade, as Mitch promised? That was a laugh—scarcely Mitch's methods.

They approached the hall end. Behind him, Ed was muttering. "Better sign off on Lil, Chick—if Mitch tumbles—"

"Can I help the old appeal?" Chick laughed harshly.

"I'll send lilies," offered Ed.

Chick kicked open a door and with a swift, stiff arm sent Jimmy hurtling through. "Sweet dreams, sap," he growled.

The door banged shut. A bolt shot.

White-faced, Jimmy glared about, crossed over and sank down on the creaking bed. Beside it, a single chair completed the room's furnishing.

Sick at heart, he sprawled there, oblivious of passing time or the chill creeping into his bones. His brain ached with thinking. Hollow-eyed, he stared into the dark. How could he block Mitch's game? How warn O'Toole?

He jerked from troubled dosing, staring at the door. It was creaking open. He held breath, easing up to an elbow.

A dark figure brushed through. The door swished shut. There came a breathless pause, filled by sound of



stified breathing, a sweet, unmistakable scent—jasmine perfume.

"Lil—" snapped Jimmy. "What the—"

"Sh," hissed the girl. She was across the room, kneeling beside the bed, fingers sinking into his arm.

"Listen, guy," swift words came tumbling. "If Mitch knew I was here, it'd be curtains."

Jimmy grunted. "So what?"

"Lay off this factory kill," she whispered desperately. "They're framing you—there's got to be a goat for the cop killer and it'll be you."

Jimmy stared hard, then spoke low in his throat. "Yeaha? I'd guessed as much, but why the personal interest?"

Her wide-eyed, tense face glowed up at him whitely in the dark. The full lips flattened above gleaming teeth. Emotion pulsed in her soft body where it pressed his knee.

"Don't kid yourself the tip-off's for your sake alone, punk—but I got reasons."

"They must be good, crossing your man."

"**H**E'S that no more," she spit. "He's made life hell for me, the damn beast! I could show you marks all over my body—look there!" She tilted her chin. Her white throat glowed a foot from Jimmy's face. Even in the dim light from the window he could make the ugly fingermarks.

He nodded shortly. "Listen," he growled. "I'm not sold on shooting O'Toole—but why—?"

"Cry mercy? That dick did me a favor once," her tones grew sullen. "I'm returning it, that's all."

Jimmy spoke desperately. "Tip O'Toole, Lil—that's safest—"

"With Mitch's double-o on me? That's a laugh."

Jimmy scowled. The dick's safety worried the girl, but she still wanted her share of the sugar, that was evident.

She surged on. "Get the set-up? Keep mum—let the pay dough come through. I'll pick up the swag, only you pull punches on O'Toole—" she paused abruptly.

Footsteps were creaking down the bare boarded hall. The light of early dawn was coming from the curtainless window. The steps paused at the door. Breathlessly, the two in that dim room tensed forward. Sweat stood on Jimmy's temples. Lil huddled there, hand across her mouth, eyes stretched in terror.

The steps moved on. A door opened, slammed.

Lil struggled to her feet. "Well, what's the answer, kid? Hurry!"

"One minute," Jimmy breathed. "What makes Mitch so sure O'Toole will be on the job—pass those light poles?"

"He lives just across that back lot. When hell cracks, he'll come on the double. To make sure, Mitch has him phoned."

"The skunk," Jimmy gritted. It was increasingly evident that the knockover was the lure to insure the officer's death—that the frame hadn't been complete till he'd hit the picture. He was being crossed by Mitch, but behind lingered a hate-filled woman holding the joker.

Somewhere in that riddle, with luck, he might find the answer, the saving of O'Toole. Now he could but play the cards as they lay.

Lil was clawing at his sleeve. "You fool!" she chattered. "Make up your mind!"

"Okay, it's us for it." He rose, thrusting out a hand.

She seized it feverishly.

"When O'Toole passes, I hold fire."



You trail in, picking up the loot and me—that it?"

"Right." She swung toward the door, paused, listening at the panels. Then, twisting the knob she was through, the latch clicking dully. There came only the occasional sound of creaking boards as she crept away.

THE big sedan slid silently through the gloom. Behind orange-glowed lights dogged its trail—the second car, and Lil's roadster.

Mist filmed the windows. Automatic wipers sobbed monotonously on the windshield. In the back seat, Jimmy crouched tensely, once more flanked by Chick and the hatchet-faced Ed. There were eight men on the job. Four to each car.

Last loaded had been the tommy guns. Jimmy had shuddered at sight of them. They spelled the ugly realities of the night's work. He was as yet unarmed. They'd see to that later.

He wondered about Mitch. That last moment before the cars left the alley curb at the pool hall, Mitch had appeared, crossing the walk, and entered the roadster with Lil. Her startled exchange of glances with Chick had spelled this was an unexpected move. Did Mitch suspect something? How would it affect the girl's plans? Only time could tell.

That long, miserable day had dragged endlessly. Jimmy guessed he had walked miles pacing the narrow confines of the bare room above the pool parlor.

What was Milly doing, thinking? How was she taking his prolonged absence? No doubt she'd phoned the Buckhorn that morning. Small aid, that. He'd left at midnight, been swallowed in the dark. She knew Aldershot had sent him to prison. Would she read the papers, guess that he in some way was

connected with the attorney's killing? Improbable, likely.

But he'd spent their last dollar for the baby's medicine at the drugstore. There was little food in the place. Up and down, back and forth he'd tramped, haggard eyed, hollow cheeked, racking his aching head for some means of communicating with Lieutenant O'Toole. Twice he'd tried the door. It was locked. Outside, below that single window, furtive figures lurked throughout the day—Mitch's men.

His one hope was the girl, Lil. She'd claimed owing O'Toole a favor. What was the girl's game? Fading with the loot, probably, contacting Chick. Jimmy hadn't missed the tell-tale glances between the two.

He'd scarcely touched the handouts brought to him from the lunch counter below, had welcomed almost gladly the growing darkness, the action of the coming night.

Ed was stirring beside him, fumbling for a cigarette. Chick growled, "Nix on that. We're closin' in."

They were rolling up Finnister. The car slid to a halt beside a signboard.

Chick said, "All right, punk," and seizing Jimmy's arm, shoved him through the door onto the curb.

When the sedan moved off, Chick still stood beside him. He wasn't surprised. They'd scarcely leave him unguarded. He thought bitterly that Mitch was going to a lot of trouble, planting O'Toole's killing on him when any rod might have done it, but putting a guy gone straight on a hated copper tickled Mitch's vanity, his sense of humor.

