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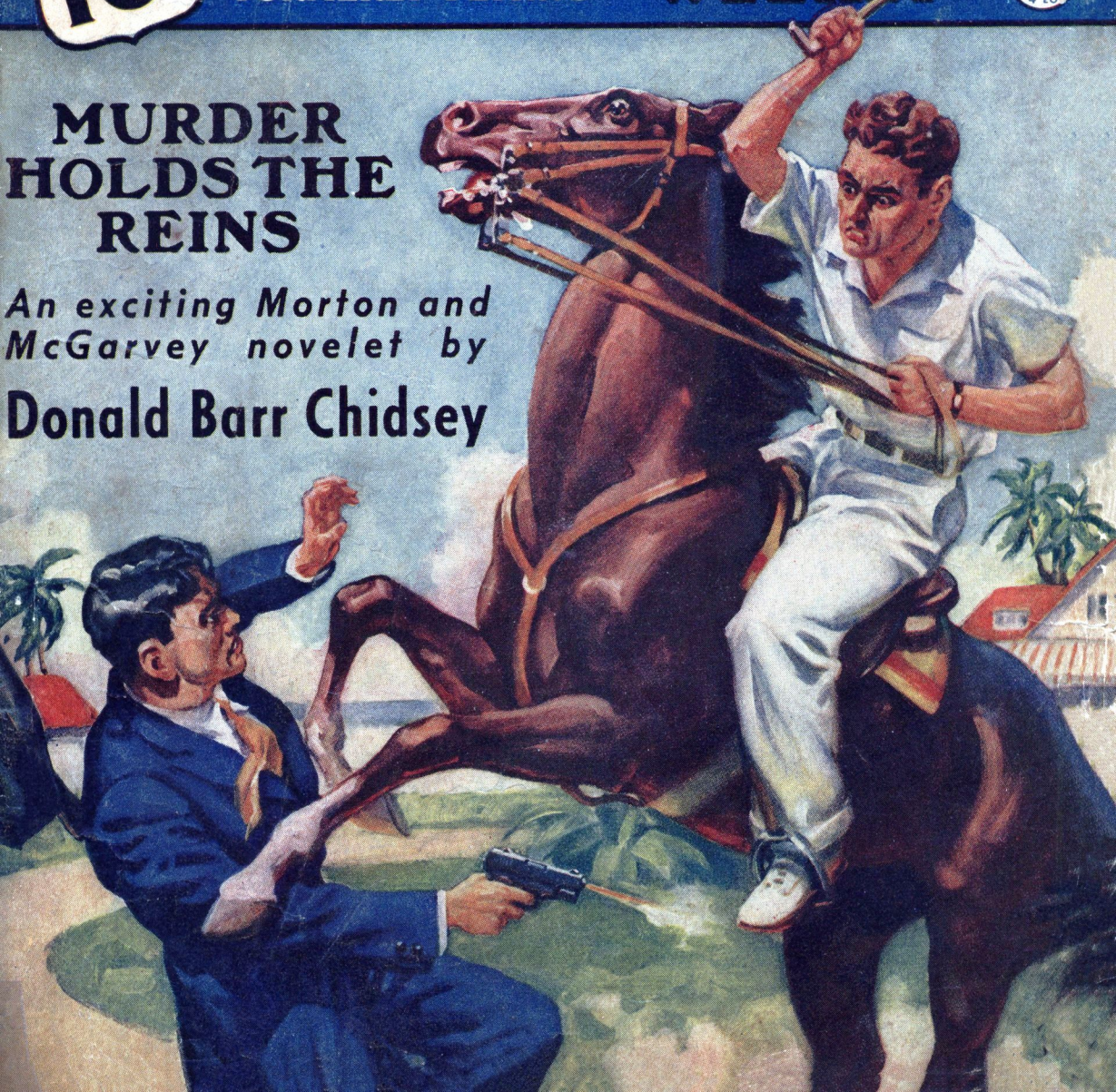
FORMERLY FLYNN'S

**WEEKLY**



## MURDER HOLDS THE REINS

*An exciting Morton and  
McGarvey novelet by*  
**Donald Barr Chidsey**





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# DETECTIVE

## FICTION WEEKLY



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VOLUME 136

April 20, 1940

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Illustrating Murder Holds the Reins

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Eerie figures, crouched low, were moving  
among the palmettos

## Murder Holds the Reins

### I

**H**E STEPPED lumpily down. There were only three bodyguards with him—he who used to sport at least a dozen—and he looked peevish when he faced Morton and McGarvey. He was squat and ugly. The backs of his hands were mats of thick black hair, and his chin and cheeks were blue-black in startling contrast to the rest of his face, dead-pale from the penitentiary. Indeed, except for the bright blue raincoat and slate-gray fedora, he looked inhuman and might have been one of those fantastic composites the medievalists were fond of

writing about, for he had the mouth of a pig, the hands of a bear, and the eyes of a venomous snake, while his body resembled that of a great frog uncertain whether and in which direction to jump.

"Cops, eh?"

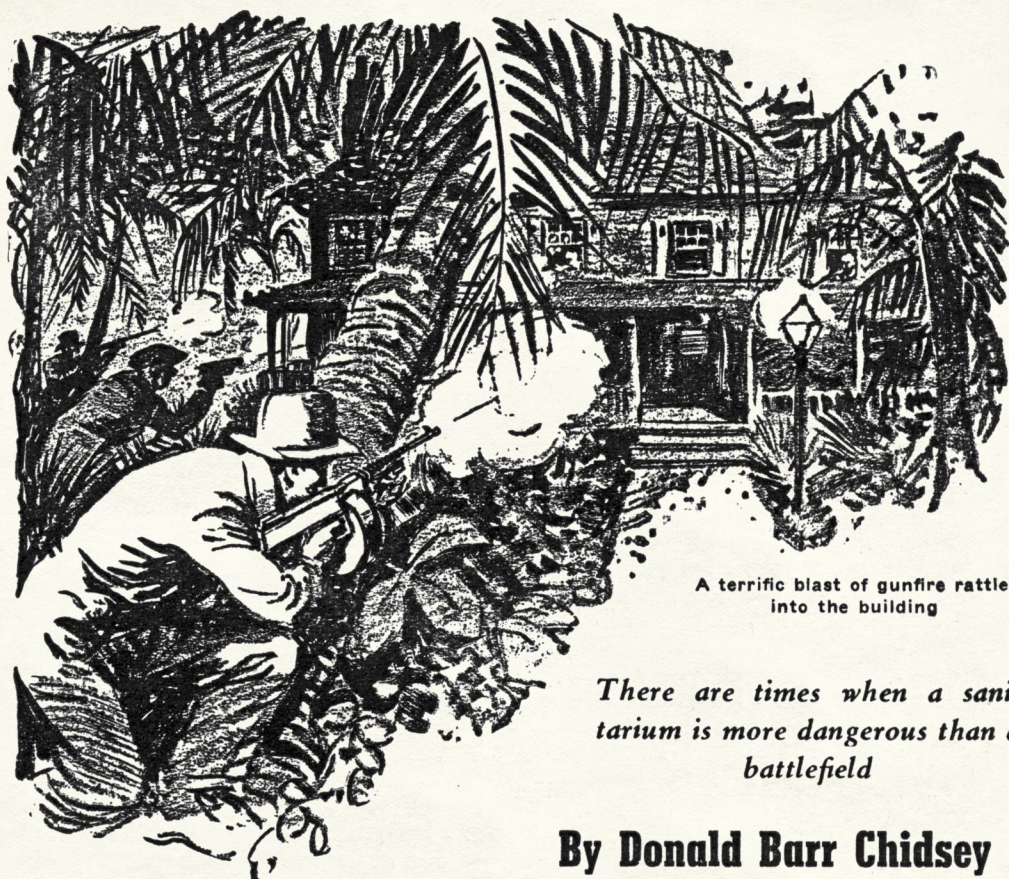
"Cops," Morton confirmed patiently. "Just walk around behind the end of this next train, Lassa, and we'll slip you out. That is, unless you want to go out through the regular way. There's a crowd."

"My car—"

"I arranged with the driver to go around to the side door."

"All right." He did not even blink,





A terrific blast of gunfire rattled  
into the building

*There are times when a sanitarium is more dangerous than a battlefield*

**By Donald Barr Chidsey**

though his eyes were bright with suspicion. "Only it ain't a pinch, is it?"

"No, it isn't a pinch," Morton said wearily. "I only wish we could *pinch* you. Come on."

Only a few people saw the party get into the car and there were no other cars near enough and ready to give chase. But of course there was a crowd outside of the mansion in Brickell Avenue. There had been a crowd there all morning.

"I'm not going to give you guys any trouble," Lassa said once.

"I hope not."

"I'm absolutely out of the rackets."

"We'd be much happier if you were out of Miami too."

"I never pulled anything funny down here."

"No, as far as I know you never did. But we don't want you. Too many men are anxious to see you stretched on a slab. Of course we can't prevent you from occupying your own property."

"Damn' right you can't!"

The bodyguards clustered close around him as he climbed out of the car. The crowd was silent, eager to see but not breaking out into either cheers or hisses. Cameras in the hands of amateurs and professionals alike clicked in a high furious chorus. Somebody inside the wall unlocked the great steel gate and opened it a few inches.

Joe Lassa, you would have said, was



going from one prison to another, though this second one, his home, was certainly more comfortable than Alcatraz. Locally it was known as Machine Gun Hall, and all sorts of stories were told about it. Lassa had it not as a hideaway but rather as a retiring place, a place in which he could be quiet. It resembled a fortress. The wall around three sides of the property was ten feet high and surmounted by broken glass. There were only two gates, the main one and a small tradesmen's gate which nobody had ever seen opened. Neither was barred; they were made instead of solid sheet steel and each was topped by spikes. Only a few days ago, in preparation for the return of the lord of the manor, a servant inside, presumably standing on a step ladder, had spent several hours sharpening those spikes.

Machine Gun Hall itself was not visible from Brickell Avenue or from the properties on either side, because of this wall. It could be seen from the fourth side, which was formed by Biscayne Bay, beachless at this point and held back by a sea wall. Along the top of this sea wall was a double 12-foot fence of barbed wire, the strands very close together. It was said that this fence was charged with electricity, but nobody had ever come close enough to find out.

Now Lassa balanced on the balls of his feet, his hands deep in the pockets of that bright blue raincoat.

"This is as far as you come, cops."

"This is far enough." Morton, like his partner young McGarvey, was not even looking at the broken rackets king but at the crowd, his eyes flicking from man to man. There were three other detectives posted in that crowd and they too were busy studying faces. You couldn't be too careful at a moment like this. It was a hell of a nervous strain.

"Well, don't stand there," Morton snarled, still not looking at Joe Lassa. "If you're going in, go ahead in!"

The man nodded sourly and stepped toward the gate, which was opened a few inches more. There was a general surging of the crowd. Everybody wanted to get a glimpse of Machine Gun Hall.

"Well, goodbye, flatfoot. I hope I never see you again."

"I hope you never do too!"

THE gate clanged shut. Nobody stirred. They all stood there as if they still hoped that something violent would happen.

McGarvey yelled at them: "All right, now let's move along. If you like to see rats so much why don't you buy a trap and catch a few? If you—"

He was interrupted by a terrific explosion.

The sound was so great that it did not seem great at all. A sharper, lesser sound would have been harder on the eardrums. This was dull and low, yet at the same time it was tremendous, shaking the earth, thudding the very air in upon itself so that everybody in the crowd had the curious sensation of being pushed from all sides at once. The gate, the thick, steel gate, *poofed* outward like that much cardboard, its lock smashed. It sagged on twisted hinges. Smoke swirled out through that opening. The hideous silence that followed was broken, after what seemed whole minutes, by a thin, persistent rattle: bits of earth, bits of shrubbery, the leaves of trees, petals of flowers from the garden inside, sticks, stones, pattered and floated down in a ghastly rain.

People began running around. Women screamed, men shouted. Two women slid to the sidewalk and were motionless. Another fell on her knees and



began to pray in a high hysterical voice.

McGarvey cried to the other detectives, "Hold 'em back!" and he and Morton scrambled through the violated gate.

Here was hell. It might have been a battlefield just after an artillery bombardment. The air was chokey with dust and great long sluggish streamers of smoke. Trees, bushes, hedges had been stripped of leaves. Between the gate and Machine Gun Hall was a deep irregular hole, like a volcano's crater. In it, along its edges, and stuck grotesquely in the bare, broken, splintered shrubbery and trees were scraps of clothing and mangled chunks of human flesh.

"They did a good job of it," Morton muttered, and stooped to pick up the shredded remains of a bright blue raincoat. He picked up also a slate-gray fedora which looked as though it had been through a concrete mixer and then held over a fire: there were black hairs clinging to it. "Yes, they did it right, all right."

ONE of the things young McGarvey never ceased to complain to his partner about was Morton's secrecy. Everybody complained about it—nobody ever knew what Morton was up to, not even his superiors, to whom he blandly refused to report except on the most trivial matters until he had a case ready for the pinch. But McGarvey complained about it most of all.

Yet Morton was Morton. He was famous, a public hero. He had his own methods, and he got results. So why interfere with him? He was waxing old, and drank a lot, and he was kind of cantankerous sometimes when he thought fellow detectives were too inquisitive. It was better to let him alone. You couldn't get anything out of him

he didn't want to tell anyway. Keeping his trap shut was more than a policy with Morton; it was a fixed habit.

He was old enough to be McGarvey's father—indeed McGarvey's father, dead now, had been for years Morton's friend and sidekick—and he still treated young McGarvey like an overgrown kid.

"All you ever use me for is when there's going to be a fight!"

"That's all you're good for."

The bombing of Machine Gun Hall created a nationwide sensation. Joe Lassa had been followed and interviewed and photographed from San Francisco to Chicago, from Chicago to Miami. Everybody was wondering when the blow-off would come; and when it did come it not only tore four men to pieces but jolted the whole country.

Not that it was deplored. There was a general belief that it was the best thing that could have happened. Joe Lassa had long ago ceased to be picturesque. People had come to see him for what he was, a hoodlum who had started something he couldn't stop and who should have been sent to the electric chair many times over. His protestations that he was out of the rackets now and only wanted to be left alone, convinced nobody. Even if he really had wanted to live quietly, obviously he wouldn't be permitted to do so. Sooner or later, the boys who had taken over his interests while he was in jail were going to get him, and it was just as well that it had happened right away.

All the same, murder had been committed, and it was up to the police to do something about it. The fact that the men who had been killed thoroughly deserved what they got had nothing to do with the case.

Not much evidence remained. The bomb, which experts decided must have



consisted of a very large charge of TNT or some similar high explosive and must have been buried just inside the gate, blew everything nearby into such small bits that even after days of patient sifting and assembling there was no way to be sure of its size and nature.

There had been only one servant in Machine Gun Hall when the bomb went off, and he had not seen it happen—or said he hadn't. He really was a professional house servant, not a gangster, and though they held him for several days at headquarters they got nothing out of him. He said, and he was probably telling the truth, that though he knew who it was he was to work for, actually he had never seen Joe Lassa. He'd been hired through an agency.

One thing was certain. It had not been a time bomb. Nobody would have gone to all that trouble, danger and expense to plant a time bomb for the arrival of a man who might be late. What if Lassa had not gone directly to his house? What if the train had been delayed? What if he had gone for a drive, waiting for darkness so that he could sneak in more quietly? What if the cops had found some excuse for picking him up and questioning him? No, it wasn't a time bomb.

They found the wires, after considerable searching. The wires, above ground, what was left of them, went along the inside of the wall and underneath the forgotten tradesmen's gate. From there they dodged unobtrusively into the sidewalk-bordering hedge of the next estate. Anybody in the crowd might have seen them there, the few feet of them exposed between the tradesmen's gate and the end of the hedge, but nobody had happened to do so. People had been too absorbed in the sight of Joe Lassa himself.

The wires went along the inside of

the hedge for a short distance and then entered a simple detonating box to which was attached an automobile battery hidden in hibiscus. The man who set off the bomb could not have seen the front gate of Machine Gun Hall but by leaning over the hedge a little he could easily have seen the crowd.

