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by PAUL ERNST

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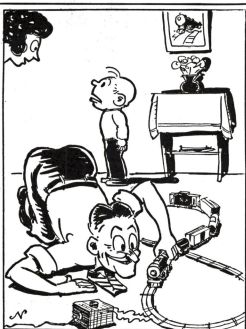
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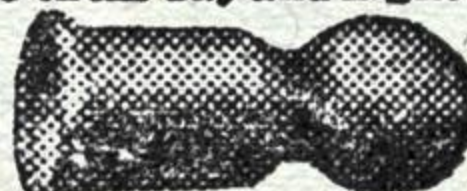
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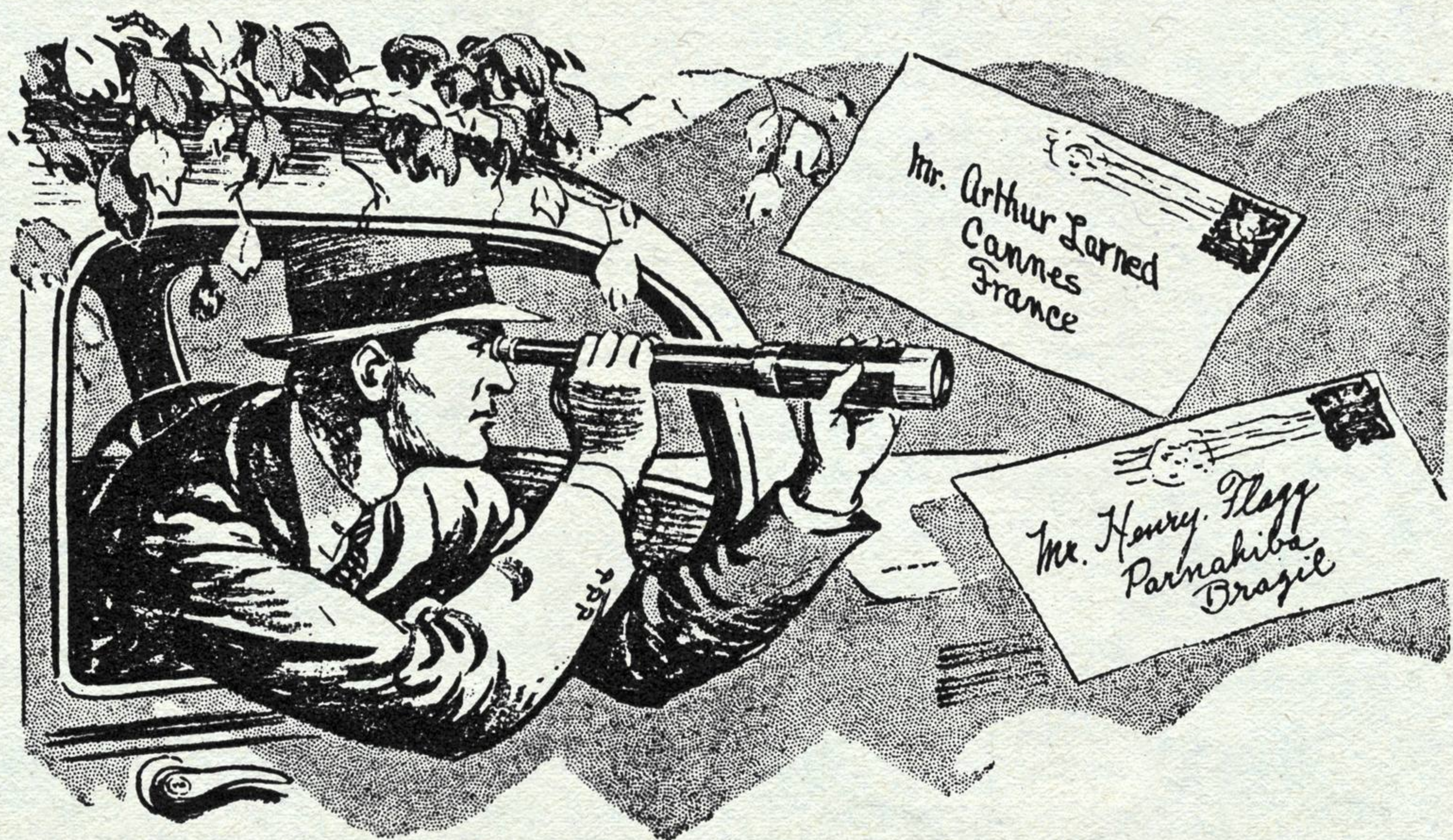
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THE DEAD



By Paul Ernst

Author of "Generals Die in Bed," etc.

THE beautiful blonde laid her hand on Russ Tildon's arm.

"Darling," she said, "that man is here again."

Tildon stared toward the door, black eyes bland under heavy, straight black eyebrows. They were in the Tony Sarg cocktail room at the Waldorf. Elephants danced with kangaroos in Sarg's murals on the walls. Benign tigers grinned at frolicsome lambs. All was festivity and fun.

But the man in the doorway of the little room didn't look festive.

He was an important appearing individual of fifty, with a thick middle, a pompous jaw, and the impatient manner of a big executive. There was a hint of a glare in his look as he walked toward Tildon.

"If he offers you a job—" said the beautiful blonde, pouting.

"No jobs," said Tildon firmly. "I'm on vacation."

Tildon was as dark as his lovely companion was fair. His thick hair was black, and grew low on his narrow forehead. His skin was dark, with a hint of large freckles just under the surface. His eyes, with over-large pupils and correspondingly small whites, were like inkspots.

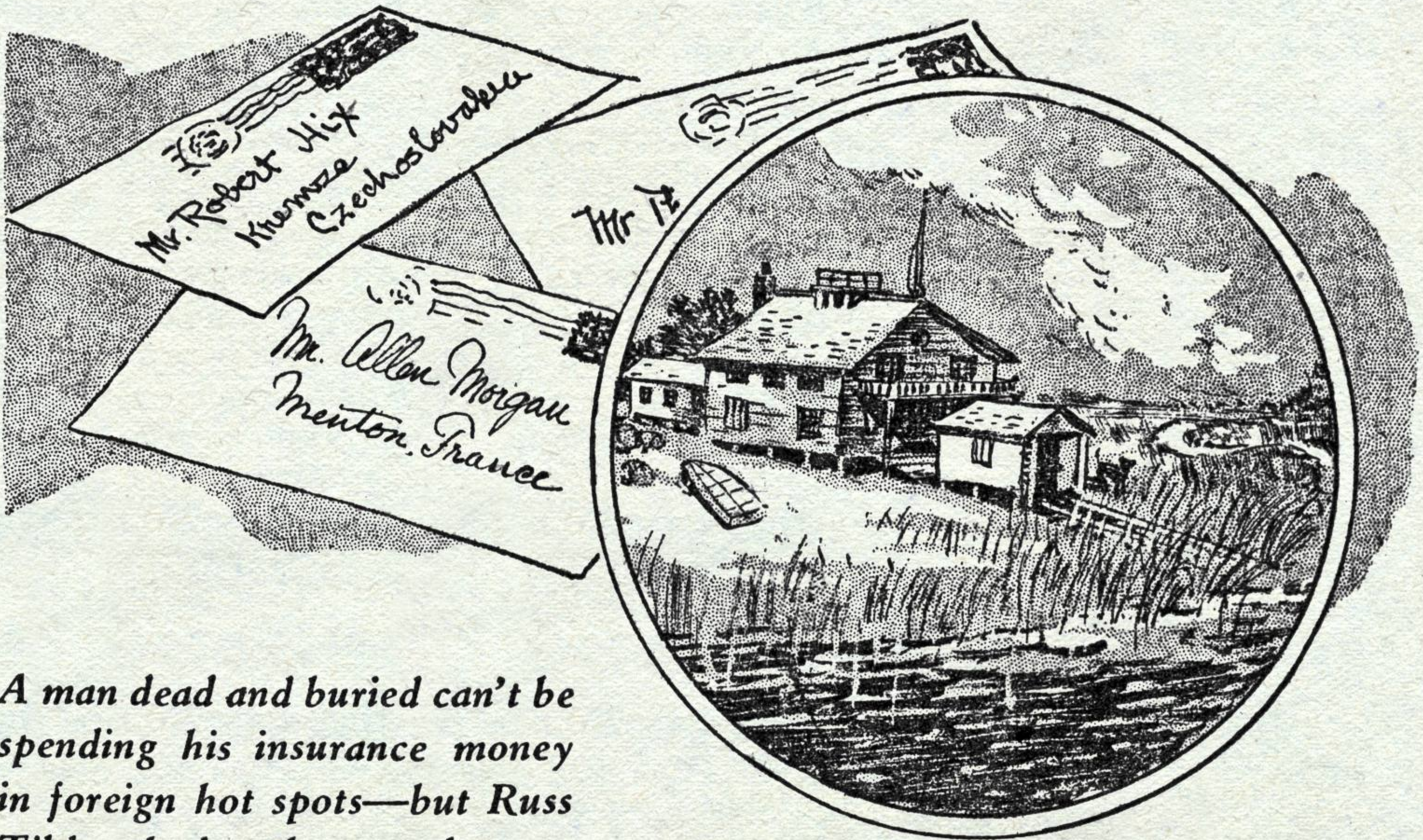
The impatient executive reached the table. Tildon nodded to a chair, and the man sat down.

"You're Private Operative Tildon?" the man asked.

"That's right," said Tildon, without curiosity. He was from Chicago, but he was pretty well known in New York too. He went there often enough, either on work, or just to raise hell. The latter was his occupation at the moment.

"I've had a hard enough time locating you," the man said fretfully.

GET MAIL



A man dead and buried can't be spending his insurance money in foreign hot spots—but Russ Tildon had to buy a telescope to prove it

He could see a huge mastiff coming around the house

"You're never in your room upstairs."

"I didn't come to New York to stay in a hotel room," Tildon shrugged.

"I've been sent to one cocktail lounge after another in search of you. I almost got you at the Astor, but you got out of the place somehow. Are you avoiding me?"

"Avoiding you?" murmured Tildon. "I don't even know you."

"I'm Carvel Titus, vice president of the New York Insurance Association."

"Oh. How are you, Mr. Titus. This is Miss Isabel Baker."

Carvel Titus nodded, pretty brusquely for all the blonde's pulchritude, started to say something to Tildon, then jerked his eyes back on the girl.

"Daughter of Jackson Baker, the financier?" he asked, with all impatience gone from his voice.

"That's right," said the blonde, smiling.

"I'm *very* glad to know you. Your father is a director in several of the insurance corporations belonging to the Association. It is a great pleasure."

"Thank you," said Isabel Baker. "But you wanted to speak to Mr. Tildon, I believe?"

Titus colored a little, and turned back to the private detective.

"**H**ODGSON, of Chicago, referred me to you, Mr. Tildon. He said you were in New York at the moment, and that if I mentioned his name he was sure you would handle a certain matter for us."

Tildon wrinkled his forehead.

"Certain matter? It wouldn't be work, would it? I'm on a vacation just now."

"Hodgson said you were the laziest—the hardest man to get going on a job he'd ever met," Titus said, with disapproval in his fleshy face.

"Good old Hodgson," murmured Tildon. Isabel's red lips twitched.

"But we have a very important case on our hands, Mr. Tildon. We want your help very much indeed. At least, I *think* the case may be important."

"Think?" repeated Tildon.

Titus spread his pudgy hands.

"It sounds a little insane," he said, "So much so that there may be nothing in it but personal eccentricities."

"I know a swell detective, down on Thirty-Fourth Street," said Tildon mildly. "I'll phone him and—"

"It's your services we want," said Titus. "Hodgson was firm on that. He advised no one but you."

"Sorry," said Tildon.

"We'll pay you well. It's worth a lot to us to know how dead men get mail."

"On vacation," Tildon began, mechanically. Then his inkspot eyes became reluctantly interested. "You said what, about dead men?"

"I said we'd like to know how dead men get mail. Unless this thing I have reference to is just a personal eccentricity. Bereaved women are flighty, sometimes . . ."

Tildon glanced sideways at Isabel. "I suppose we might as well listen to this? It sounds screwy enough."

"If you listen," Isabel said firmly, "the vacation is out. And so am I! I know you. But it does sound intriguing."

Tildon nodded and turned back to Hodgson.

"What's the story?"

"I preferred to see you alone, and in some place more conducive to business," Titus demurred, gazing disap-

provingly at the benign tigers and jolly elephants.

"This is okay, and Isabel's discreet. Go ahead."

"Well, it starts with the death of a man named Larned, two weeks ago. Arthur Larned, middle-aged thread manufacturer. Insured for a hundred and fifty thousand dollars. Beneficiary, daughter. Committed suicide by drowning, it would appear. His body was picked up on the private beach of an estate below Asbury Park, along the New Jersey shore."

"So? Guys bump themselves off every day. Was he in financial difficulties?"

"Yes. After his death it developed that his business was bankrupt. Another week would have seen him in receivership."

Tildon shrugged. "Broke, desperate. Decided to shuffle off and leave his daughter his insurance before the creditors got that too. What's unnatural about that?"

"Well, his daughter just died, too. Yesterday. But this wasn't suicide, though we thought so at first. She was found shot through the head, with a gun in her dead hand. But there were no powder burns on her skin as there should have been if the shot was fired from close range."

Tildon just listened, narrow forehead corrugated. Titus went on.

"When it began to look like murder—though even now we aren't sure, mind you—we searched the daughter's effects thoroughly. And we found a letter to her father. It was addressed to him in Cannes, France. And it was dated day before yesterday."

"Wait a minute. She'd written it two days ago?"

"Yes."

"To her father?"

"Yes."

"But you said her father died two weeks ago."

"That's right."

Tildon took a sip of his Scotch highball and stared at Titus with one black eyebrow raised.

"That's what I meant when I said a moment ago that we'd like to know why dead men are having mail addressed to them," said Titus. "Arthur Larned is officially dead. His insurance was paid to his daughter. He was buried. And his daughter writes letters to him in France!"

"You mentioned eccentricity," said Tildon. "It's possible that the girl's mind was affected a little by the death, and that she was playing a game of make-believe and writing to her father as though he were still alive."

"Perhaps," nodded Titus. "But the tone of the letter throws a doubt on that. Here, read it."

ISABEL and Tildon looked at a folded sheet of lavender note-paper which Titus passed over. Tildon took it and read.

Dead Dad: You'll never know the shock I got when I saw "your body" and was asked to identify it. Even now I am in doubt. But I know everything is all right, of course. And I know that my silly doubts will be resolved at Cape May tonight. It was the only way out for you, I guess. Anyway, I'm trying to keep telling myself that. I must hurry and get ready for the drive now. I will mail this the instant I get back, so that you will receive it shortly after arriving. Dreading the long months that must separate us, I am, your loving daughter, Joy.

"So the daughter identified the body of Arthur Larned," Tildon commented. "You had other identification of course?"

"Of course. Larned's dentist identified him. His physician, a well-known specialist whose name is above suspicion, identified him. His war record description was obtained, and that tallies. The man who was buried as Arthur Larned was Arthur Larned, beyond a shadow of a doubt."

"And yet his daughter writes letters to him," Tildon shook his dark head.

"Any more to this story of yours?" he asked, finishing his highball.

"Yes. With this unexplainable thing shoved under our noses, we began browsing around in the Association files. Looking for suicides. Possibly similar ones. We found that in the last six months four other men, all well insured, killed themselves by drowning along the Jersey coast. All were found on the shore, washed in from the sea, at points between Asbury Park and Cape May, New Jersey."

"And the last six months takes in last winter and this spring," mused Tildon. "Damn cold for drowning. They jump off tall buildings out our way. Any more?"

"One thing," said Titus. "With the strange letter of Joy Larned to her father in mind, we put one of our Association men on the trail of the beneficiaries of the other four. And he found two others writing letters to dead men, just as Joy Larned had done. In neither case were the letters obtained. But in one instance a desk pad gave a few jumbled words, and in the other a blotter did the same. Enough to show that the letters were written to men judged dead and identified months ago."

"The obvious inference being that

the men didn't really die. In each case they were positively identified?"

"Positively!"

Tildon got out an old envelope and a pencil.

"What are the names of these interesting suicides that continue to get mail?"

"Arthur Larned, Henry Flag, Al-len Morgan, Robert Hix, Thomas Dougherty."

"You've told me some about Larned. Let's hear what you know on the others. Flag."

"A man of sixty, retired, in very moderate circumstances. So moderate, indeed, that I think the premiums on his hundred thousand dollars worth of insurance must have been hard to pay. His wife, Sally, got the money. She was one of the letter writers."

"Hix."

"Younger. About forty-five. A bachelor, working as vice president of the Broadway Bank. After he was found dead, it came out that he had embezzled money over a period of years, and would have been caught with the next visit of the bank examiners. His brother was beneficiary. He took the money in cash, and has managed to conceal it successfully from the insurance company who stood the bank's loss."

"Morgan?"

"Another near-bankrupt. His coal company is just about on the rocks, though a partner put more money into it after Morgan's death. Insured for a hundred and twenty-five thousand. Beneficiary, wife."

"Dougherty?"

"Middle-aged. Promoter. Had recently lost most of his money but was not in debt nor facing personal bankruptcy. Insured for eighty thousand. Made out to his wife, the other letter-writer."

Tildon creased the envelope, frowning at it with black brows drawn low.

"All five of the men were in doubtful financial circumstances, so the insurance money would have come in handy. All five of them killed themselves in the same way, by drowning, and in the same general locality, between Asbury Park and Cape May on the Jersey coast. All were absolutely identified by men beyond suspicion. And to at least three of the five dead men, relatives write letters! You spoke of one, Hix, whose beneficiary took the insurance money in cash. That's a lot of cash. Any of the other beneficiaries do the same?"

"All the others did the same."

"You mean all five policies were drawn in cold cash?"

"Yes."

"There certainly are points of similarity to be explained," said Tildon slowly. Isabel Baker sighed and got up. "What's the matter, Isabel?"

"Nothing," she said sweetly, "except that I'd like to tell your Chicago friend Hodgson where he can go. One nice vacation shot! And I was just beginning to like it, too."

"But—"

"I'll climb in the towncar and roll home. Phone me when the case is finished."

"You seem very sure I'm going to take it."

"I know that look in your eyes, darling. Hell hath no fury like Russ Tildon interested in a job of work."

"Well," murmured Tildon, gazing at and through Carvel Titus, vice president of the New York Insurance Association, "I *would* like to know why people write letters to dead men—and what kind of a postman would be able to deliver them once they were consigned to the mail."

II

LIEUTENANT Detective Brent, Homicide, had worked in Chicago on the force years ago, and Tildon knew him well. He went to Headquarters to have a talk with him. On the way, he listed again the quite amazing similarities of the policy holders Titus had told about.

All five had committed suicide in the same way. By drowning. All five had been picked up along the same hundred-and-fifty-mile stretch of coast. All five had been in a position where an insurance fraud, enabling them to gather in their own life policies, would have been greatly appreciated. But all five had been identified in death, beyond a shadow of doubt, which erased the charge of fraud.

To three of the five definitely, and to all of them possibly, letters had been written as though they were still alive. . . .

Brent, six-foot-three and a yard wide, took a whack in the stomach from Tildon and growled an affectionately insulting greeting in return.

"Haven't seen you since I almost nailed you for the Erskine murder in Evanston, Russ," he said. "What you doing in New York?"

"I was on a vacation," said Tildon distastefully. "But a guy named Titus caught up to me. With the Insurance Association. Just because I've done a few jobs for the Chicago insurance crowd, they pick on me here. Tell me, who would I see on the murder of a dame named Joy Larned? If it was murder. Nobody seems too sure of it."

"You'd see me," said Brent. "I covered the case. And it was murder, though we haven't hooked a suspect yet. You can't fire a slug through your own head without holding the gun

close enough for powder burns, unless you've got arms ten feet long."

"No burns on her skin?"

"No burns."

"Give me what you've got on it, Brent."

What Brent had on it was not too much.

Investigation had revealed that Joy Larned had left her apartment at ten o'clock the evening before she was found dead. She had got into her car, a cream-colored roadster, and driven south, into Jersey. A cop at the Hudson Tunnel had verified that. From there, all trace of her disappeared, until her car rolled into Cape May.

When the strange letter to her dead father had been found, mentioning Cape May, the New York police had shifted their inquiries down there. In that quiet seaside resort a few dozen miles below Atlantic City, an attendant had been found at an all-night gas station who remembered filling the tank of a cream-colored roadster driven by a red-haired girl, at half-past two in the morning.

That was all they had on her movements just before her death. The next thing on the police list was the discovery of Joy Larned's dead body. That was in a summer place her father owned at Red Bank, New Jersey, near Asbury Park. The place was closed—not yet opened for the summer. Her body had been found among sheeted furniture that stood watch over it like distorted ghosts.

"No one around saw her go in?"

"No one," Brent said.

"And nobody heard a shot?"

"No."

"What caliber gun killed her?"

"A .22. It was found clutched in her dead hand. The slug in her brain matched, all right."

"Well, a .22 doesn't make much noise. . . . How long did the medical examiner think she'd been dead?"

Brent scowled.

"That's a funny thing, Russ. We got to her at eleven in the morning, and the examiner thought she'd been dead at least eight or nine hours. But eight or nine hours before she was in Cape May, half the length of the state away."

"So she was killed down there, a little after the guy at the filling station saw her, and carried back to the summer home," shrugged Tildon.

"So she wasn't killed down there. She was killed at Red Bank," said Brent tartly. "There was blood around her, on the floor. And a dead body wouldn't bleed any more after the length of time it would take to drive it from Cape May to Red Bank."

Tildon nodded.

"Did you analyze the blood?"

Brent chewed at his lip. "Now why the hell do you ask a question like that?"

"Because you've either got a dumb medical examiner, which I doubt, or the girl *was* dead for eight or nine hours when she was found at eleven. In which case she was killed at Cape May and carried to the summer place. If there was blood around her, the blood must have been carried there, too, and left to make it appear that the girl had died where she was found. Which means, if true, that somebody with a damn good head on his shoulders is mixed up in this business somewhere."

"You're guessing," snorted Brent.

"Sure, I'm guessing. But if it isn't too late, I'd suggest that you analyze the girl's blood, and then match it with an analysis of the blood found on the floor under her head."

TILDON grinned at Brent's skeptical look, and dismissed Joy Larned for the moment.

"About the girl's father. Know anything, there?"

"Sure," said Brent. "When it looked like the girl's death were murder, that threw the old man's death open to suspicion. I kicked around on it for several days—and didn't get anywhere. Apparently he drowned himself, fair and square."

"Water in the lungs?"

"Yeah. And no trace of violence on the body."

"It *was* Larned's body? No doubt of that?"

"No doubt at all," said Brent. "Larned himself, and no substitute, is dead and in his grave as sure as I'm standing here. I'd bet my life on that."

"So his daughter wrote a letter to him, as though he were still alive, and addressed it to Cannes, France," Tildon murmured.

Brent shrugged mammoth shoulders.

"She must have been screwy. She saw the body, too. And a girl wouldn't mistake her own father, would she?"

"Who can tell," said Tildon.

"You're nuts if you start working on a theory that the guy isn't dead!" Brent insisted.

Tildon's inkspot eyes narrowed thoughtfully.

"Look, Brent. Five men, all in bad financial messes, all heavily insured, 'commit suicide.' The beneficiary of each big policy, a close relative in every case, draws the insurance in cash—which promptly disappears. And after that, the relatives start writing letters to these guys that are 'dead' and 'in their graves.' Now I'm a simple guy. I can't help but wonder just how dead they really are."

He outlined to the city detective

what Titus had told him about Larned's companions in suicide.

"Flagg, Morgan, Hix, Dougherty," Brent repeated. "I wouldn't know anything about them except what I read in the papers. But we can look through the files. . . ."

The files told little more than Titus had.

It was assumed that each had died by his own hand, since there was no mark of violence on any of their bodies. Further, each man had had ample financial motive for suicide. The automobile of each had been found not far from the beach spot where their bodies had been washed back to shore, indicating that each had simply walked into the sea, had swum out till exhausted, and then had drowned and been carried back to the beach by the waves.

And each body had been positively identified.

"Yet their nearest and dearest write letters to 'em," Tildon mused. "I'll say this business is screwy! You don't send mail to the dead, Brent. Those guys have got to be alive. Or something."

"Better make it 'or something,'" Brent growled sardonically. "Positive identification is just that—*positive* identification. Can you fool a guy's physician about scars of old operations on his body? Scars that can't be faked? Can you kid a guy's dentist about filled cavities, and crowns, and bridgework? That can't be faked either, you know. You can't just pound a phoney tooth into a dead man's jaw and make it look as if it grew there."

"No," Tildon agreed reluctantly, "you can't. At least it has never been done before. So they're all dead. So their wives and daughters write letters to them. Why?"

"You give the answer to that one, Russ. I'm no spirit medium."

BACK in his hotel room, Tildon tried to give the answer.

He worked best slouched down in an easychair, with his body wrapped in a threadbare blue bathrobe, and his feet encased in ancient slippers. Oh, yes, and with a Scotch and soda comfortably at hand, so he wouldn't have to reach too far for it. Tildon never made a move that wasn't strictly necessary. It was that propensity which made folks who knew him call him the laziest detective on earth.

He was concerned principally with two things: first, the murder of Larned's daughter; and second, the possibility of faking the identifications of dead bodies.

Presumably she had been killed in or near Cape May, and driven back to the Red Bank summer place. Why? Murder with the ordinary passion motive would not have involved a long and risky drive with a corpse in a car. The killer could have set the stage for suicide as smartly as he did—which was not quite smartly enough—as well in Cape May as in Red Bank. And if she had been killed with simple robbery as a motive, she'd have been left where death caught her.

The only answer that Tildon could think of was that whoever killed her wanted to hide the fact that her death had occurred in Cape May.

He dwelt longer on the fake-identification possibility. The presumption that the five men had only pretended suicide in order to collect their policies was so obvious it fairly hit you in the face. But how could that be done, not once but five separate times? Could five bodies have been found, at convenient moments, so closely resembling the insurance defrauders that they could be palmed off as them? It seemed fantastically improbable.

His phone rang. It was Brent.

"Your guess just happened to hit home, Russ," he said, with exasperation in his heavy voice. "About the blood found around Joy Larned, I mean. We just got through with a test of it, and—it wasn't her blood. Human, all right. But a different type and different corpuscle count from hers. I guess it was brought with the body, all right, to set the stage for suicide in a place a hundred miles from where she was killed."

"So now *you're* guessing," Tildon retorted. "Well, it's a healthy thing to do. If you'd guess a little more, maybe you'd get a little farther."

He chuckled at Brent's profanity, and hung up. Then he called Carvel Titus.

He told Titus to have a fast car brought around for him first thing in the morning, and then got into bed.

III

CAPE MAY is a miniature Atlantic City complete with boardwalk, mud flats, and ocean. Tildon got there at a little after noon, driving an excellent sedan, one of Titus' own cars. He'd have got there earlier, but he had stopped en route at a couple of the places where heavily insured middle-aged gentlemen had been found drowned in recent months.

One of the places was the private beach of a large estate on the shore. The other was a desolate mud flat with only clam-diggers' shacks in sight. Neither setting had told him anything.

Brent and another detective from New York were down in Cape May. They had come for further investigation after Tildon's hunch about the blood had indicated that Joy Larned had died here instead of up in Red Bank. About the first person Tildon

saw, coming out of the local police station, was Brent.

The big detective stopped short, with his legs apart.

"Well," he said abruptly, "Are you working with us or against us on this, Russ?"

"Such a question," Tildon said, opening his eyes innocently. "Don't I always cooperate?"

"Not if it suits your purposes to leave us in the dark," rasped Brent. "I know you."

"I'll tell you everything I dig up, hear—or guess," Tildon said, not specifying *when* he would divulge such information.

Brent grunted, and said, mollified, "I didn't find out anything in there." He jerked his thumb toward the local Headquarters. "Maybe you can."

But Tildon had no notion of questioning the Cape May police. He was pretty sure Brent would have covered everything in there. He went, instead, to the invariable repository of neighborhood information, the local realtor.

The biggest real estate office in town was on the main street, back from the beach and boardwalk. Tildon went in, slouching, seeming to move indolently as he always did. A girl smiled up at him from a desk.

Tildon sat leisurely on the edge of it, after a glance had shown no disapproving boss in the office, and offered her a cigarette.

She took it.

"Look," he drawled, "no use beating around the bush. I'm one of those things, a private detective, and I came in here to see if I could get some information."

The girl tapped the cigarette thoughtfully, looking as though on the verge of disapproving the informality. Then she smiled and accepted a light.

"Maybe you'll get the information. What do you want to know?"

"I'm interested in leases around Cape May," said Tildon. "Maybe just the straight lease of a house, maybe something a little out of the ordinary."

"Leases," nodded the girl. "I'm listening."

"I think the party I have in mind leased a place down here between six and eight months ago. Maybe before that, maybe afterward. That would bring his lease to about October. Now, there can't be too many people renting in a summer resort at the beginning of fall and winter. Can you recall any off-season leases like that?"

"More people rent down here in the fall than you'd think," said the girl. "But I don't remember any last fall that weren't pretty respectable. People whose references were carefully checked in Philadelphia and New York."

"Nuts," said Tildon.

"However, there was one sale last fall that might interest you," the girl went on, lips solemn but eyes twinkling. "A rather unusual one, with references disregarded because cash was paid."

Tildon's black eyes fastened on her blue ones.

"A man from New York bought a large boat-house, with a dwelling in connection with it, on the beach," the girl said. "An old coast guard building, a couple of miles out of Cape May, on the flats. A dreary looking place. The word is that the man is experimenting with speedboats, and wants to keep his experiments secret. People are discouraged from going on the property."

"That," said Tildon, "is interesting. Speedboats, eh?"

"Yes. Sometimes his experimental boat is heard at night, offshore, if the

sea is calm. A couple of people have seen it. They say it looks like nothing on earth. But then, inventors are all crazy, aren't they?"

"Quite crazy," nodded Tildon. "Where would I find this experimental station?"

"You can't miss it. A little over two miles up the beach from the end of the boardwalk, with only the flats around it. You can see it from quite a distance. In fact, that's about the only way you *can* see it. There's only one road, badly filled in and rutted, and there's a dog at the end of it big enough to take your arm off at the shoulder."

"Not my arm," said Tildon. "I'm quite attached to it. Thanks for the good word."

"What's he done out there to interest detectives?" asked the girl. "Has he run dope, or sunk ships, or something like that?"

"We don't know—yet. By the way what does the gentleman look like?"

"I've never seen him. The sale was made through another office. And I understand they took the money from some third party representing the buyer."

"Thanks again," said Tildon, leisurely rising from his perch. "Clam up about my asking these questions, will you? It may be very unhealthy for me if you don't."

He strolled out. About a block away there was an optical store. He rented their best small telescope for the day, and drove in Titus' sedan to the north edge of town. He parked there, under a carefully nurtured shade tree. From this street the view along the beach was unobstructed, with the young spring marsh grass carpeting the flats, and the old coast guard building sticking up like a sore thumb in the dis-

tance. A quite innocent thumb, it seemed to the naked eye.

He trained the telescope on it.

THERE was a solidly built small dormitory building, in need of paint, at the rear, and in front a square addition like a small hangar. That would be the boathouse, Tildon concluded. There would be greased runways down the beach to the water's edge. He couldn't see those because of the slant of the beach and the grass.

There seemed to be no doors on the side of the building exposed to him. Probably there was a small one in the rear, and the big ones, swinging wide for a boat's passage, in the front. As he watched, a dog skulked around from the other side of the building. He looked tiny through the glass, but Tildon, comparing him with other objects, knew that it was a mastiff as big as a good-sized calf.

"Is something wrong?" a cultured, gentle voice asked from behind him. "A boat in distress?"

Tildon turned, not too quickly. A man was standing on the walk next to the sedan. He had come along, possibly after turning onto this street from the next corner, without Tildon's hearing him. That was not too hard to do. There was drifted sand over the sidewalk.

The man was of medium height, spare, dressed fairly well. His mild gray eyes were directed along the shore as he spoke, and there was a hint of anxiety in them.

"More than one small boat has capsized along here," he said. "People go out who don't know boating, then a sudden squall. . . ."

"There isn't any boat in trouble," Tildon reassured him. "I was just looking around, watching the gulls. One of

them, out there, seems to have a small snake in his bill. Are there snakes in the flats?"

"I don't know. I've never seen any. Are you from around here?"

"Just a tourist," Tildon smiled. "And you?"

"Almost a tourist. I am staying here a few weeks for my health. But I have been here before. A nice place, Cape May."

"Very nice," said Tildon. He put his hand on the gear shift lever. "Well, think I'll head back to town. Can I give you a lift?"

The other shook his head.

"No, thank you. I'm walking for my health."

The man stepped back from the car. Tildon nodded to him and started rolling back toward the center of town. He glanced up in the rearview mirror as he turned the next corner. The man stood there on the walk, gazing after him out of mild gray eyes.

Next moment, Tildon swore and jammed his brakes on. A closed car was making a U turn or something in the street he had swung into. Its length was across the street. Tildon waited for the turn to be completed. But the car seemed to be slow in getting around.

Something jammed into Tildon's side as a man rose up on the left side of his sedan. The something was a gun.

"Slide over," the man said.

Tildon moved his head till he could see the man. A young fellow in sober brown, with bad teeth which were exposed in a most unpleasant grin.

"Where the devil did you come from?" Tildon said.

"There are trees along here."

"And monkeys dropping out of 'em?" said Tildon.

The young fellow's grin hardened.

"Watch your tongue, mug. And—slide over."

Tildon slid over. The car in front of him was backing now so there was a clear path. The few houses on this street were boarded up—after all, it was early April and the resort was still dead.

The man took the wheel, right hand still jamming the gun into Tildon's side. Tildon wondered how he expected to drive that way. He found out in a moment. The man from the car ahead came over, and got in the rear seat of the sedan.

"Has anybody any objection to telling me what this is all about?" Tildon inquired.

"Shut up," said the man in the rear seat. The fellow in front had started the car and was driving west, along a sandy, little-used road. It was half-past three in the afternoon. The driver pulled down the sun-visor over the windshield to shade his eyes.

"Don't you like people to watch seagulls through telescopes?" said Tildon.

"Shut up," snapped the man in the back seat.

The sun was whip-hot in Tildon's face, dazzling him. The car was approaching a ram-shackle trestle over one of the stagnant salt pools that dotted the low flats. The sun on the water was more dazzling to the eye than ever. Tildon knew the driver was as blinded by it as he was. The man was instinctively slowing a little.

"Look out!" Tildon yelled suddenly.

Whether the driver thought a head-on collision was racing toward him out of the blinding path of the sun, will never be known. But he must have thought something drastic loomed unseen in his path, for he reacted as Tildon had hoped he would. He wrenched the wheel to the left.

At the same moment, Tildon, whose right hand was furtively on the door-handle, lurched to the right and out of the car.

He fell in the sandy road, and rolled toward the ditch, while the sedan went on, off the road and back to it again with its right front door flapping.

There was a triple blaze from the sedan's right rear window. Puffs of sand around Tildon showed where the bullets had struck. Then Tildon had his own gun out. He fired in answer, trying for a tire and missing. The car picked up speed and disappeared down the road.

Swearing, Tildon got up, brushed himself off as well as he could and started toward the town a mile or so back of him, with his rapid slouch of a walk that looked so deceptively indolent.

IV

BRENT was at Cape May Headquarters.

Tildon had found Titus' sedan, abandoned, at the edge of town where he'd been stopped by the other car, and had driven to the station to report his experience. He shelved the report at the look on Brent's face. The big fellow never had been any good at concealing his thoughts.

"Another suicide, Russ," he said, as Tildon came up to him. "Just phoned in. Some old guy, about fifteen miles up, near Wildwood. Want to go with us?"

Tildon emphatically did. But first, getting the name that had been telephoned in by whoever had found the body and identified it by the contents of the pockets, he got Titus on the wire in New York.

"Man by the name of Carver, according to cards in his wallet," Tildon

said sharply. "Orville S. Carver."

Titus came out with one oath, in the most emphatic place, like an economical executive, and informed Tildon that Carver was insured for ninety thousand dollars. Policy taken out three years before, so that suicide did not cancel the death payment. This thing, Titus declared bitterly, had gone far enough! The thing had to be stopped. In the name of the Association Titus was offering Tildon a ten thousand dollar bonus in addition to his fee if he could solve it.

"I think you can start counting it out," drawled Tildon.

Then he went with Brent and the other New York detective to the desolate location fifteen miles up the coast where the body of the sixth "suicide" lay.

Orville Carver had been a man in his early sixties, with more weight than was good for him, and with a monkish bald spot on top of his head. The body was in shirt-sleeves, naturally; a man who is supposed to have committed suicide by walking out into the sea and then swimming till exhausted, would not try to swim with a coat on. Also, the shoes were gone.

The coast guard had found the body. One of the men had gone through the pockets to identify it; and the fruits of his search were spread before the detectives.

A wallet, with fourteen dollars and engraved personal cards in it; a fat key ring, a sodden handkerchief; a quarter, and a pearl-handled pen-knife.

Tildon looked at the ocean, sullenly curling its surf nearby. It was cold, in the dusk. Tildon shivered.

"We're raising a race of Spartans in the east," he observed. "Six men have walked into that icy water, in weather this cold or colder, to bump themselves

off! You'd think they could have found a more comfortable way."

One of the coast guards came walking up the shore. In his hand was a pair of shoes, and over his arm an overcoat and suit coat.

"Found these three miles down," he said to Brent. "I guess that's where this guy waded in. Just dropped his coat on the beach."

"Where's his hat?" asked Tildon.

"I didn't see a hat. Maybe he came down to the beach bareheaded."

"With the April wind blowing on his bald head? Never! Bald heads are sensitive. He'd have a hat—if he got to that part of the beach under his own power. By the way, it's pretty far from the road up there, isn't it?"

"Yeah. He must have waded across the flats for a couple of miles."

"A most determined suicide," murmured Tildon.

Brent had been going through the coats. There were gloves in the overcoat, a clipped pencil and several meaningless papers in the suitcoat pocket. That, and something else, at which Brent stared perplexedly as he brought it out.

A little drugstore bottle with a darkish liquid in it. The label read, *Father Bill's Seasick Remedy*. It was full.

"Now why," rumbled Brent, "would a guy committing suicide buy himself a brand new bottle of this stuff?"

"Maybe he was afraid he'd get seasick crossing the River Styx," shrugged Tildon.

"There aren't any rivers around here," said Brent. "And besides, you don't get seasick crossing rivers."

"Skip it," said Tildon abstractedly, staring at the bottle of seasick remedy with absorbed black eyes.

They went down the beach and examined the spot where the coats and

shoes had been found. The beach section there told no tales. They went back to Cape May.

"What are you going to do now?" asked Brent, elaborately casual about it.

"I'm going to have dinner," said Tildon blandly. "I'd ask you to have it with me, but I believe I'm dining with a certain real estate lady. I didn't notice any rings on the third finger of her left hand today."

"And after dinner?" persisted Brent.

"Who can say?" evaded Tildon, thinking of a ten grand reward which he would like very much to keep all to himself. Isabel Baker was expensive. She didn't mean to be; it was just her bringing up.

THE dinner with the real estate lady did not materialize, but Tildon didn't mind much. He killed time over food and a couple of drinks till ten o'clock. Then he went to a drugstore and bought six ounces of ether and a big wad of gauze. After which he got into Titus' car and went, with lights out toward the end of the journey, to the upper edge of town near where he had almost been taken to a rendezvous with death that afternoon. There he left the sedan and began walking, bent low so his body would blend with the night and the marsh grass, over the primitive road toward the place he'd spotted with a telescope.

He kept stumbling on the miserable road. The night, not windy, was very dark and overcast. He wished he could use the flash in his pocket, but that was of course out of the question. You could see a light, across the flats, for miles.

He thought he heard a motorboat, far out from shore, but could not be sure. The surf was low, but there is

always a murmur to the advancing sea.

He got to the slightly built-up plot on which was the old coast-guard station. And he heard a low growl in the night. At the same time, he sensed rather than saw approaching him the big dog he'd glimpsed through the telescope.

The dog did not bark. Probably he had been carefully trained not to: A barking dog, as well as any other noise maker, can draw unwelcome attention to a place. He only snarled as he came skulking toward the shadowy figure near the end of the marsh road. He looked as big as a horse to Tildon.

The private detective got out his bottle of ether and the roll of gauze. He soaked the roll, and tossed it toward the mastiff. At the same time he slid out of his coat.

The dog stood still for an instant, and Tildon stood the same, staring at the brute, with the muscles of his legs and shoulders corded tensely. Then the mastiff paused to sniff at the white roll. And Tildon leaped.

The big dog's slaving jaws were jammed into the soft muck—and into the ether-reeking roll. Over the dog's massive head, Tildon's coat was pressed like a smothering blanket, keeping the reek of ether in and also any abortive barks the startled animal might try to emit.

For three or four solid minutes, Tildon had his hands full. The dog, trained to savagery, weighed better than a hundred pounds, and was fighting instinctively for its life as the drug ate into its senses. Tildon would have had no more trouble trying to ride a bucking bronco than trying to keep on the heaving, straining mastiff. He felt as though he had been pounded all over when he got up, a long time after the beast's last movement, and headed

toward the dark outline of the old building.

As he got near, he saw faint cracks of light around one of the rear windows. A screen of some sort over the window on the inside didn't quite prevent the telltale light from coming through. And, close to the same window, he heard voices. They were not plain enough for him to distinguish words; just audible enough to testify to the presence of several men in the room behind the shade.

He went toward the front of the building, a shadow in the blackness. At the front, his foot touched a heavy timber with a rail on top of it. The easeway down which boats could be slid from boathouse to surf.

The big front doors of the boathouse were open.

Tildon went in, sliding through in a hurry because for an instant his silhouette could be seen in the doorway. Inside, he felt around long enough to find a closed door leading from the empty boathouse into the dormitory structure behind. The door was locked. He started back out the beach end of the building—froze in the darkness.