JIMMY squinted eyes into the mist. The bleak hulk of the Canning Factory loomed on the right. Wind stirred lonesomely in the rank weed growth about the signboard.



Chick said through his teeth, "From now on you say 'papa' to me—get goin'. We're headed for those four light poles back there."

He jerked a thumb.

Shoulders sagging, head drooping, Jimmy complied. He'd long decided on the role of subjection.

Inside he seethed, muscles tensed, nerves fiddle strings.

So Chick was his guard, his mentor to murder. Let him watch himself.

Swiftly, they crossed the open space at the factory rear, plunging into the wall shadow, bringing up beside the grouped light poles at the gaunt building corner.

A single light glowed steadily across the block-wide vacant lot behind them.

"O'Toole's," muttered Chick. "He'll come in from there."

Jimmy shivered, glaring about. Forward along the gleaming wall an arc light lit the factory entrance.

Half-blinded by running against that glow, O'Toole would be a sweet target for many yards.

Chick crowded closer. "I'm passin' you a gat, feller," he gritted, his own gun muzzle grinding savagely into Jimmy's side, "and you'd better shoot straight—at O'Toole," he chuckled hoarsely.

Jimmy's heart chilled as the cold steel pressed his palm. He answered nothing, poising on the balls of his feet. If he'd ever doubted Mitch's intention before, it was erased now. He'd shoot O'Toole and Chick would shoot him—it was as easy as that. Later, they'd find him, murder gun clutched in his hand, apparently victim of the Detective's return fire—small doubt but that O'Toole would put up a scrap.

Two blocks over, a street car squealed the turn, churning eastward.

Up Finnister Street a car horn

sounded. The fanning lights swept nearer, picking up the figure of a girl, tossing a jack into a roadster's turtle. The light gleamed on her skirt, the flash of silken clad legs as she dodged in under the wheel. Lil, thought Jimmy. The roadster moved off.

The lights of the approaching machine drew closer, rolling into the outer radiance cast by the arc light—a big, brown limousine.

"That's her," snarled Chick. "The pay car."

A man hunched beside the driver. There were others in the back seat. Then, catapulting out of the dark, lights doused, a second car swept up, belching fire. The familiar gray sedan.

"That's Ed," chuckled Chick. "What a bellyful he's handin' 'em."

Weaving dexterously, like a darting fox, the sedan rushed on. The pay car slowed, wobbling wildly, veered, plunging into the building corner, vomiting orange flame.

Pouncing out of the north, a second car whirled down, chattering death. Came a gurgling, choked cry—silence. Firing from the brown pay car had stopped.

THE touring car that had flashed from sight beyond the building backed swiftly into view again, pausing with a jerk, brakes howling. Men dropped from the running board, dove for the pay car.

Crouching by the light poles, the gat sweating his palm, Jimmy stared at the swiftly moving drama, conscious of Chick's quick breathing behind his ear—the menacing bore of the gun in his ribs.

Far down Finnister came the bleat of a police whistle, topped instantly by the distant wail of a siren.

A single figure broke from the pay



car, darting into the wall shadow. Feet came racing.

A heavy object plopped into the weeds a few feet distant. The pay roll bag. The feet pounded away. Furtive figures about the wrecked car had vanished. Nearer and nearer wailed the approaching siren.

"For God's sake, where's O'Toole?" snarled Chick, then broke off abruptly.

There came the thud of running feet in the open lot behind them. At the same instant two orange lights flashed on—off, at the block head. Lil's roadster, tipping the dick's approach.

"Okay, punk, watch your step," snarled Chick.

Crouching low, breath whistling through set teeth, Jimmy whirled. O'Toole's bobbing figure was nearing them, a tall, hatless man in shirtsleeves. Steel gleamed dully in his swinging right hand.

Panting heavily, he raced forward. He was abreast of them, not twenty feet away, was swinging past, eyes squinted into the light glare.

"Now—let him have it!" This from Chick, gun nose grinding into Jimmy's side. His words were drowned by the police car flashing the corner, brakes howling.

Flame blazed from the bandit touring car as it leaped to flight.

A sob rose in Jimmy's throat. Milly's name fluttered on his lips—then he fired. That last instant his gat, arching round to cover the officer's flight, flipped leftward and down, the belching bullet tearing through the screaming Chick's shoulder. He reeled backward, tugging trigger, and Jimmy gasped as clawing pain seared his left arm.

Tiger-like, he was on the squirming figure of Chick, his gun butt chopping, sinking into an ear. Chick shuddered, stilled.

Lunging upright, Jimmy's glance swept round. Dazedly, he sensed the figure of O'Toole rounding the corner. The cop car's arrival had covered the minor drama beside the light poles—up Finnister, pursued by the dogging cop car, fled the decoy touring.

JIMMY swabbed a hand across his eyes, scarcely conscious of the pulsing pain in his bleeding arm. The roadster—Lil—where was she? Something must have gone wrong. Then he galvanized to action. The pay satchel—it might yet be saved!

Stumbling across Chick's sprawled body, he pawed among the wet weeds, rose triumphantly with the heavy, padlocked satchel.

Plunging madly toward the building corner, he yelled hoarsely: "O'Toole! O'Toole—this way!"

Then the big building sprang to light, every window a piercing eye. Ugly realities came to life. Smoky flames streaming from the hood of the pay car, the figure of a hatless man sprawling its running board, a copper sagging at the curb twisting a tourniquet about a dangling arm—a fat man reeling toward the office, arms clutched across a tortured middle, and lastly, like a wolf in the night, the roadster, lights doused, slithering forward along the building wall.

Jimmy caught it all with one enveloping glance, then, blinded by the glare, pitched headlong over a weed-strewn creeper.

Gasping, he struggled to his knees, still clutching the bag, as the roadster rushed in so close the bumper jostled his thigh.

He threw backward, ear drums ringing with the sudden bursting explosion behind that gleaming windshield.

A man's figure rocketed out, rolling



into a limp huddle directly at his feet—a thick-set man in a blue suit.

"Mitch!" choked Jimmy, eyes lifting.

A white arm had slid out over the slammed door, a hand clustered with rings, snatched the satchel from his fingers.

"Thanks, sap," Lil's voice, ringing shrilly. There was a blast of fire in his eyes, a burning pain at his temple, faint echo of a second shot—then came hell-black darkness.

**H**IS head was one throbbing agony, as Jimmy lifted leaden lids. As consciousness grew, he sensed activity about him. An ambulance backing up to the pay car, coppers moving about.

The roadster standing silently a few feet away. O'Toole's anxious face loomed above him.