Whoever that man was, he didn't leave any fingerprints or footprints or cigarette butts or in fact anything else likely to assist investigation. It would have been a simple matter, of course, for him to slip away in the excitement.

From newspaper photographers Morton got pictures of the crowd. He had them greatly enlarged. There were a few which had been taken at the very instant of the explosion.

"I think you're wasting your time," McGarvey complained. "I've gone all over town again with Snyder and Holtz, those two dicks Chicago sent down, and they swear they can't see anybody who might possibly be mixed up in it."

Morton said "Yeah," looking at the photographs. After a while he put them into an envelope, and went out.

## II

HE was a man with a million friends, more or less. He had a wonderful memory for faces and names. And living in Miami, as he always had, he met people from all parts of the country and in all walks of life.

Gains, for example. Gains had been an inspector of police in Chicago until his retirement a few years before. He was old and testy and lived by himself out in Coconut Grove. Morton used to drop in and drink a glass of beer with him every now and then.

"The little guy raising his arm. Who would he be?"



"Listen, Mort, I like you. But when I quit Chicago I really *quit!*"

"I know, but still . . . You were there while Joe Lassa was Number One. Who's that shrimp raising his arm? A couple of sleuths named Holtz and Snyder are here. Came to look the town over before Lassa arrived, to make sure there wasn't a gathering of the clans. Well, they didn't recognize anybody."

"They wouldn't."

"Oh, you *do* know him, then?"

Gains looked nervous. He did not pretend to be public-spirited. All he wanted was to be left alone.

"Listen, Mort, if I tell you . . . Oh well, it probably won't help you much anyway, because Claessens never had any criminal record. Albert Claessens. Used to do snoop work for a shyster."

"He'd know Lassa when he saw him?"

"Oh, sure. He knows everybody. But precious few people know him. I don't know why . . . He just had a knack of being inconspicuous. We picked him up a few times but we never got anything out of him. His boss died a month or so ago. I read about it in the paper."

"He'd know Lassa and he'd know everybody in the underworld," Morton murmured, studying the picture, "and he's out of a job, and he was raising his arm in that crowd just as . . . I guess I'd better be going. Thanks for the beer and so forth, Gains."

Soon afterward he turned the picture over to McGarvey. There was no reason why McGarvey shouldn't do the routine work. He was an enormous youngster and sometimes lost his head, but for ordinary day-by-day detective work he was all right.

"Go look."

"Listen, Mort, if he fingered Joe Lassa, he certainly wouldn't be hanging around this part of the world now."

"He might be. There's a lot of funny angles to this case."

To save time, they went separate ways, each armed not with a full picture, for that might excite or divert possible identifiers who had seen it in some paper, but only with the cutout figure of Albert Claessens. They went to hotels, ticket offices, taxi stands, all the usual places. They had expected a long, tiresome and perhaps fruitless search, but McGarvey clicked at the third spot he visited. He phoned Morton at several places (for each knew the route the other would take) and located him in a car rental establishment.

"You were right. He's here at the Columbus. A clerk and an elevator boy are positive. He's up in his room now."

"I'll come right over."

A FEW minutes later the veteran walked into the lobby. Gray-haired, dignified of mein, an immaculate handkerchief in his breast pocket, an immaculate Panama on his head, he looked more than ever like some prosperous, conservative businessman. Yet he was chewing a cigar. It seemed to Young McGarvey, who worshipped him, that Morton was smoking an uncommon lot of cigars lately. McGarvey himself never smoked or drank.

"There's a couple of guys went up to his room since I called you. I didn't see them but the bellhop told me they looked tough."

Morton nodded.

"Well, we've met tough guys before. Come on."

The door of Claessens' room was thrown open as they approached it. Claessens came out. They recognized him instantly from his picture. He was a pale, blurred, indefinite, gray-faced man of middle age, who didn't look as



though he had guts enough to swat a fly.

He was followed by two firm-jawed young men, each of them holding one of his elbows.

"What's all this?"

One of the men said, "Out of the way, buddy."

"Out of the way, hell," said Morton. With his left hand—his right was on the pistol under his coat—he fished out his badge. "We'd like to talk to your friend Albert Claessens, if it wouldn't trouble you too much to let go of him."

Claessens himself remained expressionless, but the two men grinned.

"Cops, eh?" the first one said. "I'm afraid you're a little too late." He took a wallet out of his pocket, flipped it open, passed it to Morton. "Federal Bureau of Investigation. This is our prisoner."

Morton slammed his cigar into a cuspidor. He was no longer the mild-mannered dignified businessman.

"You damn' federals! Every time a man starts getting anywhere, *you* come barging in! I want this guy!"

"What charge?"

"Vagrancy," answered Morton, who had not previously thought of this.

"Sorry. He's our prisoner."

"What do *you* want him for?"

"Why should I tell you?"

"Because we happen to be city detectives and if you don't tell us what you want this man for, and show us a warrant, we'll run you both in on charges of attempted kidnaping. Just try us and see."

Even this did not nonplus the G-men. One drawled, "Okay," and produced a warrant, which he permitted Morton to see. "Bankruptcy fraud case in Chicago last year. Satisfied?"

"No! That isn't what you're picking him up for, really."

"Well, if it comes to that, vagrancy isn't what you were going to pick him up for—really."

"Listen, we want to question this man."

"After we're through. I don't know how long that's going to take. We might cart him off to Chicago first. Well, toodle-oo."

The G-men and Claessens went down in the elevator, and McGarvey, turning to say something to Morton, learned that Morton was no longer by his side.

He went into Claessens' room, the door of which had been left open. Morton was standing in the middle of the room, looking around. There was not much to see. An open suitcase, fully packed on the bed, was the only sign of recent occupancy. It contained a pair of binoculars and various items of wearing apparel.

"Funny thing that he should have field glasses. . . ."

"Came down to see the races maybe."

"The racing season doesn't start for more'n a month yet."

"Well, I don't know . . . Listen, Mort, let's get going! Our only chance is to keep right after those smart guys and maybe they'll let us in on the questioning."

"Yeah, you're right, Come on."

THE other car went up Biscayne Boulevard, slowly at first but it picked up speed and began to weave in and out of traffic.

McGarvey scowled. What did these guys think they were doing? Did they think they could get away from *him*, the best driver in the department? They had a bigger car, yes, but at the wheel of a police Ford, in traffic, McGarvey could catch any other machine in the world.



"They keep this up," he shouted above the roar of the engine, "and I'll cut 'em off and give 'em a ticket for speeding."

"They keep this up," Morton shouted back, "and they'll be past the city line and out where they can drop us behind."

"You think so?"

The Ford still had some speed in reserve. It jerked forward when McGarvey flattened the accelerator; its tires sang a loud, high song; rocking from side to side, it began to overtake the larger car.

Other machines made for the curb, their drivers cursing. A traffic cop blew his whistle, but the "peep" was thin and tiny and the wind snatched it instantly away.

"Watch us now," yelled McGarvey, and somehow he made the Ford go even a little faster.

At that moment a round white splotch appeared on the windshield. Something clanged tinnily off the side of the hood, removing a strip of paint.

"The so-and-sos are shooting at us," McGarvey yelled. "Give 'em a few back, Mort!"

Morton shook his head. He had his revolver out but he would not shoot. There wasn't one chance in a hundred, going like this, of hitting a tire or the gasoline tank. But there was an excellent chance of hitting a pedestrian or the innocent driver of another car.

"Well then, I'll shove 'em off the road!"

It was a dumb cluck who spoiled everything, the kind of guy who drove like an old woman, who usually only drove on Sundays anyway and shouldn't have been allowed to do so even then. They were somewhere up in North Miami, still on the Boulevard. To right and left were private residences,

neat little houses, each an island in a sea of grass and flowers. Here and there, on the right, a side street cut over toward the water; and it was out of one of these side streets that the cluck came. Looking apparently neither one way nor the other, he trundled right out into the Boulevard, just missing the back of the first speeding car. That seemed to startle him. Perhaps it was the first time he had seen it. Anyway he did the worst thing possible. He slammed on his brakes and came to a full stop, right there in the middle of the boulevard.

There was a car coming south, coming at a good clip too. To swing right, trying to turn into the street out of which the cluck had come, would have meant to upset the Ford, which was moving much too fast for any such trick. There was only one thing to do; and McGarvey did it.

He swerved a little to the right, missing the end of the stalled car by inches. He mounted the curb with a crash, blowing both front tires, shot over the sidewalk, crossed a lawn, snapped through a hibiscus hedge, went between two ornamental date palms, and at last came to a stop at the foot of the veranda steps of a house whose occupant was going to be sore as a pup about all this.

The cluck leaned out of his car, having started the engine again. "Sorry," he called. He trundled on down the boulevard.

McGarvey was so mad he didn't even think to take the cluck's number. As for Morton, he actually cried. He didn't bury his head in his arms, but he stared through the smashed windshield, his lips moving, and there were tears, real tears, coursing down his cheeks. It was horrible to see a man like Morton cry. It scared McGarvey.



## III

THE rest of that day, and all the next day, Morton seemed to go to pieces. He smoked one black cigar after another. He drank continuously, and not beer but whisky. His face was strained, his step uncertain. When he signed reports or scribbled memos his hand shook. He did not talk much, but he blamed himself for the whole fiasco.

After all, he pointed out, while young McGarvey, worried as a mother hen, *tut-tutted* and *poo-pooed*—after all, he alone, had looked at the fake F.B.I. credentials and the fake federal warrant. *He* had done it, not McGarvey. *He* had loitered in Claessens' room to see what Claessens had left, instead of going right out with those men and climbing into the car with them, as McGarvey had properly proposed. It made matters no better that Morton never had liked G-men. He respected them; but he didn't like them. They got in his way. The G-men, after all, though Morton didn't phrase it like this, had a different way of investigating. They worked in cooperation, at least with one another. They were a team. Whereas old Morton instinctively and always played a lone hand.

Miami, whether Morton liked it or not, was getting plenty of attention from Washington, not as a result of the bombing, which left the federal government no excuse for horning in, being strictly a local police matter, but as a result rather of that very chase up Biscayne Boulevard for which Morton held himself responsible. Posing as a federal officer is a serious offense; and there was absolutely no question, after McGarvey and Morton had described the two abductors of Claessens to the special F.B.I. field agent who flew

down from Jacksonville, that they had been imposters and their credentials and warrant forgeries. The big chief in the big, white Department of Justice building in Pennsylvania Avenue, was shooting agents into Miami by every train. They would probably yet manage to snatch the credit for any arrest that might be made.

McGarvey and Morton described those two men to Snyder and Holtz of Chicago too, but Snyder and Holtz did not recognize them. This was no surprise. Except for Albert Claessens himself, the men who engineered the bombings were not likely to be Chicago men. That would be too obvious. Chicago men might be behind the whole business, probably were, but they would not appear in person. Anticipating the presence in Miami of such detectives as Holtz and Snyder, they would hire gunmen from other cities.

Claessens of course was different. The face and figure of Joe Lassa had been made familiar to millions of newspaper readers, but Lassa was a smart man who might switch his own double into the midst of his bodyguard, himself sneaking away somewhere else. Lassa had certainly known that they'd be gunning for him. Men who did not really know him personally could not be expected to identify a possible double. It needed somebody like Claessens.

"But why was Claessens still hanging around? That's what I want to know!" McGarvey stalked the floor, perplexed, though more worried about his partner's condition than he was about racketeers and bombs. "Those two smart guys were up in the hotel room to take him away, and they probably had the credentials and the warrant with them just on the chance they might be interrupted. I suppose somebody downstairs, some bellhop maybe,



phoned to tip them that we were coming up. We'll probably never find out who it was. But why was Claessens still *there*?"

Morton finished his drink and stared at the empty glass.

"Why did Claessens have a pair of binoculars when the racing season doesn't start for more than a month?" mumbled Morton.

"What's that got to do with it?"

Morton did not answer. He just sat there staring at the glass.

**I**T WAS McGarvey who organized the conference. They gathered around Morton on the second day after Claessens' escape, and they tried to talk sense into him. The captain was there, and a deputy commissioner and several old-timers on the force, close friends of Morton.

"Look, Mort, you just got to take it easy for a while. You've been doing too much work. I mean that!"

"Remember, you're not as young as you used to be."

"Listen, Mort, why not step out on sick leave for a while? Garv and the rest of us can go after this thing . . . though personally I don't see what there is left to do."

Morton took a drink. He drank right in front of them, not caring. His hand shook.

What they did not tell him, though every one of them felt it, consciously or unconsciously, was that, aside from their personal feelings, which were deep, Miami must not lose its Morton. No-body could estimate how much Morton and his immense prestige meant to the city. He had come to be a fabulous personage, a man who never missed. Just the knowledge that he was there on the job, keen, gray-eyed, alert, remembering every face, incorruptible and never

to be frightened—just this knowledge kept uncouth crooks away from Miami every season.

Morton was a distinct municipal asset. He was too valuable to lose. With Morton out, or with the power of his prestige broken by a single failure, the work of the police would be redoubled. Once let the word get around that Sergeant Morton was slipping, that he was a physical wreck, and pickpockets, confidence men, crooked gamblers, stick-up artists, extortionists, would pour in from every part of the country to what after all was their natural hunting ground.

"Don't you understand, Mort? You are okay. You're as good as you ever were. Any man's got to have a rest now and then!"

McGarvey went over and put his hand on his shoulder. Morton did not look up. He only slouched a little lower.

"Listen, I'll take this thing over, and I promise you I won't let up on it until it's finished. Monty'll assign me to it, won't you, Monty?" The Captain nodded, watching Morton. He was fond of Morton. They all were. McGarvey gave his partner's shoulder a little shake. "So you blow yourself to a nice vacation and don't worry about bombs and phoney federals. After all, I'm not half as dumb as you think I am. Just being around you all this time, I couldn't help absorbing a *little* brains. And you go off somewhere and forget all about it until you feel better. Don't call us up. Don't even look at a newspaper, okay?"

After a while Morton poured himself another drink and took it straight. He lighted another cigar. But he did not square his shoulders, he did not lift his head as he replied.

"All right . . . I'll go away. Now let me alone. I'm tired."



They went out one by one, all except McGarvey.

"It's the best thing, Mort."

Morton rose very slowly, not looking at his partner. He put on his Panama. He slouched out.

McGarvey stood in the doorway and watched him. That was not like Morton, that walk. McGarvey shook his head. Then suddenly he stiffened.

A young man named Laurey, a hulking kid, who punked for a cheap criminal lawyer, had emerged from an office near the head of the stairs. He faced Morton, and he was grinning.

"So you're letting guys pull all sorts of stuff on you, eh, Sergeant? Well, you can't go on forever, you know. Personally I think you always were a lot of baloney, if you ask me."

McGarvey, overhearing, started forward. But he was not needed. Morton, scarcely pausing in his stride, lifted a short right uppercut to Laurey's chin, sank a left into Laurey's belly, and as the cocky kid doubled over swung a long and beautifully timed right hook to the jaw.

Laurey slapped back against the wall. His knees ceased to function. He sat on the floor. Morton went downstairs.

In the doorway, young McGarvey scratched his head.

"Physical wreck, eh? Hm-m-m. . ."

THERE was moonlight on the water, and seen through coconut fronds it was very lovely, but Morton wished it wasn't there. The poets could have their moonlight. *He* would have preferred utter darkness.

Nor did the silence of the tropic night please him. A little noise would have been better—rain on the roof, say, or a breeze to stir the palms. But there wasn't a sound.

Or wait! *Wasn't* there? Not breathing, he stood in the middle of his room and cocked his head. From down on the beach, off to the right, somewhere just beyond the inlet where the great live-oak stood surrounded by scrub palmetto, came a muffled *put-put-put*. He would not have heard it, if he hadn't been straining his ears.

Funny about that sound. He had heard it, or thought he heard it, the previous night too, his first night at Harry Brady's; but then he had been too tired to get up and go to the window and listen more closely. He had really been tired that first night.

Tonight, the second, was different. There was work to be done.

The *put-put-put* died, and the only sound, which itself might have been half imagined, was the gentle *shush* of wavelets on the beach. Morton crossed the room on bare feet, opened the door, stood there listening for a long while. He could not even hear the wavelets, now.