From the direction of the beach came a grating that meant only one thing: the beaching of a boat. And with it came voices. Again he couldn't hear words. The voices were those of a man and a girl.

HE FELT around for cover. He couldn't leave the big front door now. Inevitably he would be seen by whoever had just beached the boat. His hand came in contact with a big hinged box, or chest. He lifted the cover, felt inside. There was rope at the bottom, but plenty of room. He climbed in, and held the lid open an inch so he could see out.

He saw two men come in, and an instant later heard the labor of a boat being hauled into the boathouse. He could barely see it as it came in the doors. It was a large rowboat, high-sided, on the lifeboat order but not so big.

Following the boat came a man and a woman. Tildon could tell nothing but their sex; the darkness hid all details of feature and form.

"—why you didn't let me see my uncle closer," the girl was saying.

"My dear young lady," said the man beside her in a smooth, cultivated tone. "You seem to forget that this affair is illegal in the extreme. I and my associates—as well as yourself—face the penitentiary if it ever leaks out. So of course I could scarcely show a light in the boat, to let you have a better view of your uncle's face."

There was a pause, during which the two entered the boathouse and the big doors were rolled silently shut. Tildon had the lid shut, now, fearing a light in a moment. He heard a slight scrape as some one laid a hand lightly on the chest.

"What are you getting at, Miss Corsey? Are you trying to hint that it was not your uncle you saw off in the motorboat?"

"I don't know," came the girl's slow, troubled answer.

"But such a suspicion is ridiculous. You tell me you've lived with him all your life. Then surely even on a dark night you could identify him positively. And the darkness doesn't keep you from hearing his voice. You know *that* well enough to be sure, don't you?"

"I don't know," the girl said again. "But I wish you had let me see his face in the light—"

The man's voice, as he cut in, was not quite so suave.

"There are coast-guard boats all around here. That is why we took Mr. Corsey from here in a rowboat, with muffled oars, two miles offshore to the motorboat—which should not be heard at that distance—and in that to the tramp steamer eighteen miles out which shall take him to France on a forged passport. And you would have all our careful plans endangered by showing a light out there!"

The two were moving away. The girl's voice sounded once more. "He didn't seem to move or gesture as Uncle Rand used to—"

Then the sound of a closing door shut it off. The two had gone into the rooms behind the boathouse, through the connecting doorway. Tildon waited for the two men who had hauled the boat up to leave the boathouse too. But for a moment they didn't.

"Where's that one-inch cable?" Tildon heard one of them say.

"In the box over there."

It didn't mean anything to Tildon till he heard steps approaching his hiding place. Then he realized that the box he was in was the one they were talking about.

The steps stopped right outside the box. Tildon drew himself up. He tried to get the rope on which he lay out from under him so that the man might, by a hundred to one shot, reach in and get it without touching him. But it was impossible. The cable was in a loose snarl underneath him.

The lid was raised. Then from a few yards away a man said, "Whatcha want the cable for? We're goin' out of here again pretty quick. And for the last time."

"Yeah?" said the man who had raised the lid. Tildon could not see his face; could only see the hand and arm that held the lid open.

"Yeah. Forget it. Come on in back."

The lid slammed down on Tildon again. He felt sweat trickle down his arms from something more than the warmth of his cramped quarters. Then the steps of the men died away. There was a click as the light was switched out, and once more the sound of a door opening and closing. But this time there was something in addition to the door's slam.

A muffled scream, coming to Tildon's ears when the door opened, cut off as though with a knife when the door was closed. A girl's scream.

V

TILDON opened the door between boathouse and living quarters. He had climbed out of his box and got to the panel in a matter of seconds after the scream. And this time he had found the door unbolted.

He peered through a half-inch crack into a badly lit narrow hallway. At the end of the hallway, twenty feet down, was some kind of a big open room taking up the rear of the dormitory structure. In the intervening corridor wall-space were set doors. Three on each side. Opening, evidently, onto tiny sleeping rooms.

Tildon saw a man move across the far doorway opening into the big rear room. Then he couldn't see him, or any one else; any more. He slipped into the corridor and tried the first door on his left. It swung a little to his touch. He strode in, gun in his hand.

The room was empty. It held only an iron cot and a dresser and chair. The dresser drawers were half out, showing emptiness. On the cot was a sloppily packed suitcase, with an overcoat lying in a messy huddle next to it. Somebody was getting ready to leave in a hurry.

He backed to the door, listened, heard steps. Also he heard, in the next room to his, a sort of gasp that would have been a scream had not something muffled it. The girl again.

The corridor still seemed to be clear. Tildon skimmed down it to the next door and again entered a tiny room with his gun out. But this room was not vacant.

In the corner, next to a heavily blanketed window, were a man and a girl. The girl was huddled on the floor, with wrists and ankles bound. Tildon could see a little of her face over the man's shoulder as he crouched low over her. He could see wide, frantic brown eyes, and part of a broad strip of adhesive over her lips.

She saw him at the same instant, and Tildon swiftly put his finger to his lips to try to keep her from warning the man, whose back was to him, by any untoward movement. But his gesture was too late. Something in the quick rigidity of her body must have tipped the fellow off.

He had been passing a coil of rope around her slender body, not satisfied with the bonds on her limbs. He whirled, now, dropping the rope. His hand darted for his shoulder. But Tildon was on him before he could get his gun out.

Tildon didn't shoot. He swung his automatic in a hard, overhand arc. It thudded on the man's skull, and he went down. It was, Tildon was glad to see, the young fellow with the bad teeth; the one who had held him at gunpoint that afternoon.

The girl was gasping and shuddering as he turned to her. She was pretty in spite of her pallor and the disorder of hair and dress—hardly over twenty, brown-eyed, soft-featured, small.

Tildon whispered into her ear:

"Don't make a sound when I untie you."

She nodded. He took off the adhesive first, with a quick flirt of his hand to make as short as possible the painful tearing of the tape from her skin. Then he loosed her bonds. She hadn't been tied long enough for circulation to be impaired. She could stand, all right. He led her to the door.

But after a glance out the partly opened panel, he shut it in a hurry. At the back end of the corridor, in the big room there, two men were seated so that they couldn't fail to see any one trying to sneak down the hall to the boathouse.

The girl glanced at him, eyes fearful. He nodded. "Have to wait a minute. Then we'll get away from here."

She caught her full red lip in white teeth till her trembling subsided a bit. Then she said, in a whisper, "Who are you? One of . . ."

"One of this mob? Hardly!" Tildon whispered back. "I'm a detective."

HE OPENED the door again, the barest fraction of an inch. The seated men had not moved; didn't look as if they were going to very soon.

"How did you get in this mess? Seeing a relative off?"

"Oh," said the girl. "Then you know . . ."

"Most of the idea, I think," Tildon said. "Your uncle, isn't it? I overheard a little, out there."

The girl bit her lip, then sighed.

"Yes, my uncle. Or at least I thought it was, until—"

There was a heavy laugh from the back room. The girl shivered.

"These—these *murderers*! They told my uncle they could help him collect on his life insurance. They said they could make up a—a body that would fool

police and insurance companies and every one else so the policy would be paid. Then my uncle, who had lost everything on the stock market, fell for it."

Tildon was nodding, as her story fell into place with those of the others.

"My uncle came secretly here, to Cape May. Three days later police found a body identified as his. Ten days later the policy was paid over to me. Sixty thousand dollars. The plan of these crooks seemed to be working all right. But I saw the body they were supposed to have 'substituted' for my uncle's, and I was terribly upset. I was sure it *was* his. Of course no dead person looks quite like he did in life, but it didn't seem possible to me that any one, no matter how much of a wizard, could imitate another person so marvelously. But I went through with my end of the plan just the same. I—I loved my uncle, so I became a partner in what I knew, even if successful, was an outright crime."

She paused again, working on the shivers till she'd made her teeth stop chattering.

"I came down here secretly with the insurance money in cash. I was brought from Cape May to this dreary place by a man that gave me the jitters just to look at him. I got here just a little while ago. I was led, in the pitch darkness, to the water's edge. There were four men there in a high rowboat. And one of the four was my uncle.

"I was ready to cry with relief. I was so sure it was his body I'd seen in the coffin. But when he spoke to me, I knew his voice, even though I could hardly see his face in the night. We got into the boat. We were to row out several miles to a motorboat, which would take him on further out to a small steamer on its way to France. He

was going to live out the rest of his life on the French Riviera with the insurance money.

"We got to the motorboat. I gave my uncle two-thirds of the cash, and gave the other third to the head murderer of this outfit. That was their fee. A third of the policy. But on the way back I got to thinking. I'd heard my uncle's voice. What little I'd seen of the face was my uncle's, all right. Yet it didn't somehow seem like him after all. And the more I thought it over the less sure I was that I'd seen him in the boat and the more sure that the last time I'd really seen him was when he was being lowered into his grave. I didn't have sense enough to keep my mouth shut. And I think this crowd was uneasy anyway . . ."

"Quite uneasy," said Tildon. "They'd decided the place was getting too hot for them, and were moving on tonight."

"Anyhow," said the girl, "the man in charge suddenly swore and said something to the man you just hit. And then I was knocked down and tied. I guess I wasn't supposed to leave here."

"I guess you weren't," Tildon said grimly. "There was one other girl who wasn't quite fooled by this racket. Her name was Joy Larned. You were to join her in—wherever she is at the moment. But we'll get out of here in a minute and then there'll be a nice little raid—"

"That," a third voice sounded suddenly in the room, "is what *you* think."

Tildon crouched and swung, with his gun jabbing toward the source of the sound. But there was nothing to shoot at, now. The voice had obviously come through what seemed to be a little ventilator grill, high up on the inside wall. And there was nothing behind the grill to shoot at.

The girl was moaning a little. Tildon

was swearing. A moment ago everything had looked rosy. Now . . .

THE window crackled suddenly as it was broken from the outside. Tildon, crouching lower, covered it with his gun. And, while his attention was thus nicely occupied, a voice spoke from behind him, from the doorway.

"Lay your gun down on the floor, please."

For a second Tildon was rigid, rebellious. But in the next second he obeyed and laid his gun down. There was ice in the voice. Ice, and deliberate murder if he moved a muscle in disobedience to commands.

"Stand up, please," the voice purred. "Thank you. Now back to the door and out into the hall. You will stay in here, Miss Corsey. I'm afraid we'll have to tie and gag you again. Muggs, take care of that."

Tildon saw a burly fellow he hadn't seen before, step over the body of the man with the bad teeth, dragging the girl with him.

"Don't scream, Miss Corsey. If you do, it will be your last. You, walk down the hall to the end room." The latter command was emphasized by the jab of a gun against Tildon's spine. He walked.

Two men, one with a sort of grin on his thick lips and the other with snarling fury in his dark eyes, received Tildon in the big back room. Each held a gun on him. He felt the pressure against his spine relax.

"Sit down, please."

Tildon sat in the nearest chair, with a smile on his dark face covering the thwarted rage he felt at having been so seemingly near escape and then having been caught off-base. A man came around from behind him, and sat leisurely in a chair about ten feet from

his. It was the mild looking gentleman who had spoken to him in the afternoon, just before the abortive death-ride.

"We rather expected you," the man said suavely, gray eyes as mild as a preacher's. "But I will admit that you got in more quietly and quickly than we apprehended. One of my men just found the dog."

Tildon said nothing, just sat there with his narrow forehead serene and unwrinkled. The man with the gray eyes went on.

"I suppose you have found out some very interesting things, Mr. . . ."

"Tildon's the name," said Tildon. "Yes. I *have* found out a little." He stopped and listened for an instant. He thought he heard a faint grinding, scratching noise somewhere near. He couldn't be sure.

"You seem to reverse the usual procedure," he said. "Till now, people trying to defraud insurance companies of life policies have done it by attempting to palm off unrecognizable corpses as their own. You give them the real body on which to pay out the cash—and then prepare your double *after* that, to fool the relatives. I don't know why you show such sympathy for the relatives, but I suppose there's a reason."

The man with the gray eyes spread his hands.

"Of course. If it began leaking out, to prospective customers, that previous ones had never been seen again, my very profitable business would have withered for lack of clients. This way, the bereaved have left Cape May satisfied that their loved ones were still alive and that what they saw in the coffins were only clever duplications. I'll admit I didn't foresee that my ham actor's impersonations in the darkness of a boat at night would be so realistic that

the bereaved would write letters to their departed ones. The letters were the suspicious point, weren't they?"

"They were," said Tildon, wondering why he hadn't been shot moments ago. "Letters to the dead are apt to arouse any one's curiosity. But Joy Larned wasn't quite taken in by the act, was she?"

"No. Nor Miss Corsey, tonight."

Tildon couldn't figure out why he was being given so much time, but it was jake with him. If enough minutes passed, something helpful *might* happen . . .

"I haven't seen the name of Corsey on the New York Association's suicide list," he said.

THE man with the gray eyes smiled pleasantly. But it was a pleasantness so out of place that Tildon felt a cold sensation creep down his spine.

"Corsey was from Boston," the man said. "It isn't out in the open yet, but we drew our customers from all the big cities on the Atlantic coast. Not just New York."

"Wholesalers, eh?" said Tildon. "Suicides in dozen lots. With relatives handing a third of each policy to you, and the other two-thirds to your impersonating actor—"

He stopped. For the man with the gray eyes had suddenly stood up with a curiously businesslike crispness.

"That will be enough for a simple phone conversation," he said to the big fellow who had re-tied the girl, and who had entered the room a moment before. "Take him, Muggs."

Tildon blinked with the quick change, and felt the cold streak along his spine grow icier. The big fellow came toward him with a snarling grin on his mouth.

"The usual, boss?" he said.

"No, not the usual. This man would have no shadow of motive for suicide. Don't just hold him under till he stops struggling. See to it that he stays under. I would suggest tying him to the little anchor in the rowboat. That weighs over a hundred pounds. Use wire. Rope might rot too quickly."

"Okay," said Muggs. "Better come along, Gratz."

One of the two who had covered Tildon while he sat in the easychair, went to Muggs' side. He was a thin, snakey looking fellow with a scar under his left ear.

They prodded him out of the room and along the corridor toward the boathouse. As they passed the doorway of the room in which the girl lay, Tildon looked in. The door was open so he could see her, huddled in her corner again, gagged and bound. Her eyes were hopeless, glazed with fear as they rested on him for a moment.

The boathouse door was opened. Tildon started to step in as the gun prodded him. But he stopped a moment. Behind him, in the big room, a voice was sounding.

"Tildon's the name. Yes. I *have* found out a little."

The voice was perfectly distinct and clear, although accompanied by a faint scratching.

"You seem to reverse the usual procedure. Till now, people trying to defraud insurance companies of life policies have done it by attempting to palm off unrecognizable corpses as their own . . ."

Syllable for syllable the things he had just said in the back room. His words. More than that—*his voice!*

"Letters to the dead are apt to rouse any one's curiosity . . ." the voice of Tildon continued to grind out twenty feet to his rear.

"Get on into the boathouse," snapped the man behind him.

He took two steps, and then the roof seemed to cave on him. There was a white light in his brain and he fell, deeply unconscious. The men behind him were taking no chances.

VI

HE WAS cold. His body was painfully distorted and constricted. He blinked with the discomfort of it, and opened his eyes. He saw an expanse of heaving water and a dark sky. And the edge of a rowboat. Oars creaked beside him.

He tried to bring a hand up to his throbbing head, and found he was tied. Furthermore, he was tied to something which was responsible for his cramped, distorted position.

The words of the murderer with the pleasant gray eyes came back to him. Sure. The anchor. He was tied, or rather wired, to the rowboat's anchor. Which weighed a hundred pounds or so and would keep him on the bottom of the sea nicely.

He had his eyes shut again. Behind the closed lids his brain was active.

The duplication of his voice had been a recording. That accounted for the slight scratching. He had been allowed to live only that his voice could be recorded, as the voices of others before him had been recorded. Then the man with the gray eyes would practise on the record of the voice, over and over, till it had become temporarily *his* voice. After that, a phone call to the New York Insurance Association that he, "Tildon," had a hot lead in a distant part of the country. And finally—death, with the faked phone call giving the pleasant-eyed killer plenty of time to cover his tracks because days would pass before any one

decided it was time to investigate Tildon's disappearance.

"We're a mile out," said one of the two men in the boat with him. "Ain't that far enough?"

"No," said the other. "Make it another mile. It's kind of shallow around here."

There was silence again. The oars, handled one each by the two men, creaked monotonously. Tildon strained at the wire that bound him to the compact little anchor. He accomplished nothing other than having the thin strands cut deeply into his flesh.

"Did you croak him?" asked the big fellow, Muggs.

"I don't know," said the other. "What difference does it make?"

The oars creaked on. Tildon kept his body as still as he could while he explored further with his fingers. His hands were movable from the bound wrists down. It gave him a little leeway. He had always said that a man could think his way out of any situation, given time. Well, he had time here; and he began to think he had been talking through his hat.

When he first discovered that the crossbar of the anchor was loose in the shank, he didn't think much of it. The bar went through a slot in the shank, and moved from side to side. It didn't seem to mean much. He managed slowly to move the bar till one end was against the shank—and it still didn't mean much. There was a knob on the end of the bar, integral with the iron, that kept it from sliding through the shank and out.

Then he slid the bar the other way, very slowly, because the wire from his wrists was looped around it making movement very difficult, and the picture was changed. For on *this* end of the sliding bar, keeping it from slipping

out of the forged slot in the shank, was a knob which screwed on, like a nut on a bolt, on threads.

At this point in his explorations, Tildon felt a peculiar nausea and weakness. He had experienced it several times before in his colorful life. It was the weakness, the physical sickness, produced by surprising and unexpected hope where all hope had seemed lost. He fought it down in a hurry and worked on the removable knob.

He was lying on his side with the anchor hook protruding between his legs, the shank along his body, and his wrists bound to the crossbar so that his hands were palm-down. Which was lucky. It gave him a chance to get a fair grip on the bar. He did so, clamping his right hand on the bar and his left on the hopeful, threaded knob.

Then he twisted one way with his right hand and the other with his left.

His hope began to recede a bit. Even the double motion of his hands gave him less than an inch to twist, because of his rigidly bound wrists. The anchor must be rusted, after immersion in salt water. It wouldn't be possible to loosen that knob . . .

And then it slipped, ever so little on its threads. The flesh of his numbed hands was capable of feeling *that* motion, all right! It slipped—and kept on turning, slowly, as he worked at it with steely fingers.

"Hey," said the man handling the oars with Mugs, after awhile.

"What's the matter?" said Mugs.

"I heard a kind of rattle."

"Probably it's mice," said Mugs sardonically. "Shut up and row."

The oars creaked on. The rattle had been caused when the knob slipped from the crossbar, and from Tildon's bruised fingers, and clattered an inch

to the bottom of the boat. The crossbar could now slide out of the anchor-shaft—and out of the wire loops.

Tildon slid it out, leaving a generous inch of slack in the loops around his wrists. He spread his arms apart, and then worked the loosened loops down over his hands.

He didn't bother to unbind his legs just then. He picked up the bar like a club. By stretching a little he could reach the men who rowed, with the bar. And their backs were toward him as they bent murderously to their task of getting out to a depth where it would be impossible for a storm to wash an anchored body ashore . . .

THE man with the gray eyes was in the small room where the girl lay. With him was the one member of his crew now left, with the two out with Tildon and the fourth lying dead where Tildon's gun-barrel had stretched him.

"Why didn't you have Mugs take these two out and sink 'em with that black-eyed ape of a detective?" asked the man, touching the body of his dead pal with the toe of his shoe.

The gray-eyed man didn't look like a person who was used to explaining his commands. But he did this one, after a moment, speaking as though more to himself than his man.

"We've always steered clear of leaving more than one body in a given spot," he said. "We've always kept from giving Cape May away as the source of these suicides and disappearances. We might as well continue. This is an ideal location. We can come back and work from it again in a few years. But not if several bodies eventually wash up on the beach within a short distance of the boathouse."

"What'll you do with these two? Just leave 'em here?"

"Hardly. We'll take them, with everything else, in the motorboat. Go clear down to Charleston, or farther. On the way, a hundred miles or so from here, we can dump them out—"

"That," a third voice sounded suddenly in the room, "is what *you* think."

For an instant there was a silence in the little chamber like that preceding a depth-bomb explosion. Then the gray-eyed man exclaimed shrilly and whirled toward the ventilator in the side wall. The man with him was already glaring at it. He put three bullets futilely into it—and then dropped his gun as a fourth explosion sounded from the door and a slug cut through his right hand.

With the man nursing his hand, and the gray-eyed fellow showing white teeth in a thin smile, both turned.

"Tildon," said the man with the gray eyes.

"That's the name," said Tildon. "Both of you, stay very still. You're two to one. I can't take chances. If either of you goes for a gun I'll have to shoot, and it won't be for the legs."

"I hardly expected you here," said the gray-eyed man. He had gotten his urbanity back. His voice was pleasant and even, his eyes were bland.

"No, I don't suppose you did," retorted Tildon. "But here I am. I decided the ocean was too cold to live in for the next few months."

"My men?"

"Out, but not dead. I socked them with the anchor crossbar, but not hard enough to break their damned heads. Not that I'm so forgiving and humane—I just want to see them fry in the chair. Along with you."

"I suppose I will get the chair," murmured the gray-eyed man. "A messy death. I'd like to escape it. In fact—I think—I *will* . . ."

With the last two words, he leaped squarely at the man in the doorway, disregarding the gun as though it didn't exist. Tildon swore and jumped back. He didn't shoot. The man's move was too obvious at attempt at suicide. And he wanted this killer whole and well. That is, comparatively well.

He slammed his left fist forward. The leaping man met the outlashing fist with a solid arm and shoulder behind it. There was a sickening crack, and the man fell like a collapsed bag.

Tildon sent a slug in the neighborhood of the other man, to discourage his tentative move to pick up his gun with his left hand, and then bent over the gray-eyed fellow. He was afraid he'd broken his neck. But he grinned as he felt a faint pulse. Grinned, and turned to the girl.

"Seems to be a habit, untying you. But I'll let this guy do it this time. I guess he can untwist wire with one hand, all right. Then the three of us will go to the back room while I phone a gentleman called Brent."

TILDON'S narrow forehead wrinkled in a grin as he stared at Isabel Baker. On the wall, elephants danced with kangaroos. Benign tigers grinned at frolicsome lambs. All was festivity and fun in the Tony Sarg room at the Waldorf. But Isabel did not look festive. She looked exasperated.

"You're holding out on me," she said.

"Holding out?" murmured Tildon, black brows rising.

"You heard me. You've told me how dead men got mail—or, rather, didn't get it. But there's more. I can tell by the grin on your homely pan."

Tildon's eyebrows climbed down.

"Haven't you any idea?"

"None," she said. "And I'm not in the mood for guessing games."

"You'd make a lousy detective. Look. This guy gets men who are financially embarrassed to come down to his Cape May place. They think they're going to be smuggled abroad from there—one actually bought a bottle of seasick remedy for his 'ocean voyage.' Instead, they're killed by being held under water till they don't breathe any more, after which the insurance is paid on the genuine corpses. But that's by the way. The thing is: How do you suppose the gent with the gray eyes knew who to approach with his proposition?"

"Who to approach?"

"Sure. How would he know just which men, respectable pillars of the community, would be desperate enough to take him up on an insurance fraud?"

"I never thought of that," murmured Isabel.

"Neither did the cops. But, with all due modesty, I did. So we put the question urgently to the gray-eyed fellow. And after awhile he talked.

"It seems there was an insurance chappie who made a note of supposedly well-to-do men who suddenly got late with insurance premium payments which should be easy for them to make. He would investigate, and if the late payment was due to sudden

financial embarrassment, he would give the name to Gray-Eyes, who would then spring the proposition.

"He didn't get his half. Gray-Eyes held out on him. So the insurance master mind had an idea. He'd heard Gray-Eyes swear that if something went wrong he'd never be taken alive to face the chair. He'd either kill himself or force the cops to kill him. The insurance brain knew where Gray-Eyes cached the money. So, thought he, let's put the finger on Gray-Eyes. If he's killed, *all* the money would be his. If he was taken alive, there was still a fine chance that the insurance genius could loot the cache and beat it ahead of a raid. A good gamble, and he took it by sacking a private detective onto Cape May."

"Russ!" exclaimed Isabel.

Tildon nodded, gazing through the rim of his glass at a tipsy lion on the wall.

"We spread the word that Gray-Eyes lay wounded and unconscious in the hospital, due to recover consciousness and probably talk in ten or twelve hours. Then the cops ambushed the insurance lad and trailed him to the money cache. And I imagine the most surprised and disillusioned man in any cell in the country at this moment is Carvel W. Titus, vice president of the New York Insurance Association."

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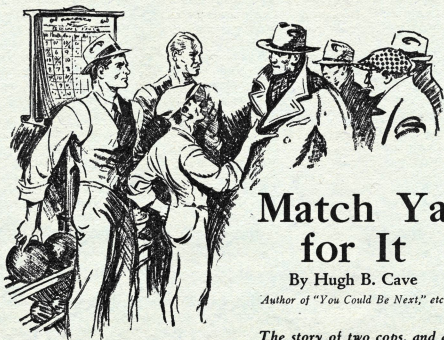
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"What's it worth to you?" the kid asked

Match Ya for It

By Hugh B. Cave

Author of "You Could Be Next," etc.

The story of two cops, and a kid who, when Death walked through the door, said, "I'll match ya, double or nothin' "

THIS Marson guy was working as a car-juggler in a parking lot when I first bumped into him. When I drove up, he was flipping coins with a customer, and he must have won, because when he turned to me there was a grin spread all over his round, good-natured face. "Yes, sir," he said, "and what can I do for you this morning?"

Usually I'm wrong in my first impressions of people, but that doesn't stop me from hoping I may someday be right. I liked this kid. He'd be about twenty-two or twenty-three, I figured, and he looked as if he spent the biggest part of his time thinking what a swell world this was. Maybe that was what I needed—to run into someone with a different outlook on things from what I had. I was pretty sour that morning.

I said: "What is it? Fifteen cents?"

"Right," he said.

I fished in my pocket and had only a dime in change. I looked at the kid, and he looked at the time and he said: "Match ya. Double or nothing."

He tried it and I won.

"There's a jinx on me today," he said.

"Jinx? Didn't you take the fellow that just walked out of here?"

"Him? Heck, no! I ain't taken him in over a week. He eats rabbits' feet for breakfast every morning."

I said: "Well, better luck next time, sonny," and hiked up the street to my job. I wasn't going to like that job today. I knew what I was going to find out, and I didn't want to hear it. Not that I was any particular pal of Joe Perrin's, you understand—but Joe'd

been a good guy and a good cop, and he had a wife and kids.

I was right. Joe'd been dropped from the force. Some of the wise guys who owed their jobs to politics were already dissecting the corpse.

I'm a detective, myself—Lieutenant Paul Colle, of Homicide—and I didn't have to get mixed up in it. Matter of fact, I had no call to open my trap, even, because I hadn't been anywhere near the scene of action at the time Joe made his arrest. But I'm hot-headed. When I hear of things like that, I always want to plough into the middle of them and slug somebody. More than once it's got me into trouble.

I was parked in the chief's office, reading a newspaper, when two of the wise guys began tearing Joe to pieces outside in the corridor. The door was open. I got a load of: "Well, he won't think he's such a big shot now. He'll be a damn' sight more careful who he gets rough with!"—and I crumpled the paper down on my knees and belowed:

"And why should he be? It was his job to arrest the punk, wasn't it?"

They shot me a couple of dirty looks and walked on without answering.

You'll have to know the whole of it, and I can't give it in detail because I wasn't there. I went there later, though, after hearing about it, and I got the low-down from the guy who runs the joint. I did that because Joe knew what he was up against, and had told his wife about it, and she was calling him a fool. He begged me to explain to her that there were times when a cop just had to do his duty and to hell with the consequences.

IT happened Sunday night about eleven-thirty, in the Rainbow Tavern on Lake Street. The Rainbow isn't

much of a place—just one room with a bar at the right side as you enter, and a line of booths on the left. There were maybe twenty people present, all of them peacefully enjoying a little beer and maybe a sandwich or two, when Charlop walked in.

Well, this lad Charlop is ordinarily a pretty decent fellow. About thirty years old now, he stands about five-ten, weighs maybe one-eighty, and leans to the handsome side. He played football and baseball around town, and was pretty fair at both, before his old man, who used to be a congressman, greased him into a political job. The job went to his head, but even at that, when sober, he was a fairly decent cuss and not too hard to get along with.

The trouble was, he was on a beautiful tear the night he walked into the Rainbow.

He was alone. Usually when a man goes out drinking alone, he's pretty quiet about it. That's the way I am, I know. But Charlop had a talking jag on, and was bound he'd get someone to listen to him.

He parked himself on a stool at the bar and ordered beer and looked around him. As I've said, it was a Sunday night and the place was quiet—no music, no rough stuff, and not much talk. He didn't like that. He said: "Say, what is this, a morgue, huh?" and then he said, with a swagger: "Oh. I see. I get it. You people don't like me, huh? I don't belong out here, huh? I don't belong to the right political party."

It was a big joke—so he thought. Maybe it was, at that. The neighborhood around the Rainbow is pretty solidly for the party that doesn't happen to be in power in our fair city at the moment; and, of course, Charlop is a little tin god among those in the

driver's seat. He was in the wrong pew, there at the Rainbow. He belonged downtown, or over in the South Side.

Well, I wasn't there, so I can't go into quotes too much, but I have it straight from the owner of the place that for more than half an hour Charlop sat there and talked politics. He began with the national administration and worked on down to local personalities—not in any general way, you understand, but hot and heavy, with an abundance of cuss words and plenty of challenges to his listeners to stand up and argue with him. The barkeep asked him in a nice way to quiet down, told him it was Sunday night and the people weren't interested, but on he raved.

When that didn't get him into the fight he was looking for, he tried another tack. Getting down off the stool, he walked along and got chummy with various men at the bar. Did they agree with him, or didn't they? If they didn't, did they have nerve enough to stand up and have it out with him? He could lick anybody in the place. "Anybody in the place—you hear that! And there ain't a man here with enough of what it takes to tell me I'm a liar!"

No one bothered with him. He'd been funny at first; now he was just a pain. The barkeep suggested that maybe he'd better go somewhere else.

He'd been waiting for that.

"Who's gonna make me?" he demanded, flaring up. "Who's gonna throw me out? You?"

The barkeep sighed, walked away. But Charlop was yearning for a fight and was determined to get it.

He paraded up and down, wanting to know in a loud voice who was going to throw him out of the joint. "I've been thrown out of better dumps than

this," he jammed. "And by *real* guys, not a bunch of sissies like you. If ya don't want me here, why don't ya do somethin' about it?"

There were two or three waitresses in the place, and one of them dropped a nickel into the phonograph, selected the hottest number on the list and turned the machine up loud, to drown him out. He didn't like it, but apparently he couldn't figure out what to do about it, because all he did was stand there with his hands on his hips and his head thrust forward, glaring at the girl. If he'd said anything to her, one or two of the men in the place would probably have handed him what he was asking for—a damn good mauling. But at that he might have done pretty well for himself. The dope was tough.

Anyhow, the same girl who'd turned on the phonograph now had a few words with the barkeep and slipped on her coat and went out to rustle up a cop. And the cop she rustled up happened to be Joe Perrin.

YOU can guess the rest of it. It was a tough spot to push a cop into, and Joe knew what he was up against the minute he walked into the joint. There was Charlop, parked on a stool and doing his damndest to insult the customers into action, and there was the barkeep, getting sorer by the minute and holding himself together with an obvious effort.

Joe walked up to the barkeep and asked what was the matter.

"You can see for yourself," the barkeep said. "The guy's disturbing the peace. I want him put out of here."

Joe walked over to Charlop and tried to be nice about it. After all, this dope Charlop had a big finger in things downtown.

Some of the customers, knowing who Charlop was and realizing what a tough spot it was for a cop to be in, watched with interest while Joe talked to him. They told me afterwards that Joe gave the guy every chance to make at least a half-way dignified exit. But Charlop wasn't looking for an out. He wanted a fight. He told Joe, in a loud voice, to go fly a kite.

Joe sighed, took him by the arm and said grimly: "Let's go."

Charlop shook himself loose, looked at Joe in amazement, and said: "You mean you're gonna *throw* me out?"

"I mean you're leaving. Better go quietly now."

"The hell I will! And you ain't big enough to make me!"

Joe was big enough to make him, all right. Joe just grabbed him, hauled him off the stool and started pushing him toward the door. At first, Charlop struggled, yammering threats and curses. Then he calmed down.

"This is gonna make history," he said.

Joe Perrin walked him up to the corner, to a cab stand, and said: "You better go home." And that was that.

I did a lot of thinking about it that day. At Headquarters there wasn't much of a voice lifted in Joe's defense; those of the boys who felt sorry for him were careful not to say so too loudly. All but me, of course. As I said before, I'm hot headed, and being a single man with no responsibilities I didn't give a damn whether they took my job away from me or not. I talked plenty. I let it be known that Joe Perrin was a pal of mine, and I was for him. And Charlop was a rat.

Nothing came of it that day, but the next morning when I showed up for work there was a note on my desk, telling me to report to the Chief's office.

I had an idea what was coming, and I ploughed in without knocking. The Chief wasn't there. Charlop was sitting on the desk, reading a newspaper, and when I walked in he looked up at me, pushed the paper aside, stared at me a moment without speaking. Then he said: "Sit down, Lieutenant."

I sat.

"You don't like me, do you?" he said.

I said: "No. Why should I?"

"Well," he said—and at least I'll give him credit for not trying any oily smile on me, or trying to pull the disappointed father and wayward son act—"well," he said, "I suppose there's no reason why you should, but on the other hand, is there any reason why you should *dislike* me?"

"Joe Perrin is a friend of mine."

"Oh."

"Furthermore," I said. "Joe has a wife and kids, and he was as good a cop as any on the force, and it was your own damned fault that he put you out of the Rainbow. You asked for it, and you gave him no alternative."

"Have *you* a wife and kids, Colle?"

"No," I snapped. "And I don't think enough of my job to worry about losing it. And if you're as anxious for a fight as you were the other night, I'll be pleased to accommodate you."

He didn't answer me. He wasn't looking for a fight—I could see that—and he was aware, now, that he couldn't smooth my hair down with threats or promises. After staring at me for a minute, he picked up his newspaper, folded it, pushed it into his pocket and walked out of the office.

I wondered what would happen. Nothing did. So that night I dropped in to see Joe Perrin.

It wasn't much of a place where

Joe lived. You don't rent mansions on a cop's pay. The house was a two family affair, with a yardstick of lawn out front and an empty garage out back. Joe was home alone, and seemed to be glad to see me.

"Margie and the youngsters went over to the Palace," he said, the Palace being the neighborhood picture-house a couple of blocks distant. "I made 'em," he told me. "I'd have gone myself—I like that Edward G. Robinson fellow—but I figured maybe the thirty cents'd better stay in my pocket."

We talked over a glass of beer, and Joe said he'd been looking for a job but so far without any luck. There wasn't much he could do, except maybe drive a truck. He'd been a cop about long as he could remember.

I said: "You'll be a cop again, too, before long."

"What are you going to do?" he demanded.

"Nothing," I said. It's already done. I had a talk with Charlop this morning, and I worried him. Unless I'm wrong, he'll be doing his damnedest, right now, to figure out some way of giving you your job back without showing his hand too much."

It was about nine-thirty then, and Joe's wife and kids wouldn't be home for another hour or so. There was a bowling and billiard joint over on Everett Street, a few minutes walk distant, and I took Joe over there. It would get his mind off his troubles for a while.

Who should be there, bowling in the alley next to the one we took, but this kid Marson from the parking lot. It seems he was some shakes as a bowler, and spent several evenings a week knocking the pins down. Tonight he was all alone, so we invited him to hook up with us. I figured his barrage

of wise-cracks, and his goofy antics would be good medicine for Joe.

The kid trimmed us royally, bowling himself a three-string average of 174, but had to pay for a round of beers afterward when he flipped coins with me and lost. "I'm jinxed," he said, tsk-tsking. "Everybody I match with today takes me to the cleaner's."

THE next morning, at the parking lot, he took another crack at me and lost again. And I lost, too, when I got to Headquarters.

It hurt, because after my talk with Charlop I'd come to believe that Joe Perrin would get his job back. For myself, I didn't care. The Chief tried to make it easy for me, and all I said was "Nuts."

I couldn't figure it out. I'd been telling myself that Charlop was afraid of me, scared stiff I'd shoot my mouth off. After all, we had newspapers in town, and they weren't all in favor of the present political setup. The opposition sheets would be more than willing to print a signed statement of the real truth behind Joe Perrin's dismissal.

I figured I'd have one more crack at it, for Joe's sake, and I went over to the State House to see Charlop. I went over there exactly five times. Each of those times, after I'd given my name to the pasty-faced yes-man in Charlop's outer office, I was told Charlop wasn't in. Well, maybe he wasn't. Maybe he was drunk in a taproom somewhere.

I drifted home to my apartment and called up Joe Perrin, told him what had happened to me. He said: "Paul, you shouldn't have done it. You shouldn't have stood up for me. Now what will you do? You need money?"

"Hell, no," I said. "And what's more, I don't need any sympathy. I'm sore. If you've got any spare sym-

pathy, save it for Charlop. He asked for it, and he's going to get it. You keep your eye on the newspapers."

The laugh was on me. I was the lad who glued his optics to the newspapers that night. There was a picture on page one that floored me.

It was a picture of Joe Perrin and me, standing shoulder to shoulder and grinning at each other, with steins of beer in our hands. Pals. I looked at it hard for fully sixty seconds before I remembered where it'd been taken. Then my mind drifted back to a coppers' clambake we'd attended about two months ago. The beer barrel set up on a couple of saw-horses in the back-ground bore me out.

Over this work of art, which in itself was harmless enough, blazed a headline that doubled up my fists and made my throat ache. *Plot to oust Charlop uncovered by investigators!*

It was a raw write-up, occupying the biggest part of the front page and a couple of columns on page 2. They had everything. It seems Mr. Injured Innocence Charlop had been informed by close friends of his in the ousted political party of a dirty, underhand plot to put him out of business, blacken his character, and raise hell with the administration in general. Yeah. It seems Joe Perrin and I had been chosen—presumably by certain higher-ups whose names at this time could not be mentioned—to frame Charlop beautifully. The disgustingly crooked story to be fed to the public in a day or two was to the effect that Charlop had been seen rolling drunk in a local barroom, cursing the customers and disturbing the peace.

Fortunately, this dastardly plot had been nipped in the bud, and both Perrin and I had been thrown off the public payroll. The whole thing was just

another example of how low the opponents of Charlop's political party would sink in their efforts to regain control of the city.

Well, it didn't ring true. It was a bunch of lies and it sounded like a bunch of lies, and no doubt most of the Jimmy J. Publics who happened to read it would know it for what it was—except that the story was backed up with some photostat copies of letters supposedly received by Joe Perrin and me.

These letters, typewritten and unsigned but ostensibly written by the political big-shots in charge of the framing, were addressed to Joe and me personally and contained detailed instructions. After reading them, and realizing what an utter rat Charlop was, I walked up and down the room for fully half an hour, talking to myself and tearing chunks out of my fingernails.

Charlop had got the jump on us. By morning, this yarn of his would be all over town, and anything I gave the papers would be branded phoney. Neither of us would have a shred of reputation left by tomorrow night. Most likely we wouldn't even have any friends.

Naturally, after I got through talking to myself I sat down and did my best to figure a way out. And about eleven o'clock I drove over to the Rain-bow, with a copy of the paper in my pocket.

I didn't need to bring the paper. The barkeep and the owner of the joint, and most likely everyone else in the place, had already seen it. I talked to the owner and I said: "Listen. You know, and everyone else who was in here that night knows, that this is a damned mess of lies. Unless you pitch in with some signed statements, Joe

Perrin will be shamed out of town. What about it?"

He thought about it and shook his head. He was sorry; he felt bad for Joe and all that, but he didn't dare get mixed up in it. This Charlop was too powerful downtown. "I got to think of my business, Mr. Colle. If they get sore with me downtown, they'll take away my license."

"Joe Perrin is up against it," I said. "He's got to be helped. He has a wife and kids to take care of."

"Me, I have a wife and kids, too."

Well, I couldn't blame him. After all, it's every man for himself in this cutthroat world. I could even understand his point of view when he refused to let the barkeep or any of the waitresses sign a statement. I still had a chance with some of the customers who'd been in the joint that Sunday night, and he was decent enough to sit down and write out the names of those he remembered.

I went the rounds. I got four signed statements and then walked right smack into a genuine break.

The girl's name was Dorothy Orzeck, and she lived in a nice residential section about half a mile from the Rainbow.

Her mother came to the door—it was after one o'clock in the morning then, mind you—and after I explained in a nice way what I was after, I was admitted to the parlor. The girl came downstairs a few minutes later, in pajamas and a robe.

She heard me through and then she said: "I'll give you more than a statement, Mr. Colle. You wait here a minute."

She came back with a little square of film and a four-by-five enlargement. I took one look at that picture and let out a whoop that must have aroused the

neighborhood. Man, that *was* a picture!

"I'm a candid camera hound," she said, smiling at me, "and it so happened I had my candid with me that night. Bernie—that's my boy-friend—gave me the dickens for taking this picture, and said it might get me into trouble, but now I'm glad I did. If it will help Mr. Perrin, you're welcome to it."

It was a shot of Officer Joe Perrin escorting Charlop to the door, and you could tell by Charlop's face, by his bent legs and outflung arms and dishevelled mop of hair, that he was crooked to the gills. She'd taken it just about the time Charlop had declared viciously: "This will make history!"

It would make more than history! It would make a new and better job for Joe Perrin and send Charlop straight to the ash-heap!

I could have kissed that girl. As it was, I damn near wrung her hand off, thanking her. Then I roared downtown to the *News-Press* Building and slapped the picture and the signed statements down on the desk of Editor Clark Ashworth.