He grinned faintly. "They didn't get you, huh?" he breathed.

"Hardly, kid," O'Toole laughed shortly, dropping to a knee. "Thanks to your yellin', I blew the turn just as Lil sapped Mitch Marlin and grabbed the roll—I winged her down but not in time to save you taking lead. Funny about Lil." O'Toole stared into the night. "I'd given her a hand several times. Thought maybe she was washin' up on the racket."

Jimmy thought of Mitch's words, "Somebody's been stoolin' to that louse." It had likely been Lil.

"Pure yellow," breathed Jimmy. He was thinking grimly Lil had crossed Mitch, the boys, himself.

Then suddenly he wove to an elbow. "Milly," he gasped. "The kid—"

"All skeeky," O'Toole pushed him gently back, "and the doc'll be here in a minute to patch you up. Milly's been in

touch with me all day—phoned H.Q. early this morning."

With a rush the ugly hours returned. Jimmy sank back, groaning.

"It was a frame-up, O'Toole," he said faintly. "The red-hots grabbed me by Aldershot's car last night. I saw the mix—thought I might help. They planted the kill-gun on me, tried forcing me to kill you tonight when you answered the SOS—but I—I plugged Chick instead."

O'Toole's fingers pressed his arm. "Save it, Jimmy," he offered grimly. "Tell it later. I guessed something of the kind when I found the rattle in the gutter beside Aldershot's car."

"Rattle—the kid's?" A sob choked in Jimmy's throat.

O'Toole nodded. "I traced you to the drugstore from the Club. You'd left there on foot. I figured your route home. It checked Fourth and Clark—the time was right—"

"Sure," said Jimmy, groaning restlessly, "but that wasn't so hot, was it? I could have killed Aldershot—"

O'Toole laughed. "Guys totin' ipecac and rattles make damn poor suspects. You see, the Assistant D.A. has been sharpening hooks for Mitch's scalp for some time. And when Murphy on the Buckhorn beat spotted Mitch's sedan doing French leave from the alley, last night, right after Aldershot left the Club, well, we added two and two."

"And dumb guys like I was once, think they can beat the law." Jimmy grinned crookedly. "Going straight's easier." Nausea swept him. He closed his eyes.

"Easier?" O'Toole's voice reached him through a curtain of pain. "Sure, when you got the guts!—Here comes the Doc and maybe it ain't time."



# Civil Service Q & A

By "G-2"

## Could You Qualify as —

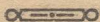
Police Patrolman  
Police Detective  
Policewoman  
Fingerprint Expert  
State Trooper  
Crime Prevention  
Investigator  
Probation Officer  
Criminologist  
Police Radio Expert

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

*This department will give you every week typical questions asked in civil service examinations.*



### Police Test (Continued)



**P**REVIOUS questions in this test for sergeant of police covered rules and regulations and laws and ordinances and while they were interesting as an example of what a police sergeant is expected to know about those subjects, the most interesting part of the entire test is the section which follows—Report and Administration—for it is under these headings that the most important phases of police work are covered. The section on report follows:

Q42—Assume that in the month of March you were John Doe, a sergeant attached to the 90th Precinct and temporarily assigned to strike duty to patrol a section so seriously affected by a strike of building service employees (elevator operators, doormen, etc.) that feeling was intense, with occasional clashes between opposing groups.

Write a report in proper form for the information of the Police Commissioner, to be forwarded through official channels, stating (a) the conditions and facts which

confronted you while on patrol during a day tour and during an evening tour; (b) the part played by members of the force; (c) your conclusions, in the light of experience, on what a uniformed patrolman should do and should not do when assigned to a post at a picketed building where trouble is expected.

Constructive criticism and logical conclusions based on clear-cut analysis are essential. Correct English, including punctuation and capitalization, is required. Sign this report: *John Doe, Sergeant, 90th Precinct*. If you sign your right name, or any other name, you will be disqualified.

Answer: (a)

New York, N. Y.  
March 12, 1936.

From: John Doe, Sergeant, 90th Precinct.

To: The Police Commissioner (through official channels).

Subject: Report on the Building Service Employees Union strike disclosing conditions involved, the work of members of the Force and observations and conclusions respecting the duties of a uniformed patrolman when assigned to a post at a picketed building where trouble is expected.

(a) Conditions and facts which are likely to be found under the circumstances as outlined above:

(1) A strike involving such buildings as are inhabited by human beings is a dan-



ger in cold weather due to the possibility of water pipes freezing through lack of proper attention, thus leading to water waste and a possible fire hazard.

(2) Owing to the possibility of explosions of boilers handled by inexperienced strike-breakers, there is a danger of a shut-off of light and power and injury of human beings and general confusion, perhaps panic.

(3) Owing to the lack of elevator service in tall buildings, persons of unsound health, particularly those with heart and lung ailments, might suffer from the necessity of climbing many flights of stairs and need immediate medical attention.

(4) The gathering of tenants and office and apartment occupants in hallways and lobbies is likely to foment agitation and argument and lead to serious disorder.

(5) Property destruction may be extensive because of many windows which might be broken by strikers and their sympathizers; and the possibility of damage to elevators.

(6) Inexperienced and incompetent employees hired to replace strikers may result in injury to citizens because of carelessness on part of said strike-breakers in operating elevators.

(7) Sidewalks congested and business and traffic seriously interfered with by the massing on sidewalks and in streets of strikers and sympathizers, and efforts by radical agitators to inspire the commission of unlawful acts against life and property.

(8) Thefts and other offenses committed in buildings concerned by strike-breakers of questionable character taking advantage of confusion.

(9) Danger of death and injury to persons as a result of conflicts and clashes between strikers and strikebreakers.

(10) The general unfavorable effect of such a strike on business, transportation and health conditions throughout the city.

(b) Activities of members of the Force. The function of the Force, and each member of it, is to preserve the peace, safeguard life and property and essential government activities; to prevent crime, confusion and disorder, enforce laws, detect and apprehend offenders.

In this, as in all strikes, the Department serves as a referee to see that the strike is lawfully conducted; that life, limb and property are not unprotected.

It is essential to proper and adequate police service during a strike of this nature that the captain in each precinct survey his district to determine the location of buildings affected by the strike, the number and size of such buildings, the number of persons employed, such operating facts as the number of elevators, boilers, motors, etc.; the names and addresses of the building owners, managers, superintendents and janitors.

The captain should make a personal study of the situation and determine where the possibility of trouble is greatest and what obstacles would face his men in the event of trouble.