He slipped out into the hall. It was black as pitch. All lights had been out for more than an hour, by command of the proprietor, and it was a safe bet that most of the inmates would be asleep, for when you'd gone through the program Harry Brady put you through every day, you didn't do much tossing in bed. That was why men came to Brady's, to get sleep. They paid the fancy prices Brady demanded because they wanted to relax, to be away from fuss and worry, and get their nerves loosened, their muscles tightened. And as long as they stayed there, they obeyed the rules. He was a tyrant, that man Brady.

Morton crept past two doors and at the third he stopped. He listened. Somebody slept behind that door; the snoring was soft, bubbly, regular. Mort-



on went on one knee, still wondering about the *put-put-put* down by the inlet, and put his eye to the keyhole.

There was some moonlight in this room, though not much, not as much as in Morton's room, for the shades were drawn here. Nevertheless such slits of moonlight as broke through underneath the shades and on either side were full and firm, and after the blackness of the corridor the room seemed a bright place.

Morton squinted for a moment, and then he began to frown in bewilderment. It was not what he saw which prompted this frown, for what he saw was only the wall, two windows and a pile of unmarked cardboard cartons. No, it was what he smelled.

**O**F ALL places to smell such a smell!

But he had come here for something else. He moved his head. The keyhole was large and he hoped to be able to see the man who snored.

The edge of the bed came into his sight, but he got no further.

The door at the end of the corridor opened and there was a momentary drizzle of light from the locker room, against which somebody large was silhouetted. Then the door was closed.

Morton must have drawn in his breath or shifted his feet a little. A low voice from near the door said, "Who's there?" Morton did not move. He was still crouching before the keyhole. He *felt* the man coming toward him, though he could not see anything. He heard a faint metallic click. It might have been the safety catch of an automatic.

After a terrible instant of emptiness he felt something graze his left shoulder. He heard the man gasp.

Morton dropped flat, soundlessly. Something slished above his head and

clacked against the door, probably near the very keyhole through which he had been peeking.

He got to his feet and ran.

He could have made for the door of his own room—he had carefully paced the distance—but to do this would be to give himself away. Instead he ran for the door at the end of the corridor.

"Stop or I'll shoot!"

The voice was low, behind him. He found the knob, opened the door, and bending far over, dived through it, closing it after him. There was no shot.

Green steel lockers gleamed. He raced past them, raced across the gymnasium, vaulted a rowing machine, and made the outside door. Fortunately it was unlocked. He scuttled crablike along the front of the building until he came to the window of his own room. That window was open, of course, but Morton had also been careful to leave the screen unlatched and lifted a little. Now he lifted it further and slipped over the sill with an agility any second-story man might have envied. He did not *jump* back into bed, for he did not want the springs to creak; but he didn't waste time.

He lay for a little while, hearing a patter of footsteps in the corridor, and whispers. Then everything was still.

Morton was finished for the night. They would be watching now. He closed his eyes and fell into a beautiful sleep.

#### IV

**H**ARRY BRADY himself awakened him. It was about half past five. You got up at dawn at Brady's and went to bed early too. You were allowed to read until nine, but you had to be in your room by eight.

Harry Brady was an ex-middle-



weight champion, tall, beamy, forty-five, hearty, not Irish at all (the name had originally been Panagiotopoulos but obviously you couldn't get anywhere in the fight game with a monicker like that) and just full of vitality. He wrote articles for physical culture magazines; he endorsed bicep-strengthening devices; he owned Brady's Island (renamed, like himself) and charged broken-down millionaires as high as a hundred dollars a week to come there and get themselves back into condition. There wasn't anything original about his methods—probably he never really cured anybody of the drink habit at all—but he kept good horses and good rubbers, he served good food, and best of all, the place was utterly quiet, free from telephones and automobiles; visitors were forbidden and everybody minded his own business.

Brady believed in a lot of exercise and a lot of sleep. If you didn't like it, that was too bad. If you couldn't take it, well, go back home. Brady didn't care. He had made his reputation on this sort of discipline, and he was too clever to compromise. He and his trainers manhandled corporation presidents precisely as if they were *pork-and-beaners*—and what's more, made most of them like it.

"Hi, Mr. Millis!" Morton was registered here as George Millis of New Orleans, snatched back from the brink of D.T's, "How do you feel today?"

Morton crawled grumpily out of bed. "Terrible."

Brady spun him around, slapped his chest.

"You'll be all right pretty soon! How 'bout a little work-out and then a rub-down before breakfast? Come on!"

When Harry Brady said how 'bout

a work-out, he was not asking a question but giving a command. He glowed with health and good advice.

Morton kicked off his pajamas, wrapped a towel around his middle and toddled after the ex-champ through the locker room to the gym. There, feeling silly because he didn't have any clothes on, he stooped, touched his toes, arched his back, squatted on his heels, while Brady, beaming, counted in crisp accents.

"All right, now a little go with the gloves. Here we are."

"Can't I have a cup of coffee first?"

"Coffee? You don't want coffee, Millis! Bad for your nerves. You just go a round or two with me now, and then have a rub-down. Milk's what you want, not coffee. I've got a new rubber for you today, by the way."

Morton groaned.

They only went one round, Brady smiling broadly all the while, Morton deliberately missing, puffing, causing his knees to wobble. The weaker he looked, Morton figured, the sooner this nonsense would be finished. But he would have given much to swing a real one at that grinning face.

"If you'd only learn to use that left, Millis, I might make a fighter out of you yet." A resounding slap on the back. "Now go to your room for the alcohol rub. I hope you like this new man."

Morton hobbled back. He noticed when he passed it that no light shone through the keyhole of the third door from his. There was a key, or something else, in that keyhole now, he surmised.

He cast off the towel and flumped down on his face on the bed. He heard the rubber enter . . . he sounded like a heavy man . . . but Morton was too sore and tired even to move his head.



He heard the door closed. Then huge hands gripped him around the neck from behind, and a pair of enormous thumbs started to press against his spine.

"So you're a detective, eh? Well, see how you like this!"

MORTON, no weakling, wriggled and tried to yell, but his face was pushed into the pillow. All his struggles went for nothing. The man who had him by the neck must have been a giant.

Suddenly he was released. He heard a familiar chuckle. Panting, gasping, he turned over.

"Garv!"

"*Sh-sh-sh!* My name's Garrison here. And I'm not supposed to know you. You're Mr. Millis, aren't you?"

"How the hell did you get here?"

"Got a job as a trainer. I know something about the business. When I was in high school I used to work nights in a Turkish bath as a rubber. And I'm no slouch with the gloves on, if I do say so."

"But what made you think of coming?"

"Well, I promised you I'd clear up that Machine Gun Hall bombing case, only I didn't know where to start. Well, the best thing to do, I figure, was to follow Wentworth L. Morton. I've done that before, and it always seems to come out right. So I did it again. You never fooled me a minute," McGarvey lied, "about this physical wreck stuff."

"As a matter of fact, I damn' near am a wreck," Morton grumbled. "And I'll be something even worse if you don't take it easy there."

While they talked—and it made an excellent cover for their conversation—McGarvey's enormous hands, pro-

fessionally cupped, were spanking Morton's limbs and body.

"I'll bet you wish you could have a drink now." McGarvey gave Morton's pink posterior a couple of final cracks that sounded like boards striking water. "There, that ought to do for the present, sir!" Then in a lower voice, "I'll see you right after breakfast. We'll have a better chance to talk, out on the beach."

But on the beach it appeared that it was necessary to run. Morton did not care for running, but McGarvey insisted.

"They can see us from the lodge. Come on."

He set the pace, and a lively pace it was. He pranced like a young, strong horse, lifting his knees, and Morton, puffing, panting, swearing, had all he could do to keep up. Not until they had reached the shelter of the palmettos at the inlet, a couple of hundred yards from the lodge, did McGarvey call a halt. Morton flopped on the sand.

"I don't know what you're here for," McGarvey said, "but I've got an idea it has something to do with Claessens and that bomb."

Morton nodded. He was not yet able to talk.

"I tailed you," McGarvey went on, "and then, when I saw where you'd come, I went back and asked questions here and there until I found out what you'd been doing. You'd been showing that picture of Claessens along the waterfront and asking small boat men if they'd seen him. And one had. A guy named Jacobs."

"How— How'd—you learn that?"

"It's not so hard to tail you, Mort. You're pretty famous, after all. I wonder whether you're really fooling anybody here at Brady's."

"I've been—wondering that—too."



BRADY'S Island, though some distance out in the bay, was technically a part of the city of Miami. But only technically. Brady ran a quiet place, an exclusive place, and there had never been any complaints about it. He had his own water, drawn up from a well, and his own little electric plant. He minded his own business, which was, to a considerable extent, confidential. For Harry Brady's was primarily a place where drunks who could afford it got put on their feet again—for a little while. There were young bucks who actually boasted of having to go there; but most men preferred to keep their visits secret. You were not encouraged to strike any acquaintanceships at Brady's. You weren't given much chance to, as a matter of fact, what with the strict training regime. No visitors were allowed. It is true that sailboats and powerboats sometimes went by, as close to the island as they dared, and peered at the pot-bellied, jelly-kneed sots, some of them famous men, chucking medicine balls or trotting after a trainer along the beach. There was nothing Brady could do to stop this. But no boat was permitted to land.

Brady himself was a New Yorker who came to Florida only for the season and almost never visited Miami proper. He conducted the greater part of his outside business by mail, and his steward, going back and forth in Brady's launch, did all the marketing and bought necessary supplies.

This was why Morton was hoping he had not been recognized. Any real resident of Miami, or any regular business or hotel man there, would have known him by sight.

"That's why you were interested in those binoculars, was it?"

Morton nodded.

"And when I found out that Claes-

sens had made half a dozen trips around this island in a hired boat . . . well, he *could* have done it as an ordinary sight-seeing jaunt. But that didn't seem likely. Not a man like him."

"I don't understand. What do you figure is here to interest him?"

"Joe Lassa."

"What!"

"Why not? We've got no definite proof that Lassa was killed."

"Why, they assembled four bodies! Even if they were too mutilated for identification. And Lassa had just gone through the gate with his three mugs."

"Four bodies, yes. But who opened the gate from the inside?"

McGarvey nodded slowly.

"Never thought of that," he admitted. "There must have been another guy . . . But then, what about the raincoat? and the hat?"

"It was the raincoat that gave me the idea. Lassa never had a name for wearing bright colors, and he'd be specially careful to avoid them when he knew somebody might take a pop at him. As for the hat, there were hairs in it, yes. But they were brown. I had 'em examined under a microscope. They *looked* black because they'd been scorched in the explosion, but actually, the scientist said, the pigmentary substance in the medulla was brown."

Absent-mindedly Morton reached for a cigar—and was reminded that he wore nothing but shorts, without pockets. He sighed.

"You see, Lassa wouldn't want to be at Machine Gun Hall when the whole world *expected* him to be there. If he only . . ."

McGarvey stooped, grasped his friend by the wrist, yanked him to his feet and slapped him in the face.

"The boss," McGarvey whispered, and slapped Morton again.



Morton slapped him back. McGarvey danced away. Morton lunged, and McGarvey sidestepped, tapping his open hands, first the left, then the right, on Morton's chin.

"Use that left, Mr. Millis, he said loudly. "Your left!"

Harry Brady came strolling around the palmettos. He stood with hands behind him, teetering on his heels, and nodded approval.

After a moment, laughing, he called time, and the detectives quit. Morton promptly dropped on the sand.

"You're absolutely right, Garrison. I told Mr. Millis this morning that if he'd only use that left he might make a good fighter yet."

"Do you really think so?" panted Morton.

"Oh, I really do! We'll have you in fine shape after a while. Well . . . Back to the lodge now. Mr. Millis must have his ride before lunch, Garrison. There's a horse saddled and waiting."

"I can't ride a horse," said Morton, startled.

"You'll learn," Harry Brady assured him. "It's unsurpassed for the liver. Absolutely unsurpassed. Well . . . back to the lodge."

And when Morton rose and started to walk back up the beach, Brady cried, "No, no! You trot! It's good for you!"

And McGarvey, "Garrison" here, ranged up alongside of him, trotting, and poked him on.

"Sure, it's good for you," McGarvey cried. "Come on."

## V

MORTON looked at the horse and the horse looked at Morton and you could see that they didn't have any community of tastes worth mentioning. The horse, saddled and bored, probably

didn't really care one way or the other; but Morton did. Morton stood up for his right, something even a patient at Harry Brady's could do now and then. He simply would *not* mount the beast. He would *not*.

Brady laughed.

"Oh, well. We'll put you on the sis-sies' stallion then."

So it was an electric horse he sat upon, the kind of steed the late Calvin Coolidge used to ride, and he clung piteously to an absurd pommel while McGarvey switched on the juice. McGarvey laughed aloud at what followed. Trainer or no trainer, he simply couldn't help it. He roared.

Morton's teeth were castinets, and dandruff shook itself out of his hair. His flesh went one way while his bones went the other, these two never seeming to get together, as the electric horse did its workmanlike shivver. Though even his eyeballs were jogging, he managed to glare.

"I sup-p-p—I s'pose—this is—g-g-good—for the l-liver?"

"Unsurpassed for the liver," cried McGarvey, who held his ribs for fear they would fly in all directions. "Absolutely unsurpassed."

"You l-l-louse!"

They allowed him an hour of rest, which he needed, after lunch. He could read, if he wished, Harry Brady generously told him. But Brady did not recommend too much reading. It was bad for the eyes.

Then he went for a walk around the island, alone, which was not thrilling. And then he had his afternoon workout—with McGarvey.

Harry Brady had elected that they should box. There was nothing like boxing, Brady believed, for putting a man back on his feet.

"Use your left," McGarvey cried, and



leather *plopped* twice in Morton's face. "Your *left!* What've you got it there for?"

"If you don't shut up, I really will hit you," Morton grumbled.

For Morton had to be an invalid. He had to be a physical wreck. Otherwise, what was he doing here? No actor ever played a more difficult role.

"Your *left*, for Pete's sake!"

Brady watched them a few minutes, grinning, and then he went out, and this gave them a chance to talk things over. They did so in whispers, between and during punches.

"You see, no matter how well guarded Machine Gun Hall was," Morton panted, "they'd get him some time. So you see what he did? As soon as he stepped inside that gate he peeled off the conspicuous raincoat and the hat and handed them to a bodyguard, and he put on another coat and hat, of a different color. Then he scampered out by way of the tradesmen's gate. I took a look at that tradesmen's gate. Nobody in the neighborhood has ever seen it open, and yet I found the hinges had been recently oiled. They wouldn't squeak. Lassa always was lucky. He must have stepped out on the sidewalk just before the bomb went off. All he had to do then was mix with the crowd, where naturally nobody would ever suspect him. The explosion, which of course he didn't expect, turned out to be a godsend for him. It made it a cinch to escape unnoticed in the excitement, and it made everybody think he'd been killed."

McGarvey nodded slowly, his lips drawn back. But he kept *plopping* rights and lefts into Morton's face.

"The guy who set off that bomb could have seen him come out through the tradesmen's gate," he objected.

"All right. What of it? That guy

wouldn't have dared to shoot at him—even supposing he toted a gat, which is unlikely, considering that he wanted to lose himself in the crowd. He might have hit somebody else. In fact, he'd be almost sure to hit somebody else, since Lassa would have mixed with the crowd instantly."

Morton's nose had begun to bleed. He wiped it with a glove.

"And that, of course, explains why Claessens stuck around. They realized that they hadn't got Joe Lassa yet, after all."

They rested a little while.

"And what makes you think Lassa's here?"

"Well, it would be an ideal hideout, for one thing. Harry Brady would do just about anything for money. I looked him up, before I came, and I learned he's been dropping big sums in Wall Street. He looks prosperous, but he's actually in the red. This place is mortgaged up to the hilt. And then, why did Claessens circle the island half a dozen times with field glasses? And who's in room nine?"

"Room nine?"

"Since I've been here the door of that room's never been open and the shades are always drawn. *Somebody's* there, because you can hear him move around, but whoever it is he never shows himself. See if you can find out, won't you? You're in a better position to do it than I am."