ASHWORTH was and is as square a man as you'll find anywhere. He heard me through, made me repeat a lot of it while he took down notes. Then he said: "You leave this to me, Lieutenant. We've waited a long time for Charlop and his crooked crowd to make a mistake like this, and if I don't have the decent people of this city standing on their ears by ten o'clock tomorrow morning, my name isn't Ashworth."

I left it to him. He did a good job. His paper was bigger and better, anyway, than the yellow sheet controlled by Charlop's crowd, and when it tossed

aside its dignity to blaze monstrous headlines all over the streets, Jimmy and Mrs. Jimmy Public knew something sensational was up.

I kept out of it. I stayed away from Headquarters, took Joe Perrin and his wife and kids in my car and headed for parts unknown. All I had to say was in cold print alongside that photograph, and I didn't want to answer a bunch of questions thrown at me by reporters.

We spent that night in some tourist cabins about 200 miles up the coast, and the next day we had a swell time cruising around through the mountains. I didn't buy any papers. I had it all figured out what would be happening back in our fair city, and I knew I couldn't be wrong. To save their own skins, Charlop's political pals would have to denounce him, give him the bum's rush, and reinstate Joe Perrin and me. For me I didn't care. I was half of a mind to head South for the winter, anyway. But for Joe I was tickled pink.

When we did get home, they were waiting for us—and I was right. Charlop's pals had printed a public apology in their yellow sheet. Joe's job, and mine, too, were handed back to us, and there was talk in the papers about what a courageous, honest cop Joe'd been in the performance of a distasteful duty. Joe's wife shed a few tears of happiness . . .

The payoff came exactly three nights later, and this is where that kid Marson, the "match ya for it" lad, comes back into the picture.

We were bowling, Joe and the kid and I, and I guess we were all a little rosy, because after every couple of boxes we'd sneak out the back door and trickle across the street for a nickel beer. There was no harm in that. The bowling joint was deserted except for

the three of us, and we weren't annoying anyone with our horseplay. The manager was enjoying it and was getting a big kick out of the way young Marson could slap those pins down.

It got late. My hands were blistered and I'd given up, parked myself on a bench to wait until Joe and the kid finished their string. When the street door opened I naturally looked up, and right away I knew that the four guys who paraded over that threshold had not come to do any bowling unless it was with us.

They were big guys and they looked tough. I put them down as imported thugs because I'm pretty well acquainted with most of the local strong-arm lads, and these boys were strangers to me. I stood up while they walked toward us. I wasn't armed. When off duty, and most of the time when on duty, I don't lug around any artillery.

I remember wondering whether they were after me or Joe, or both of us. It would be me, most likely. Charlop was the rat who'd sent them, and I was the lad he was sore at. I'd been the cause of his downfall.

These four huskies approached in no hurry, and the manager of the place said apologetically: "Sorry, gentlemen, but we're about to close up." They didn't even glance at him. Joe Perrin and the kid stopped bowling. The kid looked sort of bewildered, and Joe just stared, turning pale.

I didn't overlook the fact that the leader of the outfit came on with his hands in his pockets. The nasty leer on his map didn't scare me, but the fact that his hands were hidden sent a little wave of cold sweat trickling down my back. A beating up I could have faced without shuddering, but this had all the ear-marks of something worse.

"Which one of you is Colle?" the guy demanded.

I said: "What's it to you?"

He slouched to a halt an arm's length in front of me and looked me over. His mouth was curled in a sneer, and I could see he was actually enjoying himself. His three buddies lined up alongside of him, and Joe Perrin stepped up beside me. I could feel Joe trembling. He had a bowling ball in his hand.

"Which one of you is Colle?" the guy demanded again.

By this time, the manager of the joint had caught wise to the fact that something very ugly was about to happen. The back door of the place was only a couple steps to his right, and he sidled toward it, evidently figuring on clipping out, hoofing it across the street to the barroom and getting help.

They'd been waiting for that. The minute he moved, one of them snapped at him: "Stay where you are, you! One yap out of you and you'll get taken apart!" That was enough to change the poor fellow's mind. He stood right where he was, and I didn't blame him.

BUT so help me, I didn't realize what young Marson was up to when he stepped forward and said: "You want to know which of these guys is Paul Colle?"

The leader glared at him, said sarcastically: "Yeah, sonny. We want to know which of these guys is Paul Colle. Maybe you can tell us."

"What's it worth to you?" the kid replied, without batting an eye.

"Huh?"

"What's it worth to you? After all, I work for a livin'. A little extra dough would come in handy."

I couldn't believe I was hearing straight. I couldn't believe, so help me,

that I'd been so wrong in my judgment of the kid. He'd fooled me. I glared at him, and the contempt in that glare must have been as hot as a branding iron, because he twitched away from me, turned his head.

It struck the chief thug as being very funny, though, that a kid the size of Marson should be willing to sell his pals out for cigarette money. It tickled the guy's fancy. He said: "Okay, sonny, it's worth a buck."

"A buck? Jeeze, is that all?"

"You heard me. A buck."

The kid hesitated, frowning, then reached into his vest pocket, pulled out a quarter and said quickly, in that tone of voice I knew so well: "Match ya for it. Double or nothin'."

It just goes to show you that even killers sometimes have a sense of humor. You never can tell about a guy. I expected the thug to slap the quarter out of the kid's hand, grab him by the throat and snarl at him to quit stalling. Instead of that, he narrowed his eyes, looked puzzled for a second, then broke out laughing.

"Sure," he said. "Sure."

He took out a coin, flipped it, slapped it down on the back of his hand. The kid flipped his. It trickled through his fingers and fell to the floor, rolled between the thug's legs.

Habit'll do queer things to a man. Habit made this tough bozo step sideways and look down to see whether the quarter would settle heads or tails. Before that quarter even began to think about settling, Joe Perrin and I were in action.

A bowling ball isn't the easiest thing to toss around, nor is it easy to hold onto. Joe Perrin had the bowling ball. I'm glad I didn't. I'd have dropped it, most likely, before hitting anything with it. But Joe has big hands, and the

mess he made of the chief thug's face was something ghastly to see. That ball crashed home with a sickening crunch, mashed the man's mouth all out of shape, and pushed broken teeth down his throat. It might have been un- wieldly but it was effective.

As for me, I used my hands. Used them open. I grabbed hair, bashed two heads together, then jabbed a foot in among a bunch of legs and went down in a pig-pile. I weigh about one-eighty and stand five-eleven. I can fight the right way, and I can fight the wrong way. In this case, the wrong way was necessary. A thumb was gouging my left eye out, and a knee was in my groin.

I didn't have a chance to hang onto the fourth and last of Charlop's killers. He backed up, flattened against the wall and pulled out his gun. He stayed there, pale around the mouth, trembling a little, waiting for the pile to untangle itself so he could get a shot at either me or Joe.

I was doing all right by myself, and so was Joe, who had pitched in to help me after flooring the big one, but if it hadn't been for young Marson that fourth thug would have had his way with us.

Marson picked up a bowling ball, slammed it all his might, and rolled a strike. He broke an ankle with that ball. The thug yelped, dropped his gun, staggered forward and dropped to one

knee. I hurdled him and snatched up the weapon.

"Okay, Joe," I said. "Get up."⁸

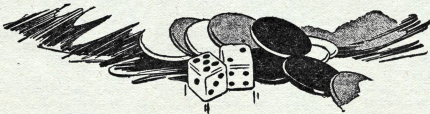
There wasn't much talk, or much action, after that. I nodded to the manager of the place and he picked up the phone, called Headquarters. The lad with the broken ankle had fainted. The lad whose face Joe Perrin had caved in with the bowling ball was sprawled out in a pool of his own blood and would be a long time in the hospital. The other two, pretty badly mauled, stayed on the floor, stared at the gun in my fist, and had sense enough not to tempt me.

The cops arrived about ten minutes later, with the wagon, and took the four of them away. I told them Joe and I would be down later. I told them also to locate a guy named Charlop and arrest him.

"This," I said to Joe, "is Charlop's last move. His last for a long, long time. All the political pull in the world won't grease him out of this." Then I turned to heap words of gratitude upon young Marson.

The kid listened, grinned, and said: "Shucks, it was nothin'. I didn't know what would happen. I was just stallin' for time." Then he walked over to where his quarter had stopped rolling, and he looked from the quarter to the coin which had fallen out of the big guy's hand.

"Holy Gee!" he said. "I busted the jinx! I matched him!"



ILLUSTRATED CRIMES

by STOOKIE ALLEN

HOT BONDS

ON JANUARY 28, 1935, A MESSENGER DELIVERED \$440,000 IN NEGOTIABLE BONDS TO THE CLERK OF A WALL STREET FINANCIAL FIRM. AS THE CLERK TURNED TO ANSWER A PHONE, A MAN STOOD OUTSIDE THE CAGE APPARENTLY ENGROSSSED IN A NEWSPAPER WHILE ANOTHER THRUST A CANE TIPPED WITH CHEWING GUM THROUGH THE WINDOW AND DEFTLY SPEARED THE PACKET!



Meyer
Frankenberg

(How it happened)
THE CLERK NOTICED THE LOSS A MOMENT LATER AND GAVE THE ALARM, BUT MEN AND BONDS WERE GONE. THIS WAS THE THIRD BIG ROBBERY IN THREE WEEKS—\$500,000 IN BONDS HAD VANISHED IN SIMILAR FASHION FROM THE U.S. TRUST CO., AND \$1,456,000 HAD BEEN SNATCHED FROM A MESSENGER—AND BROUGHT THE YEAR'S TOTAL TO \$4,000,000. G-MEN ENTERED THE CASE WHEN SOME OF THE BONDS BOBBED UP IN NEIGHBORING STATES.

IT LOOKED LIKE THE WORK OF A CLEVER GANG. CHECKING SUSPECTS, G-MEN LEARNED THAT MEYER FRANKENBERG, A PICKPOCKET WITH A LONG RECORD, HAD BEEN SEEN BELOW THE "DEAD LINE" FIVE BLOCKS NORTH OF WALL STREET. CAMPING ON MEYER'S TRAIL, THE FEDERAL MEN FOUND HIM MAKING A PHONE CALL TO PARIS FROM A BOOTH IN WALDORF-ASTORIA. THEN HE DISAPPEARED.



Coming Next Week—



SEVERAL WEEKS LATER, FRANKENBERG AND BERNARD KLEIN APPEARED IN MONTE CARLO AND MADE THE ACQUAINTANCE OF THE CHARMING COUNTESS RIVA DAVICO. THE ACQUAINTANCE RIPENED UNTIL MEYER HINTED HE HAD \$1,500,000 IN BONDS HE AND KLEIN WANTED TO SELL. THE COUNTESS THOUGHT SHE COULD CONTACT SOME PEOPLE WITH PLENTY OF FRANCS TO INVEST IN BONDS. A DATE WAS MADE FOR A CONFERENCE. — BUT THE PROSPECTIVE PURCHASERS TURNED OUT TO BE MEMBERS OF THE FRENCH SÛRETE.



*The
Countess*



KLEIN, WHO PROVED TO BE THE LEADER OF THE BOND THEFT GANG, LANDED IN JAIL, CAUGHT WITH THE GOODS. THE CROOKS MADE A FAUX PAS IN LETTING THE LOVELY COUNTESS DAVICO IN ON THEIR GAME. SHE WAS AN AGENT ALSO OF THE SÛRETE.

FRANKENBERG CHECKED OUT OF HIS HOTEL JUST IN TIME AND RETURNED TO THE STATES. THE LOWLY "DIP" WHO HAD REACHED THE HEIGHTS OF CROOKDOM IN ONE BOUND WAS NOW QUARRY FOR THE BEST SLEUTHS OF 3 COUNTRIES, ALONG WITH THE REST OF THE AUDACIOUS HOT BOND RING.

THE STORY OF HOW THEY WERE FINALLY CAUGHT WILL BE TOLD IN NEXT WEEK'S DETECTIVE FICTION WEEKLY.

Don't Mention Murder



Darby said, "I think I've got it, Lieutenant!"

By
Wyatt
Blassingame

Author of "The Last Fare," etc.

*Ed Darby was all cop:
when there was a murder
no amount of ward
heelers could keep him
from jumping in*

IT was hot. At two A.M. August heat still rose from the pavement. No wind shook the elms that made a tunnel of Felder Avenue, and the heat seemed to gather between them and the street, breathless and stifling even at this hour. Ed Darby peddled his bicycle slowly, coasting as much as possible. His hands were sticky on the handlebars. Now and then a bead of sweat slid from his brows into his eyes, stinging and salty. The .38 police special pulled heavy at his hip.

The houses were scattered with wide lawns, most of them dark now. Few cars passed. One drifted by and there was the sound of a girl laughing, and radio music drifted from the open windows. Darby grinned, his mouth a little crooked and bitter as though he

had been reminded of something better forgotten.

Near the Perry Street intersection a small roadster pulled up beside him. The man under the wheel was bare-headed, his hair rumbled. The knot of his tie was half way down his chest, his collar open. He wasn't more than twenty-three, about Darby's age. He said, "Hello, Ed. How's it going?"

Darby braked his bicycle, stopped with one foot on the roadster's runningboard. "Hot as hell, Nelson. Hot as hell."

"Have a bottle of beer," Nelson said. "It's cool anyway." He took an open, half empty bottle from the seat beside him and passed it over.

Darby had a swig, said, "Thanks. Where are you going?"

"Trying to get cool. Paper's gone to bed, but Tom had a little stuff he wanted to do, so I'm riding before we go down to Pete's and get a game started." He paused a moment, then said, "You learned anything else?"

The rather bitter smile twisted Darby's mouth again. He said, "Hell, I'm a peddle-cop. I'm no detective."

"You'll get back," the reporter said. Then, "How's Martha?"

"Okay, I guess. I haven't seen her much lately."

"Why?"

Darby's hand tightened fiercely on the car door, relaxed. "What good would it do?" he asked. "An honest detective in this town doesn't make much money. A bicycle cop . . ." His face showed dimly in the dark, the lips pulled tight, the eyes narrowed, throat muscles working.

"You'll get back," Nelson said again. He took a pull from the bottle, handed it back to Darby who finished it. "You're not being fair to Martha," the reporter said. "She's one swell girl. She wouldn't care if you were pounding a beat or—"

Darby said, tight-lipped, "I care!"

For a moment neither man spoke. "Thanks for the beer," Darby said. He pushed against the runningboard and the bicycle began to roll slowly.

Nelson hesitated. He put the roadster into gear. "You'll get back," he said for a third time. And then because they were friends he added, "You were a damn fool to try to put the bug on Earl Reinhold anyway. You can't beat money *and* politics." Darby didn't answer. The car began to roll as Nelson let the clutch out. The roadster passed, headlights scooping the darkness between pavement and trees, fading until the red tail light dipped over a crest and was gone.

Darby peddled slowly. His face was set and hard. Into his clenched teeth he said, "I was a fool. You can't beat money *and* politics." And then he made a sound that never got out his throat but was almost like a cry of pain. "But it was murder!" he thought. "It was murder!"

THERE was an alley in the middle of the next block and on the hot stillness Darby heard the sounds before he reached it. He pulled up at the alleymouth, one foot resting on the pavement, while he took the flash from its belthook and sent the white cone of light spraying the darkness. Where the light faded something moved vaguely. There was the clank of metal and the squeak of an unoiled wheel.

Darby peddled into the alley, still holding the flashlight. The beam ran over the dirt lane strewn with ashes, occasional garbage cans, a wooden fence to right and left. Near the far end his light picked up a rickety wagon piled high with scraps of metal, cloth, old tires, and a small hunchbacked figure perched atop the whole mess. The wagon's left front wheel was larger than the others. It swayed from side to side, threatening to come off with each turn.

Some of the bitterness went out of Darby's face as he smiled. That wagon always amused him, and old Abe Stanzwitz who drove it. A couple of nights ago he'd asked Abe if he wasn't afraid the wheel would fall off. Abe said it did sometimes, but it hadn't in more than a week. So he was content. Darby liked the old man, although he probably did a little petty thieving along with his scrap collecting. He liked Abe's method of laboriously reading any newspapers found in the garbage and accepting them as spot news without noticing the dateline.

There was a streetlight at the other end of the alley and the glow touched on the wagon while it was still several yards short of the sidewalk. Sitting on his pile of litter, Abe's head was above the fence. Darby was to remember this later, remember that an automobile motor went into action a half block away, accelerating rapidly.

The wagon moved out across the sidewalk and into the street. The long ears of a bony gray mule showed to the left as Abe began to turn. And then Darby, still inside the alley, became fully conscious of the roaring automobile in the street outside.

The sedan was making sixty and running without lights. Darby saw it only as a huge, dark streak. But he saw that it could have passed Abe with room to spare. Instead it swerved. It crashed the front end of the wagon just back of the mule. There was a sound like an earthquake and thunder, a rending tearing crash that rumbled on for long seconds. Wagon and junk spewed into the air. The big automobile rocked, bucked from the impact. Then it straightened out and was gone.

Ed Darby was peddling furiously as he swung into the street, but he didn't have a chance. The police special in his hand blasted twice and then the big sedan whirled a corner and was out of sight. Darby turned the bicycle, and raced back for the wreck.

Junk was scattered for fifty yards. And in the center of it, at the gray edge of light from the street lamp, half in the gutter half on the sidewalk, was Abe Stanziwitz. His head was on the curb, twisted curiously back from his shoulders. His mouth and eyes were open, but the eyes saw nothing and from his mouth came a thin trickle of blood to follow the wrinkles across his grimy face.

Darby put his hand over the little man's heart, knowing it was useless. He turned away, stiff-kneed. The mule was on the opposite side of the street. It was still living although its ribs were smashed and both rear legs broken. Darby put the muzzle of his service gun between the mule's eyes, and fired.

Lights had come on in houses up and down the street. A man in pajamas, a bathrobe flapping from one shoulder, ran up wanting to know what had happened and who had been shot. Darby told him to get back in his house and telephone Lieutenant Farron at Headquarters that there had been a fatal hit-and-run wreck. A very large black sedan was the best identification he could give. "And tell him," Darby said slowly, "that it wasn't an accident. Tell him it was intentional. *It was murder!*"

Darby was only a bicycle cop. He stayed until Farron and a couple of men came, made his report, and rode off on his beat. In his pocket was a piece of jagged glass that looked as though it had been broken from a headlight. There had been other pieces and the men from Headquarters would make the same investigation probably. But Darby's face was set. Behind his dark bleak eyes his brain was racing. He'd had only a glimpse of that automobile. He couldn't possibly identify it. And yet . . .

IT was daylight before he was off duty. He left his bicycle at Headquarters, walked over to Jenkins' garage, and waited a half hour for Bud Jenkins to get down to work. Then he showed him the broken glass and asked if he knew what kind of car it had come from.

"Can't say for sure," Jenkins told

him. "Whatever it was, it was a big one. Probably a Pierce or Duesenberg or something like that."

"Thanks," Darby said. His thin nostrils were flared with his breathing. His eyes were squinted, bright. "Maybe this is going to work," he thought. "Maybe at last . . ."

But his idea was full of holes. He was jumping ahead too fast. There wasn't any reason why Earl Reinhold, millionaire and political power, should murder a half nutty old scrap collector. But say it was true, say Reinhold had driven that car last night, had intended to kill Abe Stanziwitz; even so, what could Darby do about it? "You were a fool to buck Reinhold," Nelson had told him. "You can't beat money and politics." Certainly Darby should know that by this time. His mind flashed back to that night five weeks ago in Lieutenant Farron's office.

"You're back in uniform," Lieut. Farron had said. "Bicycle detail, starting tonight."

Darby had thought it was a joke. He stood looking down at the lieutenant, grinning slightly. "Yeah?" he said. "What's the gag?" He didn't mind a joke, certainly not the way he felt that night. He'd been with Martha until time to report for duty. A picture show in the late afternoon and supper at her house. They hadn't talked much. A sort of quiet, breathless happiness had filled them both. There had been no set date for the wedding. They needed a little more money in the bank. But Darby could save it out of a detective's pay, small as it was. "And when I crack this Madden killing there'll be a raise," he told her. "I'll crack it too, sooner or later. Reinhold murdered him in cold blood. I'm positive of that, but proving it's the thing."

It was Lieutenant Farron's face that

told him the demotion wasn't a joke. Those craggy, bony features, the stubble of graying beard that always showed no matter how recently Farron had shaved, held no emotion; but looking in the lieutenant's eyes Darby had known. Even so he refused to believe at first. He said, "What—what's the idea? What's wrong? Hell, you've got to be joking, Lieutenant."

"You had orders to lay off that Madden killing," Farron said. "That case was closed. But you've kept working at it, causing trouble."

Darby still wouldn't believe. A sort of stricken incredulity showed in his face. "It was murder, Lieutenant. Reinhold shot him down in cold blood. It wasn't any accident."

Farron's face didn't change. It was like a soiled expressionless mask. "It's on the books as an accident. You had orders to lay off."

"But I—"

"In the police department orders are final," Farron said. "Go home and put on your uniform, then report back for duty."

Darby hadn't answered. He'd looked into the lieutenant's face, but for all he saw there he might have been staring into a blackened mirror. He turned. His expression was like that of a dog who has been whipped without knowing why. He went out of the office and out of headquarters.

He was a half block away when he felt the hand on his arm and looked around to see Farron. "Let's go in the bar around the corner," the lieutenant said. "It's a little irregular, but we're not in uniform. I want to buy you a drink."

At a booth in the rear of Mac-Namarra's Farron said, "I just wanted to tell you those orders didn't originate with me, Darby. Your work's been sat-

isfactory. Keep your nose clean and you'll be back in plainclothes soon."

"Yes?" Darby said. "Then where'd they come from?"

"The commissioner. He got 'em from Brooke Hardee."

Everybody knew who Brooke Hardee was. Nominally only a district leader he pretty well ran the city. He elected commissioners, or did away with them. Municipal judges listened with a careful but concealed ear to what he told them. From a small office on Court Street he ruled the town.

"Why should Hardee cover Reinhold?" Darby asked. "What hold does that guy have on him?"

"You're young," Farron said. "You've still got ideals. You won't believe a thing when you know it's true. You know how Hardee holds his power: because he does things for people. A lot of the things require money. He gave a playground to the poor kids in West End—but Reinhold really paid for it. Maybe Hardee wants to give a hundred dollars to a public charity or to some poor family, fork over money for a hundred things, good or bad, that will place people under obligation to him, but he won't have the money handy; he'll 'borrow' it from Reinhold. Reinhold puts up the money that keeps Hardee in office; and Hardee sees that the Reinhold Contracting Company, the Reinhold National Bank, the other Reinhold businesses, get a big cut from the city graft and make it all back."

DARBY didn't answer for a moment. He was thinking of the night James Madden had been killed. Madden and Darby had been friends in high school although Madden was a few years older. He took a law degree at the State University, came back

and got a job with one of the Reinhold companies. Five weeks ago he'd gone to a poker party at Reinhold's home. According to the millionaire, Madden had left with the other guests but had returned drunk, probably for a hat he'd left behind. He had entered the house without knocking, wandered drunkenly about and been shot by Reinhold who mistook him for a burglar. It was a good story because all the guests had been drinking, and Madden had left with the others. But there were flaws.

The body had been found in the living room near a door leading into the rear of the house. Reinhold said Madden had walked that far after being shot. But there were two bullets through his heart and Darby didn't believe he'd walked at all after they struck him. And there was a stain of blood in the center of the living room never quite thoroughly explained. Also, when last seen by the other guests, Madden hadn't been drunk although he was on the outside of several cocktails. And Darby wondered why the door of the Reinhold home was left unlocked that particular night.

"It was murder," Darby told Farron. "I saw Jimmy Madden a couple of days before he was killed. He told me things were going to pop. He didn't explain, but he hinted that in checking some accounts he'd found where Reinhold had been beating the federal income tax. Jimmy Madden was honest. He probably told Reinhold to pay up or he'd expose him. And Reinhold murdered him."

"Reinhold himself?" the lieutenant asked. "He had only to speak to Brooke Hardee and Hardee would have had a professional do the job. It wouldn't be the first time he's had a man knocked off."

"Not Reinhold," Darby said. "He's one of your rugged individualists. A selfmade man. But more than that he's cruel, and he likes a thrill. He's a big game hunter who uses human beings for animals. Look at the competing businesses he's wrecked, the men he's ruined, not so much because it was necessary to break them, but because he got fun out of it. I believe when he found it was necessary for him to murder Madden he did it himself, and enjoyed it."

A light kindled in Farron's deepset eyes. "You know a lot about this fellow," he said.

Darby said, "I've been studying him since the day Jimmy Madden was murdered."

"Perhaps you're right," Farron said. "Perhaps . . ." Then the fire went out of his eyes. He shrugged and stood up. "Get on home and put on your uniform," he had said. "When you are old as I am you'll know you can't beat the system. A cop stays honest, does his best—and takes orders from crooks. But—" and now the light was in his eyes again, a sort of red and desperate fire—"if you ever think there's a chance of breaking that case, let me know." He downed the last of his drink, said, "Go get on your uniform," and walked out.

DARBY was remembering that conversation when he entered Farron's office again, his first visit since that night five weeks before. Excitement flushed his dark cheeks. His eyes glittered. His mouth and jaw were set. His fingers were held stiffly at his sides to keep them from trembling.

Darby said, "I think I've got it, Lieutenant! I think I've got it at last!"

Farron wasn't the man to get excited easily. His face stayed frigid as

ever. His sunken eyes looked out from under heavy brows. "Yes?" he said.

Darby said, "And of all things, it turns around the death of a half crazy old junkman."

"What do you mean?"

"Reinhold killed Abe Stanziwitz."

Farron put hard blunt hands on his desktop. They pushed down until the nails whitened. He leaned forward almost imperceptibly. "Yes?" he said again.

Darby said, "Abe made a tour of the city's alleys in the early morning so as to be there before the garbage collectors beat him to the junk. Maybe he snooped a bit, stole a little. He was in the alley behind Reinhold's home the night Jimmy Madden got killed. He saw the killing."

Farron's fingers had begun to drum slowly on the desk. He asked, "How do you know?"

"It's got to be that way," Darby said. "And from the alley you get a clear view of Reinhold's drawing-room, of the spot in the center where we found the blood that Reinhold couldn't explain. I was out there this afternoon to check."

"Go on," Farron said. That strange red fire was in his sunken eyes now.

"Abe was queer, half cracked. Maybe he took it for granted the killing was solved. It must have seemed open and shut to him. Then a few weeks later he gets ahold of an old paper and sees where its called an accident. Maybe it's that way, or maybe he tried to blackmail Reinhold from the first and Reinhold paid off once, but I doubt it. I don't believe Abe got around to his blackmail for several weeks. Then Reinhold killed him by running into that rickety wagon with his Pierce."

"Proof?"

Darby put a broken piece of glass on Farron's desk. "That's part of the headlight from the murder car. And it was murder. It wasn't any accident. I watched it. *And this glass came out of Reinhold's car!* I was in his garage this afternoon."

Farron leaned back in his seat. The fire died out of his eyes. His fingers got still and lax on the desktop. A moment Darby watched him and as he did fear came up cold inside his chest. There was something wrong. He said, "Well?"

"I was afraid that was your proof. But you seemed so sure, and that stuff about the alley—I hoped . . ." Farron fumbled in his desk for a moment, then handed over an official report.

The excitement oozed chill out of Darby as he read. It was a report, made at midnight, two hours before the accident, that Earl Reinhold's Pierce Arrow sedan had been stolen from in front of the Bell Building. The report was made by Reinhold himself. It was marked closed with the discovery the next morning of the car some three blocks from Reinhold's home. It had been found by one of the Reinhold servants.

Darby put the report back on the desk. "That's a fake," he said huskily. "Reinhold needed a big fast car to wreck that wagon and make a sure job of it. He used his own. And he made that report to cover himself."

"You're guessing," Farron said.

Darby nodded.

"Yes. But I'm right. I know I'm right."

"You can prove his car was the one in the wreck. You can't prove he drove it."

"I'm going to," Darby said. "I'm going to!"

"Five weeks ago you were in plain-

clothes and going up," Farron told him. "You tried to buck Reinhold and—"

"He murdered Jimmy Madden," Darby said. "Jimmy was a friend of mine. I don't give a damn if Reinhold's got a hundred million dollars! What right's a man got to commit murder because he's rich? He can't pay for lives with his money! He can't buy Ann Madden her husband back again! I'm going to get him! You hear me?" Darby said. "I'm going to get him!"

Farron didn't look at him. He said, "You were planning on getting married yourself, weren't you, Ed?" It was the first time he'd used Darby's given name.

Some of the fury went out of Darby. A weak fear moved in his stomach. "What's that got to do with it?"

"I've been a cop for thirty years," Farron said. "I was a cop before you were born. I'd be the chief now, if I'd learned quicker. You ask what right money gives a man to murder and go free. No moral right maybe, but they get away with it. They always have and they do now. You can't beat that system, Ed."

Darby didn't answer. There was something in his throat that hurt like hell. He was thinking of Jimmy Madden, and Jimmy's wife—and he was thinking of Martha. He had his own life to lead. And Martha loved him. Her life depended on him. He didn't have any right to throw away her chance to happiness because of some crazy ideal, even if there were a chance of winning to it. But what chance was there? "You can't beat politics *and* money," Nelson had said.

Darby made a noise that might have been a sob. He turned and went out of the office.

THREE days later Farron had him in again. "I see by the *Advertiser*," Farron said, "that Abe Stanzwicz's death is being investigated, with hints that it was more than a hit-and-run accident."

"Yes?" Darby asked. He was looking down at the desk.

"I asked Nelson where he got that story and he said it was a confidential pipeline he couldn't divulge."

Darby didn't say anything, and after a moment Farron said, "I've heard that somebody has been checking on Reinhold's whereabouts the night Abe was killed. They've asked the janitor in his office building, the servants at his house, everybody who might know."

Darby looked full in the lieutenant's eyes then. He said, "I haven't learned a damn thing that I can prove. But I will."

"You're not supposed to investigate stolen automobiles."

"Everything I've done has been while I'm off duty."

"A cop's never off duty," Farron said. "You work eight hours a day, but you're a cop twenty-four." He waited a moment. "There hasn't been any actual complaint yet," he said. "Brooke Hardee mentioned that he thought we might as well drop the case since there wasn't any way to find who stole the car. He said the present kind of investigation was embarrassing for Mr. Reinhold."

"Does Hardee run the police force?" Darby said the words bitterly.

Farron was looking at his blunt fingers. He said, "Hardee might mention the same thing to the commissioner. The commissioner might say we can't have cops who embarrass prominent citizens."

"I understand," Darby said slowly.

But he went on with his search, and each day the morning papers ran stories that, while they actually said nothing, hinted at something still to come. The police, at least some of them, were convinced that Stanzwicz's death had been murder, the paper said. The police had a clue which they were following up and which might develop into a break any time.

And then Darby found himself in Farron's office and Brooke Hardee himself was there. Hardee seldom left his own office. It was important when he did.

He was sleek, with small bright eyes and patent leather hair. He was tall as Darby but with more stomach. He smiled always. His voice was soft, very confidential and friendly. "I understand you're the officer who's been investigating the death of that junkman," he said to Darby, "You know, the one killed in the accident out near Felder Avenue."

"I know," Darby said.

"It was Mr. Reinhold's car that was in the accident," Hardee said. "Stolen from him earlier that night, as you know."

"I know," Darby said.

"Lieutenant Farron has explained to me that it's quite natural there should be some suspicion that perhaps Mr. Reinhold himself was driving, drunk. I like to see the Department on its toes. But in view of the fact that Mr. Reinhold reported earlier that his car was stolen, that suspicion seems rather far fetched. And I can assure you that Mr. Reinhold wasn't driving. To continue to ask questions that cause persons to suspect him is very embarrassing. I'd take it as a personal favor if, say, you'd just drop the matter."

"Listen," Darby said, "I don't—"

Hardee cut in, suave as ever, "I

really think you ought to be back in plainclothes anyway, Darby. You're a good man and no doubt you could use the money. I hear you're planning to get married."

Darby stared at him. He was breathing heavily, lips pulled back from his teeth. His gaze shifted to Farron, saw the man growing pale under his stubble of whiskers, saw the red light coming in his eyes.

"I've met your girl," Hardee said. "She works for Patterson Inc., doesn't she? Maybe if she got a raise that would fix you up for the wedding. I know them pretty well down there."

There was a stiff, deathly silence in the room. Through it Hardee's smooth voice ran on, saying that well everything was fixed now. He was glad. He was sure they understood how their mistake embarrassed Mr. Reinhold. If there was anything Lieutenant Farron wanted, anything within his modest ability, let him know. He had to be going now. He put his hand toward Darby.

Darby stood for an instant that was long as years. He was thinking, "What difference does it make? It's been done before, plenty of times. He couldn't do it so smoothly if he hadn't bribed the cops before. A raise for me, one for Martha. She'll be as happy as a kid with a new toy. Marriage. And what good will it do Jimmy Madden if I get the man who murdered him? Jimmy's dead. But my whole future depends on reaching out and shaking the hand of this guy in front of me."

He moved his own hand. He thought he did it slowly. He thought he was going to grasp Hardee's finger. He was surprised when his right fist smashed Hardee's jaw, when he saw the man reel backward, strike the wall, and slide down it. Then he heard the

torn sob in his own throat, heard himself say, "You lousy heel!" He leaned over, caught Hardee by the collar, jerked him upright. "I'm not taking the bribe," he said. He knocked Hardee down again.

Darby turned then. He was still like a man in a trance. He was thinking, "I'm out of work. I'll never get another job in this town. Martha . . ." He put his badge and gun on Farron's desk. He said, "So long, Lieutenant."

Farron said fast. "Wait a minute, wait a minute," He took the badge off his own shirt and put it beside Darby's. He circled the desk to where Hardee was getting wobbly to hands and knees. He said, "I'm fifty-five years old and that's too old to take any more orders from your kind of rat." With his left hand he pulled Hardee to his feet. His right fist swung and the knuckles made a sound like a rifle shot.

THEY went out together, out of the police station, around the corner and into MacNamarra's bar. They went to the same booth in the rear where they had sat five weeks before. They each downed a straight bourbon silently.

"I didn't mean to get you into this," Darby said at last.

"I got myself in it," Farron said. "I've been wanting to smack that face for years. I felt sick at my stomach every time I saw him. I've taken his orders, and his favors, before. You have to if you get anywhere. I feel better now."

"What are you going to do?" Darby asked. "You'll be discharged. You'll loose your pension."

"I've got a little money. I'll get by. What about you, about that girl you were going to marry?"

Darby didn't answer. There wasn't

any answer. He didn't want to think about Martha and the future. He said, "You know, I didn't mean to hit him. I meant to shake his hand, to take his bribe. And something . . ."

"I know," Farron said.

They sat quietly for awhile. Farron ordered a second drink, "After all, we're not on duty," he said.

Darby kept turning the glass in his fingers. The trance-like moment in which he had acted was past. He realized now what he had done, to himself and to Martha and to Farron. Martha would lose her job, too. Hardee would see to that. Martha needed her job. There wasn't anybody to look after her except Darby himself. And he was in a hell of a fix to do that now. Farron had needed his job. He was too old to start afresh.

Ed Darby put his glass on the bar and stood up. Muscle made knots at the hinges of his jaw. His eyes looked wildly at the wall, through it and out into something beyond. Irrevocable and furious decision hardened his face, made it ugly and twisted and terrible. He said, "I can't make any worse mess of things. I'm going ahead!"

HE went to see Nelson and told him exactly what had happened. "Put it in the paper," he said. "It won't get our jobs back, but the publicity won't help Hardee either. Enough of that kind of publicity and maybe some day he'll be kicked out of office."

"I'll run as much as I can," Nelson said. "As much as gets by the chief and by the publisher. Hardee can put the pressure on us up here too. Advertising . . . But maybe we can get it through without downstairs knowing about it."

"And something else," Darby said. "Exclusive. You've just learned that

Abe Stanziwitz wasn't quite dead when I reached him after the accident. It's because of something he told me before he died that I've thought he was intentionally murdered, that I kept on the case. He mentioned the name of a man that I've been looking for. I hope to find this man soon and then things should break. I hope to tie this case up with another recent killing called 'accidental.'"

Nelson ran long fingers through his wrinkled hair. "You're playing with fire," he said. "That kind of bluff will get you murdered."

Darby said flatly, "My only chance is to make him come out in the open."

"But don't make bait out of yourself," Nelson said. "You're going to get killed, you fool."

"It's the only chance," Darby said again. . . .

It wasn't easy during the days that followed to look casual, knowing that at any moment he might be murdered, to purposely give the killer chances to strike. And each day the paper hinted that Darby knew more about the death of Abe Stanziwitz than anyone else, that very soon he would prove it had been murder and that it related to an earlier killing. Darby lived during those days with the feel of death walking close behind him. On the street fear tugged at his eyes; his spine would ache with cold; he had to fight the constant impulse to look behind him. In his room, when he tried to sleep, there was never a moment of complete relaxation. He was trying to force the killer to come to him, baiting a trap with his own life as Nelson had said.

But the killer was not to be caught so easily. He made no move toward Darby, and as the days and nights passed the former policeman's nerves frayed toward the ultimate snapping

point. It was then he told Nelson, "This man I've been looking for, this man that Abe Stanzwitz told me about before he died, is in town. I'm sure of that and I believe I'll locate him within the next twenty-four hours. When I do, the whole thing will break. Put that in the paper."

Nelson said, "You talk about the man as if he actually existed." He looked at the dark circles under Darby's eyes, the nervous pulse beating at the corner of his mouth, the stiff way he kept his fingers from trembling. "You ought to get out of town," he said. "You ought to give up this case. A man can't live under the strain you're working under."

"I can stand it a day of two longer," Darby said. "That'll be long enough for something to happen."

"Long enough for you to get murdered," Nelson thought, but he kept quiet.

That night Darby wrote the letter.

I was in the alley with Abe Stanzwitz the night you murdered James Madden. Both Abe and I saw you shoot him down in the middle of the room. I let Abe handle the blackmail so he'd have to take the risk; I knew you were tough. But before the old fool died he told a policeman that I had been with him. The cop's been after me ever since. I've kept away from him so far. I don't want anybody beating the story out of me. I'd rather have money. Do like I tell you and I'll take the dough and scam out of the state. If you don't, I'll talk to the cop. And don't try any tricks like you pulled on Abe. I'll be looking for them.

Get ten thousand in cash, small

bills chiefly. Go out the Birmingham highway to the first dirt lane turning to the right beyond the overhead bridge at Prattville. Go along the lane to the first shack on the left. Put the money just inside the door and leave. Have it there at eleven o'clock tomorrow night. Eleven, not before or after.

He didn't mail the letter. He gave it to a child to give to a telegraph messenger, watching to make sure it was done but keeping out of the way so there'd be no chance the messenger could describe him. He had never met Reinhold, but he'd seen him, and it was probable the millionaire knew the face of the cop who was hounding him.

He didn't want it to check.

THE road was little more than a pair of deep ruts winding among pines. A warped moon was just climbing the sky in the east. Fragile, tattered pinions of light sifted through the trees, but most of the ground was black with shadow. Somewhere a whip-poor-will uttered its three-noted cry, was silent for awhile, then whistled again. A slow wind was caught in the pines, moaning faintly.

The car was big. It came down the road with the motor purring. Past a shack on the left of the road, a shack almost hidden by sassafras bushes and a rickety fence overgrown with honeysuckle, the car moved slowly. It was five minutes of eleven.

The car did not stop. It went on past the house for a quarter of a mile, turned around and came back. As it neared the shack a spotlight lashed out from it, swept over the sassafras bushes, the bleak, unpainted walls, the weedgrown yard.

The carlights went out altogether,

and the car stopped. Earl Reinhold got out. He was big, bulky, heavy-shouldered, heavy-faced. His jaw was underslung, his mouth thin and straight. He carried a small leather briefcase in his left hand. As he stepped onto the porch of the cabin it was exactly eleven o'clock.

He opened the cabin door without hesitation. "Anybody here?" he said.

From the dark, across the room, a man said, "Sure somebody's here. You got the money?"

"I've got it," Reinhold said. "Do you want to count it?"

"It better all be there. You wouldn't want me telling the police I saw you murder James Madden."

"No."

The voice went on inexorably:

"What did you kill him for?"

"I didn't come to answer questions," Reinhold said. "Here's your money. Count it and get it over with."

"Ten thousand," the man said. He started across the room, invisible to Reinhold though there was the sound of his shoes. It was Ed Darby. He could see Reinhold against the pale light in the doorway, but he himself kept to one side. He said, "Ten thousand is letting you off easy for murder, isn't it?"

"Easy enough," Reinhold said. "Count it if you're going to. I'm ready to leave."

"I'll count it," Darby said. He took the briefcase, put it on the floor and knelt beside it. He had a pencil-sized flash, and the tiny cone of light showed on the case, leaving Darby's face in the dark. Reinhold took a slow backward step toward the porch. His shoulders had hunched unconsciously. His nostrils had widened with his breathing.

Darby's hand rested on the zipper,

but for a moment he didn't pull. The sweat on his body had gone sharply cold. He felt sick at his stomach. He had known from the first that Reinhold meant to kill him, but that natural fear was suddenly changed into gruesome, loathsome terror. His hands on the bag shook. There was an odor in his nostrils that nauseated him. He thought he was going to vomit.

Then he pulled the zipper. He got only a flash of the thing as he cried out hoarsely and flung the bag. He went reeling backward, shaking all over and scarcely able to stand erect.

The briefcase, open, sailed straight at Earl Reinhold's face. Reinhold screamed. He flung up both arms and the bag struck across them. He shrieked again, whirled, tried to leap from the porch and fell. He thrashed about like a man gone mad.

Powerful flashlights cut through the house. Farron and Nelson came from a back room, running. There was the crack of guns.