As soon as possible, the facts developed by such a survey should be communicated to the proper departmental bureau so that adequate preparation may be made to provide immediate protection and facilities for handling casualties, offenders and public business.

Rules, ordinances and law affecting strikes should be enumerated and explained to all members of the Force likely to come in contact with the strike so that in every eventuality proper police action will follow.

Owners of property involved, their managers and superintendents, should be interviewed by members of the Force; likewise strikers and strikebreakers also should be interviewed and each and all of them advised as to their rights and cautioned against any illegal or harmful act. These persons should be warned that, without exception and partiality, all offenders will be treated alike and dealt with swiftly.

NOTE—The above is a model answer. Frequently candidates with superior reasoning powers excel the model answers prepared by examiners. In some cases, civilians have been known to formulate better answers than experienced officers.)

Section C (continuing the above report)  
What uniformed patrolmen should do:

(1) Be continuously alert and watchful.

(2) Ascertain at once where and by what means assistance can be summoned by the quickest means in the event of sudden trouble.

(3) Study the buildings to determine exits and entrances in case of emergency.

(4) Warn all concerned that infractions



of laws will be summarily and impartially dealt with.

(5) Maintain a neutral courteous attitude towards all parties concerned.

(6) Compel pickets to observe ordinances and laws and constantly bear in mind that it is a patrolman's duty to anticipate trouble and act to prevent it. Should he observe any movement that indicates disorder he should order someone to relay a message to headquarters calling for such assistance as he deems necessary to take care of the situation.

A patrolman should not:

(1) Depart from his post. But when necessary to do so for meals or in an emergency, he must arrange to have another patrolman cover it in his absence.

(2) Do anything that would give strikers or strikebreakers the impression that he is lazy, shiftless or indifferent to his official responsibilities.

(3) Should not be overfriendly or unfriendly with either side of the strike controversy but seek at all times to impress both sides with his neutrality and his determination to do his duty.

(4) Should not lounge around or engage in unnecessary talk with anyone, including other patrolmen.

Respectfully,

JOHN DOE,

Sergeant, 90th Precinct.

THE Q AND A BOX.

*Questions pertaining to civil service examinations will be answered without*

*charge. If a personal reply is desired, enclose stamped, addressed envelope.*

Oscar Hedberg, John P. Doherty and others. If the examination announcement requires a statement of your physical fitness, ask the U. S. Civil Service for its Physical Fitness form 13, a yellow sheet. The physician who examines you must certify your height and weight, vision with and without glasses, color vision, symptoms of diseases in the digestive, nervous, genito-urinary, respiratory and circulatory systems; the presence of tuberculosis, organic heart disease, imperfect speech, mental defects, epilepsy, venereal disease, Bright's disease, diabetes, spinal disease or abnormal curvature, skin disease, malignant disease, loss of hand, foot, arm or leg, deformed or crippled hand, foot, arm or leg, hernia. In addition, he must certify to what extent, in his opinion, any disease found might interfere with the applicant's work. Several tests are given to determine the applicant's ability to hear. In the event of appointment all applicants (in tests where physical requirements are fixed) must submit to a thorough examination by a Federal medical officer. All statements made by the applicant in form 13 are considered part of the sworn application which is attested by an oath made before a notary or other person legally empowered to administer an oath. It is bad business to make a false statement in the physical fitness form.

**Coming Next Week—The Concluding Test on Scientific Crime Detection**







# They're Swindling You!

Frauds!

By

Frank Wrentmore

*This is the seventy-fifth 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*

**M**ANY frauds follow old formulas and if you avoid the types which follow you'll save money. Each of these firms has received a formal communication from Postmaster-General Farley captioned "Fraud Order" and I am merely telling you what the post office inspectors found.

J. M. Barlow of St. Louis, while on parole from Leavenworth Penitentiary, dropped back into one of his old habits, that of operating a "home work scheme" in which he obtained a "deposit" from women who answered his advertisements offering an opportunity to make money at home addressing envelopes. He admitted to post office inspectors that no person had earned any money through following his instructions.

Another "envelope addressing scheme" was that of J. Levinson, who operated as the "Linden Laboratories" of Hammond, Ind. Those who responded to his classified advertisements were asked to send \$2.95 for a so-called "Combination Gift Package" of cosmetics and to address and mail pamphlets offering similar cosmetics to their

friends. Their only remuneration was a commission on the cosmetics they sold.

Although Levinson represented that all "working supplies" would be furnished free, the workers were required to pay \$1.25 per hundred sets for the circulars and envelopes—and that did not include the postage stamps they used.

Many firms that advertise, "Make money at home addressing envelopes" will not pay you for doing this work. There is always some cheap merchandise you must sell in order to make any money—when you get it.

A similar scheme is that of the advertisers who want you to do some other kind of work at home. William K. Lebowitz of Hoboken, N. J., advertised under the name of the "Angora Embroidery Co." He wanted women to do embroidery at home and offered them, in his advertising, complete instructions and a working outfit, but Lebowitz in his literature asked, as a protection against "curiosity seekers" and "idlers" that the prospective home worker send him \$1.00 for the outfit, which, the government says, cost him 45 cents. He claimed to have a steady demand for this embroidery but the figures compiled by the post office inspectors show that, although he got about \$20,000 from as many workers



only 654 persons had been employed by him. These he had paid an average of \$1.09 each for embroidery and the most any worker had received from Lebowitz was \$17.16.

To the fellow out of a job during the depression, the advertising of the Continental System of Gary, Ind., looked like money from home. A Miss Viola Storey was the genius behind this enterprise and she advertised for men who wanted employment on construction projects in the United States and South American countries. When you sent Viola the dollar bill she demanded before she put you on the job, she replied by sending you a mimeographed list of firms who, she said, had employment to offer.

When the Post Office Department investigated they found that *none of the firms employed persons who made application by mail*. A great number of them had no employment to offer. Many of the firms did not operate in the countries where they were supposed to provide employment and then Miss Storey admitted that she had not even made inquiry of these firms to ascertain the true facts in regard to any available employment. But a lot of poor fellows out of jobs paid her a dollar just the same.

G. E. Anderson and his wife worked it the other way. They conducted their business under the names of "Virginia Domestic Service," "Dixie Employment Agency," "Anderson Employment Agency," etc., from Richmond and Petersburg, Va.

**A**DVERTISING in out-of-town publications, they offered to supply domestic servants for a fee of fourteen dollars, two dollars being a service fee and the remaining

\$12 for rail fare to send the servant to the prospective employer. Some of the servants had not been sent for nine months after the fee was received and others who paid the fourteen dollars received nothing.