Brady came into the gymnasium, and they got to their feet again and started to spar. Brady, fists on hips, stood watching them. Morton continued to play the broken-down sot, and there was no steam in his punches, but McGarvey, who enjoyed this, bobbed in and out, his gloves flying, and hit Morton four times to every time Morton hit him.



Morton fell into a clinch and was able to whisper with his lips against one of McGarvey's ears:

"Another thing. If you do get near room nine, notice the smell."

"The smell? What the—"

"I found it very interesting," whispered Morton, and broke, staggering back.

Brady called: "All right. Now Mr. Millis is going to have a swim."

MORTON went to the door of his room again that night, a little after ten, but he did not go out into the hall. Somebody else was out there. Morton could not see the man—he opened the door only an inch or two—but he could hear the breathing. A watch on room nine? It seemed likely, after what had happened the previous night.

Harry Brady might believe in sleep, but Morton differed from him. Night, Morton thought, was the best time to work.

He left the room by way of the window, and keeping in the shadow of the lodge, stooping so that he would not be seen passing the other windows, he made his way around back to the stable. Behind the stable, as he had previously observed, was a considerable stretch of palmetto scrub about waist deep. It stretched all the way down to the inlet, where the palmetto was much higher.

Morton made his way through this on hands and knees. Probably there was nobody looking out of a window of the lodge anyway, but there was no sense taking chances. When he heard the *put-put-put* of an engine down by the inlet, it was a terrible temptation to get to his feet and run; but he resisted this.

The motorboat was gone when he

arrived, but he had glimpsed the name on her stern. Jacobs' *Daisychain*. And in the sand near the water he found an imprint recently made by a box of some sort. It could have been made by one or more of those paper cartons he had seen in room nine. It was about that size.

He fell to thinking about Joe Lassa. If he was right, and Lassa really was in room nine, it meant more trouble. They'd always have trouble while that man was around. Those who wished to see him dead were so numerous and so powerful. If Lassa was here on Brady's Island there was nothing illegal about that, nothing to justify a search warrant. But if Albert Claessens the finger man had *learned* that Lassa was here, then almost anything was likely to happen. The island after all was part of the city of Miami, and Morton, though he would never admit it, loved Miami. Miami was his mother, his wife, his kids. People used to wonder if Morton didn't get lonesome, living all by himself. They didn't understand his feeling for his home town.

Of all the crooks he had ever met, and they were many, he thought he liked Joe Lassa least. The man wasn't brilliant, only lucky—and ruthless. He did not even have guts. Morton had seen that in his face. He was yellow as a canary, Morton knew. It might have been different when Lassa was at the height of his glory and ordering murders as casually as a housewife orders meat; but today, possibly as a result of that term at Alcatraz, Lassa was yellow. If he was alive, he knew how close he had been to death in his own garden. He must be scared stiff.

And yet it was part of Morton's duty to protect him. Hate him as he would, he was obliged to do everything possible to see that he was not slaughtered. For



Joe Lassa was a resident, a citizen, a property owner. That he happened also to be a rattlesnake had nothing to do with the matter.

The important thing now was first to learn where Lassa was, then to find out whether Claessens and his employers knew this. If only . . .

He heard something move in the palmettos behind him, and he dodged behind the trunk of the live-oak.

For a little while all was silent, and Morton was beginning to wonder whether his imagination had tricked him. Then he heard the sound again. Somebody was moving back there, very quietly.

After a few minutes a man emerged from the palmetto. He had been creeping on hands and knees, and his legs were stiff as he brushed off his trousers. He was cursing in a low voice.

"IT'S very good for you," Morton said from the shadow of the live-oak. "Walking on your hands and knees is excellent for the stomach."

McGarvey stepped back, instinctively reaching for his right hip pocket. Then he laughed a shade sheepishly.

"Oh, hello. I thought I heard a motorboat down here."

"You're not toting a gun, are you?"

McGarvey shook his head.

"No. I left it at the office. Thought somebody here might see it and get suspicious."

"That's more brains than I gave you credit for."

"At that, I kind of wish I had it now. There's going to be trouble around this island pretty soon, if I know anything. That guy in room nine is Joe Lassa, Mort. I learned it from one of the other rubbers, a guy named Schultz. There's three of us, but the third one, a big disagreeable guy named

Andrews, hasn't got much to say for himself. He's the one who has charge of room nine. Schultz and I are good friends already, and Schultz saw Lassa day before yesterday. He saw him more or less by accident, but he says there isn't any doubt about it. He hasn't mentioned it to anybody else, and doesn't intend to. He's scared. He's going to quit."

"I think I am too." Morton was staring up the beach. He could not see the lodge from where he stood, but he could see the bay, the lights of the city on the left, the lights of Miami Beach on the right, and he could even see the pinpricks that were automobiles moving back and forth along the causeway. "As I said this morning, you're in a better position to find out things here than I am, and anyway I've got a notion that Brady's wise to me anyway."

"But he's not likely to know *me*. He wouldn't have given me the job, if he did."

"Exactly. So I'll pull out tomorrow. I'd like to have the gloves on just once more with Bigmouth Brady, so's I could really paste him a few, but I guess that's a pleasure I'll have to forego."

"What are you going to do on the mainland?"

"Get a drink. And find out what Jacobs is coming here for nights. That was the *Daisychain* you heard. Incidentally, did you get a whiff of room nine?"

"Yeah, I did. Say, that's a funny thing, isn't? Do you suppose it's possible that Lassa uses perfume—of all guys in the world?"

"Well, it could be that," smiled Morton, "and on the other hand it could be—"

While he spoke he had walked close



to the edge of the palmettos and had reached a place where he could be seen from the lodge. He was reminded of this fact by the crack of a rifle. A bullet whined over his head.

As he fell flat, there was another shot. This one was lower. They heard it click through the palmettos.

"We'd better get away from here," Morton muttered. "Somebody seems to object to our presence."

They crawled in silence to the stable from where, separately, they made a dash across the open moonlit space to the lodge. They heard nothing and saw no one.

## VI

**H**ARRY Brady was loud with his objections next morning when Morton announced that he was going to return to the mainland.

"Why, you haven't given us a chance at you, Mr. Millis! A man in your condition needs at least a couple of weeks here. Of course, you're the boss, but at the same time . . ."

Nevertheless, Morton went. He sniffed room nine as he passed it; he threw a baleful glance at the electric horse in the gymnasium; but he did not see McGarvey.

It was night before he could get hold of Hymie Jacobs.

"Listen, Sarge. I told you everything I knew about that guy I took out around Brady's. Your sidekick was here a couple of days ago, asking the same things, and I told him just what I'd told you."

"Hymie, you used to run booze over from Bimini, didn't you?"

"Oh, well, now, Sarge! After all, they was a lot of guys . . ."

"I know. I'm not holding it against you. Probably drank stuff that you'd

smuggled in many a time myself. But I was just wondering if you were still in that same sort of business?"

"What do you mean?"

"You've been puttering around that bushy end of Brady's Island quite a few nights lately. Don't deny it! What's the idea?"

The little boatman had a peaked, pinched face and the eyes of a rodent. He had also a profound respect for Wentworth L. Morton. He stared at Morton now, wondering how much the detective knew.

"No, I won't deny it. And as a matter of fact, it is the same as the old business, in a way, only on a much smaller scale. As a matter of fact, Sarge, what I'm doing is picking up a little on the side by running liquor over to Brady's Island."

"What!"

"It's a fact. Brady won't let any of his customers drink, you know."

"I know," Morton said grimly.

"He's very strict. Won't allow a drop on the island. But some of the patients don't feel that way about it. They got the idea, some of them, that they'd feel better if they could just taper off a bit. So they propositioned one of the trainers, a guy named Andrews, and he slips 'em a bottle now and then. But he can't keep a stock—doesn't dare—Brady might find it and he'd be out of a job—and he doesn't often get over to the mainland. So he buys it from me, nights. I take it in pint bottles, rye whiskey, and I go to the inlet there and he meets me. What he gets for the stuff I don't know, but I know that I pay a dollar a bottle and sell it to him for three."

"I see," said Morton. He stepped into the *Daisychain*. "Take me out there, to that inlet, Hymie. I want to see it from the water."



"Well, I wasn't going to go out there tonight, Sarge."

"Change your mind." His nostrils twitched. "You know, Hymie, I seem to smell gardenias in this cockpit. Now that's odd, isn't it? I smelled them at Brady's the other day too."

Hymie Jacobs did not answer, but he didn't look pleased.

When they were within half a mile of Brady's Island he cut the engine and they drifted toward the inlet. Jacobs got out an oar and fitted it into an oar-lock in the stern, and this he used to propel the boat, gondola fashion. *Daisy-chain* was very small.

"There's another boat there," he whispered.

MORTON nodded. He had already spied the other boat, a craft somewhat larger than *Daisy-chain*, anchored in the shadows of the live-oak, the branches of which extended out over the water.

"Nobody in it," Morton said.

"I don't like this," said Jacobs. "I think it must be that crowd of guys that came up to me, just a little before you did tonight."

"What crowd was that?"

"Dunno. Seven or eight of them. Never saw them before in my life. Northerners. And they looked plenty tough. They was well-dressed and all that, but they looked tough."

"What did they want?"

"Wanted me to take them out to Brady's Island. Wanted to know how much I'd charge. I didn't like the idea too much, but I'd have taken them all right, I guess, only they found out then that the *Daisy-chain* wasn't big enough. Seems they all wanted to go. So they left."

They were alongside the other boat now.

"Pete Wilson's *Cressenda*," said Jacobs. "But I don't see Pete. I don't like this business, Sarge."

Morton reached into the cockpit of the *Cressenda*. "They forgot something." He picked up a magazine clip for a Colt .45 automatic. There were seven cartridges in it.

"Sarge, I think I'd better get back to the mainland."

"Hymie, I think you'd better too. And when you get there, go to the police launch and tell Sergeant Walsh that I want him right away, and I want him to bring a whole squad along with him. Understand?" He looked over the side. "How deep is it here, Hymie?"

"About up to your waist."

Morton nodded. He took out his own Police Special and McGarvey's great S. and W. Magnum .357, which he had picked up at the office. Holding these over his head, he slipped into the water and waded ashore.

"Seven or eight of them, you said? Well, make it fast, Hymie."

UNDER the live-oak he found a man who presumably was Pete Wilson. Presumably too this Wilson had done something to anger his customers, for he had been badly beaten, his face was pulpy and bruised, and there was adhesive tape across his mouth. His wrists and ankles were tied together. He was conscious and looked with fearful eyes at Morton, but Morton didn't have time to stop and reassure and untruss him. There was something more important. The man who probably deserved it more than any other in the country was threatened with death; and Morton was a cop.

He could feel the presence of concealed men all around him as he crept among the palmettos toward the stable.



Now and then he could hear them as well. And once he ran into one.

The man loomed suddenly, moving, as Morton was, on hands and knees.

"That you, Art? Listen, the idea is—"

He probably never knew what hit him. Morton had clubbed his pistol, and his hand moved like lightning. He brought the butt down on the very top of that man's head. There was no gentleness in the blow. For all Morton knew, or cared, he had broken the man's skull. The important thing was that he had shut the man's mouth. The man collapsed, landing flat on his face, and not a sound came from him. Morton moved on.

A moment later he heard firing. It was ahead and a little to the left, A cannon-like *boom-boom-boom* which could have been made by a Colt automatic was answered briskly from the house, a sharper sound, possibly a rifle. Then silence again.

He avoided the stable. It would be a natural lurking place for members of the besieging force and he did not wish to encounter them. At the edge of the palmettos he took out his handkerchief and held it above his head. Then he rose, and started to run toward the lodge. He heard a yell behind him but no shots.

He had almost reached the lodge when a rifle barrel appeared at a window and there was a sharp smack of sound. A bullet touched the loose fabric of Morton's trousers leg, tugging gently as though it sought to attract his attention. He yelled "Hey!" indignantly.

A second shot might have downed him, but there wasn't any second shot. The besiegers had seen that rifle barrel. There was a roar of automatics behind Morton, and every pane of

glass in the window at which the rifleman was posted flew out. Morton reached the window next to it and vaulted in, smashing the screen with head and shoulders. A couple of bullets entered at the same time, by the same window. They *phwee-ed* past his head and *tocked* into the far wall.

Morton sat up. Harry Brady stood in the hall door—this was, by an odd chance, the very bedroom Morton had occupied during his stay at Brady's—and stared in amazement.

"I came back."

"So I see."

"Forgot my toothbrush," explained Morton. He rose, "There are some bad boys outside. I wouldn't let them in, if I were you. Is that rubber around? Garrison?"

"You mean your friend McGarvey?"

"Have it your own way. Knew us all the time then, eh?"

"Knew *you* all the time. We just found out about Garrison. . . that he is really McGarvey. He told us himself. Wanted to take command as soon as the shooting started, and we thought it best to keep him under control for a little while. Come on. I'll take you to him."

When they passed the door of room nine the smell of gardenias was stronger than ever, and there was a smell of roses too, and of sweet peas. The sound of something being shifted, cardboard cartons, perhaps, being piled one on top of the others, came clearly. And under the door was a trickle of something that looked like water but certainly didn't smell like it.

"That patient's barricading himself," Brady explained. "He's scared half out of his wits."

"Well, he's got reason to be. He's the one they've come for."

Brady gave him a sharp look.



"I see there's no use trying to fool you. Well, what of it? Joe Lassa's a free citizen. There's nothing in the law that says I can't put him up here if I want to."

"Not a thing. But of course you *didn't* want to."

"He's paying mighty well . . ."

"I don't doubt it. But you must have known he's dynamite. Anywhere he is, there's going to be trouble. No, it was more than money. You wouldn't have taken him for just money. He must have found out somehow about your little deal in French perfumery."

### VII

**B**RADY looked for a moment as if he were about to spring upon Morton and bite him. But he stepped back, shrugging.

"Why should I deny it? I wouldn't say this in front of more than one witness. But I'll call you a liar if you try to hold me to it . . . and there won't be any evidence here then to back you up. Yes, I put in a lot of perfume. It was three or four months ago and there's still some left. I had nothing to do with the original smuggling venture, except that I knew some of the men in on it.

"They were bringing a schooner up from Haiti, where French perfume is practically duty-free. She carried about half a million dollars worth of it. I mean, it would be worth that much at wholesale here in the States. But the customs people were tipped off and they were spotted all along the coast here. The boys on the schooner were short of water—every available space was taken up by perfume—and yet they were afraid to put in anywhere.

"Then they thought of me. It was a dark night. They sent a small boat

here to proposition me, and the proposition was too good to turn down. I stood to make almost fifty grand. I had to take the whole cargo over and pay on the spot, but I could use the market they'd arranged for. So we brought the stuff here in my launch, and I've been getting rid of it ever since, a little at a time. I didn't like to send it over to the mainland in my own launch. I wasn't sure I could trust the steward . . ."

"So you got Hymie Jacobs to come and fetch a load every now and then?"

"That's right."

"And do you usually take pot-shots at him, the way somebody did at me when I was down there last night?"

Brady gave him a funny look.

"So that was you, eh? It was Andrews who shot at you. He knew Jacobs had gone, and when he saw somebody moving around down there he got excited and let fly. We've both been kind of on edge since Lassa came."

There was a blast of gunfire from room seven, the room next to Lassa's. There was an answering blast from outside. Four or five persons must have been shooting out there.

A door flew open. A little man with a tub belly and wide, popping, blue eyes ran out into the hall. He wore pink pajamas. Otherwise he looked like a temperance poster on the evils of alcohol.

"Oh, my! Think of having this happen in a place where you can't get anything to drink! Brady, give me some whisky?"

"No!"

The man ran back into his room, no doubt to hide under the bed.

"That's Andrews shooting in there now," Brady said, and opened the door of room seven. "Come on."

There was another spatter of pistol



fire, and three or four bullets *tocked* into the door frame scant inches from Morton's head.

"Don't stand in that doorway," cried Andrews. "Duck! They can see you through the window if you stand up!"

He was at the window himself, or just below it, and he held a rifle. From time to time he would peek above the sill. From this post he commanded the clearing between the lodge and the stable, the only part of the surrounding land an attacking force would be likely to rush.

"This is Sergeant Morton, Andrews."

"You don't say," said Andrews, squinting over the sill.

"It was Sergeant Morton you took those shots at last night."