DARBY said, "After all that in the paper about Abe Stanziwitz not being dead when I got to him and telling me about another man, Reinhold was afraid not to answer the letter. He had to come. I knew of course he meant to kill me, the man who was blackmailing him, and when he kept insisting that I count the money I figured he meant to do it with that briefcase some way. Naturally I was afraid, but the moment I touched the case it was worse than that. All my life I've had a phobia about snakes. They scare me to death. I smelled that couple of rattlers he had in there and was scared without at first realizing why. I was careful opening the bag; I meant to throw it aside. I didn't really mean to hit Reinhold with it, but when I saw

the snakes I just flung it without looking."

"Served him right," Farron said. "If one of those snakes had struck you, you'd been in no shape to fight. And he had another rattler in his car that he planned to bring in when you couldn't struggle, let it bite you in the face. That would have made death absolutely certain, with no evidence of murder."

Darby grimaced. "I prefer guns," he said.

"You did well enough. You got him to admit Madden's murder, or practically admit it. Taken down on that dictagraph we borrowed from Headquarters, that would have convicted him. But after a couple of those snakes bit him and he thought he was going to die, he talked. These hardboiled guys break bad when they break."

"I ought to have stayed and lis-

tened," Darby said. "But I wanted to see Martha. What'd he say?"

"Everything. Enough anyway so there's a warrant out for the arrest of Brooke Hardee for accessory after the murder."

"And Reinhold?"

"We got to the doctor in time," Farron said. "He'll get well enough to spend a half million trying to keep out of the chair. Maybe he'll do it, but he'll get life. That'll be worse for a man like Earl Reinhold than quick death. Hardee'll get two or three years; it'll ruin him in this town. The crooks he used to protect will turn on him. He'll be better in jail than out."

"There's one thing I wish," Darby said. "I wish I was the man going to make the arrest."

Farron said, "You are, Detective Darby. That's what I came to tell you."

Crime Increase

ACCORDING to a report recently submitted to the Legislature by Department of Correction Commissioner Edward P. Mulrooney, major crimes in the state of New York showed an increase of 14.2 per cent for 1937 as compared with 1936. Of all crimes listed, New York City recorded 56.8 per cent.

Despite the increase in major crimes, Mr. Mulrooney asserted: "It may be safely said that the steady expansion of our department's facilities, coupled with closer coördination of the State's police agencies, is making for a more effective campaign against crime."

"During 1937, major crimes totaled 42,641, with the exception of 13,047 car thefts," the report read. "In 1936, major crimes numbered 32,848, exclusive of 8,789 cases of grand larceny of an auto."

There was also a decrease in several fields of criminal activity. Homicide showed a decrease of 8.3 per cent; crimes involving dangerous weapons decreased 17.9 per cent; sex offenses dropped 12.9 per cent. There was an estimated \$8,069,237.19 of property lost or stolen during 1937, of

which \$3,870,686.34, or 34 per cent, was recovered. The report estimated that crimes for the entire state totaled 7,426.1 for every 100,000 of population.

Ralph J. Brown





Murder Wholesale

By Dale Clark
Author of "Shakedown," etc.

A cat-faced mystery man unsheaths his murder claws, and Stan Baxter finds himself between the devil and the midnight keep

"I suppose you know that this constitutes a criminal offense?" said the bearded man



EMPLOYED by a private detective agency, Stanley James Baxter is making good money until he meets Selma Elmore, debutante. He studies law nights and in a few years is admitted to the Bar. As a young lawyer his social standing is much improved but he is rapidly going broke for lack of clients when he has a peculiar caller, Joseph Callum.

Callum, it appears, is a racketeer in that he makes a practice of buying a small amount of stock in some corporation, acquiring legal rights as a minority stockholder, and then threatening a lawsuit. It is a form of legal blackmail, or at least so says Judge Horace Elmore, Selma's father, who is attorney for the Randt Camera Company and to whom Baxter goes after talking with Callum. Elmore

advises young Baxter to drop the case.

"I'll think it over," says Baxter.

Selma, he learns, is about to be married to John Harne, general manager of the Randt company.

Baxter goes to Callum's home to investigate further. He finds Callum shot to death in the doorway—and in the house is Selma Elmore. She was there, she says, as a guest of Lois Callum, niece of the murdered man. The two girls tell conflicting stories. Some mysterious caller is supposed to have killed Callum.

Callum had mistreated his niece, and she, as Suspect Number One, is jailed. Stan Baxter becomes her attorney at the urging of Selma Elmore.

Later he returns to the Callum home. In a dark hallway he is attacked, knocked

This story began in last week's *Detective Fiction Weekly*

almost unconscious. He senses that there are two men.

"Run, you fool—run for it!" were the last words he heard.

CHAPTER VI

Another Door, Another Death

STAN BAXTER fumbled across the floor, found the flashlight.

The gun was gone. He made sure of this, fanning the light around.

He still felt stunned.

He remembered the sound of running footfalls, but how long ago had that been? It might have been a few seconds, or as many minutes.

Anyway, the intruders had made their getaway.

Stan looked around, sniffed. He had been vaguely aware of a taint in the air. It was stronger now, pungent and acrid. He saw why it was stronger. The fleeing men must have left the back door open. A current of air moved, sucking the fumes out of the study. He used the flashlight.

He saw then what the housebreakers had been at. They'd used an electric drill to pierce Callum's safe door. Then a dose of nitro "soup" had been administered to the lock. They'd dragged a mattress downstairs to muffle the explosion.

Not a very modern job—but Callum's strongbox hadn't been modern, either.

He shrugged. Of course, it had been a perfect set-up for crooks—a servant-less house, with one member of the family in the morgue and the other in jail.

But Stan Baxter frowned as he focused the flashlight into the open safe. The beam wandered over an orderly row of bulky ledgers. He strode across the study, yanked out the

cash drawer. He saw some banknotes that might have totaled a hundred dollars—he didn't bother to count it.

This was no ordinary burglar's caper!

These men had known what they wanted. And they had known exactly where to find it. There'd been no ransacking of the envelopes in the various pigeonholes. An inside job?"

But they had no key to the house. They hadn't known the safe's combination. Or had they? They might have been smart enough to cover up that knowledge.

Stan's pondering was cut short by the whirl of a starter, the growl of a motor outside.

He clicked off the flashlight, sprang to the window. Across the yard, a side street dead-ended at the cañon. It was seldom traveled, would offer ideal concealment.

His gaze was obstructed by hibiscus shrubs lining the sidewalk. The car—a big dark sedan—was wheeling around the corner before he glimpsed it at all. It was running without lights.

Stan whipped up the window sash, leaped into the yard. He sprinted to his coupé. The sedan was nearly a block away, vanishing with the curve of the pavement.

He stamped the motor alive, and swung the coupé in pursuit. He had a chance! Cañons slashed these hillsides apart. The sedan couldn't confuse the trail—the side streets all ended up with *No Thoroughfare* warnings.

Three blocks away, he drew close to a sedan. He couldn't swear it was the same machine, of course. The lights were on, now. It could easily have been another and entirely innocent car. But it was similar—and it carried two men.

He caught the license tag number. The big car rolled across town. At

Lycinth Hill, it swung left, but for only a few blocks. It swung left again, onto Superior Boulevard. Climbed the hill there, and stopped. One of the men got out.

Stan braked the coupé a hundred and fifty feet away. A perplexed frown etched his forehead. He knew this hill. It was landscaped, terraced, a show place. A rambling, tile-roofed house crowned the top of the slope.

Julius Randt lived there.

THE sedan stopped for only a moment. But Stan was no longer vastly interested in the movements of the car. He watched the man who had gotten out disappear through a gap in the hedge—and Stan followed.

It was passing strange that a safe-cracker should proceed directly from Callum's home to this one. It merited investigation. Stan trailed the fellow across the lawn.

But not too easily. The landscape architect who laid out the Randt property had some eight or ten acres of hillside to work with, and had shelved the grounds into a dozen terraced levels. Without using steps. The paths wound and doubled and twisted, threading a semi-tropic jungle of vegetation.

There were times when Stan could see his quarry outlined against the lights of the big house. And there were times when the fellow melted into the background, was lost entirely.

But there was never a time when Baxter could see the man's face clearly and definitely. He couldn't risk coming that close. It would be too easy for the other to simply wait in the shadows, gun in hand, if he suspected pursuit. There was no need to chance it. The man would have to show himself when he went up onto the lighted porch of the house.

The porch was still fifty yards away when Stan heard the shot.

He stiffened, recognizing the crash of a heavy caliber weapon. It was followed by a savage growl. Then, the *th-chunk* of a blow. The growl—it had started to change to a whimper—ended abruptly.

There was a moment of paralyzed silence. For Baxter's part, it was a wary silence. He waited, straining his ears; but vainly. The mysterious drama concluded as suddenly and as strangely as it had begun.

He broke into a run. And now someone else was running, too. He could hear sole-leather scuffling upon concrete—by the sound of it, fleeing along some other walk that led directly to the street.

Stan had reached the topmost terrace. The house now came plainly into view. There was a curving driveway, screened by a hedge of native holly. From beyond this hedge came the drumming sound of footsteps.

He swerved, hurdled a flower bed, raced on. Since the driveway followed the slope of the hill, a short cut along the terrace promised to head off the other runner.

Stan didn't get to the driveway.

Afterward, when he had time to think it over, he could not see how he could have done better than to take that short cut. It was the quickest, and certainly the quietest means of pursuit. Only it failed.

The other figure seemed to materialize out of nowhere. It plunged, smashing Stan Baxter with a hip-high tackle. Both were traveling at top speed. The impact knocked them rolling.

It wasn't an expert tackle. The hands clutching Stan's thighs lost their grip as both men struck the lawn jarringly. The hands flailed at Baxter's head—an

instant later, as the two came to their feet.

Stan took four knuckles flush on his cheekbone. He said, "Uhh!" loudly, and staggered backward. His hands hung at his sides, and his knees sagged.

The trick would not have fooled a professional fighter. For the professional would have known the *feel* of the punch in his own arm; would have known that Stan had rolled his head with the blow.

But the other man was not a professional. Very excited, he rushed in to finish Stan. Rushed, and swung.

The swing crossed Baxter's hunched shoulder as he stepped in. His right snapped up from the waist. It landed with a satisfactory crunch.

The other dropped. Whereupon, he displayed gameness that would have done credit to many a professional. For he got right up again. His jaw hung slackly, and his eyes were glazed, but he got up.

Stan Baxter said: "Harne!"

FORTUNATELY for himself, John Harne had gotten up at a spot where the house lights pierced the holly hedge. A yard away, either way, would probably have caused his gameness to result in a broken jawbone.

Harne's dazed stare was clearing. "Good Lord!" he said stupidly. "It's Baxter!"

Stan had already wheeled away. He plunged through the break in the hedge, onto the driveway. The concrete strip was clear. Stan ran as far as the gateway. He could scan both sides of the hill from here. But there was nothing to be seen, and nothing to be heard except Harne stumbling along the driveway behind him.

He went back to Harne. "That shot! What happened?"

Harne's large eyes fixed sharply on the younger man. "Mr. Randt has been shot—murdered."

Stan Baxter said, "Randt!"

"Exactly," Harne said. And kept watching Stan sharply. "I was chasing the murderer—and I caught you."

His meaning was perfectly clear. And perfectly natural. Under the circumstances, Stan Baxter did not resent it. He would have thought the same under the circumstances.

"I suppose you mean the fellow who ran down the driveway," he said calmly. "I was chasing him, too. We caught each other, and let *him* slip through our hands. Now there's nothing to do except call the police."

They started back toward the house.

"Look here," Harne said abruptly. "I'm no diplomat, just a plain business man. I'll ask you cold turkey, what were you doing out here, anyway?"

Stan nodded. And said, still calmly: "Cold turkey, I'll tell you. Two men broke into Callum's house tonight and broke into his safe. I tailed them here. One of the pair went up to the house, and that's the bird who got away from us."

"All right. I wanted to know," Harne sounded embarrassed now. "Anyone would have been curious about it."

"I don't blame you."

They climbed onto the porch. There was a cluster of frightened looking servants at one of the French doors. There were a number of such doors along the porch, each hung with a Venetian blind. This one stood open. The body of a sparely built, elderly man sprawled upon the sill.

Baxter thrust his way through the servants. He saw at a glance that Randt was dead. He had been shot through the heart.

"Ames, you'd better get these people back into the house," Harne was saying. "They've no business here. You'd better call the police right away."

Ames was silver-haired, obviously a servant of the highest class.

"I've already called them, sir," he quavered. "I've told these people, too, but they won't listen."

But the others were retiring before Harne's frown.

Stan Baxter looked up into the other's squarely made features. "What happened?"

"We were inside," Harne said. "There was a scratching on the glass of the door here. Mr. Randt went to open the door—his terrier did that, you know, scratched when he wanted in. The shot rang out the minute he had the door open."

"Then you ran outside?"

"Yes. We'd been looking over some papers together. I jumped up, but I didn't want to step over his body." Harne's lips tightened. "I ran to one of the other doors. It was locked, and it took me a moment to get it open. I could hear the dog growling outside, and then what sounded like a blow. When I got onto the porch this fellow was already running down the driveway. I ran across the lawn to head him off. You know the rest."

Stan stood up and looked around. Something among the elephant-ear fronds at the end of the porch drew his eye. He walked to the spot. There lay the little terrier. The poor creature's skull was a crushed and bloody horror.

JOHN HARNE, at his side, growled an oath. Stan said nothing, but the gleam in his eyes spoke volumes. "Mr. Randt was fond of that dog," Harne muttered. "It's lucky he can't see—well, not lucky I guess. He had a

specialist all the way out from New York. And then fired him because the fellow suggested getting rid of the terrier."

"A specialist for the dog?"

"For himself," Harne said. "Mr. Randt has been a very sick man for the past year. With asthma. The specialist thought he might be allergic to dogs, you know."

The general manager thought a moment.

"You see, Baxter, Mr. Randt had given up going to his office at the plant. Those asthmatic attacks were periodic, usually coming in the morning. Afterward, he had to rest for hours. He kept active charge of the business, but he did it by having the office men come out here. Usually in the evening. That's why I'm here tonight."

"Yes?" said Stan, wondering why Harne bothered to explain.

Perhaps the other read his thought.

"I'd been here three quarters of an hour when it happened," Harne said. "Incidentally, about five minutes ago Ames brought in a glassful of medicine. Mr. Randt took the stuff every two hours. Ames saw us together in there at that time. I'm telling you that, in case you've got any idea either Mr. Randt or I were mixed up in Callum's affairs. We weren't, and we had nothing to do with the burglary."

"I didn't say you had."

Harne shrugged. "I don't mind telling you. After all, I asked you to explain your presence here. Turn about's fair play."

"Fair play. Oh, sure." Stan's tone was absent-minded. He peered at a spot on the porch rail. It looked as if a foot had rested there. He stared over the elephant ear leaves at the driveway, a distance of twelve feet. Could the murderer have jumped that far?

CHAPTER VII

The Wrath of a Cop

STAN BAXTER lighted a cigarette, puffed it thoughtfully as he paced the floor. He was alone. At moments he could hear voices in the next room—Harne's voice, and Lieutenant Andreason's.

Stan found himself disliking Harne. But it was hard to state a logical reason for this dislike. Frowning, he wondered whether there *was* a logical reason. It might be entirely emotional, based on the fact that Selma Elmore intended to marry the general manager. Which was silly. It ought to work just the other way. Selma's acceptance of the man should be an excellent recommendation for Harne.

"She's no fool," thought Stan. "Selma's smart, sensible, and attractive. The Elmores rate socially. Selma could have her pick of a hundred men. If Harne's her choice, it's because he's got the right stuff in him."

He paused, grinning wryly. Why try to kid himself? He liked Selma a lot—almost a dangerous lot. And he wasn't really thinking about Harne in connection with the murders at all. He was only wondering what Selma Elmore found lovable in the square-chinned manager. "Which," he reflected dourly, "is none of my business, anyway."

Shrugging, he forced himself to think of the two killings. A puzzled gleam came into his gray eyes.

Stan could not believe that Lois had killed her uncle. There must be some other motive for the slaying, and the only visible one concerned the Randt lawsuit. It looked very much as if Callum had been killed on that account—or at least he had to assume so until a better reason came along.

The burglary tonight seemed to point that way, too. It had been necessary not only to kill Callum, but also to steal certain property from the man's safe.

"So far, so good," Stan thought. "But then, why wind up by killing Randt?"

It didn't make sense. Callum's attack had been aimed at Julius Randt. The manufacturer would have profited more than anyone else from Callum's death, and from obtaining possession of the evidence Callum claimed to have.

Stan moistened his lips reflectively. The mysterious figure of the "blond man" worried. No doubt Callum, since he owned only six Randt shares, had really been up to the extortion game. Suppose a third party knew that, and therefore killed Callum and robbed the safe—so that *he* could blackmail the manufacturer?

Stan shook his head. It wouldn't do. Why should the blond man, if that was his game, turn around and kill Randt—kill the only likely buyer for the stolen evidence?

HIS perplexed thoughts were interrupted as Lieutenant Andreason strode into the room. No longer tired, Andreason looked thoroughly aroused now. And the lieutenant had reason to be wide awake. Randt's death was a challenge. It would fling a comet-tail of publicity across the local sky. The thing had to be solved, or there'd be wholesale police shake-ups.

"Well, Baxter!" he said harshly. "You're right around when these things happen, ain't you?"

For he wasn't happy to find a private investigator ahead of him at this *second* murder. George Andreason was a good cop. But a cop, not a plaster saint. He knew that he would have to

take the rap for failure, and he wanted the glory—if this case resulted in that kind of solution. And he didn't want Stan Baxter butting in.

"I'm not around *when* they happen," Stan corrected quietly. "I got here a few seconds late, unfortunately."

He told the story. Andreason listened, a frown on his large face. At the conclusion, he rapped out: "You're a hell of a help, Baxter!"

"What's the matter now?"

The Homicide officer flushed. "You say you took the license number of that car. That's a clue, Baxter. You got a nerve to keep it under your hat all this time. Boy, you burn me up plenty!"

Yet a certain satisfaction was apparent in his burning anger. Stan could see that Andreason was a little glad to have caught him off-base.

"But I phoned Headquarters," Stan smiled. "They say the plates were stolen. They're looking for the car, of course."

"You could have *told* me, anyhow!"

"Don't get hard about it. You were the one who made me stand in a corner while you quizzed Harne first," Stan pointed out. "It wasn't my idea."

The lieutenant's beefy hand impatiently slicked imaginary hairs on his pate.

"Oh, sure!" he exclaimed sarcastically. "You're the grand little co-operator. You're helping me all you can! Hell! You ain't kidding us a little bit!"

Stan could take a certain amount of this sort of thing, but not a large amount. His lean face tightened. He took a step toward the big man. He said, "Meaning just what?"

Andreason laughed shortly. "The Callum dame. The D.A.'s crowd is plenty sore about that. You pulled a

fast, dirty gag there—and I'm soaked for it. For trusting you, Baxter."

Stan's eyes narrowed. "I don't get it."

"Oh, yeah, you do. You got it fast enough when I was crazy enough to spill the D.A.'s case to you! Me, thinking you'd play square. Nuts!"

Stan said, "Why? Wouldn't Lois talk, after all?"

"I'll say she talked. Listen!" the lieutenant stormed. "You framed an out for her. Sure, you did! You went in there and doped out a story for her!"

The accusation astounded Stan. "Andreason, you don't really think that."

The officer lifted his bulky shoulders in a shrug. "What else can I think? I talked to that girl three times today. The D.A.'s man talked to her. She had every chance in the world to clear herself. If she could—if it was as simple as that—why didn't she say so? Because she never knew it *until you told her.*"

Baxter flushed resentfully. Quite normally, he did not like being called a cheat and a shyster. It was unfair. Stan had never in his life framed a case, and Andreason ought to know that.

His angry impulse was to call the lieutenant—call him hard. But Stan fought the impulse. He told himself that this was no personal quarrel. He was no longer one of Sweeney's hard-hitting, high-riding operatives. He had become Stanley James Baxter, attorney at law; he represented Lois Callum; in a very real sense, Lois' life was in his hands.

"Wait a minute, Andreason," he said, keeping his voice low. Utterly without fear for himself, he could not risk deepening the antagonism between his client and the police department.

He continued, "You're not seeing

Miss Callum's side of it. Remember, Lois is a somewhat peculiar girl. Her life has made her so. Callum treated her badly. She was forced to be the goat, always. And she expects to be the goat, to be mistreated and taken advantage of. Lois firmly believed that you intended to convict her, innocent or guilty. She thought that anything she said would be twisted against her. Having that slant on it, she thought you would do anything to destroy her defense. And so she refused to explain or defend herself. That's what she said, and I believe her."

"I suppose you'll tell that to the jury."

"Be sensible," said Stan. "Look into her story. Find out whether there's a bullet hole inside the garage."

Andreason's face wore a sneer. "After you had a chance to *put* one there?"

It was too much. Stan Baxter's muscular arm shot out. His fingers twined into the lieutenant's shirtfront, and he jerked the big man sharply.

"Ah-h, you Headquarters ape!" he clipped. "You want it this way, do you? Well, you got it! Because I'm going in back of that tin badge and find out what you're made of."

The Homicide officer's face burned beet-red.

"Let go, Baxter," he said thickly. "Keep your fists at home." His own fists hung open at his trouser seams.

Stan relaxed, stepped back.

"I'm not fighting," Andreason rumbled. "I'm as much of a man as you are, any day. It just happens I got a job to do tonight—and pinning back your ears ain't part of it."

"Now you're talking sense," Stan agreed. "Now let's both quit acting screwy. Let's get down to cases on this thing!"

But the lieutenant was still very angry.

"Cases?" he echoed. "I'll case it for you! Look here, young fella. I can't stop you from monkeying around on the Callum murder. You're the jane's lawyer, and that makes it your play-thing. But it doesn't cut you any cake in this Randt killing."

"That sounds like an invitation to get out."

Andreason answered laconically, "Yeah."

Stan began to glimpse the meaning of the thing. He inspected the lieutenant suspiciously.

"George," he said, "tell me one thing."

"What?"

"Are you working off a peeve—or is this out of your hands?"

The Homicide man grunted. "It's official."

STAN began to pace the floor thoughtfully. He'd felt sure all along he could have a showdown with Andreason—make the guy see reason. But hell!—it looked like Andreason had his orders.

He wondered who was behind it. Was it simply somebody in the D.A.'s office, sore because Lois Callum had come up with such a convenient story? Or had some outsider with political pull let it be known that Stan Baxter was to be hampered as much as possible?

He turned to the lieutenant. "Get this straight," he said quietly. "I think these two murders link up. That means I'm playing this Randt job for all it's worth. I've got to. It may clear Lois Callum on the other murder."

Andreason's face clouded. "Be careful." His voice was grim. "You might land yourself in jail. I mean it. The

way Harne nabbed you out here to-night—that's grounds for a pinch."

"You can't make it stick."

"You'd be out of other people's hair for a while, anyway!"

They looked at each other silently. Andreason's expression was menacing, Stan's face a study in bitterness.

Another voice cut in: "But that would be false arrest. You surely don't want to fight a suit for damages, Lieutenant?"

Andreason gulped, and spun around. His assistant, Leo, stood crestfallen in the doorway. At Leo's side stood Judge Horace Elmore. The two had been listening, and Leo had not been able to warn Andreason, being kept silent by the judge.

"False arrest!" Elmore repeated. His eyes challenged the officer. "Besides, Mr. Baxter has every right to be here. I'm acting as Randt's legal representative. I'm hiring Baxter to investigate this murder."

Stan stared. Only a few hours ago this man had asked him to stay out of the Callum case!

"Okay," Andreason yielded slowly. "If that's what you want, Judge."

Elmore's florid face wore an unpleasant smile.

"I'm not through," he told Andreason. "I think it's damned funny you police should resent an independent investigation from any source."

The lieutenant flushed angrily. But he took the accusation silently.

Elmore grunted. "That isn't all. I'm going to have a talk with the Commissioner about your behavior!"

Leo spoke up. Probably he felt his chief's embarrassment, and wanted to change the topic. It wasn't likely he intended to spill the beans—which he did.

"There's something else, Lieuten-

ant," Leo said. "The blond guy was here, too."

"What?" cried Andreason.

"Yeah. About two hours ago, according to Ames," said Leo. "He didn't give any name, but he sent in a sealed envelope to old Randt. They had it hot and heavy, Ames said. He heard Randt ask the blond guy if Callum put him up to this, and he heard Randt say they'd settle it tonight."

"All right! I'll talk to Ames myself!" Andreason threw a defiant glance at Stan Baxter, and strode out. Muttering as he went: "A blond guy! Again!"

"Murder," said Stan, "seems to follow that blond man around."

Judge Elmore nodded, and closed the door.

"I want to talk to you alone, Baxter. I've got quite a lot on my mind."

CHAPTER VIII

An Ancient Feud

THE judge drew a flat silver case from his coat. "Smoke?" He smiled, tapping the cigarette on the case. "Well! I rather settled his hash—eh?"

Stan wondered. He felt that Elmore had certainly taken a fall out of Andreason, but maybe it wasn't such a triumph, after all. The lieutenant had been humiliated in front of Leo. Which would make it difficult to win any future cooperation from the Homicide Bureau. On the whole, Stan wished that Elmore hadn't butted in. Perhaps he could have argued Andreason into taking a more reasonable view of the matter—but that chance was lost, now.

Seeing the other's florid face, Stan asked himself whether Horace Elmore wanted to destroy that chance. Whether he deliberately made the gesture in

order to drive a wedge between Stan Baxter and the police.

"You think I could have been a little more diplomatic?" asked the older man.

"Yes. Yes, I did."

Elmore's lips curled. "Quite so. But I didn't want to be. I expected you were ready to bargain with him—offer to swap information, and so on. Doing what a private investigator in your shoes would have to do—let the cops have the credit for breaking the case."

"You're no fool, are you?"

The judge laughed. "I hope not. But it was really quite obvious." He waved a plump hand. "I had to prevent that. I don't want you striking any such bargains with the police. The things I'm going to tell you *must* be kept confidential. You are to be a free agent, with no strings on you at all."

Stan shrugged. "That's out. I'm already committed to Miss Callum."

"Oh, her! Yes, I know. I meant that you mustn't go tattling these things to Andreason or the newspapers."

"I'm not in the habit of tattling," Stan said sharply. "What are you getting at, Judge?"

As he spoke, Stan analyzed the older man acidly. He sensed something evasive in Elmore's manner. But exactly what was the judge trying to evade?

Horace Elmore hesitated.

"Let's have an—eh, meeting of minds," he suggested. "I want you to investigate Randt's death. But I want it done confidentially. I'll pay any reasonable price. And I make one more condition."

"Well?"

"You are not to use this information for any purpose except to free Lois Callum, and to bring the real murderer to justice."

Stan grunted. "Naturally, I agree. What purpose *would* I use it for?"

"None—I hope."

Stan smiled, a bit incredulously. It all sounded so vague. He wondered whether this condition amounted to anything more than hot air. What was Elmore's real motive?

So far as Stan could see now, the judge was playing a clever little game to widen the split between Andreason and the lawyer. For some reason he did not want the two working hand-in-glove. That was why he had used so little tact with the lieutenant; and even more clearly, it was why he forbade Stan to deal with Andreason. Stanley James Baxter became very thoughtful. He asked himself whether he had any bit of information, maybe something that didn't seem important as yet, which would help the police solve the two murders?

But why wouldn't Elmore want the murders solved?

"Okay, Judge," he shrugged.

HORACE ELMORE moistened his plump lips. He seemed reluctant to tell the story, after all. And, after the fashion of a reluctant witness, he began by beating around the bush: "Look here. This morning I asked you not to investigate Callum's death at Selma's request. Randt's death changes all that. It makes it necessary for me to drag up an old story. Which may or may not have a connection with the case."

"But you think it has?"

Elmore grunted. "Well, suppose a man is murdered. Suppose the man had a mortal enemy. That would look suspicious, wouldn't it?"

"Yes. Of course. Are you going to tell me now that Callum had a mortal enemy?"

The judge shook his head. "No, but Julius Randt had."

Stan asked bluntly, "Who?"

"It isn't that simple. It's an old scandal, and it affects some of the most prominent people in the city," Elmore said. "Few people remember it now. It was very well hushed up even at the time. That's why I'm not telling the police. I don't want this thing in the papers unless it's absolutely necessary. Let sleeping dogs lie, you know. It all happened so long ago. The beginning of it, before the World War."

Judge Elmore's voice had softened, as men's voices are apt to do when they become reminiscent. "Let's see, Baxter. How old were you in 1912?"

"I was saying da-da then."

"Uh-huh. I was a youngster not long out of law school myself. I married in '14. Not that it matters, except that it helps you realize how long ago all that really was," Elmore said. "In 1912, there was no Randt Camera Company. Julius Randt at that time was a foreman in the Ameroptic plant."

"Working for Kendall?"

"Oh, no. The Ameroptic company was owned by Strawn Hayward then. Old Strawn has been dead for many years. Frank Kendall worked in the plant, just as Randt did. It's curious you should mention his name," the Judge said. "You know, he's the enemy I meant."

"Frank Kendall was Randt's enemy?"

Elmore nodded his large head slowly. "They were rivals, after the same girl. She was Julia Hayward, old Strawn's daughter. A very lovely girl. And worth winning, because she happened to be an only child. I believe Julius Randt really loved her. I don't think Kendall did. So, naturally, Kendall won out and married the girl."

"Naturally?" Stan asked. "Why naturally?"

"Because he wasn't in love," the judge said profoundly. "Therefore he made no mistakes. A man in love is impulsive and shy by turns. His emotions magnify little things. He fears that he isn't good enough for the woman he loves. He is afraid that her money will come between them and happiness. Kendall had no such misgivings. He wanted Julia; he courted her determinedly; in the fall of 1912, he married her."

Stan grunted. "That made him Randt's enemy?"

"Oh no. Randt took his beating like a man. The trouble didn't start until 1915. Then Strawn Hayward died. Julia inherited the Ameroptic business, and Kendall took charge of it. His first act was to fire Randt."

"What did Julia say about that?"

Judge Elmore sighed. "I think it gave her a glimpse of Kendall's character. Or perhaps he dared to show himself in his real colors after old Strawn was gone. At any rate, the marriage became a dreadful mess. It was hell on earth for Julia. I don't know why she stuck it out as long as she did. But divorce was a good deal more of a disgrace then than it is now. She didn't leave Kendall until 1917. And even then the truth wasn't openly admitted. Julia was supposed to have gone away into some form of war work. Kendall of course kept busy here at home. The war brought a boom in the optical business — manufacturing binoculars."

"I see," Stan said. "What did she really do?"

"She planned to sue for divorce. I know, for she came to my father's law office. Otherwise, I wouldn't know the story. Much less know," said Elmore, "that Julia bore Kendall a child after she left him. Even Kendall didn't know

that. You can guess why. She was afraid the court would award him partial custody of the baby. Very likely she made up her mind to divorce him when she knew there would be a child. The infant would have supplied him with one more way to crush her spirit. That sounds exaggerated to you? But Kendall was after the money, and he'd do anything to keep control of the purse-strings."

Elmore nodded reflectively. He went on: "Even my father didn't know about the baby's existence. Until one day Julia came into the office. She was ill—we called it the 'flu,' then. She wanted to make a new will. All her property was to go to the child, Leslie. Julius Randt was to be appointed guardian. By that time, he had set up the Randt Camera Company. The idea being to leave Frank Kendall out in the cold."

"The divorce hadn't been granted?"

"No. Which made it a legal problem. And it was a large and involved estate. So—it all miscued. Julia died that night. The new will had not been signed. And the baby could not be found."

"Could not be found!" Stan cried.

"No. Julia must have been paying someone to keep the child hidden from Kendall until after the divorce. And she did the job too well."

"It's incredible!"

"Those things can happen," said Elmore. "It's not impossible that the baby died of the influenza, too. The nurse, whoever Julia employed, might have buried the little one quietly. For fear, you know, of having to return some of the money she'd been given. And then, there's another angle."

Elmore's large face was flushed. He bent forward in his chair. His voice was lowered.

"BAXTER, I told you once that Joe Callum had worked in my father's law office as a clerk. He helped type up some of the material in connection with Julia's will. Therefore he knew the secret!"

"Leslie," Stan said, "could be a boy's name. Or a girl's."

"Julia's child was a daughter."

A tense silence followed Judge Elmore's words. The older man's voice had unconsciously risen. He swallowed, now, and got out a handkerchief with which to dry his flushed face.

"I see," said Stan.

The judge nodded. "Randt made all kinds of efforts, ever since, to locate the missing child."

"Why?"

"Because he hated Kendall. Kendall had made hell on earth for the woman Julius Randt loved."

Frowning, Stan said, "And the reason he wanted to find the child—?"

"He wanted to injure Frank Kendall with an unwanted, unloved heir. An heir to Julia's property. Randt believed that Leslie, if alive, could claim a large share of the property. Kendall would have to make a settlement, and it might ruin him."

"But it was Kendall's child, too. Or wasn't it?"

Elmore's tone was grim. "Leslie—if alive—would have no reason to love Frank Kendall. Especially if Randt found her first—if he told her the story, she might be very willing to have a hand in ruining her father. You can see that."

Stan placed a cigarette in the corner of his mouth. He snapped flame from his lighter.

"Does Kendall know about the girl?"

"I couldn't say." The judge cocked his head to one side and smiled meaningfully. "What's your opinion? Cal-

lum knew. And Callum would naturally sell out to the highest bidder."

Stan considered.

"Leslie is alive, of course," he muttered. "You must know that. Otherwise, where's the point of all this?"

Horace Elmore spread his hands, palms up. The gesture indicated indifference.

"I couldn't say whether she's alive or not," he retorted. "Does it really matter? A phoney would serve Callum's purpose just as well."

"I can believe it," said Stan. He thought a moment; then, abruptly—"I'll tackle it. But my gun was stolen tonight. I need another. Do you carry one?"

Elmore shook his head.

"No. I have several weapons at home, though. Selma knows where they are kept. You're entirely welcome."

CHAPTER IX

The Filed Trigger

BAXTER indulged in a brown study as he turned his coupé away from the Randt house. Boiled down, Judge Elmore's story was only a theory—without one bit of direct evidence to support it. Stan knew that; still, the theory interested him. It suggested a brand new motive. Maybe Joseph Callum's murder could be traced to neither Lois nor the Randt lawsuit—maybe it was linked with Kendall's long lost daughter.

Another thought made Stan's fingers tighten on the steering wheel. Two of the three living men who knew this story had died within the last twenty-four hours!

His lips framed a soft whistle. Perhaps more than three men knew the story. According to Elmore, Randt had

employed a good many private detectives in his search for the child. One of those private investigators might have ferreted out the truth. And sometimes such men were not above blackmailing a client.

Stan was trying to account for the "blond man" who had visited both Callum and Randt very shortly before their deaths. An unscrupulous detective?

Driving along, Stan reflected that there were other points where Elmore's theory fitted nicely into the chain of events. Yesterday Callum had wanted to bring a lawsuit against the Randt Camera Company. But why? On the face of it, Callum had no chance at all to win such a suit. Stan wondered if it had been only a blind.

"A cover," he thought. "Under the legal pretense of settling the suit, he may have hoped to get a lot of money out of Randt. But the money would really have been paid for this secret—if Callum did know where to find Kendall's daughter. And Callum would have protected himself against any charge of conspiracy or extortion, only—"

Only, after all, he had nothing to go on except Horace Elmore's word. And Elmore had acted queerly. Stan was convinced that the lie detector would have caught the judge in more than one falsehood.

He parked in front of Judge Elmore's Lycinth Hill home. Selma must have been watching the street, for it was she who opened the door.

"Stan Baxter!" the girl cried. "What does it all mean? Have you found out—?"

"Randt is dead. You knew that?"

"Yes. Ames phoned. He wanted Father to come right over."

"I've just talked to your father."

"Yes, he called me a minute ago. You wanted a gun, he said."

She guided Stan to the judge's den. A comfortable room, its walls were lined with bookshelves. The shelves boasted a respectable array of legal tomes, but by far the majority of the volumes were detective novels. Yet it was not exactly a bookish room. It had a sporting flavor. There was a mounted moose head, numerous framed photographs of the judge and large fish, the judge and a bag of ducks, the judge on the fairway. A glass-fronted case was crammed with trophy cups.

Selma followed Stan's inquiring stare.

"Would you like to see his prizes?" she asked. "He's very proud of them. The big silver flagon stands for the Del Playa amateur championship—he shot a 73 to win that. What are they going to do about Lois, Mr. Baxter?"

Of course she was only showing him the trophies to bring up questions like that, Stan realized.

He said, "I think it clears Miss Callum. They certainly can't charge her with murdering Randt. And it looks very much as if Randt and Callum were killed by the same hand."

Selma's brown eyes flashed with interest. "What makes you think that?"
"*Modus operandi.*"

Stan was fingering a medal which immortalized Horace Elmore's feat in taking the largest trout out of the Twin Forks stream during the 1935 season.

"Because they were both killed answering the door?"

"Oh no. A killer could borrow that idea from the newspaper accounts of Callum's murder. It's surprising how often things like that are borrowed from the papers," Stan said. "But no one can learn from a newspaper to shoot with such deadly accuracy. I

counted the steps from Randt's body to the end of the porch. Eighteen paces. The fact that anyone could put a bullet into Randt's heart at that distance makes it seem much more plausible that Callum could have been slain at twenty-five yards."

"But," objected Selma, "how do you know the murderer stood there?"

Stan peered at a cup on the lower shelf. It was a target range pistol trophy, awarded for championship performance at fifty yards.

"Because of the terrier," he answered slowly. "The little creature's growl was practically simultaneous with the shot. That terrier tackled the killer the very moment Randt fell. And the dog was killed at the end of the porch. Otherwise there would have been blood somewhere else on the porch."

SELMA drew a breath of relief. "Then they'll have to release Lois right away."

Stan shook his head. "A second murder never causes the police to release suspects. Lois will be grilled more severely than ever, now."

"But if she didn't—?"

"She might have guilty knowledge." Stan swung around. From the masculine point of view, Selma Elmore was well worth inspection. Her brunette prettiness became more attractive each time you saw her. A dinner gown left her arms and most of her slim shoulders bare, and fitted clingingly to the girl's finely modeled figure.

Stan tried to forget these things. Tried to think of the girl as an element in the case—possibly a much more important element than she realized.

"Look, Miss Elmore. How well do you know Lois?"

"Well enough," said she loyally, "to be sure she didn't kill Callum. Or have any guilty knowledge, either."

"Well, that's knowing her pretty well. She must be a close friend. How long have you been friends?"

"We shared the same room at Briarcliffe."

"And since then?"

"I have seen her—oh, twenty or thirty times."

"Schoolgirls are generally pretty chummy," Stan surmised. "I suppose she must have told you things about her home life. Her parents, for example. Before she went to live with Callum?"

Selma shook her head. "That's part of the pity of it. She couldn't remember having a real father or mother. They died when she was a mere baby."

"But there must have been other relatives, besides Callum?"

"No. At least, no one interested enough in her to let the fact be known."

"She never got cards at Christmas, and so on?"

"Never."

Selma smiled thoughtfully. "Never," she repeated. "I suppose that was part of the bond between us. My own mother died the summer before I started at Briarcliffe. That helped me to understand Lois. But I had my father left, at least."

"What did he think of this friendship?"

The girl's brown eyes opened widely. "Why should he think anything of it?"

"Well, you say you visited Lois. I suppose she sometimes came here. What was the judge's attitude toward her? Did he like her—show interest in her—anything like that?"

Selma exhaled a long breath.

"I don't know what in the world you

mean," she declared. "Father felt about her as he felt about my other chums, I suppose. I don't know. I don't think he ever paid any particular attention. He took Lois and me to a circus once. That's the only memory of any kind I can dredge up. Why do you ask?"

Stan felt it best to evade the question.

"I wondered whether Lois might not have admired your father, and thought less of Callum as a result."

"Oh, nonsense. She didn't need any encouragement to think less of Callum."

"Strange," said Stan, "that Callum took the trouble to have her around. There are orphanages, you know."

"That's easy! He made money out of her—or expected to."

Stan's eyebrows went up. "She told you that?"

"Not exactly. She seemed to think her parents had left some money, though."

"Well," said Stan, "this isn't supplying me with the gun I came after."

SELMA crossed the room, the gown flowing gracefully as she walked to the desk. She pulled open a drawer. "Be careful. He said on the phone, they're loaded."

Stan looked into the drawer. It contained a .45 automatic pistol and a .38 revolver—the latter with a five-inch barrel. Not a very suitable pocket weapon, but he picked up the .38.

The chambers were fully loaded. He shucked out the cartridges and tested the action.

"Be careful!" the girl breathed again as the hammer snapped.

"You're wary of guns, aren't you?" he smiled.

"I was taught to be. Just a feather will discharge those things."

"I noticed," Stan said. "This one's been filed."

"That's for target shooting. Father goes out to the police range a lot."

"I noticed his medals, too."

She smiled a little. "The judge is quite a guy. At heart, he isn't a lawyer at all. If he'd been born poor, he might have—been a detective, maybe. Being rich and ultra-respectable, he's never had the adventure he craves."

It was quite an acute observation, Stan thought.

"Well, he got jarred out of the rut tonight, I expect. When Ames telephoned that Randt was dead, I mean."

"But Father wasn't here then."

"What?"

"He wasn't here. You see, Mr. Randt had telephoned before that, asking the judge to come over. It was about some business matter or other, so Father had to pick up some papers at his office," Selma related. "He drove away in the sedan at least half an hour before Ames called."

Stan was reloading the .38 as the girl spoke. He had turned, in order not to point the weapon in her direction.

Selma could not see his averted face. She missed the sudden compression of his lips.

"I see," he said dryly. "Well, I've got to be on my way."

CHAPTER X

Threat of Death

THE house was a grimly old-fashioned structure at the foot of La Playa Avenue. It belonged to an age when good taste demanded gables and turrets and colonnades, and very large windows with very small, leaded panes. It represented the bad and pretentious architecture which flourished before 1900.

At that time, the now fashionable Lycinth Hill area had been not even a subdivider's dream. People who had the money built in the La Playa district. And they didn't copy Italian villas, either.