The Post Office had received from 250 to 300 complaints before the fraud order was issued.

Henry R. Cohen of Hollywood, California, drew his fraud order as the proprietor of the Universal Scenario Company and the Universal Song Service. The first named purported to be in the business of revising and marketing movie scenarios for amateur authors, while its companion company charged amateur song writers a fee for putting their lyrics in usable form. The Post Office solicitor's memorandum said:

"Of 4,735 lyrics so received within the past five years, only 45, or less than one percent, had any usage in motion pictures of any kind or received any return whatever upon said serviced lyrics, and, with one exception, no return exceeded the total amount of \$12.50." This "service" cost the author \$50. If you multiply 4,735 by \$50 the result is \$236,750. Mr. Cohen is appealing to the courts from the ruling and order of the Postmaster-General.

Although each of the above is an authentic case which has recently been handled by the Post Office Department, they are nevertheless typical of many others which are still in operation *and which are just as fraudulent*. Before you let go of any of your good dollars to firms or persons you don't know get in touch with the nearest Better Business Bureau and ask them for a report on the firm.

If you don't know where these Bureaus are located, get in touch with me, and I will be glad to help you.



# 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. O'HAYER  
"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.

**T**HIS week's special puzzle, No. X-35 by Lethargic, is a real test of skill! In this problem, the twenty-five numbers of a magic square have been enciphered with a ten-letter key, numbered from 0 to 9, as in a cryptic division. The numbers used are consecutive, although of course they are not so arranged in the square, and the total in each row, column, and diagonal is the same, the cipher equivalent for this number being RHE. With these clues see if you can solve Lethargic's square, and if you are successful, send us your answer! The solution and key will be published in two weeks!

No. X-35. Cryptic Magic Square. By Lethargic.

EI	EH	XR	SX	SE
SV	SA	SC	ER	XH
EE	XR	SS	SL	EX
SH	EV	EA	XE	SI
XA	XC	SR	ES	EL

Last week's Inner Circle cipher, Joubert's No. 60, yielded through vowel spotting. Noting frequency and pattern, symbols Y, O, and I stood out as vowels. Of these, finality pointed to Y as probably e, with the divowels YI, IO, and OI thus suggesting ea, ai, and ia, respectively. Substituting, IRRYVGIZY (a--e--a-e) as appendage would check with YSOVMOVZ (e-in-ing) and YIMU (ea--), evincing and each; and so on.

Remdin's division puzzle, first on this week's cryptic menu, employs a 10-letter key phrase numbered thus: 012 3456789. The third subtraction will give you the value of symbols R and G, to start you. Comparison of B, BKF, and BUU, also the ending -KDEE, afford entry to Zapolya's contribution. Having guessed these,

substitute in YBGGXKDEE, duly noting YXE, and fill in the missing letters. GDLGUD will come next.

In Vedette's cryptogram, the three-letter connective FGL will give you a lift with the two 3-word compounds, at the same time translating \*TGYAPL \*OAFAP0, XUY0AO, and OFF. Royal Fusilier provides two lines of approach in his message. Thus, RXP and RPYX will unlock XRRAPG, leading to RLPYAP, by one route. And by the other, the ending -LFFV, noting LS and YLSV, will help with the next-to-last word.

In Captain Kidd's construction, the suffix -PFFPG will lead to the two groups XKNZHPFFPG and XKNZHG. Next, look to GXHZS and SKSPG. A well-disguised letter in the form of symbol Z is a feature of Larry Bee's Inner Circle cipher! See what you can do with it—and look for the answers to this week's Nos. 61-66, inclusive, in next week's issue! The asterisks in Nos. 62 and 63 indicate capitalization.

No. 61—Cryptic Division. By Remdin.

YSV)	NVTGR(SVO
ITN	
<hr/>	
RLYG	
RORV	
<hr/>	
RRSR	
GOO	
<hr/>	
RNI	



No. 62—Royal Farewell. By Zapolya.

"BKF KLS SD BUU YBTD B KDS VXXZ. X SXEY YXP BKF  
OLR, YXE GDLGUD, YBGXKDEE BKF GHLEGDHXAO SXAY  
BUU PO YDBHA."—\*DFSBHF \*TXXX.

No. 63—Colors Aloft. By Vedette.

RYRAPPG-AXUTOFGL-AUG \*ONFGYOX BPHPZ OXYN  
\*PONFGF RYBPO TNUG ASU-AXUTOFGL-AUG \*TGYAPL  
\*OAFAPV VTGHUFA \*PBYP. \*PBYP XUYOAO \*OAFBO FGL  
\*OABYNPO. \*PONFGF OKTBBYPO RUB UNPG OPF.

No. 64—Instructive Entertainment. By Royal Fusilier.

PLNUX EPXLNOLGKUSD XRRAPG YLSV LNTLSKLDAG  
RXP KBA RLPYAP, NMPUSD FXSD ZUSKAP YXSKBG,  
AGHAOULFFV RXPY LS ANMOLKUXSLF TUAZHXUSK.

No. 65—Womenly Ways. By Captain Kidd.

ATGF OPAKRKR PFTYZXXT ECPHG GATQP XKNZHPFFPG,  
ZUFLTENL AZRB SHPOPH XKNZHG, AZBLZS SKSPG.  
LTDYPKF, GTAP UZVKPG XLPD GXHXS, DLKUP TFLPHG  
VTFF ESTR VTENLFB SUEN.

No. 66—Flowery Fairyland. By Larry Bee.

BUNPH ZNP PZDFKB FUBERBY, OBYPEZ NARZR VBXTXRT  
EYLP DZLXBV MRBYERNYT NFEXQT TCZSBLV, DXVTE  
BXLZ GRFKZLT.

### LAST WEEK'S ANSWERS

55—Key:     0 1 2 3 4 5   6 7 8 9  
              S T O R M Y W I N D

56—Finding this department is to me like treasure for the treasure hunter! Now that I have discovered a worth-while pastime, I am going to submit solutions in this fine art!

57—"March. Its tree, Juniper. Its stone, Bloodstone. Its motto, 'Courage and strength in time of danger'."—Old Saying.

58—Under blooming azalea and hibiscus hedges, Hialeah horse-racing track attracts thousands. Con men and crooks pursue bank rolls, dodge police.

59—Words with similar final trigrams: nabob, bandana, ventriloquists, syllabub, candid, coyly, juror, syzygy, husks, stigmata, xenon, wrists, phthisis.