"Too bad I missed."

He stiffened. He fired once, then ducked. Three or four bullets *phwee-d* into the room and knocked plaster out of the opposite wall.

"He's come back now to visit his friend McGarvey."

ANDREWS grinned. Like Brady himself, though he was a much younger man, he had an air of insolent assurance. He thought he was pretty darned good.

Unexpectedly, as he squatted beneath the window, he swung the rifle barrel so that the muzzle was toward Morton.

"In that case, maybe it might be a good idea to take his gun."

"Just what I was going to suggest," said Brady.

From behind, he relieved Morton of the Police Positive and McGarvey's beloved S. and W.

"I hope you know what you're doing." Morton was sore. But he did not dare to resist physically. Andrews

was an unimaginative gorilla, and his killing blood was up. He would have loved to shoot Morton. You could tell it from his eyes. "Remember, I'm a cop."

"We can't remember that because we never knew it. All we know is that you came as Mr. Millis of New Orleans, and we find you with two gats. Dear, dear!"

"You damn' fools! Don't you know Garv and I are fighting on your side, if you'll only let us! All we want to do is protect Joe Lassa!"

"I'm not so sure that that's what we want to do," Brady said slowly.

He grabbed Morton's shoulder, spun Morton around, pushed him toward the door.

Somebody out by the stable shouted: "All we want is Lassa! Shove him out, and we'll go away! If you don't, we'll burn the place down!"

Brady looked troubled. He kept pushing Morton toward the door.

"Keep 'em back for a while, Andrews. I want to fix this guy so he won't interfere. And besides, I can't resist the temptation to show him what a tough partner he's got."

In the hall they paused again before the door of room nine. They could hear Lassa moving around, piling cartons of rare French perfumes, talking to himself, cursing, sobbing. Obviously Morton had been right. The man was in a panic.

Brady grinned a tight grin, and knocked.

There was silence. Then a whisper: "Who's that?"

"It's just me, Joe," Brady called softly. "I'll be back in a few minutes and help you barricade that window."

"You . . . You wouldn't chuck me out, would you, Harry?"

"No, indeed! Don't let it worry you,



Joe." He took Morton's arm and said in a lower voice, "Come on. You want to see your pal, don't you?"

**M**cGARVEY was in the gymnasium.

He was seated on the electric horse, a fact which astounded Morton for a moment—until he saw that McGarvey was fastened there. McGarvey's wrists were tied behind him, his ankles were tied together underneath the apparatus, the "sissies' stallion." A rope around his waist was tied to the pommel. He could wriggle and he could swear, which he did, but that's about all.

"He got violent," Brady explained with a nervous laugh, "and we had to take precautions."

"Mort! They socked me over the head when I wasn't looking! That guy Andrews! And when I came to, they had me done up like this!"

Morton resisted the temptation to laugh. He turned to Brady.

"This thing's gone far enough. Unfasten him. Didn't I tell you that all Garv and I want to do here is protect Joe Lassa?"

"I don't think I want that done. What happens if those guys out there throw torches at the lodge and set it on fire? They could do it, from that distance. No, I'm going to push Lassa out."

"You can't do that! They'd fill him full of lead!"

"Well, let them. That's better than having my place burned down and then getting into trouble about that perfume that's left. Let 'em kill him. I never did like the guy anyway. And after that they'd go away, and before the cops got here I could chuck all the perfume that's left into the bay."

Morton stood appalled at the cold-bloodedness of this plan.

"You mean to tell me you actually

want to push that man to his death?"

"That's what I'm going to do. Only first I'm going to tie you up with your pal, so's you won't get in anybody's way."

He started toward Morton. He was a big man. He'd always had difficulty making the weight as a middle—he should have been a light heavy—and nowadays he was well over two hundred. His long arms hung easily at his sides. His hands were open.

"Oh, you are?" said Morton.

McGarvey cried, "Slam him one, Mort!"

"I intend to slam him one," said Morton.

Brady paused, amused rather than alarmed.

"Don't be a fool, Morton. A man in your condition . . . Why. I could pull you to pieces without even getting up a sweat."

"Let's see you do it then."

Brady grinned, nodded. His left foot went forward, his fists came up. He feinted with his left and brought a swift right across. Obviously he expected that blow to end the fight. It didn't. In fact it didn't even touch Morton, except to graze his neck.

Not that Morton backed away. Instead he went in. And the knuckles of his left fists spat against Brady's mouth.

"Attaboy, Mort! You got a left after all!"

"I'd been hiding it up to now," Morton explained.

He did not have much chance to talk for a little while after that. Harry Brady, recovering from his amazement, muttered, "So *that's* the way you're going to play?" and rushed him, both fists flying.

Brady knew how to use those fists. It was not for nothing that he had



once held a title. He had never been a brilliant boxer, perhaps, but he'd had a lot of experience, he outweighed Morton by at least thirty pounds, he was in perfect shape, and he was unexpectedly fast.

He jolted Morton twice. Neither blow landed full, as he had planned, for Morton was weaving back and forth, rolling his chin. But Morton knew he'd been hit. He backed away, shaking his head to clear it. And when Brady rushed again, Morton went in low, thumping the big man's body. He clinched.

Brady, very strong, roughed him around. Brady's arms were tied for the moment, but he knew how to use his knees. He knew all the dirty tricks.

Morton knew them too. The difference was that Brady was accustomed to going round after round. Morton's fighting was less academic, more immediate. Morton was used to fights that did not last long. Hit the other man first, was his rule. And hit him hard. And when you knock him down, never give him a chance to get up again. Which was all very well when he was handling street corner sports or bar-room trouble makers; but Harry Brady was a different matter.

Morton broke suddenly, and his much discussed left *clacked* upon Brady's jaw as he did so.

Then he came in again, and the left landed once more, the right landed too. And he danced back.

"So you think there's a faint chance that you might make a fighter out of me yet, if you stick to it long enough, eh?"

"Attaboy, Mort! Keep playing for his body! Never mind his jaw!"

Outraged, white with fury except where he was red with blood, Brady rushed again. Morton backed away,

blocking with his elbows high the way they used to do in the old days before boxing gloves. But he stepped on a dumbbell and toppled to the floor, coming off the end of the electric horse.

Brady came in, kicking. Morton threw both his arms around Brady's legs, and he lifted, and then Brady too was on the floor, cursing noisily. Morton released him and rolled away. They both got up.

## VIII

**P**ANTING now, they faced one another. Brady was no longer bull-like in his over-confidence. And Morton was no longer fresh. After all, Morton wasn't any kid; and beer and cigars and lack of exercise really do tell on a man after a while.

"S-s-some—b-body—sh-sh-shut off this—d-d-damn' th-th-thing!"

Though he had his back to the electric horse again, and though his ears were ringing and his breath was short and his legs felt all rubber, Morton realized from his partner's voice what had happened; and even in that moment Morton could not keep a small taut smile from his face. In falling he had struck the switch which set the electric horse in motion. Young McGarvey was being taken for a ride.

They closed in again. They were silent now, sore, and slugging. What little ring science he had ever known, Harry Brady forgot. It was many years since he had met anybody he couldn't lick easily. A wee flame of fear licked up in his eyes. His face was covered with sweat and blood. He spat a tooth—and swung.

"The l-left, M-M-Mort! Use your l-l-l-left!"

Directions from the sidelines were not heard. The two men stood toe-to-



toe, arms swinging, heads bobbing under the impact of blows. They had forgotten how to duck. But they still knew how to hit.

There were four or five shots in quick succession from out by the stable. A wild one smashed one of the small high windows of the gymnasium and tore a shower of splinters out of the ceiling. The splinters fluttered down over Morton and Brady.

From the bedrooms came yells of fear. The patients, a twittery lot at best, had gone wild. Men were praying, men were screaming. A chunky man, stark naked—Morton later learned that he was the third rubber, McGarvey's friend Schultz—came sprinting into the gym. He flapped his arms.

"Run! Run for your lives! The place is on fire!"

He raced out again, and nobody paid any attention. But it was at about this time that they began to smell burning wood, and soon afterward long, dreary, streamers of smoke sauntered into the gym.

"P-play for the—b-b-body! The—b-b-b-b-body!"

Morton played for the jaw. And he landed. He had brought it up from near the floor. It was the kind of blow they were both missing, but this one happened to connect, full and fair and on the button. Morton had lifted all his weight and strength into it, too.

The ex-champ did not go over backward, movie-villian fashion. But his arms fell to his sides. His eyes became glassy. He swayed, helpless.

Morton hit him twice more, once with the left, once with the right; and these blows were deliberate; Morton took his time over them. Brady's knees gave way and he went to the floor with a crash.

Morton did not wait to see whether

he stirred, being tolerably sure he wouldn't, but ran out through the locker room and into the bedroom corridor. The door of room nine was closed but it was not locked.

"Stay where you are, Lassa! Just stay there until I—"

HE WAS too late. The retired racketeer, the jailbird, insane with fright, had pulled off the cartons with which he had barricaded his window. They lay all over the floor, some of them smashed, the contents smashed too, so that the room reeked of Chanel's No. 5, D'Orsay, Nuit de Noel, My Sin, Cuirre deRussie and a dozen other expensive scents. The window screen had been smashed out. Joe Lassa, the most publicized criminal in the world, was running across the cleared space toward the stable. He had gone utterly mad. He was a maniac. An automatic in each hand, he was firing right and left, and shrieking as he did so.

Answering fire came from the cover of the palmettos. Lassa stopped short as though he had collided with an invisible barrier chest-high, and he jolted back a step. He teetered on his heels. Another rattle of shots; and Lassa swung completely around two times, and fell flat on his face. Even after that, for half a minute or more, they kept shooting at him, so that his body jerked and quivered under the impact of bullets and tiny, startled puffs of dust rose from his clothing.

The corridor, when Morton returned to it, was filled with smoke. He blinked, rubbed his eyes, and then decided not to rub them again unless and until he had to do so. The eyes hurt. But then, every part of him hurt. He began to understand what a terrific beating he had taken.

He went into room seven. Andrews



was still there but he was no longer shooting. He lay on the floor, and his head was turned to one side as though he had snuggled down to rest. There was a blue-black hole between his eyes.

From the window Morton looked out over the clearing. It was utterly silent. The only sign of the fight was the body of Joe Lassa half way down to the stable.

But while Morton looked, there came a burst of shots down by the inlet. He heard yells. Then more shots. He took his own pistol back from the dead Andrews, and vaulted out of the window.

A figure appeared around the end of the stable. A figure in blue, and he held a shiny revolver.

Morton lowered his own revolver.

"Okay, Walsh. You round up those cowboys?"

Sergeant Walsh nodded.

"One of them tried to shoot it out, but two of the boys got him at the same time. The rest threw down their guns. Holy Mike, Mort! What happened? You look like you'd been run over by a railroad train!"

"It was something like that."

"Where's Garv?"

Morton whistled, embarrassed. He had forgotten McGarvey.

They heard then from the house, from the gymnasium, the loud indignant voice of that detective.

"M-M-Mort! F-for—P-P-Pete's sake—sh-shut this th-th-thing—off!"

And when Morton went in there and saw him jouncing up and down, Morton just had to laugh. He didn't want to do so, because it hurt his mouth to laugh, and his cut cheeks, not to mention his ribs; but he just had to. He shut off the switch.

"You really shouldn't kick, Garv. It's good for you. Absolutely unsurpassed for the liver!"

Furious, McGarvey walked around kicking kinks out of his muscles. He tried to change the subject.

He pointed to the motionless figure of Harry Brady, *nee* Panagiotopoulos, former middleweight champion of the world.

"Hasn't moved since he hit the floor. He's still out of the picture. Physical wreck—yah!"

"Let's go over to the mainland," suggested Morton. "Sergeant Walsh here can put out the fire and clean things up. We'll sit down and have a glass of beer."

"You know I don't touch that stuff, Mort."

"Well, you can sit down with me, anyway."

"Mort," said McGarvey, feeling himself tenderly, "to tell the truth, I don't think I'd even care to sit down—for at least a week."

## Backache, Leg Pains May Be Danger Sign

### Of Tired Kidneys—How To Get Happy Relief

If backache and leg pains are making you miserable, don't just complain and do nothing about them. Nature may be warning you that your kidneys need attention.

The kidneys are Nature's chief way of taking excess acids and poisonous waste out of the blood. They help most people pass about 3 pints a day.

If the 15 miles of kidney tubes and filters don't work well, poisonous waste matter stays in the blood. These poisons may start nagging

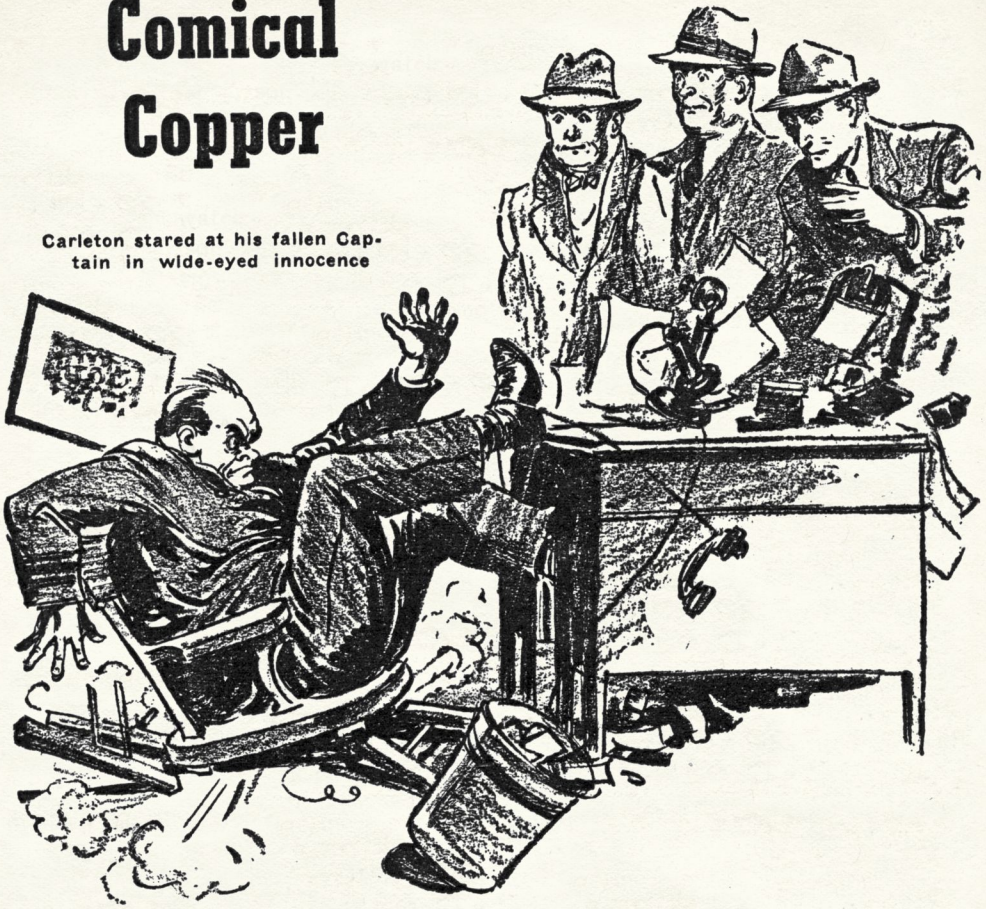
backaches, rheumatic pains, leg pains, loss of pep and energy, getting up nights, swelling, puffiness under the eyes, headaches and dizziness. Frequent or scanty passages with smarting and burning sometimes shows there is something wrong with your kidneys or bladder.

Don't wait! Ask your druggist for Doan's Pills, used successfully by millions for over 40 years. They give happy relief and will help the 15 miles of kidney tubes flush out poisonous waste from the blood. Get Doan's Pills. (ADV.)



# Comical Copper

Carleton stared at his fallen Captain in wide-eyed innocence



*Abuse was the usual response to Carleton's gags—this time he got a medal*

**By D. L. Champion**

SEVERAL curmudgeons in the Department held that Carleton was not quite bright. Then there was a second school who granted his mentality but announced, often, loudly and profanely, that he was an unmitigated nuisance, a social menace and a professional tangler of everyone's hair. A third and majority group said nothing, but prayed silently in the locker room for the swift advent of the inevitable day when Carleton's devastating humor would be visited upon the

Commissioner himself, with the ineluctable consequence of banishment to Hylan Boulevard, Staten Island, where a copper's most important duty was chasing cows off the road as the week-end traffic came through.