It was the old Strawn Hayward house. Hayward's name still appeared on the concrete hitching block in front.

But Frank Kendall lived there now. The building had come to him along with the rest of his wife's property. It had not been modernized since. Seen at night, the place had a grimly desolate look.

Stan Baxter parked his coupé across the street and sat for a moment staring at the old house.

Its appearance fitted with what he had been able to learn of the owner. Although one of the city's leading manufacturers, Kendall ignored the local society. Not for many, many years had there been a party—or even a guest—in this house.

A few romantic people held that Kendall had been permanently soured by his young wife's untimely death. More cynical spirits declared that the man had been soured long before that; very likely at birth.

Stan strode up the walk. He found no push-button, but a queer old mechanical bell that jangled dismally.

He waited, wondering exactly what he should say to Kendall.

Judge Elmore had not made the accusation directly, but of course every word of his story had pointed to Frank Kendall's guilt. His tale painted the man as a blackhearted, mercenary scoundrel. If Stan could believe the judge, every move Kendall made grew out of villainy.

Besides, who else stood to profit from the murder of *both* Joseph Calum and Julius Randt?

Stan grunted, forced another discordant summons from the bell. A louder and longer one, this time.

There were footfalls within. The door opened, but only a crack.

A head popped into sight back of the crack. It was a bullet head, with small ears flat against an almost hairless skull. Between the ears were straggling, bushy eyebrows, a bulbous nose, and suspicious eyes set small and deep in a pockmarked face.

"Well?" the pocked man asked.

"I want to see Frank Kendall. He lives here, doesn't he?"

An unfriendly snort. "You can't see nobody here tonight. Come back tomorrow."

Stan shook his head. Tomorrow wouldn't do. By that time the papers would be filled with every detail of Randt's death. He wanted to surprise Kendall with that bit of news—if it was news.

The pockmarked man growled, "Well, what you want? What's your name?"

Natural enough questions, surely. Any well trained servant would make such inquiries of a strange caller at night. But the man behind this door did not impress Stan Baxter as a well trained servant. There was something definitely wrong in the picture, and it confirmed his suspicions.

"No," he said flatly. "You tell Kendall it's important. That's enough."

"It ain't important enough to get Mr. Kendall out of bed for."

"Oh yes it is."

"The hell you say!" the pockmarked man said, and slammed the door.

Stan shrugged, and gave the bell mechanism another twist. And kept right on twisting it. Now the door flew wide open. The pockmarked man loomed on the sill.

"You beat it!" he snarled. "Before I bust you!"

He was surprisingly big. He would have stood around six feet six, erect—but he wasn't erect. His huge shoulders sloped. The bullet head poked out in the manner of a turtle's.

He wore a thick red sweater, and it was this sweater which decided the matter for Stan Baxter.

The young lawyer's hand dropped to his belt. He carried Judge Elmore's revolver there—the barrel being overlong for a shoulder holster. He whipped up the gun.

"Easy," he said calmly. "I'm coming in."

The pocked man retreated, then. "I'll ask Mr. Kendall," he yielded grudgingly. He opened a door down the hall, and stepped into this room in front of Stan.

THERE was only one light in the room. It came from a gooseneck reading lamp, and fell mostly on the untidy table. There were papers on the table, and a silver hooped reading glass, and a Manx cat in a market basket.

Some hold a theory that pets and masters tend to resemble each other. And in fact the man seated back of this table did look a little like the Manx cat. He had a wide, feline face, with widely spaced feline eyes and a small receding chin. The chin bore a beard—brown, short and very thick, like fur.

Stan said, "Hullo, Kendall."

Mr. Kendall was a very cool customer.

"Young man," he replied, and his soft voice fairly purred, "I suppose you know that breaking into this house at the point of a gun constitutes a criminal offense?"

Stan Baxter's face expressed ironic amusement.

"Housebreaking," he said. "That's a hot one, coming from you!"

At this, the pocked man said, "S-ss-s!" through his teeth. But Frank Kendall looked only politely puzzled. "I beg your pardon?"

Stan grinned. "You've got a nerve, charging *me* with housebreaking. What about the Callum job?"

The pockmarked man broke out with, "Hell! You couldn't see nobody in the dark!"

"So!" said Stan, winking at Kendall. "So it was dark."

The pocked man jumped. His sweated arms looped around Stan's shoulders. He fetched a knee, hard, against the younger man's spine.

Mr. Kendall did not make any move—had no time to make any.

Stan's mistake was in coming far enough into the room so that the pocked man had been a half step behind him.

The struggle lasted only a moment. For in another moment, Stan's spine would have been broken. The pocked man had the power of an enraged grizzly. His arms dragged the younger man's shoulders back, bent Stan's body into an agonized arc over the knee. He discounted the revolver—he was wholly behind Stan now.

Stan whipped the gun up, twisted his wrist. He triggered. There was the crash of the .38 cartridge, and a bellow of pain.

Some plaster spilled from the ceiling.

The pocked man had released Stan. He stood wringing one hand in the other. The right index finger, shot away at its first joint, rained blood onto the floor. He swore between his groans of pain. And then, to the man behind the table: "Look here! It's shot off."

It was grimly comic, in a way. The pocked man thrust his bleeding hand toward Kendall. "It's *gone*," he gasped. He could hardly believe it *was* gone. And there was further comedy in his indignation. For, another inch and this man would have broken Stan's spine like a stick of wood. He'd meant to do it, too.

Kendall's catlike stare remained placid. Little gold-capped teeth flashed above his furry beard.

"It's gone, all right," he said. "You'd better trot across the street to Dr. Starrett's. And, Wolan. You shot yourself cleaning a gun here, you understand?"

The pocked man went out; they could hear him swearing as he ran through the hall. The outer door slammed.

KENDALL sat a little forward in his chair. He began to stroke the Manx cat, for the cat had been frightened by the shot and by Wolan's screams.

He said, "It *was* dark, all the same. How did you know?"

"His sweater," Stan said. "The soup smell."

"Soup?"

"Explosive."

"Oh," Kendall said. "Oh. Very clever of you."

There was something like a smile on his feline features. He added, "That doesn't explain why you came here. Does it?"

Stan shrugged. "I didn't come here to explain anything to you. You're going to do the explaining, Kendall."

This did not seem to surprise or disturb the man, either. His catlike stare watched Stan unflickeringly. He said:

"I see. You're Baxter, aren't you? I understand from the newspapers

you're defending Callum's niece." He grinned. "You have my sympathies, Baxter. Killing Callum comes under the head of public service. They ought to give the girl a medal."

"She didn't kill him."

"Didn't she?" said Kendall. "Whoever did, then. The city ought to put up a monument. To the Unknown Killer."

Stan said, "It won't be an Unknown Killer—much longer."

The gold-capped teeth glinted. "If that's a threat, it doesn't worry me. I had nothing to do with his death."

"Then you won't mind answering a few questions."

Kendall purred, "Suppose I do mind?"

"I'll turn you over to the police."

At this point, Stanley James Baxter definitely bluffed. He had already told Andreason that he could not identify the housebreakers. But Kendall could not know that. Not until he saw the morning newspapers.

"Fire away," the man said. "What's on your mind?"

"First," said Stan, "I want to know why you turned burglar tonight."

"That's easy." Kendall shrugged. "Callum's safe contained certain documents, extremely dangerous to me. They were forged documents, by the way. But even as forgeries, they were dangerous. I took them. It's as simple as that."

"Is it?" said Stan. "I want to see them."

"You really have nerve!"

"Yeah. And I'm going to see them."

The man grinned. "You can't. I've burned the stuff."

Stan didn't believe this. He would return to the point later, he decided. Better not to antagonize the other until he'd talked all he would.

He said, "Okay. Here's another question. You visited Callum the night he was shot. Why?"

Kendall's hand methodically soothed the Manx.

"That's also easy. Callum gave me to understand he was bringing the Randt company into court. I favored the idea heartily. In business, I've suffered a lot of unfair competition from Randt. I would have backed Callum if he had had a strong case. I went there to see his evidence. And instead, he pulled this blackmail trick on me."

Stan's eyes narrowed. "You mean he had no evidence against Randt?"

"Not enough to make a case," said Kendall. "He knew it, too. So he pulled these forged papers out of his safe. He offered to turn them over to me if I'd write him a check for ten thousand dollars. It wouldn't be extortion, because on the face of it I would only be putting up that much money to fight Randt."

"What'd you say to that?"

"I told him to go to."

"And then?"

"I came home."

Stan grunted. "Can you prove it?"

"Wolan drove my car."

"Yeah. What's his word worth?"

"Not very much," said Kendall calmly. "He's an ex-con. I might as well tell you, because you can easily look up his record. It's bad."

"I believe you," Stan said. "He's a hard-shot, if I ever saw one. You'd have a swell time explaining to the D.A. why you hired the mug."

Kendall grinned. "It was charity. I held out the helping hand. I made it possible for him to go straight."

"Oh, hell."

"Well, that's my story." And Kendall chuckled.

"Yeah. You'll have a swell time ex-

plaining something else to the D.A. What were you doing at Randt's home tonight?"

KENDALL'S composure showed signs of cracking. His cheeks paled above the furry beard. His eyes evaded Stan's stare.

He said lamely, "I—but I wasn't there."

Stan came a step closer to the table. His voice hammered hard at the other.

"You lie, Kendall. You were there when Randt was killed!"

The other forced himself to meet the challenge. "Careful, Baxter. You can't prove that."

"Can't I?" Stan's bronzed hand darted across the table. He knocked Kendall's arm aside. The same movement overturned the basket.

With a startled *meo-o-w* the tawny Manx leaped away and fled to a corner of the room. Then it sprang to the top of a bookcase.

Stan grinned, thumbing over the papers which had spilled from the basket.

Kendall had fallen back in his chair, breathing heavily. "You *are* clever."

It had not been particularly clever. The reading glass on the table showed that some sort of examination had been in progress here—and what more likely than the stolen documents that Kendall now had leisure to investigate? If so, the man's impulse would have been to hide the stuff when Stan forced his way in. And Kendall's eagerness to keep the cat quiet in its basket had been too transparent. But Stan did not explain the deduction.

"According to this," he said, "Lois Callum is really Leslie Kendall. Your daughter."

Kendall bared his gold-capped teeth.

"That's not true! Those are forgeries—all forgeries!"

"Maybe," said Stan Baxter. "I want to hear that from experts."

He swept the bundle of papers into his pocket.

Kendall's face darkened. "You—you—" He struggled. "Why, you're a highway robber. You could be kicked from the Bar for this!"

Stan Baxter laughed as he leaned across the desk.

"Of course, you can have me arrested. But you won't. You'd have to tell the police how and where you got these papers of Callum's. And the police would hold you for killing Randt."

Kendall swallowed painfully. "I'm not frightened, Baxter. It's true I went to see Randt. But I turned and ran as soon as I heard the shot."

"Why?"

"I didn't want to be mixed up in it."

"But why did you go there at all?"

Kendall scowled. "Oh, I've told you all I'm going to." Another thought made his face light up triumphantly. "You don't want the police in it any more than I do. You're playing a little game of your own. That's why you came here alone."

Stan grunted. "Don't count on that too much."

He backed out of the room. The front door swung open as Stan strode down the hall. Wolan came in. The pockmarked man held up his bandaged hand. He grated:

"I'll kill you for this!"

Wolan meant it. And Stan knew that he meant it. He looked back over his shoulder as he crossed the street to his coupé. The papers in his pocket had already cost two men's lives. The kettle was boiling dangerously now.

TO BE CONTINUED NEXT WEEK

The tailor was staring fixedly at Mark Chandler's coat



IT seemed a touch of irony that Mark Chandler should be wearing the gray tweed suit on the very night when he was going to kill his wife. It was a rather foppish suit with a double-breasted coat snugged in at the waist and padded at the shoulders.

"I don't like it," Dorothy had declared the first time she saw him in it. "Makes you look like a gigolo."

That had been three years ago, when he returned from a business trip to New York, where he had bought it readymade, and he hadn't worn it from that day to this. It had hung far back in the closet, a symbol of the earnestness with which he played the part of the loving and considerate husband who wouldn't do anything to displease his wife.

It was due to the weather he was wearing the suit tonight. He had got a thorough soaking when he walked

Evidence Sartorial

By Herman Landon

Author of "The Strangling Necklace," etc.

The black ace dropped when Mark Chandler reneged on a gray suit

home from the office a little after five, and Dorothy, always mothering him, had scolded him in her gentle way for forgetting his raincoat and umbrella and insisted he take a hot bath and get into dry clothes.

"Oh, dear!" she had wailed. "You will have to wear those awful gray tweeds. I sent your other suits to the cleaner."

It had been a little trying to face

her across the dinner table and keep up a flow of small talk. Afterward, with a show of regret, he had told her he would have to go back to the office and dispose of some accumulated work and that she mustn't wait up for him. Then he had kissed her—for the last time, he hoped—wiping the taste of the kiss off his mouth as soon as he was outside.

Now he sat at his desk waiting for the hour he had fixed upon for the murder. It had to be done tonight, for Mrs. Jordan, their servant, had been called out of town by the illness of a relative, and Dorothy would be all alone in the dreary old house at the end of the street in which her parents and grandparents had lived before her. The opportunity was too good to miss. Then there were all those robberies, ten or twelve of them, that had terrorized Midvale for a month, giving him the best possible cover for the thing he intended to do.

Papers were piled high on the desk. If anyone should walk in, it would look as if he were hard at work. Carlson, the janitor, had taken him up in the elevator, and Mark had given him a good cigar, but he was building up no ingenious alibi. They were too dangerous, and he didn't expect to need one.

He got up, paced the floor restlessly, then stood before the window, a tall, slim figure, sleekly good-looking despite a rather loose mouth. His dark hair had been falling out lately, and the tonic wasn't doing it much good, so he wore it long to hide the thinning spot on top. He looked down into the dismal main street of Midvale, the poky New England town he had always hated, and dreamed of the kind of life he wanted—ease and luxury, glamorous places, girls whose mouths

were warmer and brighter than Dorothy's. All those things he could have when Dorothy was dead. Her money would then be his.

He jerked his watch from his pocket and saw that it was almost time to start. Dorothy, whose life was as dull and regular as clockwork, would go to bed at eleven as usual. With habitual frugality she would turn out the lights. He was counting on that. It would be easier to do it in the dark. She wouldn't see him, and he wouldn't have to look at her.

AT five minutes past eleven he put on his hat, raincoat and gloves and cut a short piece from a roll of adhesive paper tape. Then he stepped outside, leaving the light on and the door unlocked, cast a glance up and down the hall, reached down close to the floor and stuck the piece of tape over the crack between the door and the jamb. It would tell him, when he returned in half an hour or so, whether anyone had opened his door during his absence.

The elevator was no longer running, and Carlson was probably in bed. As he turned toward the stairs, he saw a glow on the frosted glass panel in a door in the extreme rear, showing that J. Pillcutt, "Ladies and Gents Fine Tailoring," was still at work. He gave it a passing glance, slipped down three flights of stairs, then out a window in the back of the building.

Nobody saw him as he traveled the roundabout course he had determined upon in advance. Soon he stood in the darkness behind the house, his heart beating fast. The neighboring houses were dark, the only lights a couple of street lamps glowing foggily in the rain. He shrugged off a morbid fear, a weakness. It wouldn't take long. He

would just push or carry Dorothy into the small closet in the back of the bedroom and lock the door on her. It was a sturdy door and had a strong lock. She couldn't live long in that narrow airtight space and nobody would hear her shouts for help. Then he would arrange the scene to make it look as if a burglar had locked her in the closet so he could plunder without interference. Perfectly simple!

Quietly he let himself in with his key and picked his way to the stairs. His raincoat seemed to make unearthly swishing sounds in the darkness. He threw it off, flung it over the newel post and crept up the stairs. He fumbled for the bedroom door. It was wide open.

He stood stunned. Then he heard the hideous gasping sound of his name.

"Mark—darling!"

He pushed the button inside the door, gave an involuntary cry as light flashed up in a wall fixture. The room was in wild confusion and in the midst of it lay Dorothy, a splash of crimson spreading on her light blue negligee.

"Mark—" she moaned.

Like a puppet moved by strings he was down on his knees, bending over her, eyes fixed on the ugly splotch over the breast, the rip in the garment.

She flung out her arms convulsively.

"Darling—hold me—close. It's so dark—so cold—"

Frantic fingers clawed at his face, his hair; arms circled his neck, clung to him pulling until he felt the heave of her breast and heard the agonized breath rasp in her throat. In a revulsion of horror he tore himself free and sprang to his feet, shaking.

"Damn you!" he snarled.

He kicked her hard. He didn't have to pretend now. It didn't matter what she thought.

The breath jammed in his throat as he saw the light of understanding dawn in her eyes—dawn and go out.

"Dead!" he muttered, breathing again. Dead, and he was free!

HE whirled toward the open door behind him, stared into the darkness beyond. Surely he had heard something and the sound had clanged a tocsin of menace in his brain, giving him a sense of eyes watching him out of the darkness. He listened, pulses hammering. Nothing. Only the beating of rain on the windows and the storm noises in the chimney.

He turned back. Death was writing its ugly scrawl on Dorothy's face. Dimly he saw the weapon lying beside the body. Dorothy's own nail file with its ebony handle and strong, firm blade of steel ending in a sharp point. Slowly his eyes moved over the room. No need to stage a burglary scene, as he had planned to do. Someone else had done that with grim realism.

The fog lifted from his mind. What had happened was another of those burglaries. The thief had done just as Mark had planned to do. Probably, like Mark, he had waited until after the lights were out, only he hadn't waited quite so long.

He stared down at the crumpled figure and suddenly fear seized him. She had been dead only a couple of minutes. Probably the stabbing had been done only five or ten minutes ago and here he was standing beside her, on the scene of the murder. If someone should walk in . . .

Fear, the fear of guilt, crawled over him like a physical thing. He had murdered Dorothy in his thoughts and now he felt as if he had murdered her in reality as well. He would have to get away, do as he had originally planned,

sneak back to the office, wait there an hour or so, then return and go through the farce of discovering the murder.

"Wait!" a voice seemed to whisper. "Steady!" He forced his eyes to dwell on the confusion, searching it for some detail that might incriminate him. Dorothy must have fought like mad for her life, hurling everything within reach at the intruder—a shoe, a book, a pillow, the alarm clock that always stood on the bedside table.

Mechanically, with gloved hands, Mark picked up the clock. The nickel frame was badly dented, the crystal shattered. It would never tick again. The time-setting knob in the back had jammed and was immovable, the hands stopped at a quarter of twelve.

Mark looked at his watch. The right time was only twenty-seven minutes past eleven. The old alarm clock was always running fast, and he usually set it by his watch when he went to bed. It had stopped, of course, when Dorothy hurled it at the intruder, probably missing him and hitting the wall instead.

Mark put the clock down where he had found it, snapped off the lights, grabbed his hat and raincoat and hurried out in the storm. Alibi! Dorothy had provided him with an alibi when she threw that clock at the burglar. In another hour or so, no medical examiner could make more than an approximate guess as to the time of death. The clock's mute testimony would be accepted by the police.

"Luck!" he muttered hoarsely. Luck was with him all the way. Again nobody saw him. When he reached his floor, a glow on the glass panel told him the tailor was still at work. He hurried on to his own door, heaved a sigh of relief as he found the little strip of tape intact, proving nobody had tried the door during his absence. He

tore the strip away, walked in, hung up his raincoat and hat, and looked at his watch.

Eleven forty-two. His mouth hung down in a slack grin. Dorothy wasn't dead yet, according to the clock lying on the bedroom floor. She still had three more minutes to live. His eyes slid over the papers piled on the desk. For all anyone knew, he had been sitting there all evening. But he couldn't prove it. It took more than one to make an alibi convincing.

"Oh, hell!" What was the matter with him? Something had happened to him back there in the house. He was acting like a murderer, thinking like a murderer, *feeling* like one. It seemed as if Dorothy's dead body were only the materialization of his secret thoughts. That alibi?

MARK tried to iron the strain out of his face, to act as if he hadn't looked upon death. Slowly he went down the hall to the tailor shop. It had changed hands lately, and he didn't know the new tenant who was a stranger in Midvale. That made it all the better. An alibi supported by a stranger was better than one supported by a friend.

He knocked and a voice said, "Come in." The tailor, a thin-faced runt of a man wearing glasses, sat on a table sewing buttons on a coat. A light with a big green shade hung over his head. Mark wondered if he should introduce himself, but decided it might seem too pointed. It would be enough if the tailor got a good look at him.

"I saw your light," he said. "I've run out of cigarettes. Could you give me one?"

"Sure." The tailor nudged his elbow toward a package lying on the table. "Help yourself."

"Working pretty late, aren't you?" Mark fished a cigarette out of the package and lighted it.

"Rush job," the tailor grumbled. "Folks seem to think a tailor never sleeps. I promised my old lady I'd be home by eleven, and here it's—" He looked at his watch. "Why it's a quarter to twelve. She'll give me the deuce."

Mark felt a warm glow. His alibi was a little too perfect now but that couldn't be helped. At this very moment, according to the alarm clock, Dorothy was hurling things at the burglar. A margin of a few minutes probably would have made it look better, but still—

Suddenly the glow froze. The tailor was staring at him through his glasses. It was an intent stare and it was not directed at Mark's face but at the coat of the gray tweeds he had put on just before dinner.

"Well, thanks," he managed to say. "Good night."

The tailor's spectacled eyes seemed to follow him back to his office. His nerves were all raw again. Why the devil had the man looked at him that way? Why— He parted his coat, stared down at it and a cry tore through his chattering teeth. Spots swam and swelled in his vision, reddish spots on the gray fabric, glaring spots that colored the whole room. Blood—Dorothy's blood! It must have gotten on his coat when she hugged him to her and now it had soaked into the cloth and dried.

He shivered as if slapped by an icy wind. He had been all on edge, moving in a trance of horror and fear. There had been blood in his eyes; that was why he hadn't seen the blood on the coat. But the tailor had seen it. The tailor had been staring at the stains

on his coat. The tailor, his alibi witness!

He slumped down in the chair, drew dry palms over his eyes. He sat there a long time, his thoughts moving in circles and running up against dead ends. Why hadn't the tailor said something? Why hadn't he betrayed shock or surprise? Mark took a long, deep breath. Maybe he had exaggerated the tailor's stare. The big green shade had cornered the light in a narrow pool around the tailor, and Mark, except when he went over and took the cigarette, had been standing outside the circle of brightness. It was just possible the tailor hadn't seen the stains.

But something had to be done about them. He might plead a nosebleed, an accidental cut with a knife. No, that wouldn't do. The stains were too copious and they seemed to point straight to the wound in Dorothy's chest. No ordinary soaping or scrubbing would remove them. The stains would remain, glaring at him like indelible marks of Cain.

He got back into raincoat and hat and walked home. Silence and darkness hung heavy and cold over the house. The simple solution came to him as he mounted the stairs. He gave a chattering laugh. He would destroy the stains by burning the coat. No, he would do better than that. He would burn every stitch he had on.

He stripped to the skin, dressed in fresh underwear, shirt and socks and got back into the dark serge suit, badly wrinkled and still damp, he had taken off just before dinner. Making a clean job of destruction, he ripped all the buttons from the gray tweed suit and flushed them down the bathroom drain. In the cellar he opened the furnace draughts. The fire roared and he threw the discarded clothing into the hottest

part of it, then slammed the furnace door shut.

SUDDENLY he was weak from sheer relief. No nightmare in bloodstained gray tweeds would be riding him now. And there was no danger that anyone would miss them. Three years had passed since he bought them and tonight was only the second time he had worn them. Mrs. Jordan, the servant, never looked into his clothes closet. Nobody would remember that he had ever owned such a suit—except, possibly, the tailor.

He cursed in a ragged voice. Damn that little runt! Then he shrugged. Eyes could be mistaken. His word was as good as the tailor's, and he would say he had never worn such a suit. If the tailor spoke of bloodstains, he would make a laughing stock of him. Bloodstains on a suit that didn't exist!

It was just a little after one when he went to the phone and called the police. With the gray tweeds no longer haunting him, it would be no trouble to put on an act and play the shocked and grief-stricken husband.

It was a good act. He was sure it fooled Donlin, the big lummoX of a cop who took charge of the investigation. After the preliminary questioning, he sat all alone in the living room while the officers poked about on the upper floor. A warm, soothing feeling came over him. It was a ridiculous state of mind he had gotten into, feeling and thinking like a murderer and having to remind himself that he was innocent. Now the worst was over.

Donlin loomed big and broad in the doorway. He had a beefy face with heavy jowls and little chin, a mild voice and eyes as gentle and stupid as a cow's. No gray matter, Mark thought.

"Found out anything?" he asked.

"No prints," Donlin said, heaving his bulk into a chair. "Guess the killer wore gloves. Looks like one of these yegg jobs. The eleventh in a month." He grunted, scowled mildly. "Didn't you feel sorta nervous leaving your wife all alone?"

"Don't!" Mark took his head in his hands and groaned. He knew it looked and sounded just right. "Don't you suppose I feel guilty enough as it is?"

"Guess you do," Donlin sighed. "Yeah, guess you do." He drew a sad-looking cigar from his pocket and lighted it. "Now, Doc Wharton says your wife's been dead anywhere from an hour to two hours, but we know exactly when it happened."

"Yes?" Mark cried in pretended astonishment. "How?"

"By the alarm clock. Your wife tossed it at the killer along with a lot of other things. It's a wreck. The hands stopped at eleven forty-five. The killer probably stabbed her while she was still pitching things at him, so that gives us the time of the murder." Donlin hung his head glumly. "That ain't much help, though."

Mark thought fast. That alibi! He was afraid of it now. He felt it would sound well to make some disparaging remark about it.

"Wouldn't the yegg have been smart enough to set the clock backward or forward?"

"Yeggs ain't smart, Mr. Chandler. And they don't go in much for alibis. Anyhow, the works jammed so the hands couldn't be moved. I tried." Donlin chuckled lugubriously. "Your wife sorta timed her own murder. I guess we can say the killing was done about eleven forty-five."

Mark hid a smile. The big lumbering nitwit didn't even think to inquire

whether the clock had been running fast or slow.

"Where was you about that time, Mr. Chandler?"

Mark started at the direct, soft-spoken question.

"I told you. At my office. I didn't get home till—" He hesitated a moment. It wouldn't do to be too exact about the time. "It must have been a few minutes after one."

Donlin nodded heavily, jotted in his notebook, then stood up, a big, lubberly figure with eyes that looked as if he needed sleep. He turned to the door, then stopped and touched his thinning mat of hair.

"How is Hairlux," he asked with a sheepish grin. "I saw a bottle on your dresser. Any good?"

Mark stared at the lumpy, stupid face. A little chill rippled down his spine. Somehow, vaguely, he felt the innocent question played with fire. Remembering his role, he drew himself up with an air of solemn resentment.

"You don't seem to realize," he said reproachfully, "that you are investigating the murder of my wife."

"Sure, sure." Donlin chuckled apologetically. "My mind's just wandering. Sign of age, I guess."

He went out, but his big shadow seemed to linger in the room. Mark shook himself. What the devil was the matter with him? His imagination was twisting and magnifying every word and look, even a question about the bottle of hair tonic on his dresser.

THE funeral was two days later and Mark felt a load lift from his mind as he saw his wife's body lowered into the grave. He was safe now; he had been safe all the time. His fears had been as unreal as ghosts, as im-

aginary as the ridiculous consciousness of guilt that had obsessed him.

The little tailor no longer worried him. If the fellow had noticed the bloodstains on the coat, he would surely have come forward and testified before this. Mark felt he would have been safe in calling him as an alibi witness. But no alibi had been necessary. Everybody in Midvale seemed convinced a burglar had committed the crime.

Mrs. Jordan returned the day after the funeral, and early the following morning Mark's slumber was disturbed by the ringing of the door bell. Only half awake, he grunted and turned over in bed. The bell kept ringing and presently there was a knock on his door.

"Somebody to see you, Mr. Chandler." The voice, sleepy and petulant, was Mrs. Jordan's.

Instantly he was wide awake. He snapped on the light, saw that it was only half past four and wondered with a twinge of uneasiness who could be calling at such an hour. He pushed his feet into slippers, put on his dressing gown, started down the stairs. He was trembling and he could not understand why.

Donlin sat in the living room, bulging in a stuffed armchair. He looked tired and cold.

"Sorry to get you up, Mr. Chandler," he said. "Something I want to ask you. It's about that alarm clock."

"Yes?" Mark said. For no reason he could think of, his throat felt dry and tight. "What about it?"

"I asked Mrs. Jordan just now if it used to keep good time. She said she couldn't say because she never paid any attention to it. She said you would know."

Mark's thoughts raced along with

his quickening heartbeats. There was something menacing about the big, dull-witted detective, a hint of danger in the air. It warned him he might have to fall back on the alibi that once had frightened him but which now seemed perfectly safe. The murder must have been committed and the clock have stopped five or ten minutes before he found it in the bedroom, yet it had been eighteen minutes ahead of time even then. But nobody but himself knew that.

"It kept good time," he said in a puzzled tone. "It might have gained or lost a minute a day, but I always set it by my watch at bedtime."

"Then," said Donlin, "it couldn't have been more than a minute off that night?"

"No, I don't see how it could."

"So it's a pretty safe bet that the killing was done about eleven forty-five."

"It would seem so. What's on your mind, Donlin?"

The detective chewed a dead cigar and did not seem to hear the question. He nodded heavily.

"Well," he mumbled, "that lets Jack Thorpe out. Not that it makes an awful lot of difference to him now."

Mark sat in a speechless daze.

"Who?" he asked at length, hollow-voiced.

JACK THORPE. Guess you've seen him around town. The black sheep of a nice family. I've had a hunch about that guy for some time but couldn't pin anything on him. Tonight, about one o'clock, he broke into Judge Winslow's house and the judge plugged him in the chest. He died an hour later."

Mark felt a stifling heaviness in the air.

"Did he—confess?"

"No. He was unconscious till he died. We're pretty sure, though, that he pulled all these robberies." Donlin scowled as if feeling guilty of an exaggeration. "Well, most of 'em anyhow," he amended.

"You think he killed my wife?"

"I did think so." Donlin shifted his bulk in the chair and chewed his cigar. "That's what got me all tangled up. I was all set to make a pinch that night, only I had Jack Thorpe on the brain. Now I know he didn't do it. I've checked on him. At eleven fifty that night he was at Tim Hogan's lunchroom, way over on the other side of town. Half a dozen people saw him. Now, he couldn't have killed your wife at eleven forty-five and been at Tim's place at eleven fifty. The fastest car made couldn't cover that distance in less than ten or twelve minutes. It's an alibi, all right." Donlin chuckled dolefully. "A dead man's alibi."

"But—" Mark checked his tongue just in time. Too late now to recall his lie about the alarm clock; too late to demolish the dead man's alibi by explaining that a difference in time had given Jack Thorpe a margin wide enough to show up at Tim Hogan's place at eleven fifty. Jack Thorpe was the murderer, of course. Probably he had gotten panicky; amateurs often did. Then, by chance or design, he had stepped straight into the very same alibi that Mark Chandler had meant to use. Now he had been punished for his crime by a bullet in the chest. But as Donlin saw things, Dorothy's murderer was yet to be apprehended.

Mark mopped sweat from his brow. He was glad that the big, loutish detective was not looking at him just then.

"Soft for you, Mr. Chandler," Don-

lin was saying in his slow way. "Your wife left you a nice bunch of money. I s'pose you'll sell out and pull stakes."

Mark could not trust his tongue. Donlin had put his finger right on the motive for the murder he had planned and would have committed if Jack Thorpe hadn't gotten in ahead of him.

"Yeah, Jack Thorpe's out," Donlin went on. "But I'll get the guy who did it. I'll— Say, don't you feel good?"

Mark squirmed in anguish. He felt like a murderer, felt as if he had murdered Dorothy in reality as well as in his heart and mind.

"I—I'm all right," he managed to say. "Naturally I'm upset over all this. You have somebody in mind?"

"Sort of. I had him in mind that night, only Jack Thorpe got under my feet. I thought he was the killer and that the other things could be explained."

"What other things?"

"Some things we found that I didn't bother to tell you about. One of 'em was tracks back of the house. I'm pretty sure now they was the killer's tracks."

MARK stared in consternation at the lumpy, guileless face. In his mind he retraced the course he had traveled across vacant lots and over the marshy tract directly behind the house. Killer's tracks.

"There's a lot of reddish-brown clay back there," Donlin said. "We found a perfect set of footprints in it and we know who made them. On top of that, the guy dragged some of that clay with him into the house."

Mark could hardly breathe. Donlin's voice was mild, his gaze gentle. Too gentle, Mark felt.

"Yes?" he forced himself to say. "What else?"

"Well, Doc Wharton found a bruise on your wife's thigh. Seems the killer kicked her. Fact is, we know he did." Suddenly Donlin's eyes were hard; contempt crackled in his voice. "And when he kicked her, some of that reddish-brown clay came off on her night gown."

Mark clenched his teeth and stifled a groan. The scene burned in his mind—the dread and rage that had suddenly boiled up in him and exploded in a kick.

"The lousy swine!" Donlin muttered, heaving out of his chair and pounding the floor with his long, ungainly stride. Suddenly he stopped before Mark. "You say you went to the office a little after eight that evening and stayed till about one. That right?"

"Yes." Mark could hardly lift the words from his parched throat. "We've been over all that."

"And your wife was dead when you got home?"

"Oh, yes. As I told you that night—"

"I think you lied," Donlin growled. "Corpses don't pull hairs out of a man's head."

"Pull—what?"

"Hairs. There was plenty of hairs stuck to your wife's fingers. We got a sample off your hair brush and had a test made. The report came in this evening. It checked, all right. It was your hair and the oily stuff on it analyzed as Hairlux, the tonic you've been using."

Mark tried to speak but his mouth was too dry, his throat too tight. Another scene burned in his vision. Dorothy's fingers pawing his hair, clawing him to her.

He tried to look up. Donlin stood there, enormous and threatening, looking at him as if sickened by the sight.

"You're in a spot, Chandler," he

said. "We've got enough on you to burn you. It's a tight enough case. Still—" He frowned and rubbed his fatty jaw. His eyes were puzzled now. "No matter how tight a case is, a man can't be in two places at once. Why didn't you tell me about your alibi? Or maybe you ain't got none."

Mark's heart lifted with a wild surge of hope. The little tailor. He wasn't afraid of him now. The bloodstained gray tweeds had disappeared without a trace. It was as if they had never existed.

"I've done some checking," Donlin said, eyeing him steadily. "There's a tailor on your floor. Name's Pillcutt. He's a stranger in town. Now, Pillcutt tells me a man walked into his shop that night and bummed a cigarette. Pillcutt supposed he was one of the tenants. Maybe he was; maybe he wasn't. But he's sure of one thing. He looked at his watch while the man was still there, and he remembers it was eleven forty-five." Donlin paused, a look of fret and doubt in his eye. "It's a good alibi, if it stands up—as good as Jack Thorpe's. Was it you bummed that cigarette?"

"Of course!" Mark cried. "I'd forgotten. But don't take my word for it. Why don't you send for Pillcutt?"

"He's waiting outside in my car," Donlin said. "Wait a minute." He went out.

MARK gave a giddy laugh of relief. Everything would be all right. Pillcutt would identify him. The danger was over. His dreams would yet come true—money, pleasant places, girls with soft arms and warm mouths. But what a fright he had had!

Pillcutt walked in looking like a dwarf beside the big detective. Donlin stood aside.

"This the man?" he asked.

The tailor came closer. Mark's pounding heart was choking him, even though he had no doubt of the outcome. The tailor squinted behind his glasses. Again, as on the night of the murder, he seemed to pay more attention to Mark's clothes than to his face.

"Might be," said Pillcutt doubtfully. "He's about the same build. He was in a double-breasted gray tweed suit that night. It was an extreme cut. That's what made me notice it."

There was a silence, and suddenly Mark felt the weight and chill of it. Fear ran through his veins, freezing him even before he realized its meaning. He only knew that something was disastrously wrong.

"Anything else?" Donlin asked.

"Well, there were spots on the coat. Looked like grease spots. Maybe he'd been working over an engine. I'd have offered to take 'em out for him if I hadn't been so busy."

Mark's mouth hung open. The walls reeled crazily. He seemed to hear loud sardonic laughter. Grease spots! The tailor, sitting in a bright light and seeing Mark in one less bright, had thought the stains were grease spots.

"Well," Donlin demanded, "is this the man?"

The tailor took another long, squinting look at Mark.

"I'm funny, I guess," he admitted with a grin. "I can't tell a man apart from his clothes. That's what comes of being a tailor. Now, if I could see this gentleman in a gray tweed suit with a double-breasted coat, I'd know for sure if he was the man."

"Well, that's easy," Donlin said. "Go put it on, Chandler."

Mark didn't move. Dread was shackling him, crushing him. He stared at

the little tailor, at the big, lumbering detective, and he thought he saw a queer grin on Donlin's mouth.

"I know," Donlin said. "You ain't got such a suit. What's more, Mrs. Jordan tells me you never had one. That proves you ain't the man Pillcutt saw that night. You need an alibi bad, but you ain't got one. There ain't but one alibi in this case and it belongs to a dead man. You'll burn, Chandler, and damned if you don't deserve it."

Mark labored for breath, tried to cast off his tongue-binding dread. Then words were tumbling from his mouth, wild words, denials, protestations. Donlin listened patiently, then shook his head.

"Better shut up, Chandler. You're only making it worse for yourself.

You've admitted pretty near everything now, even that you was in the house at the time of the killing and that you kicked your wife when she was dying. When the jury hears about that—"

He finished with a shrug. Mark shrank away from the look in his eyes. Then he was seeing more eyes, a dozen pairs of eyes, the eyes of the men deciding his fate in the jury room, all hard and full of loathing, like Donlin's. Voices were dinning in his ears. They were talking about the footprints in the clay, about the hairs on Dorothy's fingers. "He told us a pack of lies," they were saying. "He stabbed his wife, and then he kicked her when she lay dying at his feet. Let's give him the chair!"

The Represa Poll

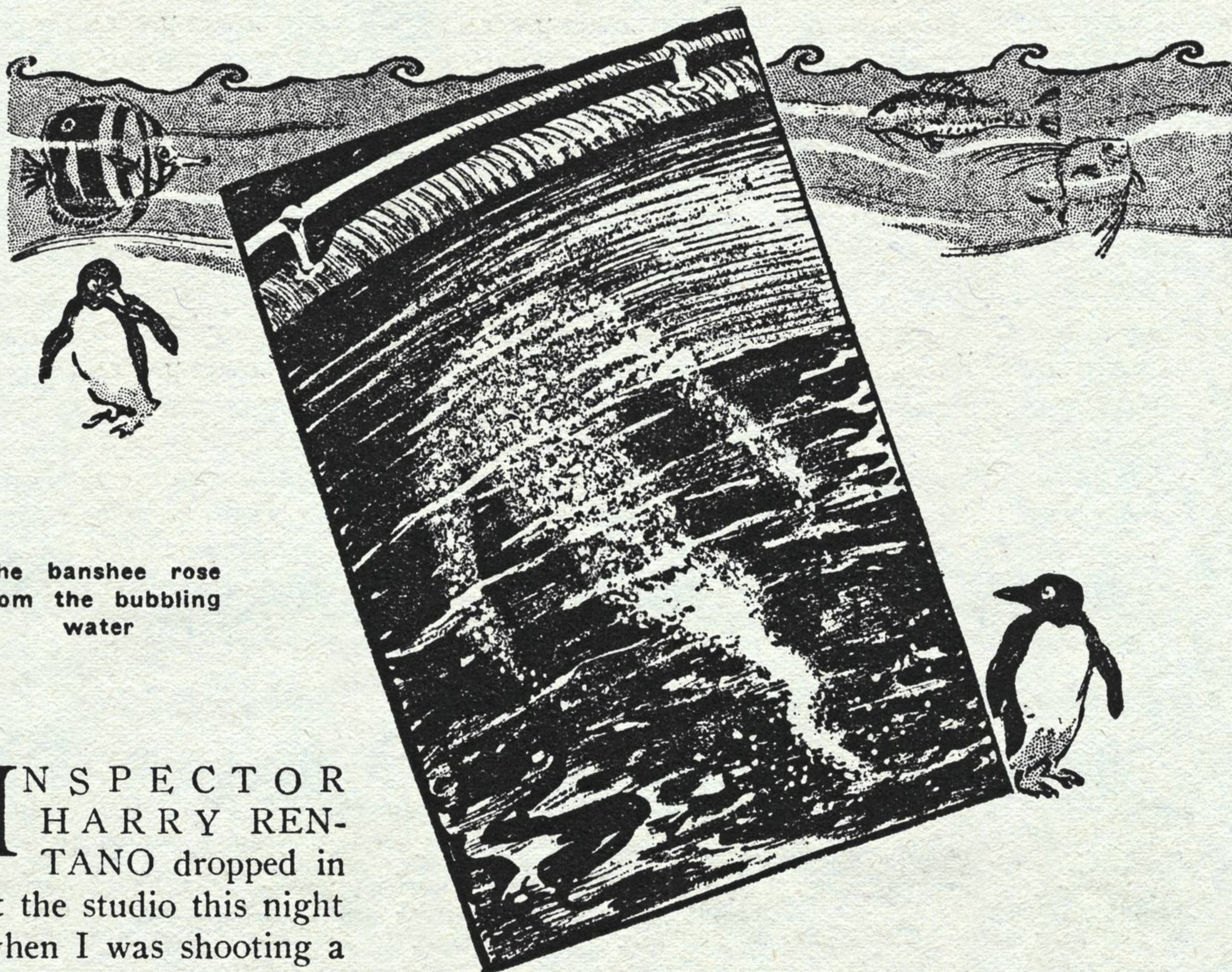
AMONG the other wonders of California list Clyde Irvin Plummer, one-time Los Angeles policeman, who is now warden of Folsom Prison, where California sends its two-time convicts. Warden Plummer has been astounding penologists for the past year by his efforts to make Folsom's 2,800 inmates happy. Among other things, he has given the prisoners swing bands, traded the prison's herd of pigs for a herd of cows to produce fresh milk, and arranged many social activities for his charges.