60—Bucolic swain, aboard xebec, saw rare astral visitors beyond distant horizon: two comets, each evincing brilliant caudal appendage.

Readers sending us their answers to one or more of current puzzles Nos. 61-66, inclusive, will be duly credited in our *Cipher Solvers' Club* for March. Address: M. E. Ohaver, DETECTIVE FICTION WEEKLY, 280 Broadway, New York, N. Y.





**R**ETURN of Sapper's famed character, *Bulldog Drummond*, to DFW this week stirred the editors to reminiscing and finally to arching their backs in self defense. Recently a number of letters have asked the same question: "What has happened to the good old writers?"

When one of the editors recalled that Sapper's first story appeared in this magazine in 1925 and his first *Drummond* serial in 1929, out of curiosity (and with those letters in mind) the editors checked the writers whose stories have appeared in DFW in the few issues since the first of this year.

And this is the result. The following authors have been writing for DFW for ten or more years: Robert Carse, Ray Cummings, Tom Curry, Frederick C. Davis, T. T. Flynn, Joseph Gollomb, Fred MacIsaac, Milo Ray Phelps, Judson P. Philips, Robert H. Rohde, Robert W. Sneddon, Edward Parrish Ware, and Richard Howells Watkins.

At first we considered publishing the names of those who have been writing five or more years, but the list became too long. In addition to the thirteen named Max Brand, Carroll John Daly and others are scheduled to appear

within the next few weeks. We admit that several prominent old timers, notably Erle Stanley Gardner, are missing, but we expect many of them to return to the fold before the year is over. Mr. Gardner, whose stories have been missed both by the editors and hundreds of readers, has been so busy writing for the movies and book publishers that he has had little time for magazine stories. We hope, though, to have him back with us soon. If there are others you want in DFW drop us a card.

**A**LL of which permits us to publish the following letter without fear and with sincere thanks to Mrs. Baxter whose dislikes are offset by a hearty appreciation of good stories. She tells us:

DEAR EDITOR:

I have been reading DETECTIVE FICTION WEEKLY (then Flynn's) since 1924.

Of course, I have my favorites among the stories; some of them are: *The Park Avenue Hunt Club*, *The Lady from Hell*, *Riordan and Halloran*, and quite a few others. Edward Parrish Ware is still a prime favorite though his work seldom appears now in your pages (see *next week's issue and others to follow*—Editor). He always writes a story where there is something to detect, not just murder, nor adventure, nor a love story like that one a short



time ago by Oscar Schisgall. I had to make three attempts before I could wade through that one. It was a sordid story, not a character in it one could like. Speaking of authors: Fred MacIsaac and Max Brand leave nothing to be desired, they are *very* fine.

Cornell Woolrich sometimes writes a good story, but there was one time that I thought him exasperating; that story, *Murder on my Mind*, which appeared in the issue dated August 15, 1936. Will you please ask him how it ended? He never finished it. He left us outside the room and said as they go in, the Sergeant will know what to do. This is as bad as *The Lady or the Tiger*. Was the police officer punished? He certainly deserved it.

Your different departments are informative and interesting. I always enjoy the fact stories, especially those by Major Russell.

DFW stands alone. It is not to be classed with the ordinary magazines publishing detective fiction. It would be cheap at double the present price. As entertainment it far out-classes the movies. We have to thank our keen and discerning Editor who makes such excellent selections of stories. Best wishes for continued success.

MRS. E. P. BAXTER.  
Chicago, Ill.

Mr. Woolrich purposely ended his story without bringing the police officer to trial because he wanted the reader to decide in his own mind what punishment would be just for a man who killed while sleep walking.

A NOTE from M. E. Ohaver who conducts our *Solving Cipher Secrets* department tells us that 71,874 readers, a new record, answered the 324 puzzles that appeared in DFW during 1936. From figures available it appears that this is the most popular cipher department in the world!

CERTAINLY the following charge deserves an answer not only from your humble editor, but from readers as well. We frankly confess that we did not consider covers on issues during the past few months a bit blood-

thirsty. If we are wrong, we want our readers to correct us and we will do our best to carry out the necessary changes. We do not want our readers to be shamefaced when "caught" with a copy of DFW; we want them to display it proudly to their friends, to read it openly in street car, bus, subway, or railroad train. Does its cover (or contents) justify the following reactions?

DEAR EDITOR:

As a reader of DFW for twelve years, I am writing direct to you in the hope of having some action taken that would increase circulation of the magazine by gaining new friends and holding those of long standing.

Recently a woman friend mentioned to me the enjoyment she obtained in reading a good detective story. I recommended that she purchase DFW. Shortly thereafter I met her on the street and noticed she was carrying a magazine that looked familiar. I inquired if it was DETECTIVE FICTION WEEKLY and she shamefacedly admitted that it was.

As she righted the magazine I saw that the front cover had been torn off. I was informed that the picture on the cover was so bloodthirsty that she was ashamed to allow her friends to see her carrying a magazine that might reflect on her good breeding and might classify her as a moron.

It was then that I realized that even I had experienced that same feeling because when I stopped at my newsdealer each week for my copy, I would invariably make it a point to cover up the issue inside of my newspaper and await my arrival at home to read it in privacy.

Now you and I know that to be reading DFW is no reason to feel ashamed whether one be sixteen or sixty, a day laborer or business executive. But, when one is seen with a copy of that magazine today with its misleading front cover, it is only natural for people to assume that such a reader has the mentality of a subscriber to such publications commonly referred to as trash.

It seems to me that it would be advisable to tone down the pictures depicted on the outside cover and eliminate those bloody colorful drawings of murderers and thieves at their work with the weapons of trade so prominently displayed.

M. R. LYON,  
Irvington, N. J.



# WE

## Who are Weak

An enlarged, inflamed or faulty Prostate Gland very often causes Lameback, Frequent Night Rising, Leg Pains, Pelvic Pains, Lost Vigor, Insomnia, etc. Many physicians endorse massage as a safe effective treatment. (See Reference Book of the Medical Sciences, Vol. VII, 3rd edition). Use "PROSAGER," a new invention which enables any man to massage his Prostate Gland in the privacy of his home. It often brings relief with the first treatment and must help or it costs you nothing. No Drugs or Electricity.



DR. W. D. SMITH  
INVENTOR

**FREE BOOKLET**  
EXPLAINS TRIAL OFFER, ADDRESS  
MIDWEST PRODUCTS CO., B-2415, KALAMAZOO, MICH.

## Be a TRAFFIC MANAGER

Big business firms need trained traffic men and pay them well. Trucking companies—now under federal registration and control—are eagerly seeking expert traffic managers. Also many other opportunities with railroads, steamship lines, air lines, trade associations, express companies, etc. Train in your spare time—at home—for this highly profitable, growing profession. We guide you step by step—furnish all training material. Training prepared by leaders in the field and given by experienced traffic men. Low cost—easy terms. Investigate. Send NOW for free 64 page book—giving full information.