For Carleton, by his own and everyone else's admission, was a very comical copper. He did not possess the biting wit of Oscar Wilde. His was not the subtle humor of W. C. Fields. He was no hair-trigger ad lib artist like Fred Allen. Carleton's humor was



a very simple thing. It ran in the direction of novelty shop gadgets.

If Detective-Sergeant O'Connor's plate danced crazily during lunch, it was inevitable that the rubber bulb beneath the tablecloth was controlled by Carleton's heavy hand. When the entire detectives' locker room sneezed in concert with the sound of a weary locomotive crawling over the Rockies, it was a very safe fifteen-to-one that Carleton had scattered the sneeze powder. If the desk lieutenant's cigar blew up on his apoplectic face, it indicated nothing more than that Carleton had gained access to his private humidor.

Copperfield Carleton was the youngest detective on the squad. He was tall, broad-shouldered and possessed of a pair of blue eyes which gave the utterly erroneous impression of never having gazed upon evil. His hair was light and curly and his general aspect of the sort that made women worry as to whether he was wearing his rubbers on a rainy day or if he were sufficiently bundled up against the cold.

**T**WO days after the Robinson kidnapping, Copperfield Carleton with half a dozen of his fellows, awaited the day's assignments in the office of Captain Brandon. They smoked and chatted idly until Brandon entered, then snapped to attention and saluted.

Brandon, heavy and beetle-browed, nodded an acknowledgment, walked behind his desk with a preoccupied air. The Robinson affair was hanging over his head like a bomb. Flora Robinson was the Number One of Cafe Society. Her family owned half the money in town and held notes for the other half. To make matters worse, she had been snatched exactly twelve hours after Brandon had stated publicly that the town was cleaner than ever before,

that every racketeer had been driven out by an alert Police Department.

Brandon sighed heavily as he stood over his chair. He ran a hand through his thinning hair, sighed a second time and sat down. As a matter of fact he sat down far more thoroughly than he had intended.

Brandon's own ample seat came into momentary contact with the chair's wooden one. Then, together, they crashed down upon the floor. The chair's four legs clattered on the linoleum, lay criss-crossed like a pair of broken crutches. Brandon, the detached seat still beneath his own, sprawled without dignity. His legs were in the air, his hands braced at his sides. His face was the hue of the red hibiscus in a tropic dawn and the expression in his eyes was not that of an abstract philosopher.

Facing him, five of his subordinates stared grimly at the far wall and fought to keep a grin off their lips. Copperfield Carleton stared at the fallen figure of his Captain with wide blue eyes. He registered, magnificently, shocked horror. His expression was that of a true patriot who has just witnessed regicide. Despite these superb histrionics, Brandon was not impressed.

He got up slowly with the air of a mine about to explode. He picked up a chair leg and examined it. The reason for the collapse was immediately obvious. The legs had been neatly sawed at the juncture where they met the seat. Then the seat had been precariously balanced on the detached legs so that the slightest pressure would send the whole structure crashing like an idealistic thought in Central Europe. Brandon's posterior had applied that pressure.

Brandon dropped the chair leg and



stared across the desk at Copperfield Carleton.

"Carleton!" he roared in a voice like Jericho's trumpet.

Carleton took a step forward. He stood sharply at attention and said with the innocence of a choir boy, "Sir?"

"You're a very comical copper, aren't you?" said Brandon, biting off each word.

Carleton blinked ingenuous eyes. "Me, sir?"

Brandon swallowed something in his throat. His face flamed like the Japanese flag. He ran through an exhaustive vocabulary of oaths like a virtuoso organist. He began thundering with all the stops pulled out. Then he muted down to a bitter sotto. He rippled through a field of adjectives, passed on through two bars of blighting participles and finished with a single explosive noun. Finally he stopped, panting and flushed, to find he had not marred the bland innocence of Carleton's eyes, had not ruffled the cherubic serenity of his countenance.

**B**RANDON'S sigh was a heavy breath of futility brought up from the bottom of his heart. He snatched up a sheaf of onionskin reports from his desk. He ran his eyes over the single spaced typing on the second sheet.

"Carleton," he said. "Go out and bring in a man called Stoney Classon."

"Yes, sir," said Carleton. "On what charge?"

"Suspicion of murder. We've no record on him. Don't know a thing about him. Benny Deane, a stoolie for the Eight Precinct, called them last night. Mentioned Classon's name. Was apparently about to tell them something about this Classon when he was shot in the phone booth. It's quite

likely Classon knows something about it. Bring him in."

A little shadow of worry flickered across Carleton's face.

"Where—where can I find this Classon, sir?"

Brandon grinned at him happily. "I haven't the slightest idea," he said with enthusiasm. "I never even heard his name before. But bring him in. I'll give you a week. If you haven't got him then, I'll bring you up on charges of inefficiency, incompetence, and dereliction of duty, if I have to perjure myself to make it stick. Now get out. Quick!"

Carleton got out. Eagerly. He was anxious to be at least eight blocks away when the itching powder he had planted in Brandon's sheaf of reports began to exact its annoying toll.

**C**OPPERFIELD CARLETON lost something of his debonair attitude as he walked briskly east. It was plain enough what Brandon had in mind. Dignity would not permit the Captain to charge Carleton, specifically, with depositing a superior officer on the floor. Instead, he had handed out an almost impossible assignment. Carleton, single-handed, was to find a man named Classon in a city of ten million inhabitants. When he failed, Brandon would exact his revenge.

But Carleton was not the brooding type. His spirits rose as he walked. An optimistic faith in Granny Lane heightened. Granny was Carleton's own personal stool-pigeon. And Carleton was quite proud of him. A garrulous old man whose fingers had become too palsied for further pursuit of his pocket picking trade, he subsisted principally on the odd few dollars Carleton threw his way for underworld information.



And of that he had a store.

Granny Lane was in the shabby waterfront saloon where Carleton first looked for him. He sat with his back to the swinging doors, staring moodily into a stein of beer. Carleton stood in the doorway, watching him for a moment. Then he approached.

The approach was devious. Carleton entered the bar, dropped on all fours and ducked his head beneath the table nearest the door. He proceeded like a rachitic panther through a forest of chair and table legs down the room.

Two yards away from Granny Lane he stopped. He took a book of matches from his pocket and broke off two. He moved up another yard. Gently he inserted the first match into Granny's right shoe at the point where the upper joined the sole. He struck the second match and lighted the first with its flame.

He backed out from beneath the table, stood up and approached Granny Lane in more forthright fashion.

"Hi, Granny," he said, sitting down. "Drink up that beer. The next one's on me."

Granny Lane lifted a wrinkled face from mournful contemplation of his almost empty glass. He eyed Carleton speculatively for a moment and said, "Lieutenant—" Thereby promoting Carleton with a rapidity never achieved by the Civil Service Commissioner. "Lieutenant, I got some dope on a hot car racket. I—"

Carleton interrupted him, came to the point at once. "Did you ever hear of a guy called Classon? Stoney Classon?"

There was sudden shrewdness in Granny's ancient eyes. "Classon," he said slowly. "Stoney Classon. I—"

He left the pronoun hanging there as he performed three simultaneous ac-

tions. He uttered a weird startled cry which held the more wracking characteristics of a banshee's wail crossed with the indignant roar of a wounded gorilla. He brought his right leg from beneath the table and laid his foot in his lap. He beat frantically at his shoes with both hands. Across the table, Carleton feigned amazement.

Granny Lane replaced his foot upon the floor. He looked at Carleton and there was something less than amiability in his face.

"Lieutenant," he said reproachfully, "you give me a hot foot."

"Me?" said Carleton with an air of being more hurt than insulted. "I came here on business, Granny. Departmental business. Not to play around. I asked you civilly if you knew a guy named Classon. I—"

"All right," said Granny, signaling the waiter for another beer. "Leave it pass, Lieutenant. What's it worth to you to find this Classon guy?"

Carleton's spirits soared. "Granny," he said delightedly, "you most excellent informer. You mean you know him?"

"What's it worth?"

Carleton figured. "Fifteen bucks," he said magnanimously. "Fifteen bucks. Cash on the barrel head. Can you take me to him?"

Granny drank half his beer. "Mebbe. Give me a nickel to make a phone call."

Carleton gave him a nickel. Granny stood up, made his way to the booth at the end of the bar. He remained within for some three minutes. He returned to the table and said, "Fifteen bucks. Cash on the barrel head, Lieutenant."

Carleton took two bills from his wallet. "Where do I find Classon?"

Granny picked up the cash. "I'll take you to a guy who'll tell you."



Carleton got up. He looked at Granny. He looked down at the half-filled beer stein.

"Aren't you going to finish your drink, kid?"

Granny Lane shook his head sadly. "I ain't," he said. "I seen you from the booth, Lieutenant, when you dumped the pepper in it."

"Me?" said Carleton almost automatically.

"Yeah," said Granny Lane and there was a strange note in his voice. "You."

CARLETON followed Granny Lane through the crowded Eastside streets and there was elation in his heart. Success, after all, had been very simple. Brandon would be bitterly surprised when the prisoner was brought in.

He trailed Granny up two flights of rickety tenement stairs. They halted before an unpainted rear door.

"Are you sure," said Carleton, "are you sure your friend will know where this Classon is?"

"Positive," said Granny Lane. Carleton's spirits were so high by this time that he failed to remark the peculiar note in the stool-pigeon's voice.

Granny hammered against the panel four times. The door opened inward. Carleton followed the old man into a square, barely furnished room. In its center was a table and a single chair. The chair was occupied by a dark faced man in shirt sleeves. A black cigar smoked violently between his teeth. Copperfield Carleton, still positive that he sat astride the universe, bowed politely and said, "Good morning."

Granny Lane shuffled over to the table, jerked his thumb in Carleton's direction.

"This is the guy who's looking for Stoney Classon," he announced.

"That's right," said Carleton eagerly. "There'll be a couple of bucks in it for you, Johnnie. I—"

He broke off suddenly and underwent the sensation of a queasy stomach plunging down a scenic railway incline. For in one swift movement the dark-faced man had produced a gun. He held it in his right hand and its barrel gazed in the general direction of Carleton's heart.

For one of the few times in his life Carleton was speechless. Not so, Granny Lane. He stood at the left hand of the man with the gun, and said, "Pay me, Stoney. One hundred slugs like you promised on the phone."

Carleton closed his eyes for a moment and shuddered. "You mean you're Stoney Classon?" he said. "And you, Granny, you little rat, I trusted you."

Granny Lane took the hundred-dollar bill Stoney Classon handed him.

"Never trust no one for a lousy fifteen bucks, Lieutenant," he said.

He shuffled across the floor avoiding Carleton's eye and disappeared through the door. Stoney Classon called out, "Hey, Hymie."

Hymie Harrington came out of a rear room which Carleton surmised was the bathroom. He stowed a heavy .45 away in a shoulder holster as he entered and Carleton knew he had been covered ever since he had entered the room. He also knew Hymie Harrington. Hymie had spent a good half of his life in the state penitentiary. He had spent the other half in the perpetration of the petty hold-ups which sent him there.

At Classon's order Hymie crossed the room, searched Carleton and relieved him of his gun. Classon ground



out his cigar, got up, crossed the room to a hat tree where his vest hung, and took another perfecto from the vest pocket. He lit it. During all these processes he kept his eyes on Carleton.

"Now, copper," he said. "I'll make a few things clear to you."

In Carleton's dazed condition he felt he would be grateful even for that.

"That front door will be kept well locked," said Classon. "The windows, you will note, are boarded up. You can have the run of this room and the bathroom yonder. The room beyond the bathroom is taboo. That door is also well locked. Furthermore, I understand that you are a very comical fellow. Well, if you try any tricks, we shall see what an amusing corpse you can be. Do you understand?"

"I understand the words," said Copperfield Carleton. "But I still don't know what it's all about."

"Leave it lay that way," said Hymie Harrington. "You know all you have to know."

THE entire Eighteenth Precinct would have been delighted to know that at this moment Copperfield Carleton's sense of humor was in complete hibernation. Like a caged bear he walked around the narrow confines of the room and gave himself over to profound and serious thought.

Instead of having Stoney Classon in custody as he had anticipated, it was all too apparent that Stoney Classon had him. And the troublesome question was why? Why had Classon wanted *him*?

He wandered into the dirty bathroom and lit a cigarette. In the other room Classon and Harrington smoked and idly chatted. Harrington's .45 was in his holster, and Classon's automatic lay within easy reach upon the table.

The bathroom was bare, dingy and more enamel was missing from the plumbing fixtures than remained. Carleton gazed casually about the room, then his eyes focussed on the ancient basin. There was no water in it, yet it was a third full of foamy soap suds. He stood very still for a moment. Then he turned toward the door at his right; the door that lead to the taboo room.

He held his breath and put his ear against the panel. He heard a faint rhythmic sound as of human breathing. He heard a more distinct sound, broken and breathless, as of human sobbing.

He walked back to the living room and sat down. Harrington and Classon watched him closely as they pursued their conversation. Carleton did not hear them. The brain that had conceived a thousand locker-room jokes was now engaged in a very humorless matter of deductive reasoning.

Twenty minutes later he lifted his chin from his chest, met Classon's eye, and said, "I got it all figured out."

Harrington glanced at him sharply, but Classon merely lifted his brows.

"Really," he said mockingly. "And what's the answer?"

"First," said Carleton thoughtfully, "you're an out-of-town hood, Classon. Probably from the far West. The Department hasn't a line on you; most of the underworld never heard of you. Always excepting the better class of stool pigeons who make it their business to know everything. Guys like Granny Lane, for instance. Or Benny Deane."

Hymie Harrington got out of his chair. "What do you know about Benny Deane?" he said. "What—"

"Shut up," said Classon. "Go ahead, copper. Keep talking."

"So," went on Carleton, "you get



the bright idea that a job in a town where you aren't known might prove a very smart deal."

"So?" said Classon.

"So," said Copperfield Carleton very slowly, "you snatch Flora Robinson."

Harrington drew a deep breath and his .45 at the same time. "I knew it," he said excitedly. "I knew it the minute Granny called. They got the finger on us. This guy was sent after us. We—"

"Shut up," said Classon again. "Carleton, do you mind explaining how you reached this startling conclusion?"

"Well," said Carleton, "I noticed the wash bowl in there half full of suds. Not ordinary soap suds but the kind made by the flakes. The sort of stuff a woman uses to wash stockings. I can't very well imagine either of you guys having a sock washing orgy so I figured that maybe there was a woman locked in the room you told me I couldn't go in."

"Well," said Classon, laying the sarcasm on with a trowel, "and what a wonderful mind you have, officer."

"I listened at the door," continued Carleton. "I heard someone breathing in there, heard a sound very much like a woman crying. Coupling that with the very obvious fact of you two guys being up to something you don't want the police to know about, I figured it quite likely you had Flora Robinson."

"Ah," said Classon, and his voice was almost a purr. "And did you figure anything else?"

"Sure," said Carleton. "I figured that Benny Deane knew about this job just as Granny Lane did. I figured he came up here and put the bite on you for dough to keep his mouth shut. I figured you didn't quite trust him. You figured he might tip off the department and collect from them, too. So you

tailed him to a Union Square phone booth. When he called Headquarters you plugged him. Either you or Hymie, here."

HARRINGTON looked angry and worried at the same time. He said excitedly, "It's a lie. We ain't got no dame here. We don't know anyone called Benny Deane. We—"

"Shut up," said Classon for the third time. "Carleton, you're absolutely right. We have the girl. I followed Deane and killed him myself. With this very gun on the table here. You have a very good mind Carleton. So good that you should realize why I'm telling you all this."

Copperfield Carleton didn't answer. He knew quite well why he was Classon's confidante. Classon, not liking the idea of a detective looking for him, had ordered Granny to bring him here. Classon was going to be quite certain that he never left.

For a long time Carleton sat still in his chair. The chances were, he realized, they would let him live until they had collected their ransom money. It would be rather unpleasant to have his corpse lying around the apartment while Classon and Harrington remained there.