Not content with old laurels, the prison-run *Represa Sports-Telegram* recently published the results of one of the most unusual polls ever conducted in this country. The poll, sent to 400 convicts, was suggested by the editor, Chick Galloway, who achieved his position by murdering a friend in a quarrel over a ukulele.

Fifty-eight of the prisoners thought the U. S. would go to war in 1938, 342 thought otherwise. There were 287 who declared they would refuse to enlist for war if they were free and 261 claimed they would refuse a parole to enlist. The prisoners opposed the Roosevelt agricultural policies, and voted that TVA was "a competitive enterprise endangering private investment." On the question of whether the prisoners approved of J. Edgar Hoover, the *Represa Sports-Telegram* announced that "we are unable to list a representative tabulation of the votes on this important subject."

—Walter T. Barlay





The banshee rose
from the bubbling
water

IN S P E C T O R
H A R R Y R E N -
T A N O dropped in
at the studio this night
when I was shooting a
little colored boy with a lighted
candle in his hand. I was about
finished anyway when Rentano
opened the door and walked in.
But he got kind of a shock.
The entire studio was black-
dark, and there was only the
kid with the flickering candle.
“For heaven’s sake,” Rentano
said mildly, “this place looks
haunted.”

“Next time,” I said drily, “you
knock and we’ll turn on the lights.
I’d hate to scare a big brave detective.”

Rentano smiled. “All right,” he said.
“But you can’t tell me that you’re
getting a picture of that kid and that
candle without any other lighting.”

I said, “I’m telling you just that,
Harry. This is a new film I’ve got
in the Leica. Ultra-Speed panchro-
matic, three times faster than regular
supersensitive. And at 1/10th with a

Banshee

By Richard Sale

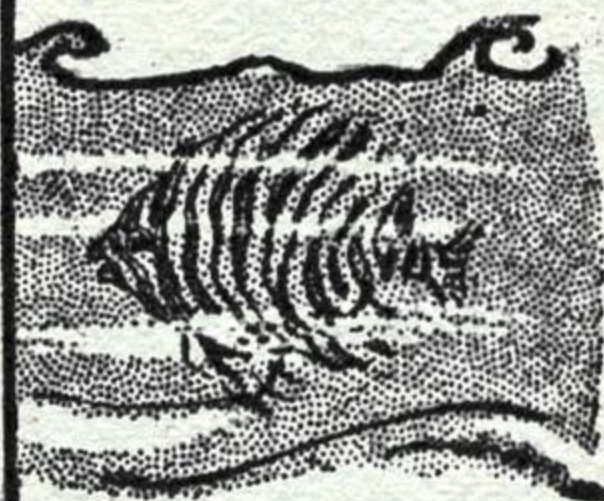
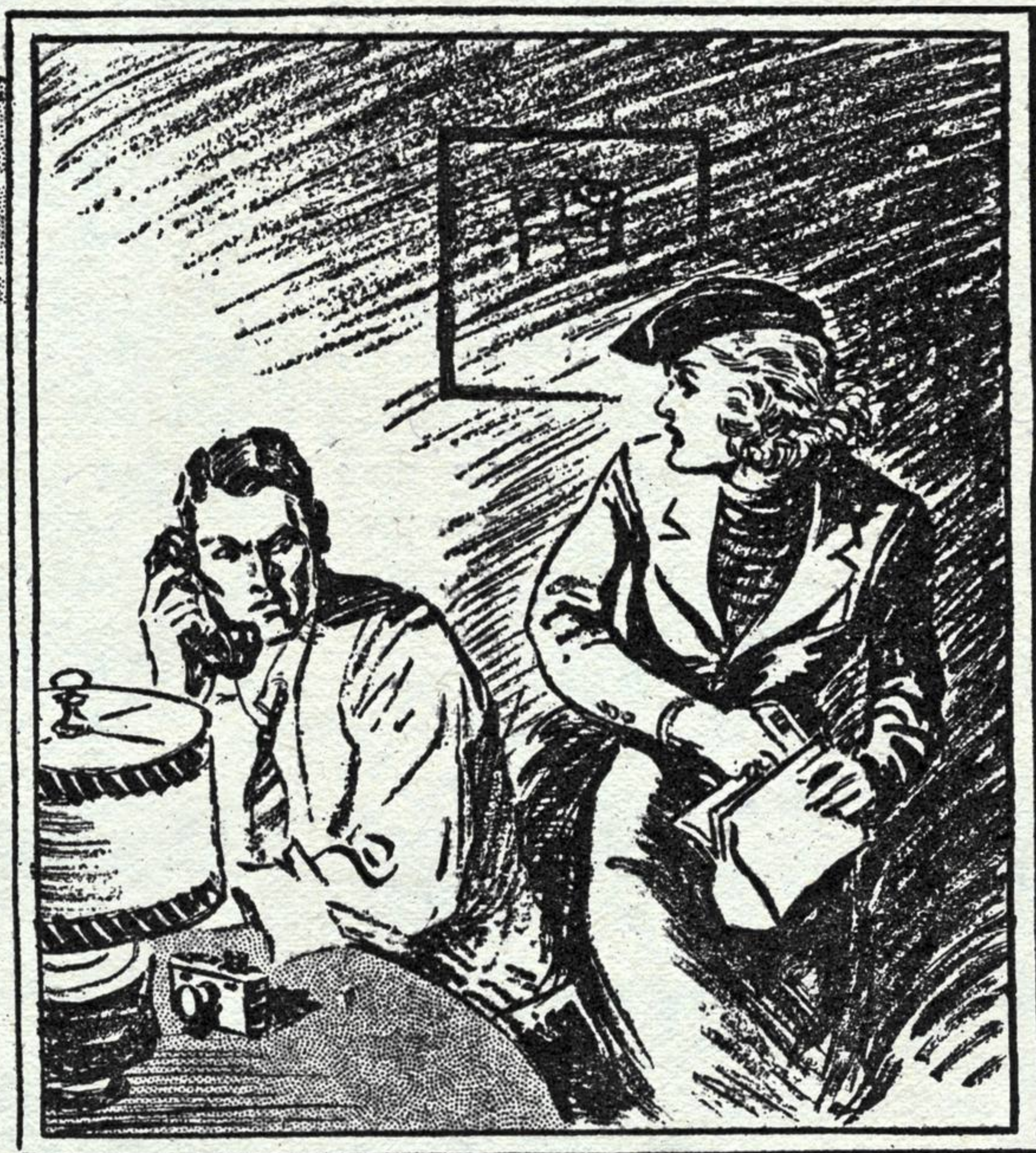
Author of “Die, Hamlet,” etc.

*A banshee is ordinarily a shy creature but
the one that helped Candid Jones break
a murder case even posed for his picture*

f4.5 aperture, I’m getting this kid and
candle in detail. They’re doing wonder-
ful stuff in speeding up the films these
days. With this new one there isn’t
much you can’t get. Even a forty watt
bulb will give you enough light for a
shot. It makes a fine medium for
photo-evidence.”

“Yeah,” Rentano said absently. I
could see he had something on his
mind. “You going to be long, Candid?”

“I’m finished now,” I said. “Sit it
in a chair and I’ll be right with you.”



I saw her taking the gun from her handbag

He sat down. I paid off the kid and turned up the lights. The kid left. I put the film cartridge in the dark room and then I came out and lighted a cigarette and sat down. "Well, friend?"

"Where you been, Candid?" Rentano said. "I haven't seen you in a long time. Aren't you working for the *Chronicle* anymore? Kate was asking for you. She swore you were sore at me or something because you hadn't been around."

"I quit the *Chronicle*," I said. "Too much of a sameness. I was getting rich without working. I'm on my own again."

"Commercial stuff?"

"That's right." I stared at him. "Harry, you're getting fat and you're getting gray. I can see silver threads among the gold. And what in hell is on your mind? You look worried."

"I'm not worried," he said. "It's just a guy. He came in the office today

and he gave me a song and dance. I thought he was a little goofy at first when he told me the thing, but then he said he could prove it with a picture he'd taken. It developed he was a candid camera addict. So he went home and brought back the picture, and it did give me kind of a turn. Only, I had to tell him that the Homicide Bureau couldn't do anything for him, and as a matter of fact, he didn't want the police department, what he needed was a spiritualist—"

"Wait a minute," I said, sighing. "You're going on like an old biddy with a choice piece of gossip but you're not getting anywhere. I haven't got the slightest idea of what you're talking about."

RENTANO sighed too. He squeezed his bulk down into a chair and rubbed his forehead. "Hell . . ." he breathed, "you can't blame me. It's a screwy setup if you

ever heard one. So I'll begin at the beginning. In the first place, Candid, what is a banshee?"

I grinned. "Banshee? A banshee is an Irish ghost . . . But you're not in character, Harry. You're Italian. You wouldn't use banshee. That is reserved strictly for Irishmen like myself."

He looked at me, smiling faintly.

I said, "That's a fact. Italians are more emotional. They'd call it—let's see—they'd call it a dread spirit or a black soul. The French, well, romantic bunch they are. They'd say it was an ominous vision. The Englishman calls it a ghost. The back-country farmer in America calls it a h'ant, and between you and me, it's a spook. Take it up from there."

"Do you believe in ghosts, Candid?"

"I'll answer that by saying I don't disbelieve in anything until it's proven otherwise. Is this a spook case?"

"It's a trifle more than that," said Rentano. "This guy today, his name was Leroy Adams. He was a fresh young kid, about twenty-five years old, carrying one of those Argus cameras. He said there was a banshee loose and that it was his missing sister's spook out for revenge."

"That's a habit banshees have," I said. "They're revenging spirits. They exist for revenge. In the old country, the legend is that a banshee will come back from the dead when a dead man has been wronged. And the banshee will right the wrong and then disappear."

"Then this is a banshee," Harry Rentano replied, frowning. "The kid went on about it. His old man was being haunted by this damned thing and the kid said his sister had been missing and that they thought she was probably dead and that this thing was her shade. But they only saw it once

this night . . . I dunno. I told him it sounded like so much malarkey to me, so he went home to get the picture he had taken of it."

"Now take it easy, Harry," I grinned. "You're not going to tell me he brought back a photo of the spook?"

"He did that little thing. This afternoon. I thought maybe it was one of your gags, but it wasn't. I told him I'd like to keep the photo for a couple of days and that I'd try to help him out."

"All right, but you still haven't told me anything. Where does the banshee hang out?"

Rentano took a deep breath. "In the Aquarium no less."

"The Aquarium? You mean at Battery Park? The fish house?"

"There's only one Aquarium," Rentano said with sarcasm. "Why be surprised? We've had murders in zoos, on ferry-boats, just about every human place in this city. So why not a banshee in the Aquarium?"

I laughed. "It just seems funny. A ghost down there among a lot of fish. And what has LeRoy Adams to do with the Aquarium?"

"His father—the old man's name is Harry Adams—is night watchman at the place. He takes charge when they close it up and he sticks around all night. Gloomy sort of job."

"I can imagine," I said. "Probably plays three-handed rummy with a penguin and a shark. Where do I come in, Harry?"

"I figured you might help me out. You're one of those cynical cusses who aren't bothered by ghosts. I wondered if you'd spend a night down there with me."

"Oh, hell, Harry," I said, "it's all a phoney. Either they're really pulling your leg, or else some one has had in-

digestion at the wrong time. Don't waste a night in the spot. Forget it."

"That's what I thought," Rentano said. "That's the way I felt about the whole thing. But the kid came back and brought me the photograph. And then I began to take stock in it."

"Let's see the photo," I said. "It's probably a faked double-exposure."

HE HANDED me the shot which he took out of a manila envelope. It was an eight by ten on glossy and the enlarging job was sloppy. But that didn't change the picture any. I looked at it and felt a cold line of prickles march down my spine.

"Faked?" Rentano asked quietly.

I didn't answer. I looked at it closely. It was a flashlight shot. If you'd ever been inside the Aquarium, the setup would have been familiar. The print took in nearly all of the penguin pool on the south side of the building. It was shot from above, the second floor balcony no doubt. You could see the penguins all crowded against one side of the pool, heads all turned to stare at something. Penguins don't pose for shots in the dark. That made it pretty real. On the other side of the pool was the banshee. It came up out of bubbling water, the same water in which the penguins stood. You could see the frothy bubbles easily. And up from that came this white-bodied wraith.

The wraith was real. It was real because it had turned whiter from the quick glare of the flash bulb which got the scene. Any attempt at double-printing would have shown this defect. The whiteness of a flash bulb gives a pallid, overbright light to the subjects it hits. The penguins showed the brightness. The wraith showed it too.

You had the feeling that the wraith

would have been gray ordinarily. But for all of that, the banshee was a work of art.

It was as ghostly as any spook you've ever dreamed about. It wasn't one of those things in a white sheet that goes around clinking chains and knocking on wood for spiritualists. This was ectoplasm, a shimmying welt of white stuff which slithered up out of the bubbling water of the penguin pool to form a figure, utterly transparent (you could see the albacore tank on the far wall beyond it right through its middle) yet with a curious breadth of body which was disturbing. It narrowed into nothing at its foot and spread into a pair of shoulders at its top. There was no head. The head dissipated into thin black air. There were two arms, distorted and baroque things, misshapen and deformed and pretty horrible, with jagged ends and no break at any elbow. The thing had the damnable appearance of a bride without a head. It was a nasty bit and I couldn't repress a slight shiver which ran through me.

"Faked?" Rentano asked again, more firmly.

And this time I answered tersely, "The McCoy."

"What is it?"

"Don't ask me. Let's find out."

"You mean you *will* spend the night down there with me?"

"I will." I got my Leica G out and swung it around me in its case, and then I took a carton of flash bulbs too. And I didn't forget to bring my Luger pistol, fully loaded.

But we drew a blank. No banshee showed up that night. And Harry Adams didn't show up either. Another keeper named George Billings had taken his place. "Adams has the day trick for this week," Billings said.

"We alternate each week. He'll be here in the morning."

We were tired and disappointed when the night was through. We didn't wait to see Adams when he arrived. We were disgusted. And by the following afternoon, we saw that Billings had talked to some Park Row reporter and the whole story—written with biting humor—was in the evening papers. After that, Harry and I dropped the whole thing because we felt like a pair of damned fools and undoubtedly had been. We were to find out later that Billings had been very smart indeed.

ON FRIDAY night, the following week, I had a telephone call. I was out at the time, but Claire Crosman happened to be at the studio waiting for me and a dinner date and she took the message. Claire Crosman is a model from the Frazer Agency and outside of being my favorite model, she's about my favorite girl-friend too. So when I came in—I'd been taking a folio of shots of the opening of the new midtown tunnel for one of the picture mags—she gave it to me.

"Jimmy LaSalle wants you to get in touch with him right away," Claire said.

I said, "What are you doing here?"

"Dinner, my frozen-faced Adonis," she replied tartly. "If you're not genteel enough to ask me, I just pursue. I haven't seen you in so long, I can't remember whether or not I used to work for you. Has business been bad, darling?"

"I've been shooting still-lives," I snapped. "I could have used you at that."

"Don't be fresh," she said. "And you'd better call Jimmy back."

I looked dumb.

"Which Jimmy is this?"

"Jimmy LaSalle. The Silver Slipper Club."

I tweaked her nose once and sat down and picked up the hand-set. I called the Silver Slipper and asked for Jimmy LaSalle and he came on quickly after I told the other end that Candid Jones was calling.

"Hello, Irish," LaSalle said right off. "Busy tonight?"

"No," I said.

"How'd you like a piece of free dining and dancing?"

I told him I'd like it fine but what was the hooker?

"That'll come instead of a check," he said. "Drop in later then. I've got a job for you."

I didn't have to persuade Claire to join me, and ten P.M. found us at the Silver Slipper, eating a hearty dinner and taking in the miniature floor show. It was a clever show and I liked it. We were in the middle of it when some one else joined our table in the dark and I looked up and Jimmy LaSalle was smiling at me.

I said hello.

"Never mind the sweet amenities, Candid," he said, still smiling. "I have a feeling that some one is spotting us, low lights or not, so just look amused as though we were chatting."

"Consider me looking amused," I said, smiling. "What's on your mind, James?"

"One of my girls it missing," he said. "Will you find her for me?"

"What's her name?"

"Doris Appleton," he said. "There'll be a picture of her in your coat when you leave. I'm playing safe on this."

"Why?"

"I liked the dame, Candid. She's a cute kid. But I think she might have stuck her nose into something and that's why we may be spotted. It was

known around here I liked the kid and whoever has got her will want to be careful."

"Girls go back to the farm sometimes," I said.

"Maybe so. Maybe in this case. But maybe not. Do me the favor and prow around a little, eh?"

"Why don't you call Rentano?"

LaSalle said, "I don't want cops all over the place, kid. And between you and me, I've got more faith in you than the missing persons bureau. How about it?"

"I'll look around," I said. "Any ideas?"

"She was running around with a kid," he said. "I don't even know his name. And she was getting a rush from Conch Merrill. That's why the precautions. He's over at another table with one of his boys. He's watching me. Check him, eh?"

"I'll check him," I said. "You take it easy. If you hear from the dame, let me know."

"I'll do that," he said. "Watch your carcass."

"A little detail I never overlook," I said. And he left.

II

RENTANO called me up next day and asked me to come down which I did. He was in his office when I got there, and we both had cigarettes before he opened up. "This is the banshee case again," he said.

"Nix," I said. "Did you see what we got in the papers from that last shot at it?"

"I know, I know," he said. "But you said yourself that the photo was on the level and the darn thing has been bothering me. I suspected Leroy Adams, the kid, and I put a tail on him, but nothing came of it. Then I

put a tail on Harry Adams, his old man. That's the keeper at the Aquarium."

"Did you find anything?"

"What I found is screwy enough." Rentano frowned. "The old geezer has been visiting the Morgue every day this week."

I didn't say anything for a moment.

"He goes in," said Harry Rentano, "and looks around. The first day he took a look at every woman stiff in the place. Since then he just asks if there are any new ones and then he ganders them. He doesn't bother with the male corpses. Murphy—at the Morgue—says the guy gives him the willies. Just goes about it in a plodding sort of way and never finds the one he wants and goes away again until next day."

"I'll say this," I replied. "We certainly have some lulus in our eight million inhabitants."

Rentano said, "What's he looking for, Candid?"

"I don't know, Harry. Any more of the banshee?"

"I talked with Leroy Adams, his son, and he says no. But—"

"Just that once then," I said. "That banshee haunted the Aquarium and those unsuspecting penguins just that one night when Leroy Adams took the picture, eh?"

"Just that one."

"Well, that gives me a hunch," I said. "But it'll have to wait."

I WAS dozing in a chair at the studio that night when hell broke loose and the ball began to roll at last. A bunch of incidents can only keep piling up so long and then the break comes and you start to untangle the mess, sometimes without much trouble either. I was sitting there, half asleep

and trying to come out of the inertia and get undressed for bed when there was a racket of a pounding on my door and a woman crying sharply for me to let her in.

I jumped to my feet and opened the door and she flew in with the wind and cried, "Lock it! Lock it!" So I locked it.

She was pretty and she was pale. Her breath was coming short and hard as she panted and she looked terrified. She had a startling figure and you could see it because she had a tight suit on and a sweater that was too small for her. She stared wildly, her eyes were watery. But she was pretty. She was very pretty.

"I called Jimmy LaSalle," she breathed huskily. "He said to come up here. He said you'd protect me. He said you wouldn't let them take me back."

I said, taking a guess in the dark, "So you're Doris Appleton."

"Yes."

"You got away?"

"They left me with Hymie. He fell asleep. I got past him and ran. He woke up and came after me. I think he's followed me here!"

"Who's Hymie?"

"I don't know his last name. I don't know any of them. I overheard them talking about something at the Silver Slipper one night last week. Something about a snatch. They'd stolen some boy and they were hiding him and waiting for his parents to pay off. They caught me overhearing them and they were going to kill me—"

"And what now?" I said. "You want me to go along with you to this spot where they're keeping the boy? You think we ought to rescue him? . . . Where is the place?"

"It's up in Westchester," she replied

quickly. "I don't know the address but I can find the house. I know I can find the house. I heard them describe it. It's in Mamaroneck on Wilder Lane or Wildwood Lane or something like that."

"All right," I said. "Just a second." I went to the telephone and called the Silver Slipper number and Jimmy LaSalle answered it immediately. I asked, "Jimmy, did Doris Appleton give you a buzz a few minutes ago?"

"Are you nuts?" he said. "I haven't heard a word."

"Thanks," I said. "I was wondering whether or not you'd given me the wrong picture. You'll hear from me." And I hung up.

I was staring at her the entire time and I saw her take the little gun out of her bag and level it at me while I was still talking. So I moved slowly because it's not smart to move fast when some one else has the gun. I said, "You see, lady? You're a phoney. Jimmy LaSalle says you never called him and the gag is out the window."

"You're smart," she said. "They told me you were going to be smart. They said you were hard to fool."

"Oh hell," I said, "I'm easy enough to fool. You're just a lousy actress."

"Don't move," she snapped as I started to get up. "Don't move from that chair."

"Why not?" I said. "The gag is floppo, so you can beat it back to the boys who sent you. What was the idea? Not to bump me off. No sense to that, I'm not even up on the business. Did you want me aside until the little plot was finished and cleaned up? Afraid I know too much?"

"All right," she said. "They say you're a tough baby. You don't have to lay it on. You're afraid of this gun and you're not kidding me."

"I'm not half as much afraid of it as you are," I said evenly, half-closing my eyes and staring at her intently. She was nervous and she knew it. "You see, lady, you never killed anyone in your life. And I think maybe you know that I've knocked off seven rats in my day. It takes a lot of nerve to shoot a man. You haven't got that nerve."

"Try me!" she blustered. "Try me and see!"

"Sure," I said. "I think I will."

She looked scared then, and she started to back up a little toward the door, and I got out of the chair and followed her quickly and without too much motion until I got close to her. "Stand back! You're crowding me!" she cried. "I'll shoot! I swear I'll shoot!"

AND then the telephone rang and it was a nice break. It damned near made her jump out of her skin. She jerked around and I lifted the rod out of her hand and slapped her once hard just to teach her to let guns alone.

She burst out in a fit of terror-stricken tears and fell into a chair while I answered the telephone. It was Harry Rentano. "Candid," he said, "can you hit the road?"

"What's happened?" I said tensely, because his voice was all raspy and I could tell he'd been shaken.

"A hell of a thing," he said. "Just a hell of a thing. It looks like we were really taken, boy. Somebody took us and took us right. Two guys just knocked off old man Adams at the Aquarium."

"Adams?" I said. "The watchman? Harry Adams?"

"They got to him," Rentano said. "They put two slugs in his chest and he died fast, Candid. He's dead now.

Can you meet me there right away?"

"You go ahead," I said. "If I can come I'll be there."

"That banshee thing," Rentano said. "What did that have to do with it? It's going to come up. The kid won't keep his mouth shut. He'll sell that photo to the rags and they'll make hay with it. How does that damned banshee tie in?"

"You go down," I said. "You look it over."

"It's all phoney," he said. "Somebody tried to drag me out into the sticks with a phoney case call. I checked with a different precinct and let them do it and they said there was no case at all. Somebody tried to get me occupied while they knocked off Adams."

"You and me both, Harry," I said. "But never mind that now. You go down there and find out. Did they get the guys?"

"They lammed. A cop wounded one of them. I'll tell you later."

"Right," I said, and I hung up.

The girl was staring at me now and she was white with fright. I put on my coat and hat and got my camera and my Luger. I turned a baby spot on her and took a quick candid of her just to have a shot in case I lost her and in case she turned out to be smarter than me. I took it so fast, she didn't know it was coming and she forgot to hide her face. I slipped her gun away then and turned down the spot and I snapped, "What's your name, baby?"

"Guess it," she said hollowly.

"I'll let the D.A. do that," I said. "It's murder now. You get what I mean. Your friends knocked off the watchman of the Aquarium and it's murder. First degree murder and you're an accomplice before the fact. Will you talk?"

"No," she said. "It's a lie and I don't know anything about it."

"All right then," I said, "let's go find Conch Merrill and his boys and we shall see what we shall see."

"You fool," she cried, "they'll—" and she stopped.

"Kill me?" I said. I shook my head and grinned. "Lady, a lot of people have tried that little trick and here I am all nice and alive. Let's blow, and keep your hair out your eyes or you'll take one in the back yourself. Sometime remind me to show you a picture of what a Luger bullet does to a man when it hits him."

"Stop it!"

She shivered violently and I thought she was going to faint but she got a grip on herself and we faded.

I DIDN'T try to cover us up because I wanted to be followed. I knew we were going to be followed. That much was a cinch. Conch Merrill wasn't going to take a chance on a girl like this. He'd send her to put the act on for me, to try and make me follow the good old red herring. But Conch Merrill wouldn't trust a dame like this to keep silent under pressure. I hadn't been an insurance flatfoot for thirteen years for nothing. Merrill had sent a guy with this girl to check up on her and give her an out. Whoever the guy was, he'd follow along.

I shoved the girl in a cab and climbed in myself and said loudly, "Just drive!" and we moved off. Then I watched out of the rear window discreetly. Sure enough. A car down the block turned over its motor, brought up its headlights and came after us, tagging all the way.

We rode for ten minutes and then I stopped at a drug store to make a phone call. I took it easy, told the dame

not to try and lam or I'd shoot. And then I went in.

I didn't make any phone call. I went in one door and out another around the corners like a flash. I circled back just in time to see the plug-ugly in the black car pull up alongside the cab. The girl got out quickly and jumped into his car. It was risky, but it was what I'd wanted. I hopped another cab, told him to tail them, and we moved off leaving my first driver at the store, waiting for me.

They felt pretty sure of themselves because they didn't waste any time but went uptown to East 76th Street and pulled up in front of a modern apartment house and parked. Another hering. They didn't go into the apartment house but up the steps of the brownstone next to it. They disappeared in the front door.

I paid off and watched the face of the house for lights. There were lights on the second and third floors. I figured this way. If the lights came on the first floor right away, there was the hideout. If they didn't, then the hideout was one of the other two floors, which narrowed it down somewhat, and the fact that the lights were already on meant that other confederates were already there.

As I watched, the third floor lights went off. I liked that. I lay back in the shadows and kept a hard eye on the windows. A curtain moved suddenly and a white face peered around the side of it and swept the street, then disappeared.

That was it all right. They felt they were home safe and now they were watching for cops to see if they had been followed.

When I could, I got away from there and telephoned Centre Street. I got hold of Detective Claghorn and

told him to take Babcock and come up here and watch this house. I gave him a description of the guy and the gal and advised arrests if they tried to lam.

Then I left and took a subway down to the Battery.

POOOR Harry Rentano was having his troubles. There was honest sweat on his face and there was fatigue and the sand of two A.M. in his eyes, and he looked completely harassed. The lights in the Aquarium were all on when I arrived, and there were plenty of cops around the spot. It was a strange sight inside, the M.E. examining a corpse in a room surrounded by fish in dully-lighted tanks, beside a pool where the little penguins, all decked out in natural full dress, crowded to one edge of their pool to satisfy their innate curiosity and see what was going on.

The dead man had two holes in his chest but neither of them was over the heart and it looked like he might have lived long enough to talk. Rentano introduced me to the dead man's son, LeRoy Adams. He was an ordinary kid and he had a cheap camera around his neck but he wasn't taking pictures with it. His face was pasty from dismay and regret.

"Have you got a lead on the thing?" I asked Harry.

He nodded. "This guy, Adams, was on duty tonight. He was up in the balcony by the office there when he heard a noise downstairs and he came out. He looked down and he saw two men by the penguin pool. He pulled out his rod and yelled at them, and they let him have it without taking any time. He fell down here from the balcony . . . It happened that the cop on the beat—where are you, Kennedy?"

"Right here, sir," Kennedy said. Kennedy was a big, two-hundred-pound patrolman.

"Kennedy heard the shots," Rentano continued, "and came loping in. He said the two killers were still by the penguin pool. He threw down on them and they had a little gun fight—how's your arm?"

Kennedy said his arm was all right. He'd been wounded.

"And they got away?" I said.

"They got away."

"I shot one," Kennedy said. "I hit him high in the right shoulder. He was cussing all the time he ran. I'd have killed both of them but they got me in my gun arm and I had to drop the rod. But I saw the both of them."

Rentano nodded. "Dragnet out for them now. Good description of them, Candid. I think we'll nick 'em."

"Let's take a look at the penguin pool," I said.

"I looked," said Rentano. "Nothing but water and sand and some rocks."

"We'll look again. Come on, Adams. I want your help too."

We went over to the penguin pool and I said to Adams, "You took the photo of the banshee that night. Exactly where did you see it?"

Adams leaned over the railing and pointed. "Right there. The water was bubbling and it came right out of the bubbles. It was a rotten thing to look at. It really scared us."

"Is it all right if we share the pool with the penguins for a minute?"

Adams looked at me and frowned. "Get in it, you mean?"

"There's a pair of boots," Rentano said. "Right over by the entrance. You can use those."

"All right," I said.

I got the boots and put them on. And then I climbed into the tank. The

water only came up half way between my thigh and hip. The penguins didn't mind me at all. Most of them went over to the other side of the pool, but one curious little guy stayed right with me, almost at my knee, to see what he could see.

Rentano got me a hook and I began to fish with it. It was something like a boat-hook but not as long a pole. Adams pointed out the spot. I shoved it down under the rocks and for a long time I didn't feel anything. Then Rentano shot the spot of his flashlight down into the water. I told him to put the glass end just under, which he did, and it illumined the whole half of the tank and I saw what I was looking for and our troubles were over.

I fished down and brought up the brief case. It was a black leather thing and it was soaking wet, of course. I handed it to Harry and I stepped out of the tank. I said, "Here's your ban-shee and a whole lot more. Open up, Harry, and see what it is."

He opened it up and we dumped the contents out. There was an oblong package wrapped in watertight oilskins. These proved to be a wad of securities, negotiable securities at that, valued at sixty-five thousand dollars. The rest of the brief case disclosed a bag in which was a small carton which had soaked itself wide open. It had held ice cream which was gone now.

"I'll be damned," said Rentano. "Ice cream and mazuma. If that doesn't beat hell."

"We don't want any more than that," I said. "Let's go get them now."

"Fine," said Harry. "But where are they?"

"That," I said, "you will see within fifteen minutes. And just keep remembering, Harry, that one of your descriptions fits a guy named George

Billings who alternates here with Harry Adams as watchman. Check? We're sliding into home plate and you don't even know it. Let's blow. You and I. We won't need more. Claghorn and Babcock are already there."

III

"I THINK they're fixing to blow," Detective Claghorn told us a few minutes later when we arrived. "Some activity up there, the lights came back on, they keep peering out now and then. Their wind is up. I know they haven't seen us but they're getting scared. What is it?"

"Banditry and murder," I said. "Do you know how many?"

"Seems like there's three different men," Claghorn said. "I didn't see the woman you spoke of."

"What the hell is this?" Rentano asked.

"Harry," I said, "get a load of this: Conch Merrill and a sidekick have worked hand in glove with George Billings on this one. I don't know the machinations but we'll find that out. Harry Adams was knocked off only because he interrupted two of them when they were trying to recover the loot where they had hidden it. A gal named Doris Appleton, who works for Jimmy LaSalle, had been snatched by Merrill and is kept in hiding because she overheard something she wasn't supposed to. She may be dead but I don't think so. I think they'll plan to kill her now though, because it's more than robbery they have to elude. It's murder. She's in that house."

"Watch it," said Claghorn. "They've got one guy—an ugly cuss—guarding in the vestibule there."

"He's the guy who followed me," I said, and explained.

Rentano looked stumped. "We can't

storm that hole, Candid. We're liable to get shot up, but more than that, *they're* liable to get panicky and kill Doris Appleton."

"Give me a police whistle," I said. He handed me one.

"What now?"

"I'm going in the back way," I said. "There's a fire escape the back way. I'll go up and try and find that girl first. When I do, or if I get caught, I'll blow on this whistle and then you take them. Right?"

"It sounds dangerous," Rentano said.

"Sure," I said. "Sure. It is dangerous. What the hell else can we do?"

"Okay," he said. "Let's take them."

I LEFT them, kept close to the apartment house wall and then went in the apartment house itself. I told the doorman where to head in, then went into the cellar and out into the back. I found the yard of the brownstone and got into it over a fence. I guessed right. There were fire escapes in the rear and easy to reach. I took a long look to make sure no one was sitting at the top with a rod all ready to go, and then I started climbing.

I went up as quiet as a mouse and I realized I was sweating and had a tight feeling in my stomach. It's like that. It always will be like that. If you're human, you never will get used to the idea that in a few minutes you're going to come face to face with a guy and a gun. You know that guy is out for your life and you know how quick a slug can stop that life. It's you or he, and you know it. It makes your gun hand go damp and grip the Luger tight as a drum.

I found Doris Appleton easily.

She was in the back room and it opened right onto the fire escape. She

was on a bed, her arms and legs each tied separately to the four corners. She had a two inch piece of adhesive over her mouth.

Her guard was the other dame—the pretty who had tried to red-herring me an hour or so before. She was standing there, looking out the door into the hall. She was plenty nervous. She was holding a big rod, a .45 which one of the guys had given to her and she acted afraid of it.

It was a cinch setup but for one thing. The window was closed. I couldn't open it to get in; she'd blast me sure. I couldn't knock a pane out, or the guys in the front room would hear it.

So I figured the dame with the gun for a rank amateur and I pulled a sandy on her. I took a flower pot off the fire escape and dropped it down into the yard. It made a sucking plop when it hit and it sounded faraway, but she heard it and turned her head to the window. It was the effect I wanted. She thought some one was in the yard below.

She came over and opened the window while I clung to the wall outside. She cautiously eased her head over the sill and peered down, trying to spot the cause of the sound.

I walloped her on the skull with the Luger barrel and she never even grunted. Just fell on the sill there like a baby.

I took the .45 from her and climbed in. There wasn't a sound. Keeping an eye on the door, I went to the bed and stripped the tape from Doris Appleton's mouth and said, "Quiet! Police!"

She couldn't talk, she was so damned glad to see me.

I got out a knife and cut her ropes and told her to hug the wall in a close-hauled corner out of line of fire from

the door. She just made it. She got in the corner and I'd turned around to make a little forage when George Billings walked in.

I'll say this: he was more surprised than I was. He stood there in the doorway and his mouth fell down on his chest. He had his left arm in a sling that also bound up his shoulder. In his right hand, he held a Colt .38 pistol. His eyes, watery and huge, nearly popped out of their sockets. He went white.

Finally he found his voice, a shrill tinny scream of warning which buzzed in my ears as he called, "*Conch!*"

He threw his gun on me instinctively and I didn't take any chances but let him have a bullet in the belly. He looked surprised when it hit him and he sat down with a bang. His gun went off. He didn't fire it at me, it just went off from the shock and his bullet furrowed the floor. He sat there, dropping the gun and put his good hand over the bullet hole and stared at it stupidly.

I heard a machine gun start to chatter in the front room and I guessed then that Rentano and the others had heard the firing and were breaking in. I was right. The plug-ugly in the downstairs hall was coming up the stairs, crying at the top of his lungs, "Lam, it's the cops, lam!"

I saw him coming up the stairs and I went over and fired four shots down it with the .45 I'd taken from the konked dame, and the plug-ugly looked as shocked as he'd ever looked in his life and turned and hightailed back down those stairs.

But I didn't have time to laugh at the plug-ugly then. I suddenly realized that the machine gun had stopped and I turned around toward the front room and had a quick hunch and ducked to

my knees as a burst of bullets slapped into the wall over my head. There was a lot of smoke and Conch Merrill must have thought he downed me for he dropped the muzzle of the gun and I started firing with both the rods I had in my hands.

I hit him twice, both in the legs and he started screaming with pain and terror and when I reached him he had thrown the machine gun aside and was sitting in the hall, holding his legs.

It was all over but the shouting.

DORIS APPLETON gave us a surprise when we got her down to Headquarters with the living rats. She took one look at LeRoy Adams and threw her arms around his neck and kissed him. Rentano and I were surprised, but LeRoy Adams said, "It's all right, she's my sister."

"Your sister?" I said. "What the hell is this?"

"Her name is Appleton," Rentano said.

"That's just a stage name," said Adams. "Pop didn't want Doris to be a show-girl, so she changed her name. She was working at the Silver Slipper. We thought maybe she was dead. They might have killed her and it was my fault."

"I don't get this," Rentano said.

"She was missing," said Adams. "Remember when I told you? You thought it was all a gag. But I made a mistake. I shouldn't have told you. Pop explained later. He had a letter from Doris saying that she was being held a prisoner and that if he played along and didn't tell the cops, she would be returned okay. I didn't know about the letter and I told you. It just happened you didn't do anything about it. But Pop thought that the guys holding her had found out about me getting

in touch with the cops. He thought they'd kill her."

"Hell!" Rentano said. "That's why he went to the Morgue every day."

"That's right," said Adams. "You're lucky, Sis. You're luckier than Pop was."

She took the old man's death kind of hard.

NEXT day we checked with a larceny squad and sure enough a bank messenger had been held up, slugged, and robbed, and sixty-five thousand dollars worth of securities lifted from him. The thing had happened in Battery Park no less. Right under the nose of the cops.

Then Doris Appleton did a lot of explaining. She'd seen George Billings at the Silver Slipper one night and got suspicious. She followed him, saw him meet Conch Merrill and Feather Thompson (the plug-ugly) and she got an earful of the setup. Billings knew this bank messenger kid. The kid used to eat his lunch at the Aquarium and look at the fish. The kid talked. Billings saw a nice heist of sixty-five grand. He got in touch with Merrill, and they pulled it. They took the stuff, wrapped it in oils, and sunk it in the penguin pool because it was hot and because it was a quick hideout for the stuff, the holdup having taken place only a short ways off. But they'd caught Doris and she'd been held prisoner the whole time. She said they were going to knock her off that night and lam. They were waiting for their nerve. The only trouble was that we got there before their nerve.

We got in touch with the bank messenger then and he gave us his version of the holdup. I asked him what the ice cream was doing in the brief case and he said one of the girls in the

office had asked him to get some for her and he'd stopped on the way and picked it up. He'd had it packed with dry ice to make it last. I began to get the picture.

"But, hell," Harry Rentano said to me later, "this still doesn't explain that Irish ghost—that damned banshee! What was *that*?"

"Listen, you simpleton," I said, "if you'll get two plates, two spoons, and a bucket of water, I'll show you."

I went out and got a quart of chocolate and vanilla and had them dry-ice pack it. Then I came back and opened the thing up. "Are you watching?" I said. He nodded. "Presto—a spook!" And I dropped the dry ice into the bucket of water.

It began to bubble and froth instantly and a thick white smoke curled up from it in as ghostly a shape as you ever saw. Only this time it didn't look horrible because it was taking place in broad daylight and not in semi-darkness, and it was also taking place in police headquarters instead of a gloomy Aquarium, and it was being seen by a cynic instead of a frightened old man.

And this time it turned out to look like a cow instead of a bride.

"Dry ice," I said drily, "and water. Guaranteed to produce one genuine banshee which will even pose for pictures and frighten penguins. The kid just happened to be there right after it was thrown in the pool. Are you satisfied?"

"I'll be horn-swoggled," Rentano said mildly.

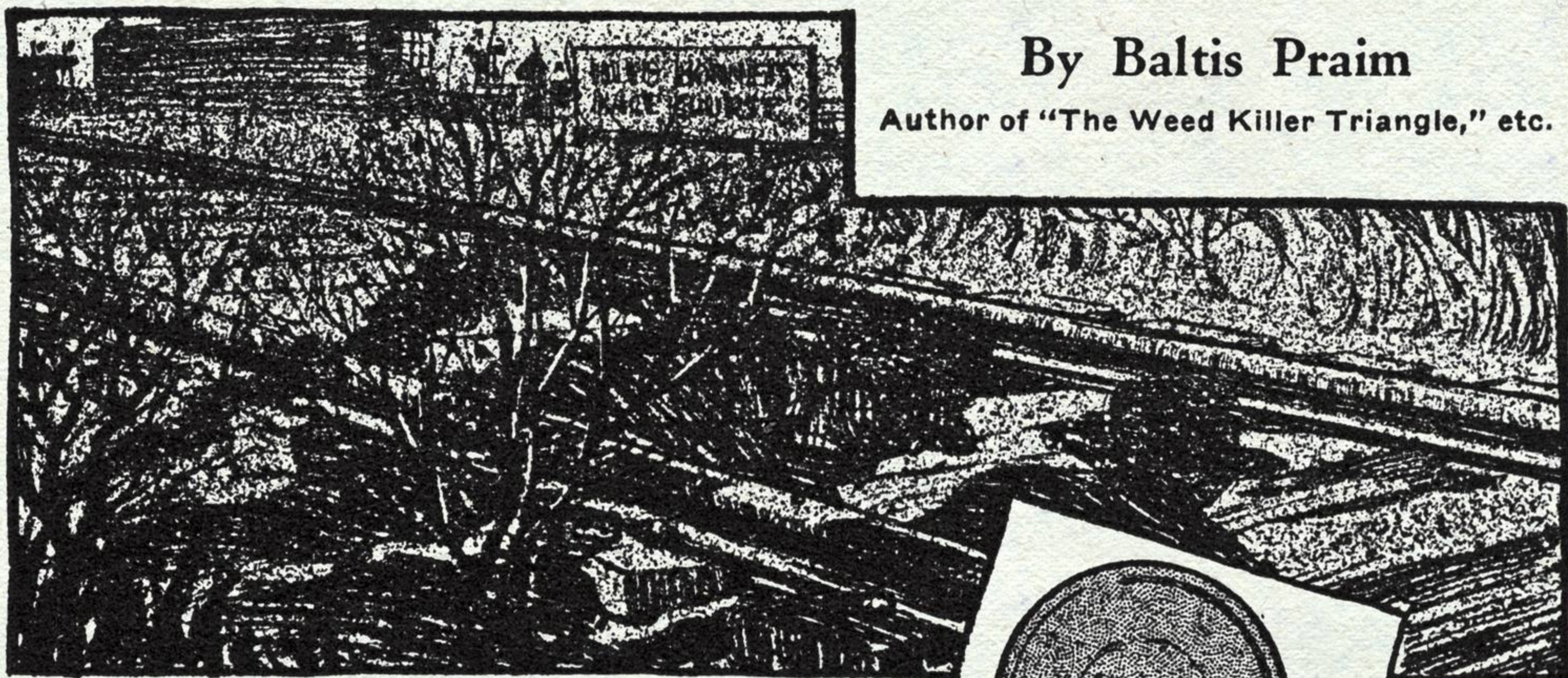
"Will you have chocolate or vanilla?" I asked, dishing out the ice cream.