**LASALLE EXTENSION UNIVERSITY**  
Dept. 358-T, Chicago

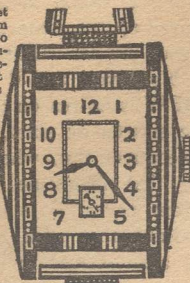


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A WEEK**

Modern Man's wristwatch or Lady's Baguette wrist watch, beautifully engraved and chased. Chromium finished cases with chromium finished link bracelets to match. Guaranteed 7 jewel movements. Tested, regulated, guaranteed accurate time-keeping and satisfactory service. Baguette wrist watches are the most popular of all Ladies' Watches. Our Men's Watches are sturdily built, designed for service and sport wear. You can own either one on our easy payment plan.

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Sensational invention. Almost human in appearance. Any snapshot can be "immortalized" by this strange new process that will not peel, tear, crack, or soil. Big money for agents. Low prices make Humanette big seller. High commissions and monthly bonus. We furnish list of prospects. If you want to make money fast, send name for free sample proposition. **LIFETIME PORTRAITS, Dept. 15-C, Cincinnati, Ohio**



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\$1260 to \$2100 first year. Clerks—File Clerks—Stenographers—Railway Postal Clerks—Mail Carriers and Clerks, etc. Write IMMEDIATELY for free 32-page book with list of positions and telling how to get them. Men and women.  
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OTHER MEN have read and profited by our free books, "Patent Protection" and "Selling Inventions." Fully explain many interesting points to inventors and illustrate important mechanical principles. With books we also send free "Evidence of Invention" form. Prompt service, reasonable fees, deferred payments. thirty-seven years' experience. Avoid risk of delay. Write immediately to: Victor J. Evans & Co., Registered Patent Attorneys, 217-C, Victor Building, Washington, D. C.

## LIQUOR HABIT

Send for FREE TRIAL of Nozalco, a guaranteed harmless home treatment. Can be given secretly in food or drink to anyone who drinks or craves Whiskey, Beer, Gin, Home Brew, Wine, Moonshine, etc. Your request for Free Trial brings trial supply by return mail and full \$2.00 treatment which you may try under a 30 day refund guarantee. Try Nozalco at our risk. **ARLEE CO. Dept. 204 BALTIMORE, MD.**

## PILES DON'T BE CUT

Until You Try This Wonderful Treatment

for pile suffering. If you have piles in any form write for a FREE sample of Page's Pile Tablets and you will bless the day that you read this. Write today. **E. R. Page Co., 404-B5 Page Bldg., Marshall, Mich.**

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Every deaf person knows that Mr. Way made himself hear his watch tick after being deaf for twenty-five years, with his Artificial Ear Drums. He wore them day and night. They stopped his head noises. They are invisible and comfortable, no wires or batteries. Write for TRUE STORY. Also booklet on Deafness.



**THE WAY COMPANY**  
726 Hoffmann Bldg. Detroit, Michigan

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Easy to use Viscose Home Method. Heals many old leg sores caused by leg congestion, varicose veins, swollen legs and injuries or no cost for trial if it fails to show results in 19 days. Describe the cause of your trouble and get a FREE BOOK.



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140 N. Dearborn St., Chicago, Ill.



# VACU-MATIC SCORES AGAIN!

**BOB McKENZIE**  
TRANSCONTINENTAL AUTOMOBILE CHAMPION  
COAST TO COAST

## WESTERN UNION TIMED

NEW YORK  
TO  
LOS ANGELES  
34 hrs.-40 min.

LOS ANGELES  
TO  
NEW YORK  
37 hrs.-38 min.

CANADA  
15,000 MILES  
18 DAYS

LOS ANGELES  
TO  
NEW YORK  
AND RETURN  
131 hrs.-52 min.

WASHINGTON, D.C.  
TO  
MEXICO CITY  
62 hrs.-27 min.

LOS ANGELES  
TO  
PHOENIX  
6 hrs.-15 min.

MUNDO DRILLAKE  
1907 MI. IN 1 DAY

LOS ANGELES  
TO  
SAVANNAH, GA.  
48 hrs.-37 min.

HALIFAX, NS.  
TO  
NEW DRIVER, B. C.  
MAJORS: 21 min.

Vacu-matic Carburetor Co.  
7617 W. State St.  
Wauwatosa, Wisconsin

Dear Sirs:

Having just completed a new speed record between Los Angeles and Chicago, driving a 1936 Chevrolet equipped with a Vacu-matic carburetor control, I thought you might be interested in knowing some of the facts and the important part Vacu-matic played in the success of the run.

The distance covered was 2322 miles in thirty-nine hours and forty-two minutes, officially timed by Western Union, which gave me an average speed of 59.7 M.P.H. based on elapsed time and with the Vacu-matic averaged 18 1/2 miles per gallon on gasoline.

Before leaving Los Angeles, we made several test runs both with and without the Vacu-matic, and the tests proved that Vacu-matic increased my gas mileage 3 1/2 miles per gallon at the driving speed of 80 M.P.H. and also very noticeable increase in both acceleration and power.

After this experience with Vacu-matic, you can depend that on my future speed runs across country that I will be depending on Vacu-matic to give me the same added performance it has proven on this last record breaking drive.

Yours very truly,  
*Bob McKenzie*



**Sets New  
Coast-to-Chicago  
Record**

**New Supercharge  
Principle  
SAVES GAS**

**MORE POWER - MORE SPEED  
FASTER PICK-UP - - NEW LIFE**

**E**STABLISHING new mileage records on cars in all sections of the country, the Vacu-matic again scores in a new speed record established by Bob McKenzie transcontinental automobile champion. Los Angeles to Chicago—2,322 miles in 39 hours and 42 minutes—driving 75 and 80 to maintain a speed average of 59.7 miles per hour!

Here is speed—a gruelling grind—where quick acceleration, greater top speed—and less stops for gasoline mean those precious moments saved that make new speed records possible. The same Vacu-matic that helped Bob McKenzie establish this speed record and gave him such fine gas savings is now available for all car owners. It is positively automatic—simple to install—inexpensive—and pays for itself many times over in gas savings.