It was a grim, unpleasant thought and being unaccustomed to grim, unpleasant thoughts, Carleton shuddered. Then suddenly a grin split his lips. His eyes lit up. For Copperfield Carleton had thought of something very funny.

"Well," he said and for the first time in an hour there was a genuine note of gaiety in his tone, "since I'm going to stay here, I may as well make myself at home."

He took off his coat, crossed the room and hung it on the hat tree next to that of Classon. Then he returned



to his chair, sat down, and whistled a lilting tune.

Then, at precisely eighteen minutes after four, it happened.

There was a sudden explosion some three inches in front of Classon's nose. Classon sprang up from his chair and at the same moment, Carleton leaped like a cat toward the table and seized the automatic. He heard a second, louder explosion and Harrington's bullet sang over his head.

Carleton swung around, touched the trigger once. Harrington dropped to the floor, howling with pain and holding a bloody knee with his hands. Carleton did an about turn and hammered his left to Classon's jaw.

Classon hit the floor like a dud shell. Carleton promptly sat on him, covered Harrington with the automatic, and drew a shining police whistle from his pocket. He blew a long and merry blast.

He was still sitting there when the radio car arrived. As they released Flora Robinson and handcuffed the prisoners, Carleton explained.

"It's brains that makes a detective, my little men in uniform. As soon as I saw that Classon chain-smoked cigars and that he kept them in his vest, I planted one of my explosive perfectos in his pocket. Then I just had to wait until he smoked down to it. I ought to get a medal for this, lads."

**H** E GOT the medal. The Commissioner himself made the presentation. And as Copperfield Carleton stood at attention listening to ponderous words of praise, it occurred to him that if he would forego comedy, he might some day—

Then he began to grin. Despite the Commissioner's disapproving gaze, the grin grew wider. For Copperfield Carleton had just thought of something very funny. If he could only work, it would be a cosmic joke.

He wondered if it would be possible for him to wangle admission to the execution chamber on the night that Classon burned. It would be a magnificent idea to put a tack on the electric chair—

**BIG BOY  
TAKES A  
TIP**



**BOB:** Say, fellow, are you taking Ex-Lax? Thought that was for women and kids.

**JIM:** Wrong, Big Boy! I've been taking Ex-Lax for years. It fixes me up fine!



**BOB:** Oh yeah! Well, I'm pretty husky... I need a laxative with a wallop.

**JIM:** Don't kid yourself! Ex-Lax tastes good, but it's plenty effective!



**LATER**

**BOB:** Thanks for the tip, pal! I tried Ex-Lax and it's great stuff!

**JIM:** What did I tell you! It's the only laxative we ever use in our family.

The action of Ex-Lax is thorough, yet *gentle*! No shock. No strain. No weakening after-effects. Just an easy, comfortable bowel movement that brings blessed relief. Try Ex-Lax next time you need a laxative. It's good for every member of the family.

**10¢ and 25¢**





**I**F THE light had turned green a few seconds sooner, Andy Watson would have been streaking through the little town with a screech of worn gears and two suitcases full of rocks safe in the back seat. But it turned just at the moment when a sharp-faced man with a crooked mouth ran out of the shadows and slid into the seat beside him.

The man's glance had sized up Andy's nineteen years, his rangy length, the sharp line of his jaw, before he pulled the door to behind him.

"Get going, kid. This is a snatch. Step on it."

Andy felt something hard against his ribs. "Okay, Mister." There wasn't anything else to do.

His wind-roughened hands shook a little on the wheel. He was remembering that there wasn't another light or cop until they got to Cranston.

"Slow down at this next corner."

Andy knew when his headlights picked up the tough-looking guy with the bag that he was going to get a double load of trouble. A thick-lipped

*There was a lot more at stake than the cases of tourmaline, topaz and beryl*

## Rough Stuff



By  
Lois  
Ames



man with the scar across his face opened the rear door and fell over the suitcases. Andy heard the snap of one of the old locks and the rattle of a couple of stones on the wooden floor of the car.

"What'n hell is this, a baggage car? Get going, sap!"

Andy got going, hoping that the man didn't know rough tourmalines, topaz and beryl when he saw them. He'd spent all summer working along the banks of streams, doing a little blasting in old quarries, getting together that lot of stones. Some of them would be pretty swell when they got their jackets off. He wished he had those two sticks of dynamite that were under the back seat.

The man beside him was watching the side of the road, looking for something. They'd be turning off, then, before they got to Cranston.

The man in back shifted about uneasily, trying to find room for his feet. "What a crate you picked out, Skeet! I bet it can't go more'n twenty miles an hour."

Andy's foot came down hard on the accelerator. "Bet it can!" If he could pick up a stray motorcycle cop looking for trouble he'd be all right. It was probably too late in the season for that, though.

The man beside him half turned, still keeping the gun against Andy's ribs.

"Cut it, kid. No stunts."

Andy let up a little on the gas. Until tonight he'd always liked driving these Maine roads after the summer traffic was gone. He liked the crisp tang of the salt air mingled with the smell of pine. He'd never felt lonely here before.

"Okay. Turn here." It was the Saw-yerstown road.

The man on the back seat leaned forward. "You crazy, Skeet? There's a

State cop barracks on this road now."

That last word puzzled Andy.

Skeet's crooked mouth slanted down in an ugly line. "Pipe down, Max. I'm running this show now. You done your trick, and a lousy job you made of it. Getting palsy in your trigger finger! There's two ends to a gun. You ought to remember that when you pull a job on Uncle Whiskers."

"Oh, yeah? And let that old guy wake up and identify me? Nix!"

Cold fear touched Andy's spine. So it was a postoffice job! And Scarface, in the back seat, had shot the postmaster. Andy remembered him, a plump jolly old Santa Claus who lived upstairs over the postoffice. Bert Griffin, his name was. He gripped the wheel harder.

Max, in the back seat, was leaning over the suitcases, fumbling with the locks. "What's in the bag, kid? Gold bricks?"

ANDY tried to sound casual. "Nothing but a lot of rocks for my geology course in college."

If he lost those stones his whole winter's income was gone. Hand-made jewelry might seem a sissy business, but to Andy any job was good that kept you from having to change grocers every week.

Skeet was looking at him shrewdly. "You don't look like a college kid."

Andy managed a grin. "These are my working clothes. You should see me in my coonskin coat!"

Skeet's crooked mouth turned up at one corner. "Yeah. I'll bet you're a knockout."

The straight road stretched ahead, dull gold as far as the headlights reached. Andy relaxed a little, with an occasional glance out of the corner of his eye at Skeet. The whole setup seemed phony. A couple of guys with-



out a car robbing a country postoffice. Federal offense. For only a few dollars, too. No, wait a minute, this was pay day out at the big dam the Government was building. The workmen would have been in, sending money orders home. A fairly good haul, maybe, but not enough to burn for. That "now" of Max's, when he mentioned the State barracks, stuck in Andy's mind.

The gun pressed harder against his ribs. Far ahead the lights of the police barracks gleamed across the road. And there wasn't a darned thing he could do. He felt like a drowning man with a life preserver just beyond his reach.

A patrol car wheeled out into the road behind them, but Andy's hope sputtered out like a wet blanket when he saw its leisurely pace. McCarthy and Robertson leaving on their usual tour of duty. Anyway, the State cops knew his car, and they'd hardly look for a murderer on his back seat. Bert Griffin might not be found till morning.

His rear view mirror reflected their headlights. Gently he pedalled the brake, remembering the Morse code he'd learned as a kid. It was just a chance. "S—O—"

The car jerked a little, though he'd tried to touch the brake just enough to make the rear light blink.

Skeet sat up sharply. "What's the idea? No funny business, remember, kid."

"Of course not. It does that sometimes. This isn't any Rolls, you know."

Skeet's gimlet eyes, set too close together, bored into him. "Just remember, you can't thumb your nose if you got a bullet in your gizzard." He looked out the window. "The right fork here."

Andy swung to the right, toward Blakestown, and with a sinking feeling saw the patrol car shoot past on the left hand fork. They hadn't got it, then.

Max, in the back seat, was getting curious again. He had a flashlight turned on the rocks. "Been doing a little prospecting, huh? If there's any money in this stuff, we could use it."

"Those hunks of rocks wouldn't be worth a dime a dozen to you."

"Yeah? That's what you say. That college stuff don't go with me, see? To put it plain, I think you're lying."

Andy shrugged. "Have it your way. But they don't grow diamonds in Maine, and if you think you've got a gold mine under your feet, you're crazy."

Max was unconvinced. "If they ain't worth nothing, what are you going to do with them?"

Andy wished Max would stop talking. He wanted to think. But he didn't want to tell him to shut up and make the guy mad. He remembered that jittery trigger finger. "If you must know, I make jewelry and put those stones in it. It pays the grocery bill, and no more. And it won't do that if my father wasn't a lapidary."

Skeet had been silent. Now he said irritably, "Hell! I'll bet you knit, too!"

Andy didn't answer that one. He was remembering the day when, fresh out of high school and with no job, he had wandered into the Natural History Museum. Because his father had cut and polished gems all his life until the Depression caught up with him, the mineral exhibit had interested Andy. That was when he had his big idea. If those stones in the cases were found in New England, as the cards on them said, he could find them too. There might be something in it. Anyway, he had thought, it would give his father something to do besides staring out the window all the time. That had been getting under Andy's skin.

They hadn't done so badly, either.



The first year they'd had enough left over to buy a fifty-dollar car. This year he was pretty proud of the stuff he was going to show his father tomorrow. If he got back to Boston. He was conscious again of the gun against his side.

Max had subsided. Suddenly he spoke. "Say, kid, what did you say your father was?"

"A lapidary."

"Cripes!" Max's tone was wondering. "I thought that was some kind of a camel!"

**B**LAKESTOWN was a little group of houses with a general store, now dark, and a filling station. In front of the pump stood a dark sedan. Its headlights shone on a hatless girl in a blue tweed coat. Her hair was gold in the yellow light and her laugh was golden, too, as she listened to something the attendant was saying. Andy knew her. Mary Rossiter. A nice kid.

Max leaned forward. "How about a switch, Skeet? This jallopy's shaking the guts out of me."

"I don't care about your guts, but it's a good idea. Them cops—Slower, kid."

They were half a mile beyond the village when the girl's headlights came over a rise behind them. This was hilly country, and Andy didn't need Skeet's gun in his side to keep him down to a bare thirty miles an hour. The old car was feeling its age. The one behind came on swiftly.

"You do what I say, kid, and nobody'll get hurt. When she starts to pass, edge her over."

There was an impatient toot from the rear. Andy swung the wheel to the right. If she went past at a good clip she'd get away. He wasn't thinking of his own neck now. But the old car had scarcely responded to his touch when

Skeet's hand was on the wheel, yanking it to the left.

There was a sharp sound of crumpling fenders and the shriek of brakes, and both cars stopped.

Skeet's mouth was ugly. "You can't afford to be a Galahad, kid. You do what I say next time or else . . .!"

"What's the big idea?" The girl sounded angry. Then her voice changed. "Hello, Andy. The boy friends want an introduction?"

Skeet's voice cut across Andy's apology. "We need your car, sister. Move over."

She looked him over coolly, saw the revolver and slid out from under the wheel.

Andy couldn't figure it out at all when, after a two-man huddle that lasted a couple of minutes Max climbed into Mary's car and Skeet got in beside him again. They got the cars apart and started, Andy leading. The thought came to Andy that all they need was a couple of American flags to make them look as if they were headed for a cemetery. That wasn't so far off, either. He shivered.

Skeet was watching the side of the road again. When he ordered Andy to stop, the other car pulled up beside them.

Skeet got out and called, "Come on, sister. Get in here. Make it snappy."

Mary got in beside Andy. Her chin was up, but she was trembling. Or maybe she was just cold. These early autumn nights were chilly. He was shivering himself.

Skeet said, "We're going to let you both go, see? But you got to do one thing. There's a road somewhere ahead that turns off to Twelveoaks, ain't there?"

Andy nodded. Skeet sure seemed to know all about the country around here.



"Okay. You can take your lady friend and drive along, slow, and show us where it is. We'll follow. Then you can go. But don't think you can pull a fast one, in that crate. We ain't such bad guys, now, are we?"

Andy didn't like the way he said it. There were plenty of things wrong with the idea, but he wasn't sure what the catch was. It just didn't make sense.

Skeet and Max took the bag and the two suitcases and got into Mary's car.

Skeet called, "Alright, kid. Thanks for the buggy ride, and the best of luck!"

Andy sat staring into the long yellow pathway made by his headlights. The fear that had been forming around his heart like frost solidified into a solid lump. He had it now. Far ahead, as far as the headlights went, he saw the turn in the road. Beyond, though he could not see it, he knew there was a deep gully separated from the road only by the rotten rails of a fence. So that was the idea! A shot in the tire. Two kids on a joyride would be the verdict, probably. He thought of the dynamite under the back seat. Perhaps there wouldn't even be enough of them left to identify.

"What you waiting for? Get going!" Skeet sounded impatient.

Andy snapped out of his paralysis. With one movement he took a box of matches from his pocket, dropped it into Mary's lap and slowly put the car in motion.

"Climb over back quick!" he said in a hoarse whisper. "Lift up the back cushion. There's a couple of sticks of dynamite there. Give me one. Light the fuse on the other and when I tell you, throw it as far back of the car as you can. Hurry!"

He kept the car at a slow crawl, but the rail fence rushed at him. He heard

Mary's nails tearing at the slippery cover.

"Got it!" she gasped.

She dropped a stick over to him and he put it in his pocket. It would be safer there if anything went wrong.

A COLD wind blew across the hill, and the perspiration under his thin suit made him shiver. He gripped the wheel in despair as Mary scratched frantically with matches that died after a brief spark. One. Two. Three. Then there was a tiny flare as the fuse sputtered and lighted. Mary's breath came in a long, choking sob.

"Hold it!" The car crawled on, the other humming impatiently behind.

"Got the window open?" They were almost at the turn now.

"Yes-yes. This thing's burning fast! Shall I throw it?"

"Not yet." He was counting. The fuse burned two feet a minute. Fifteen seconds to go. They were opposite the fence now. "Throw it!"

He swung the car sharply to the left, away from the rotting rails.

Everything happened at once. There was a sharp crack of a revolver and on top of it a deafening crash. The rear of the car seemed to rise off the ground like a bucking mule, then settle with a back-breaking thump amid the clatter of broken glass.

Half dazed, he reached over and dragged Mary across the back of the seat. Blood ran from a cut on her cheek. She pounded the air with clenched fists and sobbed, "I—threw it—short!"

The front of the car was buried in the soft left bank of the road. He wrenched the door open and dragged her through. Angry voices shouted behind them.

"Come on!" he yelled, grabbing her arm.

He pulled her up on the bank toward



shelter in the black woods. Men's feet were pounding towards them.

His feet slipped on the grass. He lost his grip on her arm, and she slid back down the bank. "Go on!" she gasped. "Oh—go on!"

He turned. There was a spit of flames and a crash. Something stung the top of his ear. He dropped to the ground.

Skeet was standing over Mary. "Cut out that shooting, Max, you damned fool! Come and put the girl in the car, and I'll get the kid."

Andy got to his feet and started to run. He'd got to get away, get help. His nose smacked against a tree. He wrapped his arms around it and shinned up.

He heard Skeet thrashing about below in the underbrush. Far back on the road, a mile or so away, the lights of a car topped a rise. Max had seen it, too. He called to Skeet.

They dragged Mary to her car, shoved her in among the bags. Max followed. Skeet flung himself into the driver's seat and stepped viciously on the starter. The engine turned. The dynamite hadn't damaged it, then.

When they had gone Andy slid down. He didn't notice the warm trickle down his cheek, or that his hands were skinned and bleeding.

There was no sign of an approaching car. It must have turned up a lane. A farmer returning from a grange meeting, probably. He began to run groggily in the direction the men had taken.

A mile down the road, where it crossed the State highway, he staggered into Mike Beatty's filling station.

"Sure, a car came down a little while ago, going hell-bent," Mike said in reply to his question. "Went straight on. Didn't turn onto the black road."