Rentano said, "Who me?" and he sighed. "All right, all right, Candid. I'll take vanilla."

The Wrong Spur at Blue Bonnets

By Baltis Praim

Author of "The Weed Killer Triangle," etc.



A True Story

He didn't have an enemy in the world yet three people sought his life

"PLEESA don't—pleesa don't kill me—" Beaten to his knees by flailing clubs, the man's dark eyes sought the faces of his assailants, still visible in the fast falling dusk, pleadingly. "Pleesa don't—plees—"

But there was no mercy. Only blows and more blows. A last cry, bitter, despairing. Then silence. Dark figures, poised and watchful for any movement, any sign of life. But there was none.

"It is finished!" The whisper was jubilant. A quick rifling of the victim's pocket. "Here, take the watch. It's worth money. Now to get him away from here. To conceal everything!"

A hundred feet, two hundred, three hundred—panting under the weight of the dead man.

"This—this'll do." Darkness now, all around. "Drop him and let's go!"

Half a dozen steps. Then: "But sup-

pose he's not dead? Only stunned? He might get up and follow us? Or run away? Would we be paid then?"

A muttered curse as the other tripped against a rock.

"Wait!" he snarled, retracing his steps. Then a laugh, bestial, triumphant. "Now he won't get up!" And the murderers fled into the night.

AT NOON the next day, June 29, 1934, a group of police officers stood on the spur of the Canadian National Railway that runs from the main line for three-quarters of a mile to the Blue Bonnets Race Course on the outskirts of Montreal, Canada. Spread-eagled across ties and rusty rails was a stiffened corpse, brutally beaten.

"A vengeance killing from the looks," Assistant Inspector Armand Brodeur of the Montreal police said grimly.

The dead man, who might have been sixty, was short and of husky build, with a laborer's hands. Strangely pitiful, those hands.

Brodeur glanced around him, taking in the quiet country scene, the lush greenery, the inimitable fragrance from sun-warmed strawberry vines.

Two hundred feet away were the buildings of the Blue Bonnets Course, a place of brilliant gaiety in season. But this was between meets. The place was deserted except for the caretaker, who had stumbled upon the body a scant hour earlier.

"Me, I saw no one. I heard no one," he stammered. "Last night, no sound. This morning, all quiet. Me, I die of the loneliness when the horses, the people, all gone. I walk the track. I pray for something to happen. Then—this. Right here on the Blue Bonnets spur."

Coroner Jean-Marie Roussel and Inspector Brodeur, accompanied by a picked staff, were speedily at the scene.

"What's your idea of it, Sergeant?" questioned Brodeur, as Roussel bent over the murdered man. "Ever see him before?"

"Never," said Detective Sergeant Ernest Francouer.

"Here's something strange," said Brodeur suddenly. "Look at those injuries and then at the ground. There's practically no blood."

"No sign of a struggle either, Inspector."

Then, as if hypnotized, both men moved toward a heavy, jagged rock that lay within a few feet of the body.

"Was this the weapon?" Brodeur

asked, aghast. Then, bending closer, he examined the rock.

"Bloodstains and bits of hair," he announced grimly. "Yet I'm sure he wasn't attacked here in the first instance. And if he was carried, that means we have two murderers to seek. Well, Coroner?"

"Smashed skull, cerebral hemorrhage. Rigidity is established—he has been dead twelve to fifteen hours," stated Roussel.

"That gives our murderers a fine head start," said Brodeur.

Francouer made a brief search for possible means of identification. "Nothing," he said at the end of a few moments. "No papers, no wallet, not even a watch."

Gently the body was lifted from its rough resting place and presently was on its way to the Montreal morgue. Brodeur gave his orders crisply, detailing his men for the first move in his search for evidence.

"I want the ground circled with the utmost care," he directed. "Cover it inch by inch. Miss nothing. And question every man, woman and child in the district."

BACK at headquarters, he set the routine machinery of the law in motion.

"I'm not so sure the autopsy is going to tell us much more than we already know," he said, as he ordered Sergeant Francouer to make an exhaustive search of the murdered man's person and clothing.

"Nor," he added, as he asked for police reports of missing persons, "do I expect him to be a man whose absence will be remarked. That would be too good a break."

But, to his amazed relief, he got his break.

"This matches up to our man." He read slowly: "'Nicolas Sarao, Italian, fifty-nine years old. Address 1513 Barre Street. Employed at Westmount Park as a laborer. Missing from his home since last evening. Report made by his son, Antonio Sarao, at nine this morning.'"

He hurried to the room where Francouer was busy at his search.

"Made any progress?"

"Stymied so far," Francouer admitted. "No tailor's labels in a workman's clothes. No laundry marks—washing done at home. No money except this." He indicated some small change. "Wait a minute though. Here's something. Worked through a hole in a pocket. Look!"

A metal identification disk bearing a serial number and the stamp "Westmount Park."

"And a Westmount Park laborer is missing," said Brodeur, heading for the telephone.

"It can't be our Nick Sarao," protested the superintendent at the park. "Our Nick hadn't an enemy in the world."

"I hope it isn't your man then," returned Brodeur, "but I'm afraid there's no doubt of it. And someone had it in for him plenty—and took it all out on him last night."

"We'll be right over," promised the park official.

The dead man was positively identified within the half hour. It was Nicolas Sarao. A man without enemies? That battered corpse?

"Hop over to 1513 Barre Street and break the news to the family," Brodeur directed Francouer. "Then have them confirm the identification."

Rapidly Brodeur flung out the police dragnet. No part of Sarao's life could be passed over.

Every known disturbance of the last weeks, every suspicious character, any possible contact with the criminal world—nothing could be overlooked.

"The time factor is against us," Brodeur conceded. "The murderers may be over the border into the States, or headed for Italy. If it isn't a local affair we'll have a long chase."

And now Brodeur snatched time to make a quick dash out to check up on the detail assigned to the men at Blue Bonnets.

DETECTIVE FELIX PRYSKY hailed him from a point a hundred and fifty feet from the place where the corpse of Sarao was found.

"Here's a path," Prysky explained. "Grassy at first, then—look." There was a rising slope of ground beside the path and from it rains had washed sand in little runways. "You had the right dope about there being two men, Inspector. Here are their tracks."

"Headed towards the spur," Brodeur nodded. "And from the way the sand is marked—see, here and here—it looks as if they were carrying something so heavy it dragged at times."

"There's a trolley line over in this direction, the caretaker says." Prysky led the way beside the path as Detectives Deschamps of the National Detective Agency and Ouimet of Brodeur's staff joined them.

"We've circled carefully but drawn blanks so far," reported Ouimet.

Brodeur, his eyes on the path, gave a sharp whistle.

"There's been a struggle here," he said, pointing.

The grass had been torn and trampled beneath heavy, scuffling feet. There were dark stains, and a few feet away, in the thick grass, lay a splintered wooden club.

"They either killed or stunned him here," said Brodeur slowly. "Threw away the broken club. Then they must have raised him to his feet, supporting him on each side as if he were a drunk. Remember where their footprints were scraped back there?"

"Right you are," agreed Deschamps. "But why in thunder didn't they find a rock nearer by? They could have bashed his head in here just as well."

While Ouimet and Pysky followed the path towards the trolley line, Brodeur and Deschamps inspected the broken club.

"Queer looking bat," observed Deschamps. "Not a chair leg but it's from some piece of furniture."

Approximately two feet in length, the stick was of hard wood, with the lower portion gracefully turned. The heavier upper portion was squared for several inches of its length, then again tapered into turned work. This upper part had been roughly chopped off, shortening the bludgeon.

"I know. It's the leg from a child's crib," announced Brodeur, adding, frowningly, "Nice taste in murder weapons."

Skirting the path they rejoined the others.

"Three sets of tracks here, Inspector," reported Pysky, "but whether they came by trolley or highway is anybody's guess."

Brodeur was intent upon the tracks themselves. "Two men walking side by side, with a third following," he pointed out. "One set of tracks overlies the trail, now on one side and now on the other. Two were shadowed by a third up to the place of attack, where we found the bludgeon. From there two walked on, carrying the third. That's the layout of the murder."

"Which two?" pondered Pysky.

"Until molds are made it's anybody's guess," said Brodeur. "But mine is that one of the killers walked with Nicolas Sarao as a friend. One set of these leading prints is made by a short, wide foot, such as Sarao's. The other is longer, slenderer."

Who, pondered Brodeur, as he sped back to headquarters, had Sarao trusted enough, or for some reason been impelled to meet in that lonely place when the night was falling? And why?

Sergeant Francouer awaited Brodeur's return to make his report on his visit to the Sarao family.

"They're pretty badly broken up," he admitted, "but I brought them all in except the old grandmother, Sarao's mother-in-law. She's sixty-nine, and her name is Giovannina Teolis. Mrs. Sarao is forty-five, first name Tomasina. Nice-looking woman, but some weeper. Wow! Two sons, Antonio, twenty-one, who reported the old man's disappearance, and Carmina, twenty. They're waiting for you. They haven't viewed the body. It wasn't ready."

NEVER had Brodeur seen a sadder, more bewildered group than the bereaved family presented. The wife wept quietly but constantly. The sons were tearless, but deathly pale, with haggard dark eyes.

Mrs. Sarao bravely made an attempt to identify the remains. But with one look she collapsed utterly so that it fell to Antonio to represent the family.

Deeply moved, the youth went through the ordeal. "Yes," his voice came with difficulty, "it is my father."

Instinctively the men watching knew that he had hoped against hope until the last minute. A forlorn hope, but faintly comforting.

In another room Mrs. Sarao, com-

forted by her younger son, Carmina, had regained something of her composure.

Brodeur himself questioned her, mindful of her sorrow. "Had your husband quarreled with anyone? Had he been threatened?"

"No, no," the tears crept unceasingly down her pale cheeks, "he has only friends, my Nick."

"Was he carrying much money?"

"Money?" The woman's hands turned outward in a singularly pathetic gesture. "How could he have money? The wages so little. The food and rent so dear."

Brodeur nodded sympathetically. "Was it payday? Had he his pay envelope with him?"

"Always he brings it to me," was the unhesitating answer.

"Then he carried nothing of value?" Brodeur persisted.

"His gold watch," the woman answered. "May I have it, please?"

Brodeur found himself momentarily staggered. This brutal killing, bad enough if actuated by hatred or vengeance, seemed incredible if only the theft of a watch were its motive.

He explained that the murderers must have carried off the watch, adding, "We will keep a sharp lookout for it. It may lead us to them." But Tomasina Sarao seemed scarcely to have heard.

Brodeur now asked the question he had put off as almost certain to send the widow into renewed hysterics. "When did you last see your husband alive?"

"It was last night, after supper, when we took a walk together," Mrs. Sarao spoke calmly, though her tears still flowed. "We went as far as the barber's on Canning Street. Nick went inside. I waited."

"Then?" prompted Brodeur.

"He came out and we walked along Notre Dame Street to Atwater Avenue. Then he said for me to wait again and he went down a side street. Levis, I think. He was so long in coming I started to walk home, slowly, so he would catch up with me."

Brodeur remained silent.

"But he did not come," Mrs. Sarao went on. "He has not yet come—he will never come! What will become of us?"

She relapsed into wild, convulsive weeping and Brodeur forbore questioning her further.

"Carmina and I will work for you," comforted Antonio Sarao.

"Father was good," Carmina added softly. "He will be happy. And we can give him the beautiful funeral, with many roses, such as he loved so much."

The beautiful funeral. Pity and respect mingled in Brodeur's eyes. Always, with these people, the few cents to safeguard burial expenses were paid to the insurance agent faithfully each week.

"Was he insured?" Brodeur asked the routine question.

"Yes, sir," Antonio answered.

Still weeping, Mrs. Sarao fumbled in her bag and brought out a handful of well-thumbed policies.

Brodeur ran through them, one for each member of the family. Five hundred dollars in all on Sarao. There would be little left after the funeral was paid for, he reflected regretfully.

DISMISSING the Saraos, Brodeur turned to the report on the autopsy brought in by Coroner Roussel. Dr. Pierre Hebert was likewise present, representing the insurance company.

Death had resulted from cerebral hemorrhage. It was agreed that it had taken place between eight and nine o'clock on the evening of June 28.

"Never," stated Coroner Rousset unequivocally, "have I examined a corpse so brutally bludgeoned. Every bone in the victim's head, excepting only the occipital was broken."

Two attacks were proved, the second, incredibly vicious, after death. The victim was neither drunk nor drugged. Possibly two glasses of a light wine had been taken with the last meal, two hours before death. No poison was present except a trace of arsenic, not more than would follow the use of any of several popular medicinal preparations on general sale.

"Well, that's that," said Brodeur, "and we're not a step farther on our way."

Doctor Hebert was on the point of leaving when Brodeur put a careless question. "Pretty small policy to call you out for an autopsy, wasn't it?"

"Six thousand five hundred dollars? Hardly negligible, I'd say," returned the physician.

"What?" exclaimed Brodeur. "Who took out the policy? Who is the beneficiary? Who paid the premiums?"

"I wouldn't know," said Hebert. "I supposed you had the information."

"It won't take long to check it," Brodeur said, turning to the telephone.

Sarao himself had paid the premium. The beneficiary was his wife.

An insurance murder? Involving that madonna-faced woman and those pale, grief-stricken sons? But in that case how explain the bestial fury of the crime?

Eagerly Brodeur turned to receive Francouer's report on his inquiries into Sarao's life. "He was never drunk, never quarrelsome, never a trouble-

maker, and there is nothing to show that he belonged to any secret societies or had any connection with suspicious characters," the sergeant summed up his findings. "If it was vengeance they got the wrong man."

"He was walking with one of his murderers," reminded Brodeur. "That looks as if he knew him."

"Hang it all, he doesn't fit into a murder picture," exploded Francouer.

No sunnier soul had ever lived. At his work his rich tenor voice rang out happily. At home he reached for his concertina as another man might for his pipe. He played for the young folks' dancing, his dark eyes shining.

"Sounds like a bedtime story," said Brodeur sharply. "Don't forget it had a pretty gory ending."

BRODEUR accompanied an insurance official to the Sarao home where Antonio made himself spokesman while Mrs. Sarao sat silent except for an occasional sighing breath such as follows long crying.

"My father won some money in a lottery," Antonio explained, "and he meant to buy a radio. Then, instead, he took out the insurance. My mother showed the policy to our regular collector and he said it was no good."

The widow was weeping again. "Yes, yes," she interrupted, her voice shaking, "that is so."

"Mother wanted father to get his money back, but he thought he couldn't," Antonio went on. "I think myself it was good while it lasted but my father couldn't pay more premiums. They were very costly. Mother put the policy in a drawer instead of with the regular ones. It always made her sad, thinking of the radio, you see."

Mrs. Sarao went quietly to a bureau

and took out some papers. "See?" she handed the policy to Brodeur. "It is no good."

Brodeur handed it to the insurance representative, first separating it from an empty envelope the widow had picked up with it.

"There's nothing wrong with the policy," remarked the insurance man. "And it is still in effect."

Amazement shone in Antonio's face, strengthening Brodeur's instinctive confidence in him. "Do you understand, mamma?" he asked. "Papa was right, after all." But Mrs. Sarao shook her head doubtfully.

"I'll find out who collects on the small policies and see what he says about it," said Brodeur's companion. "Perhaps I can get him by phone. Want to come with me?"

"No, I'll wait here," answered Brodeur. "Come back when you've finished." He turned again to the young Italian. "Were you alone the morning you reported your father's absence to the police, Antonio?"

"No. Leone Gagliardi went with me. He had come to inquire if my father got the gardener's position he was looking for in the country, and he walked along with me."

"What about the gardener's job?"

"My father wanted to work in the country," Antonio explained. "He said that if he could get a gardener's place on an estate, with a little cottage, he could teach Carmina and me the work and we would all be happy. That was why he went out to Blue Bonnets, most likely. For he had talked of a rich man living out there. I think Gagliardi told him about it."

Brodeur jotted down the name and address, 1382 Notre Dame Street, West, on the envelope he still held in his hand.

The insurance man returned.

"I talked with the collector," he reported. "He says he only explained to Mrs. Sarao that it was not a wise investment. That they could not continue paying the premium and then the policy would be worthless."

"You see?" interrupted Mrs. Sarao. "He did say it was no good. Not like the little policies."

BACK at his office Brodeur sent for Gagliardi as one who might perhaps know more of Sarao's errand into the Blue Bonnets district.

Reports were coming in with due regularity. All negative. No pawnshop had received the Sarao watch. No bus driver or motorman had noticed either Sarao or two men who might be suspicious characters on the way out from Montreal that night of June 28. No resident of the country in the neighborhood of the race track had talked with or particularly noticed any strangers. And no rubbish heap or littered back yard had yet been found with the child's crib from which that deadly club had been wrenched.

The movements of the Sarao brothers were accounted for. And Mrs. Sarao's story appeared correct. Sarao had visited the barber to have his hair trimmed. The neighbors had seen them leave together, and several had spoken to the wife when she returned alone.

Leone Gagliardi proved a well-built man of twenty-nine, handsome in a dark, rather sullen fashion. He appeared more pleased than otherwise at being summoned for questioning.

"Do you know why Sarao went to the country that night?" Brodeur asked, without preliminary.

"Why, yes," Gagliardi answered. "More than that, I went part way with him."

"How did that happen?" asked Brodeur.

"Probably the family has told you he wanted work as a gardener?"

Brodeur nodded assent.

"Well, I had heard of a rich man named Hamilton out near Cartierville, who had a large estate and needed a gardener. I told Nick about him," Gagliardi explained, "but he feared it was of no use for him to try for it. He was not sure he could find the place, and he thought the gentleman might not hire him. But when I offered to go with him he was very happy about it all."

"You knew where Hamilton lived then?"

"No, but I was sure I could find it," Gagliardi said easily. "We went by auto-bus and then on the trolley that runs to Cartierville."

Brodeur felt his pulses quicken. This was the closest they had yet come to Sarao's last hours.

"But when we got off it seemed very lonely. We walked a long while before we met anyone to ask the way. Then a man told us it was two miles farther. Nick was discouraged and wanted to go home. Said it was too late to expect anyone to talk about work.

"Then, as we talked, a man came along and to my surprise Nick knew him. He called him Joe. This Joe asked us to his house and Nick wanted to go, but I thought it wasn't such a good idea. So I came back and Nick went with him."

"Was that the last you saw of Sarao?"

"The very last," affirmed Gagliardi.

Brodeur had a curious conviction that the man had rehearsed his story. He was too glib. And, the inspector was convinced, even if the story were

fact Gagliardi had not told all he knew.

"When I got back to town I met a friend, Angelo Donofrio," the man concluded his story. "We went to a movie. I told him where I had been."

Donofrio, Gagliardi answered Brodeur's question without hesitation, lived at 511 Guy Street.

DISMISSING the man, Brodeur turned to find his office in a state of excitement.

"We've got the watch," said Prysky. "It was lodged in the plumbing in the men's lavatory at the Orpheum Theatre."

It was the watch, no doubt about that. Inside the fine gold case was engraved "Nicolas Sarao." But strangely enough it offered no help whatever. The guilty party had slipped in and out of the washroom unobserved.

"Just another blind alley," said Brodeur wearily.

Never had he handled a case in which there were so few leads. Hundreds of statements were being taken by his men. And, as usual, scores of unsolicited tips poured in upon his office. Much of the information honestly meant to be helpful, but was worthless. Some of it only malicious, and just as worthless.

There was a telephone call that eluded tracing. A woman's voice, dripping venom, jeered. "Ask Tomasina how much arsenic she fed poor Nick!" A taunting laugh and a click as the connection was severed.

"The vermin that crawl out at a time like this!" snapped Brodeur. "Arsenic—poison of any kind—that's one thing we know to be out, positively."

But now the Cartierville trolley came again into the picture. A passenger on the nine-thirty car of June 28 had ob-

served two men boarding the car in the neighborhood of Blue Bonnets.

"They were winded, as if they had been running," the passenger related. "They were young men and their clothes were splashed with water as if they'd tried to wash something off."

Brodeur sat tense, thinking hard. Two men boarding a trolley car. The tracks of two men, killers. Gagliardi. Freely admitting he was in the country with Sarao that night. And Donofrio? Was he in the country too, instead of in town?

The police had not yet interviewed Donofrio, who was persistently absent from his lodgings, but his record, as well as that of Gagliardi, had been checked. Neither man tied up to the murder as a possible suspect. Both were poor, but Sarao had no money to make robbery a motive. A vengeance killing was out of the picture.

"Nevertheless," mused Brodeur, "Gagliardi lied. Why?"

That wasn't guesswork. None of the man's statements could be proven. No Mr. Hamilton in need of a gardener. No Hamilton estate near Cartierville. No compatriot of Sarao's named Joe. Nor anyone who had been asked for direction by two men.

Suppose, Brodeur reflected, Gagliardi knew of Sarao's insurance, and realized that the policy was good. Tomasina Sarao was many years younger than her husband, only forty-five and comely in appearance. Had Gagliardi figured that a man of twenty-nine might do worse than marry a rich widow of forty-five, even though he had to make her a widow first?

"It's only a hunch but I'll play it," Brodeur thought grimly. "If he isn't guilty he won't be hurt."

"Bring in Gagliardi, and Donofrio,

too, the minute you find him," he directed crisply. "And search their rooms. If there are any boots lying around be sure you get them."

The molds of the footprints out in the fields were ready. The broader feet were Sarao's, as Brodeur had inferred. But the others?

"Size doesn't mean much," he thought uneasily. "If they had brains enough to dispose of the watch they've probably destroyed everything else that might help us to incriminate them, whoever they are."

GAGLIARDI was speedily located and brought in, but Brodeur decided to keep him waiting. Tips flattened out too dishearteningly in this case. A hunch might prove just as discouraging.

More reports with no actual developments. Then Deschamps, Francouer, Prysky and Ouimet filed silently into the room. Four grimmer men Brodeur had never seen.

"Looks as if you'd broken the case, boys," he said.

"And how!" returned Francouer.

"From Gagliardi's room," said Ouimet, pulling a stained shirt, trousers and tie from his parcel. "Smell 'em. Blood."

"Same here," said Prysky. "This suit was rolled up in the back of Donofrio's wardrobe."

But Brodeur's gaze was fixed upon the last parcel. Francouer unwrapped and held up a wooden cudgel. Stained, but unbroken. The mate of the one found where Sarao was done to death.

"Donofrio is here," the desk telephoned Brodeur.

"On a matter of hanging," Brodeur supplied. "Send Gagliardi in."

He wasted no words as he confronted the man.

"We have you dead to rights," he told him. "We know you killed Sarao. Come clean. Why did you do it?"

Beads of sweat stood on Gagliardi's face. His hands clenched and unclenched spasmodically.

"I was there," he gasped, "but I didn't kill him. It was Donofrio. Donofrio, I tell you!"

"We have both clubs," Brodeur's voice was cold.

"Donofrio broke one and pulled another out of his pants leg. It is the truth."

"Take him away!" said Brodeur. "Bring in Donofrio."

Donofrio, too, protested his innocence. "I took the clubs to Gagliardi. I carried them while he went ahead with Sarao. But I did not harm the man."

The youth—he was nineteen and a university student—was wild-eyed and staring, obviously terrified.

"That Gagliardi is a fiend," he shuddered. "See, here is where his club hit my hand when I tried to save Sarao."

"How much were you paid?" asked Brodeur quietly.

Anger blazed in Donofrio's eyes. "Five dollars. And he promised me six hundred."

"Where was he to get it?"

"I do not know," Donofrio shrugged. "He asked me if I wanted to make some money. I laughed. I said, 'For money I am ready for anything!' But I did not think it would be—that."

Brodeur returned to Gagliardi, first sending for Mrs. Sarao and her sons. "We may need them," he said.

"How were you expecting to get your rakeoff on Nick Sarao's insurance?" he shot at Gagliardi.

The man gaped at him stupidly so

that for a moment Brodeur thought that he was on a wrong scent. That this shaking creature might after all be the tool of others in some still undiscovered plot. Then Gagliardi's face became livid. His eyes blazed with desperate rage.

"So!" he shouted. "So. That Tomasina. She betrays me. Always she wants to keep her hands clean. Always she will pay. Me. The lawyers. Everything. Only I must keep silent. But I will not keep silent. Not when she betrays me. It was her plot. So that she could get the insurance."

Brodeur knew the man for a liar. A crude, brutal murderer. And he was fighting for his life with every weapon he had. His lying tongue was his one hope. Nevertheless, there was a force about the outbreak that almost compelled belief.

"She offered me a little, then more and more. She paid a woman to poison Nick but the woman failed her. Then she said she would give me three thousand dollars. Ask her. Ask her!"

The inspector recalled the tragic face of Mrs. Sarao. Her convincing tears.

"If she is acting it is the best I'll ever see," he thought glumly.

Prysky hurried in.

"Hold everything," he said urgently. "The Teolis blew the works."

Sarao's mother-in-law, Mrs. Teolis, wept when Tomasina was taken again to police headquarters, and detained Prysky.

"Why do you come here?" she demanded. "It is Gagliardi you want. He is a cheat. He took twenty-five dollars Tomasina had me pay him to get Nick a job when our Nick was already dead. Friday morning!"

"Well," said Brodeur, "that settles the noose around Tomasina's neck.

And this ties it—though I couldn't read its meaning before."

A row of clumsily made figures, the sum of which was twenty-five, set down apparently at different times on the envelope Brodeur had brought from the Sarao home.

"No money for Sarao's pocket, but she could save up twenty-five dollars toward having him killed," he said bitterly.

THE trial opened in the Court of the King's Bench, Montreal, on October 3, 1934—a joint trial in which the three defendants, Tomasina Sarao, Leone Gagliardi and Angelo Donofrio faced judge and jury.

The courtroom was jammed. Even the selection of the jury proved dramatic, constables being sent out to gather fresh prospects when the original panel was exhausted. But when at five in the afternoon of October 5 the case finally went to the jury, the

public had but forty minutes to wait for a verdict—guilty, all three, with no recommendation of mercy.

In Canada the death penalty is still exacted in what Moll Flanders so lightly termed "the way of the steps and the string." So on a gusty spring day, March 29, 1935, Tomasina Sarao, standing between her fellow conspirators on one scaffold, with them met her doom—the first woman ever hanged in Montreal . . .

"But why," queried Coroner Rousel, "did they carry their victim to that unused railway spur?"

"Just another perfect crime gone wrong." Brodeur lighted a cigarette and inhaled deeply. "A passing train was to grind Sarao to mincemeat. It was Tomasina's idea. What they didn't know—they alone in all Montreal, apparently—was the fact that trains run over the Blue Bonnets spur only when the races are on. There had been no train for a month!"

Cops and Canaries

ALMOST all sorts of obstacles have popped up in the past to trip those souls who have strayed from the path of righteousness, but a new high in apprehending criminals was reached in Manhattan recently when two canaries were responsible for the arrest of four tough guys.

It all happened when the four youths, three of them with former records, swiped the canaries from a bakery shop and then tried to sell them in a pet shop in Brooklyn. By the time they arrived at the latter shop, however, the birds were too frightened to sing. The owner of the shop refused to buy them unless the youths left them in his shop long enough to hear their voices. After a long argument, the four decided to leave but it was too late. A passing cop had noticed them and decided to investigate. As a result, the canaries were returned to their owner and the four youths were put back in their gilded cages. In the words of one of them, "You can't even trust a canary these days."



—Preston Foster

Like A Soldier

By Edgar Franklin

Author of
"The Smartest Doll on Earth," etc.



And suddenly it seemed this old guy was swinging the mallet at them

"WELL, for the—for the—for the love o' tripe!" gasped Mr. James (Red) Binney and clutched the bar of his ferocious little cellar saloon as his popping eyes rested on his old friend, earth's dumbest crook, pug-nosed young Johnny Dolan. "Did the Astoria train get bombed by one o' them Japanee aces—or what t' hell happened to you this time?"

"Do not start runnin' for the exits, Red; everything is under control," Johnny Dolan smiled amiably, using the unswelled side of his face. "Kindly stir me up one o' them pint-size Binney Snifters whilst I explain. Y' see, it was like this. I—"

"Oh, yeah? It was like this, huh?" Mr. Binney bawled suddenly, on account of you certainly have to admit there is times when a person cannot help losing all patience. "Lissen, punk! I talk myself hoarse, fixin' it so you can

Things were a little confusing to Johnny Dolan: First there was this beautiful judy, and a billion bucks, and then there was several Long Island trains running over him

work wit' Hopeless Harris, leadin' him through them Astoria trains whilst he sings an' puts on his blind act, on account of there is the one job in the whole world you can do wit'out gettin' tore to pieces. An' yet here, the very first night, you come back wit' an eye the size of an egg an' one ear lookin' like it simply hangs by a thread an'—"

"Okay, it will grow back an' if not I still have the other," Johnny Dolan said, just as amiably, "an' meanwhile there is a coupla o' things I gotta ast you. First off, do I look tough? What I mean, do I look like one o' these guys that takes a powder when he sees the riot startin' or would you say I was

the type that is in the center o' the ring an' swingin' whilst you can still hear the bell?"

"Well, off-hand, John," Mr. Binney said more mildly, "I would say you looked like some guy which had stepped on a hunk o' fat whilst passin' the top of a sausage machine an' in some way had come out the bottom end still breathin'."

"Okay," Johnny Dolan replied, on account of this was probably good enough. "Then, was Saw-tooth Dugan in here yet?"

"I ain't seen the dressy little mug in a week, John."

"You will probably see him wit'in a few minutes, Red, an' here is why. We was out somewheres near Astoria, where it is all gas-tanks an' them little matchwood houses you buy for a dollar down an' a dollar a week, an' Hopeless Harris just steps into another car an' starts singin' Headin' for the Last Roundup, when who is there but my dear old pal, Saw-tooth Dugan, an' it seems he is very glad to see me an' has been lookin' for me everywhere, on account of he has a business proposition which smells very sweet. So he starts tellin' me about this proposition an' Hopeless gets sore, on account of he is just goin' good wit' the Last Round-up thing an' a couple o' old dames is a'ready lookin' in their handbags for nickels, get the idea. So Hopeless says, t' hell wit' Dugan an' will I kindly go on leadin' him, only I have a'ready heard enough o' this proposition to know it is very sweet indeed, so I says t' hell wit' leadin' him any more an' I am resignin' on the spot."

"An' so?" said Mr. Binney.

"Well, Hopeless then gets that sore he bangs his cane down on my right big toe so hard I have to yell an' I am then so sore myself I haul off an' sock him

under the whiskers, causin' him to set down in the lap o' some fat dame which immediately starts shriekin'—an' sooner she starts shriekin'," Johnny Dolan continued, "her fat daughter hops up an' hands me one wit' the flat of her mitt, meanwhile statin' I should get the electric chair for strikin' a blind old man. So naturally I gotta give her as good as she give, an' no sooner I give her a good shove in the middle o' the pan she falls flat on the floor, pretendin' she is knocked cold an'—well, not to kid you, Red, I cannot say exactly what happened after that. What I mean, this one big guy moves in an' hangs this lamp on me, so I have to kick the stomach offen him, only at the same time three other guys is comin' at me, so I have to kick the stomachs offen them also, an' after that it is anybody's party. What I mean, Red, you can always notice people act very silly at such a time. Take for instance, here is everybody sockin' everybody else for no good reason; an' suddenly this fat old dame pushes Hopeless Harris offen her lap an' he hits the floor so hard the both sets of his teeth shoot out like they was pulled wit' a string; an' this gets Hopeless so hot he lets down his eyes so he can see an' starts beltin' everybody wit' his cane, only it so happens he knocks the cheaters offen some large guy which looks like a banker an' is carryin' home a large glass punch-bowl, which he immediately busts over Hopeless' head an' starts swearin' very vulgar an'—why, it is like bein' in the booby-hatch, wit' all the boys doin' their specialties at the one time!"

H E HAD to stop and laugh at Red Binney, the way the poor old slug was shaking his head and looking exactly like somebody had just socked him with a bung-starter.

"An' what happens in this booby-hatch when the keepers come?" Mr. Binney asked, somewhat weak.

"I really couldn't tell you accurate, Red," Johnny Dolan chuckled. "Here is the motorman blowin' whistles like crazy an' presently we are stoppin' at a station an' everybody is fightin' to get out an' cops is fightin' to get in, only it so happens I am amongst them fightin' to get out an' in this way I am presently down in the street an' explainin' to a guy which drives a truck how I am a poor lad named Morris Fishback which just got socked by a hit-an'-runner an' would he please let me ride wit' him to Manhattan. So consequencely, here I am—an' lissen, Red," Johnny Dolan concluded oddly, "everything is very, very jake!"

How it looked, Red Binney could not make his head stop shaking.

"If this is your idea o' everything bein' jake," he said, "what would you call a slight accident? Gettin' the head an' both legs cut offen you?"

"You do not get it, Red," Johnny Dolan smiled and glanced around, quite cautious. It seemed there was nobody present but the cat, which was busy eating a mouse and probably not listening. He leaned over the bar. "Lissen, sucker! Quite frequencely we spoke about how I would bring in a few grand an' you will then give this joint to some deservin' party an' we will start around the world, huh?"

"Huh?" Mr. Binney echoed.

"What I mean, Red, takin' maybe two or six years an' always livin' in grand hotels in Austrium and Constanteropple an' such countries. Okey-dokey, pal! You can buy a couple o' new shirts an' pick out which deservin' party wins this drum, on account o' we will probably be startin' in a few weeks now."

"Oh, yeah?" Mr. Binney sighed apathetically.

"On account of," Johnny Dolan explained placidly, pushing his loose ear back in place, "by the end o' the month I am gettin' me a *billion dollars!*"

"You are gettin' what?" Mr. Binney rasped with a start.

"I said, a *billion dollars!*"

Mr. Binney peered hard at him.

"You are speakin' serious, John, so far as you know?"

"I would certain'y say there is nothin' to joke about in a billion dollars, on account of that is quite some jack. I think it is even more than a million fish, but I can tell better when I get it added up on paper an'—"

Mr. Binney began to untie his apron.

"Okay, John—you are gettin' a billion dollars," he agreed, with a heavier sigh. "Sooner or later, somethin' like this was bound to happen, the way you let your dome get slugged around, so we will now go down to the free clinic an' see can some nut specialist cut a hole in it an' fix whatever—"

"Oh, an' here is my dear old pal, which is also gettin' a billion dollars!" Johnny Dolan cried happily, and hurried over to meet the arriving Mr. Sawtooth Dugan, who seemed indeed a dear old pal, for he threw an arm around Johnny Dolan's shoulders and smiled widely, showing the three strange front teeth, each broken off at the same angle, which, according to all you hear, he won whilst trying to bite the nose off a Scandinavian sailor. "An' how was everything when you left the battlefield, Saw-tooth?"

"Everything was hotsy-totsy, John, exceptin' Hopeless Harris an' a few more got a ride in the wagon an' will give up two bucks each in the mornin'. Only lissen, pal, you must never—say,

is there somethin' funny about me, Binney, that you have to always keep starin'?"

"I would hardly call it funny, Saw-tooth," Mr. Binney said, with some feeling. "What I mean, I never seen you in rags before an' I never seen you a week wit'out a shave or—well, *hell!*" Mr. Binney cried, and slapped a dollar on the bar. "You are on the rocks, Saw-tooth, you got a right to say so. Beat it next door to Tony an' get yourself a shave an' a haircut an'—"

"Oh, that is okay; I gotta purposefully look tough in my present line o' business," Mr. Dugan shrugged and, turning back to Johnny Dolan, again showed his teeth. "Buddy, old palsy-walsy, you done *good!*" he stated admiringly. "I dunno when I ever seen anybody look tougher than what you do at present. Y'know, I was wonderin' at the time did you start that mill on purpose to get yourself all mussed up, the way I was suggestin'. Only look, pal. This billion dollar stuff. That ain't to be mentioned in public. You know what you'd rate from *him*, if he heard it got mentioned in public?"

"I was merely sayin' to Red—"

Mr. Binney passed a hand over his forehead.

"Y' gotta excuse me, Saw-tooth," he said dizzily, "but it don't so happen you also have the idea you are somehow gettin' a billion dollars?"

"Not only that, Binney, but in a few weeks you can have a couple o' million if you need them, on account you also always been quite a pal," Saw-tooth replied astonishingly—and absolutely it put you in stitches, just looking at Red's pan, all wrinkles and with the mouth hanging open. "Only lissen here, mug," Mr. Dugan continued and all but stuck his pointing forefinger into Mr. Binney's gaping mouth. "You like

the way your head is fastened on your neck, huh?"

"Why, I always found it very satisfactory so far," Mr. Binney managed.

"Okay! Then do yourself a favor an' stay satisfied, on account of if you was to mention this billion-dollar thing to a livin' soul except me an' Dolan, which we ain't allowed to talk about it neither, it could easy be you would have nothin' to wear a hat on an' keep the rain outen your lungs, know what I mean?"

"I hear you speakin', but—"

"So that is that, an' let's get goin', pal," Mr. Dugan said, with an arm around Johnny Dolan's waist.

"Okay, pal!" Johnny Dolan cried joyfully, with an arm around Saw-tooth Dugan.

"Yeah, well—*wait!*" Mr. Binney cried desperately. "What I mean, whatever the hell's happened the pair o' you, it ain't safe for a couple o' mugs wit' stuff like that in their heads to be loose an'—hey! I got it now! You been smokin' Mary Warners an'—lissen! Go in back an' lay down, till I call up the free clinic an' ast them what to do till the—"

"Aw, go buy yourself them two shirts I mentioned, sucker!" Johnny Dolan called back gaily, as they skipped up the steps to the street.

"**I**T SEEMS this is a quite nice buggy you are drivin' these days, Saw-tooth," Johnny Dolan said, as they climbed into it at the corner.

"Yeah, *he* is quite strong for me, knowin' what I got on the ball," Mr. Dugan replied, like he was quite well satisfied with himself. "What I mean, it was *him* sent out an' got this stole special for my use."

"Yeah, an' who is this *him*?"

"You'll get told presently," Mr.

Dugan said briefly. "Lissen, old pal. Onct in a lifetime a guy gets a chanct to make a billion bucks. Am I right?"

"Well, I would not say it is quite as often as that, on account—"

"Okay—okay! Say onct in a couple o' lifetimes. Well, he gets this chanct, as I was sayin', an' if he is smart he don't ast no questions. He gets told exactly what to do an' he does it—like a soldier. You wanna remember that one, pal—like a soldier. It goes quite big wit' him—like a soldier."

"Well, what you mean is, like a soldier, huh?" Johnny Dolan asked fog-gily.

"You got it. An' in this way, naturally, he gets his billion dollars," Mr. Dugan smiled and, the way he said it, it certainly sounded quite reasonable. "Now lemme see. We gotta park on this one certain corner on First Avenyer an' walk two blocks north. We better do that, huh? He might have somebody spottin' us."

And with that, Johnny Dolan observed, he shut up like a clam and did his driving—and why not? Supposing the pal did not wish to talk, okay. You could always figure he had been very fond of Johnny Dolan for many years and it is very few pals that fond of you they will fix it so you get a billion dollars or—huh? Oh, it seemed they had been going up First Avenue for quite some time and were now stopping.

"From this point onwards, till he asts you to say somethin', all you gotta do is look tough," Mr. Dugan explained, stepping out and heading north. "He likes 'em very tough indeed."

Yeah, and it was getting quite interesting, too.

What Johnny Dolan meant, this extra hard-boiled egg on the second corner, which just strolled past without

looking at them and said outen the corner of his mouth: "Two an' three. Pass!" and kept on walking. And now it seemed they were going down steps, like into the basement of some old warehouse with "To Let" signs all over it and Saw-tooth was rapping on a door with his knuckles, first twice and then three times. The door opened and somebody with a candle said "Who goes there?" and Saw-tooth muttered something, away down in his stomach; and then he had Johnny Dolan's arm and was leading him down more stairs which you could hardly see—and then, it seemed, *they were there!*

And absolutely it was like one of them very high-class movies you used to see when a child, where there is so much crime that everybody is dead at the finish except the main guy and the doll he has to clinch! What Johnny Dolan meant, here was this large cellar, smelling very pleasant of rats and beer, and in the middle was an old kitchen table with a number of candles stuck in bottles, making everything bright.

ONLY it was what sat behind the table which knocked you for a loop, on account of this was none other than Tiger Toomey, which was supposed to be in the big house for busting the dome of the Greek vegetable guy, only it seemed he was evidently elsewhere, on account of he was now here! You could never mistake this mug, which was nearly seven feet tall, with a pile of black hair and them eyebrows, which were like pieces cut offen the tail of a black cat, with a couple of very bad eyes looking at you from underneath them. Yeah, and like you always heard, he was a man of few words, on account of he simply looked at Johnny Dolan and said:

"What happened to them you was mixin' it wit'?"

"Why, two is in the morgue, Tiger, an' the other four in Bellevue," Mr. Dugan said very quick, before Johnny Dolan could speak. "Four o' them was Marines an' one o' them spoke out o' turn to Dolan. I told you Dolan was a very tough number, Tiger."

It seemed Toomey was now rubbing his chin, which was all like sprouts of blue-black wire and gave out a sound the same as when you are sandpapering a board.