## **Automatic - - Nothing Like It!**

Vacu-matic is entirely different! It operates on the supercharge principle by automatically adding a charge of extra oxygen, drawn free from the outer air, into the heart of the gas mixture. It is entirely AUTOMATIC and allows the motor to “breathe” at the correct time, opening and closing automatically as required. No idling troubles—no carburetor adjustments necessary. It is so simple it will amaze you—so practical it will save you many dollars on gas costs.

## **Fits All Cars**

VACU-MATIC is constructed of six parts, assembled and fused into one unit, correctly adjusted and sealed at the factory. Nothing to regulate. Easily attached in ten minutes.

## **Agents and Salesmen**

VACU-MATIC offers a splendid opportunity for unusual sales and profits. Valuable territories now being assigned. Check and mail coupon.

## **Guaranteed Gas Savings**

VACU-MATIC must prove itself on every car. It is guaranteed to give worthwhile gas savings, quicker pick-up and more power, or it costs you nothing. “On my V-8 Ford it works miracles”, says Ralph Fields. James Seeley—“On an International Truck on a round trip to Cleveland, 385 miles, it saved 19 gallons of gas.” A. V. Grove—“On the Buick it showed 5 miles more per gallon.” F. S. Peck—“I average 22 miles per gal. on my Plymouth, an increase of 7 miles, for a saving of \$15.00 a month, or \$180.00 a year.” Wm. Lyons—“Averaged 25 miles on a gal. with a Model A Ford at 40 miles per hour.”

## **Free Details**

You owe it to yourself to know all about this remarkable discovery. Mail the coupon below. Start saving gas with VACU-MATIC and enjoy a new driving thrill! There's no obligation—so get the facts now! Write today!

## **—FREE OFFER COUPON—**

THE VACU-MATIC COMPANY

7617-248 W. State St., Wauwatosa, Wis.

Gentlemen: Please send me full particulars concerning the Vacu-matic and details of your Free Offer. This of course does not obligate me in any way.

Name .....

Address .....

City ..... State .....

☐ Check here if interested in selling proposition.

**The VACU-MATIC Co.**

**Wauwatosa, Wis.**



# don't **Worry** about **Rupture**

●Why put up with days . . . months . . . YEARS of discomfort, worry and fear? Learn now about this perfected invention for all forms of reducible rupture. Surely you keenly desire—you eagerly CRAVE to enjoy life's normal activities and pleasures once again. To work . . . to play . . . to live . . . to love . . . with the haunting Fear of Rupture banished from your thoughts! Literally *thousands* of rupture sufferers have entered this *Kingdom of Paradise Regained*. Why not you? Some wise man said, "Nothing is impossible in this world"—and it is true, for where others fail is where we have had our greatest success in many cases! Even doctors—thousands of them—have ordered for themselves and their patients. Unless your case is absolutely hopeless, *do not despair*. The coupon below brings our Free Rupture Book in plain envelope. Send the coupon now.

## Patented **AIR-CUSHION** Support Gives Nature a Chance to **CLOSE** the **OPENING**

Think of it! Here's a surprising yet simple-acting invention that permits Nature to close the opening—that holds the rupture securely but gently, day and night, at work and at play! Thousands of grateful letters express heartfelt thanks for results beyond the expectation of the writers. What is this invention—How does it work? Will it help me? Get the complete, fascinating facts on the Brooks Automatic Air Cushion Appliance—send now for *free* Rupture Book.

## Cheap Sanitary – Comfortable

Rich or poor—ANYONE can afford to buy this remarkable, LOW-PRICED rupture invention! But look out for imitations and counterfeits. The Genuine Brooks is never sold in stores or by agents. Your Brooks is made up, after your order is received, to fit your particular case. You buy direct at the low "maker-to-user" price. The perfected Brooks is sanitary, lightweight, inconspicuous. Has no hard pads to gouge painfully into the flesh, no stiff, punishing springs, no metal girdle to rust or corrode. It brings heavenly comfort and security—while the Automatic Air Cushion continually works, in its own, unique way, *to help Nature get results!* Learn what this patented invention can mean to you—send coupon quick!

## SENT ON TRIAL!

No . . . don't order a Brooks now—FIRST get the complete revealing explanation of this world-famous rupture invention. THEN decide whether you want the comfort—the freedom from fear and worry—the security—the same amazing results thousands of men, women and children have reported. They found our invention the answer to their prayers! Why can't you? And you risk nothing as the complete appliance is SENT ON TRIAL. Surely you owe it to yourself to investigate this no-risk trial. Send for the facts now—today—hurry! All correspondence strictly confidential.

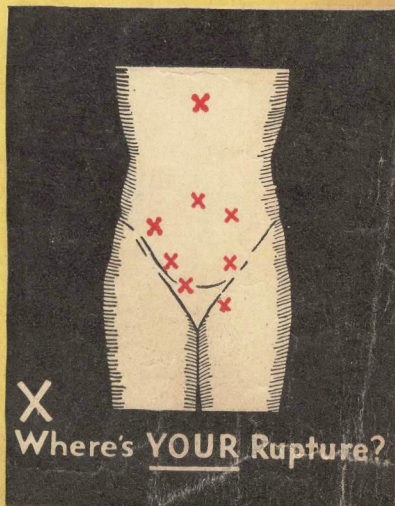


C. E. BROOKS,  
Inventor

## FREE! Latest Rupture Book Explains All!

Send You In Plain Envelope **Just Clip and Send Coupon** →

**Brooks Appliance Co., 172-D State St., Marshall, Mich.**



## PROOF!

Read These Reports on Reducible Rupture Cases.

(In our files at Marshall, Michigan, we have over 31,000 grateful letters which have come to us entirely unsolicited and without any sort of payment.)

### Likes Brooks Best

"I bought one of your Rupture Appliances in 1933, wore it day and night for one year and laid it aside last December. The rupture hasn't bothered me since. I used several others without success until I got a Brooks."—J. B. McCarter, Route 2, Box 104, Oregon City, Ore.

### "Runs and Plays"

"My son has not worn the Appliance for over a year. He wore one for ten years and I am very grateful now to think he has laid it aside. He is twelve years old, runs and plays hard like all boys and is never bothered about the rupture."—Mrs. M. George, Route 1, Box 103, Cumberland, Md.

## Mail This Coupon NOW!

**BROOKS APPLIANCE CO.**  
172-D State St., Marshall, Mich.

Without obligation, please send your FREE Book on Rupture, Proof of Results, and TRIAL OFFER—all in plain envelope.

Name .....

Street .....

City ..... State .....

State whether for Man ☐ Woman ☐ or Child ☐