"As tough as that? Swell! He might make a good captain. Lissen, Dolan, supposin' you was set just right wit' a tommy-gun, how many regular army soldiers could you knock off in, say, five minutes?"

"Why, I wouldn't wish to guarantee nothin', Tiger," Johnny Dolan replied, not so steady, on account of it made you feel slightly nutty, answering such questions in a place like this, "but I would say maybe two, three thousand."

"You'd orter do better than that, but—look! I figger I gotta have three captains, see? I figger to let them captains take a billion apiece. I figger five millions is plenty for lieutenants an' sergeants can be glad if they get a million. I figger I gotta have a thousand privates an' they get a good break if they take a hundred grand each . . . You could do a little overtime for a billion bucks, huh?"

"Why, absolutely!" Johnny Dolan said, and he could now practically feel the boys in the white uniforms fitting the canvas overcoat on him. "For a billion dollars a person would hardly notice he was gettin' tired, only where does all this jack come from?"

"Didn't Dugan give you the dope?" Mr. Toomey thundered. "Outen the ground! Outen the ground, where the

United States Government stuck it! Down there in Kentucky! They dug a hole in the ground an' stuck eleven or twelve billion dollars worth o' gold in it! Okay—that's where I'm takin' it from, outen the ground!"

It seemed he had to pause and smile, like he was quite pleased thinking about this matter. It also seemed Johnny Dolan's throat was getting very dry, on account of you really never can tell what will happen when you are down a cellar with parties that speak like this.

"Yeah, well, they might have a watchman," he suggested, on account you have to be polite and say something.

"Quite a little kiddier, Dolan—you're quite a little kiddier," Mr. Toomey laughed, causing the whole cellar to shake. "They got a couple o' regiments down there, I hear. They got concrete walls a mile thick around the stuff—*an' so what?* Suppose I cut the telefoam wires an' rub out them regiments, suppose I got guys enough to dig an' drills enough an' dynamite enough an' trucks enough to move the stuff, what's to hinder me from takin' it, huh?"

"Why, probably nothin', Tiger," Johnny Dolan admitted, on account of when you put it like that it really sounded quite simple.

"You said it—*nothin'!* . . . Oh, yeah," Mr. Toomey said, and shoved a folded paper at Mr. Dugan. "There's the rough plan o' the spot I was speakin' about, Dugan; put it in your pocket an' study it careful. I got a contact works as porter in an office where they got one o' these minium-grafts an' he turns out a few each night. You'll get yours later, Dolan. Now you're gettin' it, huh? I'm makin' up a regiment o' the thousand toughest guys in America. You shape up right, Dolan, an' I'll make you a captain, only

you gotta be tough an' you gotta obey orders."

"Like a soldier, huh?" Johnny Dolan said.

"You got it! You got the whole idea!" Mr. Toomey roared heartily. "So right now we're gettin' the jack together to buy the stuff we need. You know your way around Old Spring, Long Island?"

"I was there."

"Okay. You know this James Warsden estate, the big house bein' quarter of a mile back from the road? Okay! You know how to run one o' them little trick elevators where you press the button? Okay! Warsden coughed up twenty thousand fish to have one built in that was absolutely noiseless so you an' Dugan will be takin' that to the top floor an' goin' to the third door on the right, which is the old palooka's gun-room, an' there you will find a box wit' around two hundred thousand bucks wort' o' diamonds in it an' anywheres from ten to twenty thousand cash. I want that delivered here before five tomorrow mornin'—or else. An' lissen, Captain Dolan an' Captain Dugan, the both o' yez," Mr. Toomey went on, leaning back comfortably. "Sayin' you pull this quick an' easy an' make a clean getaway, so much the better; only inside an' outside o' this drum there is seven special guards. Supposin' a little trouble starts, I want 'em *slew*! I don't want 'em just maimed or a couple o' holes shot in 'em; I wanna read in the paper tomorrow mornin' how all them seven mugs was *slew*! I wanna see what you got!"

"I guess there won't be no trouble about that, Tiger, on account of—" Johnny Dolan was just starting to say, *when it happened*!

Yeah, absolutely! You think everything is going like greased, and then

something like this comes up and your whole life gets changed around in one second. What Johnny Dolan meant, here was this door opening on the other side of the cellar and here was this doll coming out, yawning; and, first off, you thought she was just a doll, only then she got where you could see her good and suddenly your heart blew in a million pieces and you were choking to death.

TAKE for instance this doll or that doll you meet, and she is very beautiful and you fall greatly in love with her; only presently something happens and it gets to you she was merely a passing fancy. Well, this doll was so different from any other doll in the world, you practically died, just looking at her. She was all sweeping, beautiful curves, as you might say, which wiggled as she walked. Her flat curls looked like they had been cut out of some lovely hunk of brass; she had very big blue lamps, like a couple of clear glass marbles for which you would give up at least a nickel each, with electric lights behind them; she had a couple of very red lips which you understood you would kiss just once and then be delighted, if necessary, to croak instantly. She had—well, it was absolutely impossible to describe this doll, except she was like one of these angels in heaven only much more beautiful.

Yeah, and what got you suddenly so hot you thought you would explode, it seemed Saw-tooth Dugan felt the same way about her, on account of the poor slug's whole dumb pan was now purple and his mouth was hanging open and his chest heaving like he had just finished beating a radio car around the corner. . . . Yeah! And what got you so wild you started feeling for your rod

and could hear your heart trying to bust out through your ears, was how this wonderful doll went and sat on Tiger Toomey's knee, and the big ape pulled her over and kissed her, so it sounded like a person pulling off a pair of wet rubbers!

"This is Marie—this is my moll, Marie!" Mr. Toomey stated, like he was quite proud. "Marie, meet Captain Dolan an' Captain Dugan."

And now you could hear her voice, which was like angels singing!

"Pleased t' meechee, pals!" she said very ladylike and friendly. "How's tricks?"

You would think this punk, Dugan, would at least take off his hat, the same as Johnny Dolan, instead of which he stood there gulping:

"Tricks is—tricks is—"

"That's how I always found 'em myself," Marie laughed, very musical and, believe it or not, she was now giving the eye to Johnny Dolan. "Did j'order a new ear yet, pal?"

"I only got use for eyes at present, Marie," Johnny Dolan said, speaking so thick he could hardly hear himself—and it seemed this didn't make no real hit with Tiger Toomey, on account of he suddenly scowled and said:

"Y' wanna keep 'em offen private property, Dolan, else otherwise you might only be havin' a couple o' holes in your dome where they onct was. Now lissen, both o' yez . . ."

This beautiful doll also had very beautiful hands, you could notice, with dimples in the backs of them and the nails painted a very beautiful red and. . .

" . . . the quicker the better," Mr. Toomey was saying. "Suppose you get back wit' the goods by four, I slip you each a grand apiece and . . ."

Yeah, and she also had such beautiful

feet it made the tears come in your eyes. They had very stylish heels, around six inches high, and they were quite small and still quite broad and solid, so you could tell at once she could kick the pants offen anything which started making passes at her or otherwise . . .

" . . . an' them is orders!" Tiger Toomey roared. "Are you hearin' 'em or lookin' at Marie?" And he then pushed Marie offen his lap and said: "Y' gotta stay in your cage whilst the boys is around, Marie; you take their mind offen their work. Gwan in there before I slap the puss offen you!"

"Hey, lissen!" Johnny Dolan and Saw-tooth Dugan cried, and it was so peculiar you could not believe it, but they both spoke the same words at once. "You lay a finger on—"

They then stopped suddenly, which was probably just as well, on account of Tiger Toomey was now standing with his fists on his hips and looking at thm quite severe. It seemed maybe he was mad about something.

"Hey, look, y' dirty little lice," he said. "Is Marie my moll or is Marie your moll?"

"Well, naturally, Tiger, she is your moll only—" Johnny Dolan stammered.

"Okay. She is my moll . . . Hey, did I tell you to get back in your kennel or do I have to kick you there, baby?" Mr. Toomey asked Marie; and then he cleared his throat and sat down again. "Okay, punks. Get goin'. You don't hafta hurry; it ain't safe there before two o'clock . . . I said, *get goin'!*" he roared, on account of it seemed Johnny Dolan at least could not stop looking at this wonderful judy, who was at present giving him the eye over her shoulder as she passed through the door.

IT IS very strange, but it seems you can know a person for years and think you like him—and then suddenly, in some way you cannot describe, it gets to you he is only a punk and you can hardly stand the sight of him. As take for instance this Saw-tooth Dugan number, which had always seemed quite a regular guy and very jolly, only when you came to look careful at him and think him over, you seen he was really a party you would not wish to be found dead beside, much less string with!

Like for hours now, before they got out here to Old Spring and were coming to this Warsden estate, the dumb cluck had been the same as in a trance, always looking like a dope and sighing very heavy, with hardly a word out of him, even when they were trying to shoot a little pool—and since they got across Queensboro Bridge you would think there was a wind-machine inside him, the way he kept blowing out his lungs every few seconds and saying "Heigh-ho!" and the like of that.

Only this was all very much okay with Johnny Dolan, on account of he had certain thoughts he wished to think, which were probably the pleasantest thoughts a person would be thinking if he lived to be a thousand years old. Look! You take this Toomey gorilla, which was very large and strong. Well, a couple of slugs through the stomach and he would be the same as a little child which has been run over by a truck, understand. And so what? So after that everything was simple as A B D! A guy like Toomey can make up a regiment and lift eleven billion dollars, a much smarter number, such as Johnny Dolan, can make a better regiment and lift eleven billion dollars! And once he had this, even such a wonderful doll like Marie will fall for him and . . .

"Lissen, Dugan!" Johnny Dolan said suddenly.

"Um—yeah?" Mr. Dugan breathed. "I noticed how you kept lookin' at Marie, so in case you might be gettin' ideas, get a load o' this. Henceforwards, I am takin' over—"

"What was that crack about lookin' at Marie?" Mr. Dugan asked, very quick and sharp.

"Yeah, I am also takin' over Marie. So, as I was sayin'—"

"*You* are takin' over Marie?" Mr. Dugan laughed, very loud and scornful. "Lissen, you monkey-faced hunk o' cheese, I am bumpin' off Toomey an' I am takin' over—"

Well—you hardly know you have a thing in mind, and then you have done it! Of course, it is very foolish to let a rotten little rat like Saw-tooth Dugan call you a monkey-faced hunk of cheese and get away with it, but Johnny Dolan had no idea he had socked Dugan so violent until he seen his dome rock over and smash out the glass beside him.

And he was coming back quite swift, huh? He had now pasted Johnny Dolan's nose so hard he could feel it pushing against the upper end of his spine—and for *that* one Dugan got a very nice short-arm under the jaw, which banged his head against the back of the car and caused him to spit out three teeth—and he had then landed on Johnny Dolan's good ear so you could hear a million church-bells ringing and at the same time Johnny Dolan had hung one on Dugan's stomach, causing all the wind to come out of him at the one puff—and he then had Johnny Dolan by the throat and was choking and Johnny Dolan also had Saw-tooth by the throat and was also choking.

Still furthermore, there was no kid-

ding whatsoever about this choking. What Johnny Dolan meant, he could feel his fingernails meeting in the middle of Dugan's skinny neck and he could also feel his own windpipe getting busted into small pieces and . . . there was a great many spots, flying around everywhere, so . . . it must be he was now dying, on account of he could no longer feel Dugan squeezing or . . .

How it looked, the car must have gone up on the grass and stopped itself, and Dugan was now coming around and feeling of his neck and making peculiar sounds; and when he came to notice it, Johnny Dolan was also feeling of his neck and making peculiar sounds. His neck was still there but was unhealthy like. Dugan was speaking, very hoarse, like this:

"Lissen—Dolan. This is—very silly—on account of if—we each both croak the other, Toomey—will still have Marie, know—what I mean? So, till this job is did we—gotta declare a troops, like they say in a war. What I mean—"

"I know what you mean, Dugan," Johnny Dolan said, very stiff, and was greatly surprised to feel how evil he was smiling, like a devil. "No sooner this job is did an' the goods turned over to Toomey, I will be waitin' for you outside."

"That is, if I do not decide to put the blast on you whilst we are still standin' in front o' Toomey—an' on him, too!" Saw-tooth Dugan replied, with a very horrible laugh. "What I mean, the second he has the goods, this troops is over wit'!"

He was now starting the engine and getting the car back in the road, and Johnny Dolan had to laugh inside himself, on account of the way this dumb slug had it figured. What he meant,

suppose there would be a little trouble, he could probably hold Dugan in front of him and thus get him filled with bullets by the guards—or it might be a bus or a truck would come along, going fast, so he could shove Saw-tooth underneath, which would certainly be an accident, or—oh, it seemed they were stopping again beside a quite high wall and Dugan was getting out and singing.

"Hey, what is that song?" Johnny Dolan asked.

"That is a very old song called 'Sweet Marie,' which my mother used to sing whilst rockin' me—"

"Supposin' even your grandfather sung it whilst soused, you can lay off that song at present," Johnny Dolan stated.

"Sez who?" Saw-tooth Dugan yipped.

"*Sez me!*" Johnny Dolan replied and—yeah, it seemed he had done it again, absolutely involuntary! It seemed he had clipped Dugan under the chin and Dugan was now setting on the grass, maybe twenty feet away . . . Yeah, and he was now bouncing up and it was the same as if a mule had just kicked Johnny Dolan in the face and he was now setting on the grass himself; and furthermore it seemed Saw-tooth Dugan was standing over him and singing:

"There's a flower in my heart, Sweet Marie—an' so what?"

"You wanna get all them seven guards out at once, wit' your lousy singin'?" Johnny Dolan asked.

"Okay—okay! It was you broke the troops!" Saw-tooth Dugan stated, breathing very heavy.

"Okay! The troops is now unbroke again till this job is did," said Johnny Dolan, getting to his feet again. He'd have to fix this Dugan.

YOU had to say, it was a very pleasant walk across this party's lawn, which was the size of Central Park, on account of there were no rocks or lumps whatsoever and even in the dark a person did not stumble and fall. In fact, it made you feel quite chilly and peculiar.

What Johnny Dolan meant, everything goes so very smooth like this and you are practically certain something is about to happen—and at that they were now on what you could call a sort of a brick terrace beside probably the largest house in the world, and Saw-tooth was working on a window and still none of them seven guards had shown.

Yeah, and the window was now open and they were inside a great room, with many fashionable chairs and paintings; you could notice where they kept a small night-light in the hall, making it very convenient for you to see everything. Saw-tooth was muttering to himself, like this:

"Oh, boy . . . Marie! . . . Oh, boy!"

"Lissen, garbage!" Johnny Dolan whispered. "You can leave Marie's name out o' this!"

Mr. Dugan looked him up and down, smiling very scornful and odd.

"Okay, punk—okay," he, like, sneered, and moved on to the hall.

Yeah, and everything was *still* going so smooth it made geese-pimples come out on you. Take for instance this magnificent hallway, where you could put on a six-day bike grind without hitting a chair. There was absolutely no sounds whatever except the large clock ticking and you certainly didn't need no signs to tell you where was the elevator, on account of it stood at the end of the hall, with the door wide open and many of these chrosmium trimmings shining inside. They were even

in this elevator now and Saw-tooth had shut the door and a little light had turned itself on—and *still* everything was quiet like a grave.

Also, the elevator itself was very interesting, when you come to study it. There was this small box sticking out of the wall, with all push-buttons on it, starting with "B" and then "1" and so on up to the "4," which had to be the top floor. Saw-tooth had his thumb on the "4" button and was smiling the same odd way at Johnny Dolan, when it seemed he had to start singing, very soft:

"There's a flower in my hah-heart, Sweet—"

It seemed the top of Johnny Dolan's head suddenly blew off! What he meant, you can read in any book how there is all nervous systems inside you and, supposing you pull too hard on these nervous systems and keep on pulling, something is bound to bust, the same as when you pull too hard on a rope, and you are then unresponsifal like any crazy person—and it was like that here.

What Johnny Dolan meant, looking at how this rotten mug smiled and hearing them words bringing Marie's name into this again, it seemed he was no longer able to control himself. It seemed he had given this Dugan punk the one-two, on the chin and on this what they call the sober plecksus, causing him first to fly in the air, like a ball offen a bat, and then to crash back on this box with all the buttons, so hard it busted in several pieces, with wires sticking out everywhere, and also made a noise that loud you knew if there was even dead people in the house they would come running! And maybe they'd still have to slew those guards.

Yeah, and no sooner Dugan was hauling off to sock him back, than you

knew something very screwy indeed was happening.

What Johnny Dolan meant, it seemed Dugan suddenly had to set on the floor and, no sooner he was there, it seemed Johnny Dolan was also setting on the floor beside him, greatly surprised and feeling quite confused—on account of it seemed they were shooting upwards so fast that his stomach had stayed downstairs beside the large clock.

And it was like crazy, but over this door was little spots in a row, which suddenly lighted up, one after the other, and showed 1—2—3—4, and at that point there was a great crash and it seemed they had hit the roof and were going downwards again. It seemed everything inside Johnny Dolan was now pouring out through the top of his head, despite of which he could see these funny numbers running off backwards, like 4—3—2—1, and then suddenly you seen the B light up and there was another great crash and felt all your bones breaking at the one time—and no sooner you felt them breaking, you were going up again and this time your stomach was stopping off in the basement, to wait till you got back. It was very confusing indeed, especially the way these trick numbers started counting 1—2—3— again.

How it looked, Saw-tooth Dugan, very wild-eyed, was trying to say something like:

"You busted the—controls, you—"

"You know something—" Johnny Dolan started to say, when suddenly this 4 showed again and they once more hit the roof . . . Yeah, and they were now starting down again the same as before! "—about elevators like this?" he finished.

"If I had knowed anything about elevators, do you think I would of let

you inside this one?" Dugan shouted, very bitter.

"This ain't no time to—get sore! I am only tryin' to find out does—" Johnny Dolan began and then closed his eyes, on account of the 1 had gone out and—yeah, absolutely! They had now crashed so hard in the basement Johnny Dolan's spine snapped in two and he could also feel his skull split and—hey! they were going up again! "—this damn' thing go up an' down all night?" he finished.

"Lissen, I am a stranger here, the same as yourself—" Dugan started, even bitterer, and then, just whilst they were passing 3, he pointed at the door. "Give a look!" he said, gasping very queer! "Them doors was all dark a—" They now hit the roof with the same crash—and, believe it or not, after a few of these you were getting used to it, especially how you shot downwards as if kicked from a window. "—second ago!" Dugan managed. "They are now lit."

It seemed the little mug was right, at that. Them doors were glass, only not the kind you look through, and previously they were absolutely black, only now there was lights behind them. Yeah! And you could hear people running and also shouting! You could hear this one large voice bellowing:

"Pull the switch! Pull the main switch in the cellar!" and at this point, it seemed, they had hit the basement again and one side of the car had split, only not sufficiently to catch on anything and stop it, on account of they were now going upwards once more, so you could watch the 1—2—3—lighting up and—

Well, it was very confusing indeed—in fact, it was that confusing you would not even try to describe it—but they had now smashed once more into the

roof and at the same second everything went black and this goofy elevator stood still and made noises like emergency brakes were catching—and, no matter if Johnny Dolan felt like someone had been using an egg-beater inside his head, it seemed Saw-tooth could still think, on account of he was whispering, very excited:

"There's a break, Dolan—they had to cut the juice offen the whole house to stop this damned thing. So, look! I am gettin' this door open and, the way it sounds, there is nobody on this floor. Might be we could hide somewheres a couple of hours an' then put the can-opener on—I *got it open!* Come on!"

IT SEEMED they were now out in this very black hallway. You could hear people speaking below, about how the elevator got started itself, only this one guy with the large voice kept saying it got started by burglars who were doubtlessly hiding in the cellar at present. You could also hear Dugan hissing:

"They gotta have a store-room or somethin' up here, Dolan, where we can get under cover, so kindly do not breathe till we find it an'—"

Well—it so happened he spoke too late!

What Johnny Dolan meant, you always hear how accidents can happen, no matter how good your family is regulated and you certainly cannot blame a person in an absolutely strange house, and in the dark at that, for not knowing some dimwit has put small chairs all over a hall like this.

Well, what he meant, one second it seemed he was shuffling along very nice and the next second it seemed like he had been hit in the shins and was now diving off the end of a dock. First off, there was this sound of wood breaking

and then a very loud crash indeed, which was caused by Johnny Dolan striking the floor with his face—and there were many thousands of stars and you could hear Saw-tooth cursing; and then, just like magic, it seemed the lights went on everywhere. After that, you really could not say exactly what was taking place.

Take for instance, even supposing you were stunned by this fall, you could still hear many people shouting and running up the stairs and then you could see these three big mugs, with rods in their mitts, only in front of them was this one very large old guy with the white waxed moustache, which wore silk pajamas with flowers on them and a black silk dressing-gown, and a funny white helmet on his head, and he was waving this long polo mallet and it seemed he must be the commander-in-chief, on account of he yelled:

"Stand back! I'll get 'em both! *Stand back*, I tell you!"

"Yes, but Mr. Warsden—" one of these other mugs started to say, only it seemed the old palooka paid no attention whatsoever, on account of he made a sort of flying leap at Saw-tooth Dugan, who was pulling out his rod, and with one swipe he knocked the rod out of Dugan's hand and down the hall and with the next swipe he placed this mallet on the top of Dugan's dome, causing him to go down, the way they say in the books, like a log.

Yeah, and it looked like the old palooka must be full of goat-glands or something, on account of Saw-tooth had not even ceased twitching when he was leaping at Johnny Dolan—and if he wished to take a chanct like that, he could probably afford a swell funeral, even with a band. What Johnny Dolan meant, he was now getting out his own rod and in maybe two

seconds the old palooka would be smeared all over the walls, like paint, and—*hey!* *It seemed his own hand had got knocked off!*

What he meant, one second he was about to pull the trigger and then this mallet had come swinging around and socked his hand and the rod was now flying through the air—yeah, and it had even got caught by one of these mugs, who laughed loudly and said:

"Well played, Mr. Warsden! Now just let us—"

"I told you, get back there!" the old palooka laughed, very silly, the way old people will, and it seemed he was now swinging with the idea of knocking Johnny Dolan's head down through his ribs—only it so happened Johnny Dolan suddenly stepped backward, and in this way the mallet missed him and hit the floor with a very loud slam and also caused the old palooka to come down very hard on his hands and knees; and absolutely if it was the last thing you done on earth you could not help screaming with laughter at him, down there like he was playing he was a dog, no more than you could help saying:

"Not so hot, pop! You're slippin'! You gotta do better if—"

It seemed this old palooka was all springs, on account of he was now up again and running and, once you came to notice it, Johnny Dolan was running even faster; and one of these mugs was hauling up his rod and saying: "Here now, Mr. Warsden! Let me—" only the old guy gathered up his dressing-gown so he could run better and yelled, very savage indeed: "Gangway there, dammit! Gangway and keep your hands off! I'll flatten this one if it kills me! *Gangway, Sykes!*"

It seemed they had now come to the end of the hall and there were small

stairs down which Johnny Dolan was going very rapid indeed, only the old palooka was also going just as rapid and was not five feet behind, and he had also now smashed the shoulder off Johnny Dolan with his mallet—yeah, and as they started down from the third floor, it seemed he had caught Johnny Dolan on the good ear, splitting his skull in several pieces; and, at that, he was still going strong and had now reached the second floor . . . Yeah, and they were now down almost to the first floor and the old palooka had put a very nice one between Johnny Dolan's shoulders, knocking his backbone out through his chest.

And they were now on the first floor and making very fine time along a corridor, and suddenly you could see this large room, with the paintings and the open window; and it was like a herd of horses coming down the stairs and everybody yelling to Mr. Warsden to wait—so it was maybe a twenty to one bet that in another few seconds Johnny Dolan would be that full of lead you would have to get a derrick to lift him. . . . Only don't it show you how sometimes when necessary you will use your head without giving it a second thought?

What Johnny Dolan meant, with the two of them doing probably sixty miles an hour, he now stopped very suddenly indeed and stuck out his foot, causing Mr. Warsden to trip and flatten himself out on the floor so violent you thought, first off, he had busted through to the cellar and also causing his mallet to fly out of his hand and go straight through the glass on this very large clock.

And after that it was worse than any nightmare you could dream, even if you ate hot dogs and mince pies steady for a week, on account of it is very difficult

indeed to run with every bone in your body broke and the blood pouring from probably a hundred places. What Johnny Dolan meant, he had now shot through this open window and over the fence on this brick terrace; only you could easily guess they would think he had gone straight down this large lawn, so he ran around the house and kept on going—and going—and, somehow, still going. You could hear shots out front, like there was a war, and after running many miles you could see this rail fence and somehow get over it—and then there was all lights in the distance, like a train, so you continued to run for these lights, on account of there was probably nothing you needed more at present than a train. Or maybe two trains would be needed.

Only these lights were going very fast indeed and suddenly they went by you, quite near, and kept on going; and then it seemed you knew you were dying and there was no longer any hope, so this was as good as any other place to die—only just then you tripped and everything went black.

THE longer he read the morning paper, which he had flattened on the bar, the more Mr. James (Red) Binney scowled, on account of it certainly gives you a pain in the neck, what them reporters can think up when they ain't got no news.

Take for instance all this hooey about Francis X. Dugan, which anyone could see from his description it was Saw-tooth, and how it seemed he had got the collar whilst inside some house at Old Spring, Long Island.

Well, you would say they would let it go at that, on account of this is something which could happen to anybody—but not them lads getting paid by the inch for what they write! Ab-

solutely not! They gotta go on and say, very comical, about it seemed this Francis X. Dugan was in some plot to steal eleven billion dollars in gold from the United States Government, on account of a map had been found on him which—the telephone was ringing very urgent-like.

"Well—John!" Mr. Binney said, recognizing the voice at once.

"Lissen, Mr. Binney," said the voice. "This is Morris Fishback—know what I mean? What I mean, this is Morris Fishback, which got in a slight accident, see, and will be delayed a few days gettin' home. Well, what I wanted to say, Mr. Binney, about John Dolan, understand? Well, I seen John last night an' he said, suppose anyone was astin' for him, he just took a boat for Alaska an' will probably never be back, on ac—"

"Hello! Hello!" Mr. Binney said; and there was a short pause and then some lady said, very bright and cheerful:

"Hello, Mr. Binney. I'm sorry. Mr. Fishback just fainted again. This is Miss Winkler speaking, the head surgical nurse here at the hospital. You see, Mr. Fishback was picked up beside the tracks and we think he must have been run over by a Long Island train and—I beg pardon?" she said, and there was another short pause. "Hello, Mr. Binney? That was the house surgeon and he says Mr. Fishback must have been run over by several Long Island trains. But don't worry, Mr. Binney, if you're a friend of his. We have him nearly all sewed together now and he'll be all right when—I beg pardon?" she said, and there was still another short pause. "That was the house surgeon again and I guess that's all, Mr. Binney. We have to give Mr. Fishback a transfusion now!"



They're Swindling You!

A Post Office Fraud Order

By

Frank Wrentmore

This is the one-hundred-and-thirty-first 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.

IN the case of the General Institute, a correspondence school, the Post Office Department issued a fraud order and at the hearing before the Solicitor in Washington these important facts were brought out, facts that should be of interest to many readers of this series:

"Extensive testimony of a prominent official of the United States Civil Service Commission, adduced by the government at the hearing, shows that appointment to civil service positions is not confined to persons who have taken open competitive examinations therefor, as pretended by the General Institute, but may be secured in a number of ways, namely, under acts of Congress without any examination whatsoever; by a showing that the applicant is properly qualified, as in the case of unusual positions such as Japanese interpreter; by reinstatement of former employees and by transfer or promotion of persons actually within the classified service. The testimony of the foregoing witness shows also that a number of titles for positions set forth in the literature of the General Institute are misnomers; that examinations

for various others, notably the stenographer-typist examination, it was testified that many thousands of names are now on the register of eligibles already available, with no examination in prospect. According to the testimony of this witness, out of approximately 712,000 persons taking civil service examinations in the year 1936, only about six per cent were actually appointed to positions in the government service.

"The testimony of the civil service expert shows further that civil service examinations are designed to ascertain the qualifications of applicants for the particular positions involved and in a large percentage of cases preliminary experience, institutional training or a college education or its equivalent is a prerequisite to appointment. In view of this testimony it is manifest that even the most diligent study of the arithmetic, geography, history and other elementary subjects included in the General Institute 'course' would fail to enable victims of this scheme to pass examinations for medical, chemical, architectural, engineering, metallurgical, and other positions referred to in the literature of respondents in this case. The evidence shows that out of ninety-seven country-wide civil service examinations recently held only three were based solely on so-called 'assembled' tests or examina-

tions, and that appointment is not necessarily limited to the individual receiving the highest examination rating, but may be made from any one of the three persons whose names are highest on the register of eligibles.

"Aside from the foregoing facts and circumstances, the evidence shows also that persons appointed to positions in the classified civil service must demonstrate by medical certificate by a Federal medical officer that they are free from organic heart disease, syphilis, gonorrhea, diabetes, epilepsy, arteriosclerosis, tuberculosis, insanity, malignant tumor, and other ailments, the presence or absence of which according to the testimony of a medical expert adduced at the hearing is a matter, the determination of which necessitates expert scientific tests and knowledge. In the light of these facts, it is obvious that many persons are likely to be induced to purchase General Institute 'courses' despite the fact that they may be disqualified by physical afflictions of the type enumerated from ever securing the positions sought.

"Despite the indiscriminate sale of courses by this concern under representations to the effect that they will enable purchasers to secure appointments as rural carriers, city carriers and post office clerks, the evidence shows that only persons who actually live within the delivery of the post office involved are permitted to take the examination for rural mail carrier and that due to the fact that patron-residents of the office are placed first on the register for city carrier and of post office clerk, the likelihood of non-residents of securing appointments to those positions is negligible. Notwithstanding the foregoing facts, according to a written statement furnished by Mandell to the inspector who investigated

this case, only two applicants for his courses have been rejected since the inauguration of his scheme."

NOW there is a very good—and official—outline of what you are up against if you are looking for a government job. The government has nothing to sell you and honest schools will give you the same information—they all know the facts. And the many honest schools only make it easier for the other kind to prey upon the gullible seekers after government jobs, which is the most despicable part of this racket.

When it became evident to the proprietors of General Institute that the game was about up, or that the Post Office Department was going to take a hand, they played their final card, a dirty deuce. They addressed a letter to recent purchasers of "courses" which read:

"At a special meeting of the Officers of the General Institute, Inc., on August 14th, it was decided to expand the activities of this institute with the idea in mind of rendering a more valuable and extensive service to its students; to carry out this program means the expenditure of a considerable sum.

"In order to accomplish this aim the officers of the Institute have decided to offer a special discount to those students whose accounts are in good standing as of August 14, 1937. The balance due on your account is \$40. If you will pay your account in full within the next thirty days, we will be glad to offer you a discount of \$7."

Whether this scheme worked or not, I don't know, but they certainly tried hard to squeeze the last nickel out of those they had defrauded out of many dollars; honest men and schoolboys who only wanted to prepare themselves for an honest job.

Solving Cipher Secrets

A cipher is secret writing. The way to solve ciphers is to experiment with substitute letters until real words begin to appear. In solving, notice the frequency of certain letters. For instance, the letters e, t, a, o, n, i, are the most used in our language. So if the puzzle maker has



M. E. OHAYER
"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.

HERE is the first part, cryptofans, of our †Honor Roll for 1937! Fifty-two solvers had perfect scores, "completes" for puzzles Nos. 1-312! And 240 others submitted 100 or more answers! The rest of the list will appear next week! Degree and dagger signs mark °ICC and †HR members!

†HONOR ROLL for 1937

312 Answers—°Aachen; °Jay Abey; °Amanovlettus; †Attempt; °Baab; °See Bee Bee; °Warren G. Brown; °Mrs. C. G. Burroughs; °Blue Hen Chick; °CIPHERMIT; †Judson H. Clark; °Comrade; †Jos. M. Crosby; †Cryptanalyst; °W. E. Dalton; °M. E.; °Edmaca; °Arty Ess; °Ezymarc; †Farad; °C. F.; °G. Fulton; †Michael G. H. Gelsinger; †The Griffin; °T. Hegarty; †Holly; °G. M. Howe; †H. Hyman; °Alter Idem; °U. U. Jeff; °Kate; °E. H. Loyd, Jr.; °Minerva; °Betty Murray; °Hard Boiled One; †Phoney; †Piscator; °Primrose; †Don Ricardo; °Alice Routh; °Mrs. H. A. Seals; °Sleepy; °Dick Tate; °Old Timer; †Tramsobend; †Paw Tucket; °Mrs. James Wallen; °E. A. Wilson; †H. W.; °Doctor X.; °Lew Zirn; °A. R. Zorn.

311—°Jaefsee; °Kismet; °Lethargic; †Leotta Lowery. 310—†Copper-Plate; †Sherlac. 309—°R. L. Blaha; °Sam Isen; °Nice, A. M. 307—°A. W. Smith. 306—†Howard N. Hehr; †Ker; °Jack-Stay. 305—†Mrs. Opal Hurt; †G. E. Long; †pH7. 304—†Los Ang; †Arrowhead; °Box Six. 303—°Jayem. 302—†Frank S. Burlingame; °Jonesibus; †Keystonian; °Retlaw Maldim; †Nedyah. 301—°G. A. Slight. 300—†Envy El; °J. C. K.; †Tyro V.

299—°Mrs. F. M. Ingalls. 298—°Porthos. 297—°Jayel; †Captain Jo. 295—†The Barron; °H. Le Care; †Mrs. Josephine Spalding; °Nick

Spar. 294—°Herbert E. Batho; †Hilda II; †Joubert. 293—°Gold Bug; †Doc K. 291—†Bugler; †Helen P. Foote; °Hitch; †Sam Spiegel; †Tobey. 290—†Age. 289—†Donald P. Crane. 287—†Marie Abild; †Derfy; °Dr. S. F. Hedcock; †Mrs. Bertha Luckmun; †Kay Vee See. 285—°A. Meredith. 284—°W. R. W. 283—†Cryptox; °Sue de Nymme. 282—†Chas. F. Bridewell; °Joseph E. Conklin; †F. A. Gauntt; †Saco. 281—†Enbay; †Mrs. Lynn Kaiser. 280—†Penny. 279—†H. H.; †Fae Malon. 278—†Gadder. 277—†Alpha Bet. 276—†Ah-tin-du. 275—†James G. Karns; †Thomas E. Roberts. 273—†Dictionary. 272—°Cucumber. 271—†Mabel B. Canon; °Pangram. 270—†P. J. B.; °A. Has-Been; †Dogmaamgod; †Hawk; †Nickle-Plate; †Speck. 268—†Robert De Mougeot. 266—†Zarkov. 264—°O. I. See. 263—†L. S. H.; °Hugh B. Rossell. 261—†Steve. 259—°Yogi. 255—°Edward J. Drumm. 252—°Makem Harder; †S. Kransby; °Magi; †Vegee. 251—†How Carso; †Lucille Little. 250—†Chi Valor.

This week's puzzles: The key to No. 85 runs 0123456 789. In No. 86, note E and ZENZ, BUELZ and ELU. In No. 87, guess RPU and VPSR, then *VSNPAKTRZK and KZ. No. 88 offers NKNZD, GSNOZ, and GA for entry. In No. 89 try for YGAARY and YAZRG. Asterisks indicate capitals.

No. 85—Cryptic Division. By °Jay Abey.

B B B B) N M M X E (B
A C C I Y
A A O X

No. 86—Terrestrial Trails. By Tohoz.

RELLSGP ETTSYUGXZ, BU ELU PHHY OHL E RSDDSHG
BUELZ NUX, ZENZ E *TASTEPH KANZSTSZX. RVX KLHKA-
UXSTEDDN SGTDSGUY AUGZ ZAHVDY GHX THVGX FSDD-
UGSVFZ RUOHLU XAUN ELU AEXTAU.

No. 87—Geographical Barriers. By †Bea Em Sea.

*LSUNSF LFZNNUY RPU *FGDALZK, *PSKKADSH LFZNNUY
RPU *SHXN; *VSNPAKTRZK LFZNNUY RPU *YUHSVSFU,
—VPSR, KZ RFSOOAL LZNX?

No. 88—Hollywood Habits. By Ichor.

PROUD PAYNLM, PONG UOTSG, HNP GOXN NRZUD NKNZD
LOTSG, XREN DAVLT JAXNL LOFNUD MUOX, RUMA SNUB
GA TNG GSNOZ "SOX."

No. 89—Birds Become Burrowers. By Wally.

XTKV NUDYRTLTFTRSRAU YGAARY YHVXSUL RAXSUL
EKVTPF LZBHY. RXTP USOOTRY LUAN DSURGX SUL. EKA-
BH BAPRTPZDY YAZRG. SZLTDPBD FSYN.

No. 90—Gruesome Picnic. By Katl.

OPR ONIHBC, ZNXAG, CONVOYS CONRAL CONTALC 'OP-
TKO YSICH PIUUC. DTNCO YIOYS CORNG YINNETAL FIFE.
AVKO CHICS IXOR-LENR. YIXLSO FE STYG CUVXOS. CSRO.

LAST WEEK'S ANSWERS

79—Key: 0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9
GLAZY CRWTH

80—"The first of April, some do say
Is set apart for All Fools' day;
But why the people call it so,
Nor I, nor they themselves, do know."
—Poor Robin's Almanac.

81—Trying words for combinations is great fun! Thus, in "dogma" and "puppet," we not only have "dog" and "pet," but also "ma" and "pup."

82—The crwth, primitive instrument resembling the violin, had six strings, four for the bow and two to be plucked with the thumb.

83—White-whiskered wheelsman whiffs whiskey, whispers whirlwind whoppers, whilst wheyface wharfman, whistling wheezily, whistles whimsical whirligig whatnot.

84—Foxy bachelor has radio, whiskey soda, sixty mixed extra sox, convex stomach, onyx ring, prolix lawyer, loyal foxhound. Awful syntax hoax? Yeah, man!

All correct solutions of the current puzzles will be duly listed in our *Cipher Solvers' Club* for April. Address: M. E. Ohaver, DETECTIVE FICTION WEEKLY, 280 Broadway, New York, N. Y.

FLASHES FROM READERS

WE TOLD YOU, in the February 26 issue, how the editors of the ARGOSY had finally goaded us into supporting a Cause. A magazine, they insisted, should have a Purpose and a Goal. After much deliberation, we launched our Fervent Society Against Debunking the Story of What George Washington Said When His Father Asked Him About That Cherry Tree, known as the FSADSWGWS-WHFAHATCT for short.

The response has been overwhelming, and we are reveling in the jealous attention which the ARGOSY staff is giving our mail basket. Men and women from all walks of life have flocked to our standard, enrolling by the hundreds, writing such praise that blushes of modest confusion have come once more to our leathery cheeks.

The first to enlist in our Society—the vanguard of the army—was

U. U. JEFF

whose short note sets the pace for the others.

DEAR ED:—

Please enroll me in your FSADSWGWS-

WHFAHATCT. I class this historical event in the same category as the belief in Santa Claus and it should remain "undebunked." Furthermore, if and when debunking becomes necessary, I suggest the layman turn the job over to Frank Wrentmore, who is doing a swell job along these lines. Massillon, Ohio.

A letter from

ANDREW GRIGGS

raises our first serious problem in connection with the Society.

DEAR EDITOR:—

Please enroll me at once in the FSADSWGWSWHFAHATCT. May we have emblems—maybe an axe and a severed cherry tree?—and perhaps a Society Bulletin?

Washington, D. C.

It was a serious oversight on our part to neglect stating that, in addition to there being no dues, lantern-slide lectures, nor testimonial dinners, there will be no emblems, badges, cards of identification nor annual picnic and baseball game. As for a bulletin: Let's try to keep this thing under control. For the nonce, at least, we will be glad to offer space in these pages to the Society's doings.

NEXT WEEK—

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THE ORIENT: The War Eagle with ten million in cash aboard her sails for a rendezvous with disaster in the sub-infested China Seas

GUNS FOR KANSAS **PHILIP KETCHUM**
THE WEST: "Are you Slave, stranger, or Abolitionist?" Men asked that question in those days and a six-gun waited for the wrong answer

DARK REBELLION **THEODORE ROSCOE**
IRELAND: The Black and Tans are turnin' Dublin inside out for the Collins, but divvil a chance they have of findin' him

★ Five Short Stories ★

NINE FLIGHTS TO WATERLOO **MAX BRAND**
MANHATTAN: O'Henry's Baghdad on the Subway seen through 1938 eyes

WITHOUT HORNS **ROBERT CARSE**
HAITI: Black goat, white goat—and the throb of drums in the jungle

SMOOTH SAILOR **RICHARD HOWELLS WATKINS**
THE CARIBBEAN: Iake Borg was Diogenes in reverse—searching the world for one dishonest man

DUELLO **RICHARD SALE**
ROMANCE: Twenty paces, gentlemen—and fire at the count of three

MOSQUITO COUNTRY **FRANK RICHARDSON PIERCE**
NORTH: Alaska sets nature's barriers to guard her hoards of gold

DOLLARS AND SENSE **STOOKE ALLEN**
BEATING THE DRUM **THE EDITORS**

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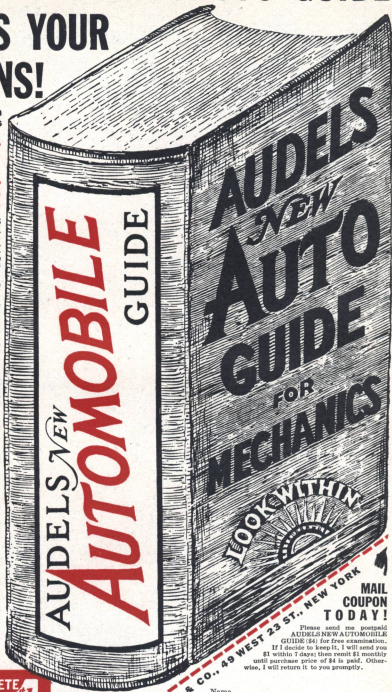
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