"Call the State cops. I'm taking your car. They've got Mary Rossiter."

"Sure, take the car." Mike was already at the telephone.

Andy grabbed Mike's pistol, lying on the table. "I'll take this too," he called, streaking out the door. Mike yelled something after him, but he didn't stop to hear. He was already climbing into the car.

**M**IKE'S car wasn't much to look at, but the engine was a honey. It purred smoothly along the narrowing dirt road. Andy hunched himself over the steering wheel trying to figure Skeet's objective. They'd never have stuck to the dirt road if they hadn't known the country. A lot of these roads ended in somebody's barnyard. But this one didn't.

Another road, little more than a cart-path, turned off to the left, winding up into the hills. He hesitated, then drove on. They might have gone up there, but he'd have to chance it. Skeet wouldn't run himself into any *cul-de-sac*.

A couple of miles farther on the woods receded and gave way to rocky pastures. Squatting dejectedly near the road was an old farmhouse. The old Cave place. Bill Cave lived here alone, and presumably liked it. Nobody seemed disposed to question it.

Andy pounded on the door. No light showed, but that didn't mean anything. He sensed rather than heard a slight movement inside the house. He pounded again, rattled the knob and shouted. He put his shoulder to the weather-beaten old panels and threw his weight against it. He'd get the old fox out if he had to bust the door in.

Then he heard a heavy step and the door was thrown open. He stumbled half way across the sill. A thick arm barred the way and threw him back against the porch rail.



"Whadder you mean, busting in this way? Who are you, anyway?" Bill Cave stepped out and pulled the door to behind him. He was a tall, stooped man with powerful shoulders and a thick head slung forward between them.

Andy's foot hit a small rock and he kicked it off the porch. "Did a car come through this road?" he asked.

Cave's head moved sideways between his thick shoulders. "Hain't seen no car since four, five o'clock."

"You sure?" Andy insisted.

"Hain't no car been through. I'd'a' heard it if it had. Now get off my prop'ty quick. And next time mind your manners better or you'll get your damned head punched in."

"Well—" Andy hesitated. He thought the man was lying, but he wasn't sure.

He turned back to the car, baffled. Something glittered in the light from the headlights. A piece of rock, the one he'd kicked off the porch. And there was another. Quartz!

He swung around, caught Bill Cave off his guard and smashed his fist into the man's jaw. "You're lying! They're here!"

Cave lashed out at him with powerful fists, but Andy's quick sidestep saved him. Before Cave could recover he caught the point of the man's jaw in a quick uppercut that had the power of anger behind it. Cave collapsed.

Andy crept inside the house and listened. There was no sound. The kitchen smelled of stale tobacco and greasy dishes. The car lights shining in the window showed him a door on the opposite side of the room. He opened it cautiously. Stairs went down to a basement kitchen lighted by a smoky lantern.

He heard a voice which he recognized as Skeet's. "You got gunman's itch, sure enough. But we ain't going

to do any shooting on Bill's place. Bill's gun-shy. That's why he skedaddled in the car when you blasted away at that old guy. You hadn't ought to have done that, Max."

Max sounded sulky. "You don't have to keep remindin' me. How do we know Bill won't turn the girl loose, when we've gone?"

"Bill ain't that soft. It's just that he don't like guns. The girl's out cold. Tie her up, just in case, and Bill will get rid of her his own way. Hurry up."

ANDY crept down another step.

From where he stood he could see Mary lying on the floor, her face white, her eyes closed. He couldn't cover both the men at once. He'd have to shoot. His hand shook a little. It was awful hard for a guy that never shot even a rabbit, to shoot a man in cold blood.

He was spared the necessity. A round pebble rolled under his heel and with elbows crooked and knees and spine stiff with fright, he skated down the stairs, his heels striking the edge of each step.

For half a second two startled faces turned toward him. Then Max's gun went off with a deafening reverberation. Andy pulled the trigger of Mike Beatty's pistol at the exact moment something hot seared his shoulder. The gun responded with a feeble click. In that split second before he hit the basement floor he knew what it was that Mike had yelled after him. He'd been cleaning the gun and it wasn't loaded!

He threw the useless gun full in Skeet's face and hurled himself at Max's knees in a flying tackle. The heavy thud threw him off balance and he went down. Max landed with a force that knocked the wind out of him. His revolver skimmed across the floor.

Andy staggered to his feet and



turned. He expected Skeet's gun to roar at him. But Skeet was making futile passes with one hand across his face to clear the blood from his eyes. It streamed from a gash made by the gun Andy had thrown. With the other hand Skeet groped on the table for his own gun.

His fingers touched the barrel just as Andy pulled the dynamite from his pocket.

"Don't move!" Andy shouted, holding the little black stick above his head. "It's dynamite! Touch that gun and I'll throw it!"

He saw the hesitation in Skeet's face as he stared at the stick. His fingers almost touching the gun. For a moment they both stood motionless. Then slowly Skeet's hands went up. He was looking beyond Andy now.

Mary's voice came from behind him. "All right, Andy. I've got him covered. This gun of Max's seems to be plenty efficient."

Andy slipped the little black stick in his pocket. A steady purring reached his ears. The State cops!

Max was beginning to move and groan. There were heavy footsteps on the floor above. He shouted, and the troopers came down the stairs, guns in their hands.

The foremost trooper spoke. "Hello,

Skeet Cave. Haven't seen you since you ran away from home, along about the seventh grade, wasn't it? And Max too! Regular old school reunion!"

He said some more, but Andy wasn't listening. "You're not really hurt?" he asked Mary.

"Just a little banged up. That faint was a phoney. Most of your stones are safe, though I may have lost a few. I loaded up my pockets and dropped them along as we came in."

She stopped and an odd expression crossed her face. Curious, and a little cool. "That—dynamite—would you really have thrown it?"

He grinned. "That was pure bluff. I didn't think they were such hot gangsters, or they wouldn't have robbed a postoffice in the first place. And they seemed to know the roads like local guys. So I took a chance on Skeet's not knowing much about the stuff. If he'd been a big-time fellow he'd have known that cold dynamite wouldn't explode if you throw it."

He leaned over and picked up the stone that had catapulted him down the stairs. "That's one of my best pieces of tourmaline. Doesn't look like much now, rough like that, but it'll be a beaut when it's finished. Make a nice ring, maybe."

Mary smiled. "I'd like it."

**USE SPEEDWAY DE LUXE BLADES**  
**FOR FAST, SMOOTH, ECONOMICAL SHAVES**



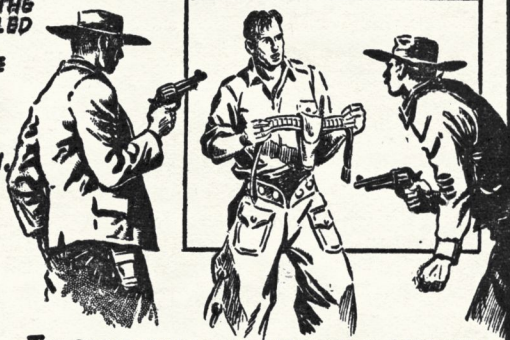


# ILLUSTRATED CRIMES

## Phantom of the Gold Fields

**PART II**-- TOM BELL, SCOURGE OF THE CALIFORNIA GOLD FIELDS, THOUGHT TO HAVE BEEN KILLED NEAR FOLSOM, REAPPEARED AND ATTEMPTED TO HOLD UP THE COMPTONVILLE STAGE WITH \$100,000 IN 1856. THE POSSE THAT SET OUT AFTER THE GANG REALIZED THEY WERE ON THE TRAIL OF BELL, OR HIS GHOST, OR SOMEONE MASQUERADING AS THE HIGHWAYMAN.

GRADUALLY THE GANG WAS KILLED OR TAKEN, AND IDENTIFIED BY THE X-NOSED BULLETS THAT WERE THEIR INSIGNIA. IN EXCHANGE FOR HIS LIFE, WHITE, ONE OF BELL'S MEN, STATED THAT HIS CHIEF WAS AT A HIDEOUT IN THE MERCED CANYON.



THE POSSE, FOLLOWING HIS TRACKS, SURPRISED HIM THERE WITHOUT A STRUGGLE; SWUNG A ROPE AND ENACTED JUSTICE A SECOND TIME ON SUPER-ROADAGENT TOM BELL! BUT SOON STAGE COACHES WERE BEING ROBBED IN THE BEST BELL MANNER AND THE REPORT CIRCULATED THAT TOM HAD TAKEN TO THE HIGHWAY AGAIN.

A MINER WAS ROBBED AND MURDERED BY 5 MEN; HIS WOMAN COMPANION BARELY ESCAPED DEATH BY EXPOSURE. WHEN THE DEAD MAN'S BODY YIELDED AN X-BULLET, THE WOMAN'S HUSBAND SWORE TO PUT AN END TO BELL.





SECURING A DESCRIPTION OF THE MURDERERS, HE TRAILED THEM TO A BELL-HIDEOUT ON THE YUBA AND LAY IN WAIT UNTIL THEY RODE UP. THREE FELL UNDER HIS DEADLY FIRE. THEY CARRIED THE TELLTALE BULLETS BUT NONE OF THEM, ACCORDING TO THE SHERIFF, WAS BELL HIMSELF.



**REWARD**  
5,000<sup>00</sup>

**TOM BELL**  
FOLLOW UP ON  
HIS QUITTING  
OF THE YUBA  
AND OTHER  
MURDERERS  
MICHAWAYMAN

**NOTICE  
OF  
SALE**  
BY AUCTION OF  
H.A. GIBSON,  
Jr.

THE SHERIFF, KNOWING A WOMAN BELL WAS SWEET ON, ARRANGED WITH HER TO NOTIFY HIM WHEN THE OUT-LAW NEXT VISITED HER. THAT NIGHT A NOTE WAS PUSHED UNDER HIS DOOR.....  
"THE HEN IS ON THE NEST," IT READ!

GATHERING A POSSE, HE KNOCKED ON THE DOOR WITH HIS GUN, ANNOUNCING: "IT'S THE SHERIFF! OPEN UP!" BELL PLUNGED THROUGH A WINDOW AND LIT RUNNING. THE GUNS OF THE POSSE BLAZED AND HE FELL RIDDLED.

WHETHER HE WAS THE ORIGINAL TOM BELL, OR A SECOND OR EVEN A THIRD RENEGADE WHO HAD TAKEN HIS NAME AND ATTEMPTED TO CARRY ON IN HIS FOOTSTEPS, NOBODY EVER KNEW, BUT AT ANY RATE, THE PHANTOM OF THE GOLD FIELDS HAD BEEN LAID AT LAST, FOR NO TOM BELL EVER APPEARED AGAIN.





# Troubled Waters



Chris fired even as he leaped behind the car

By B. B. Fowler

**S**HOCKED to discover his best friend, **BILL WENDELL**, has just been murdered, **CHRIS DAVENPORT**, soldier of fortune, decides to avenge the murder. He tells **LOGAN**, Wendell's boss, this and also tells him that he knows that **JOEY CAIN** is the name of the murderer. Logan promises to help.

Later Logan calls and tells Chris that he has found Cain. Chris goes to meet him and the two of them go to Cain's room. There, they find Joey Cain dead. Logan pulls a gun on Chris and discloses that he is mixed up in the mysterious business back of the murder of Wendell. He is about to shoot when Chris twists to one side and kills Logan. A closet door in the room opens and out steps **ELLERY**, a homicide cop who had also been on the Wendell case.

Chris later tells Ellery the little that he knows about the case; that in addition to the killer's name, Wendell had murmured "**Benson—Oil—Paddy's Cove—**" before dying.

Ellery warns him against mixing in the case but seems to be friendly.

That afternoon **LAURA EVANS**, a friend of the dead Wendell, arranges for Chris to meet a man named **SCHENLEY**, who apparently is back of the whole business. Schenley offers Chris ten thousand dollars if he will leave town—and death if he doesn't. Chris refuses to leave town and terminates the interview. As he leaves the hotel, he is picked up by **LESLIE HAMMOND** who has other equally mysterious reasons for wanting to get rid of Chris. Davenport manages to escape from Hammond and returns to his hotel room where someone else makes another try on his life. Ellery shows up again and this time tells Chris that he wants him to leave town too. But he suggests that Chris go upstate and tells him that Laura Evans' uncle's name is Benson, that he is in the oil business and that he owns a place upstate known as Paddy's Cove. Chris agrees to go.



## VIII

ELLERY said, "I wish to hell I could go with you, chum." "I'll make out all right alone," Chris said in a preoccupied tone.

Ellery looked at the newspapers lying open on the floor where Chris had thrown them as he dived. He glanced from the war headlines to Chris and said, "I hope you appreciate how big this damn' thing is you're getting into."

Chris lifted his head and frowned at Ellery. "By the way, just what kind of oil business has Benson got?"

"Independent producer. He has a refinery at Galveston and a fleet of tankers. He has a swell business built up along the eastern coast. He seems to have the fuel oil business pretty well sewn up by the amount of stuff he's been shipping."

Ellery scowled at his shoe toes. "One thing I can't figure. Where the hell are the G boys? This is up their alley."

"Maybe they're in already," Chris said.

"They will be if they're not," Ellery commented. "Personally I think that it was Bill Wendell who spotted this racket. That's why this Schenley moved so fast in knocking Wendell off. That's why he's after you. I suppose," he added indifferently, "that they'll be after me now."

While Ellery talked Chris cleaned the automatic, put in a fresh clip and worked the carriage into the magazine. As he laid it on the table beside him he said, "It looks as if the whole business won't be a secret much longer. As you say, the G-men are bound to horn in now."

He stopped for a second as he

flashed a sharp look at Ellery. "Why suggest that I go ahead on my own? I should think you'd be inclined to tip off the G men to what we know and let them crack down."

"I'll tell you why. I'm just a tough cop. But there are some things that get under my skin. There's a job to do. And I think you are the baby to do it. I've been watching you work and I've come to the conclusion that there aren't many guys on the F.B.I. who could do a job like this as well as you could."

"I still don't get it," Chris said in a puzzled tone.

"Let me finish," Ellery said patiently. "I've seen the Evans girl. I know how you feel about her. And I'm just soft enough to feel a little sick over what I saw in her eyes. That young woman is scared silly. I think I know why. And I think you're the best guy to do something about it. One man might do the trick. The Feds might only complicate the business and cause more grief."

"You see," he went on, "we looked up all about Laura Evans. She has a kid sister in a ritzy private school up on the Hudson. I pulled a few wires and got some information. The kid isn't at the school. No one knows where she is. The School people wouldn't talk so we didn't find out more than that."

"So you think . . ." Chris began.

"It's plain logic," Ellery explained. "The Evans girl knows plenty. I don't think she would cover her uncle when it came to wholesale murder. Therefore they are holding something over her head. It might be a threat of death to the kid sister. It would be smart of Benson and Schenley to think of something like that to keep Laura Evans in line, especially if they thought she



might be useful to them in circulation. It looks like the Uncle's hand. Schenley would be more apt to bump the girl off and let it go at that. The uncle is probably more squeamish; more inclined to just shut her up. I may be all wet. But that's the way I dope it."

Chris nodded. "I think you've got something there, Ellery."

He got up and crossed the room to his bag and dug down into it again. He came up with a long knife in a leather sheath. He pulled the knife out of the scabbard and ran a thumb along its edge.

"You use one of those things, do you?" Ellery asked.

"There are times," Chris said thinly, "when a knife is more efficient than a gun. A chap I know in Spain taught me a few tricks with it. I'll just take it along to Paddy's Cove."

"Just how are you going to work it?" Ellery asked. "You get on a train for Maine and I'll bet that you're dead before you get to Massachusetts. These boys aren't playing for marbles."

"I'll manage to give them the slip some way," Chris said confidently. "I'll head south until I've shaken them off my trail. Then I'll get a car somewhere and head for Maine, using back roads."

"You might work it that way," Ellery said thoughtfully. "I can fix it for you to pick up a car in Philly without the usual red tape. It will cost you about five hundred dollars for an old crate. But it will be worth it."

He smiled crookedly at Chris. "We cops have to pull the damndest capers sometimes," he said ruefully. "We have to do business with the damndest people. I know one such guy in Philly, a guy by the name of Mose Seabury. I'll tell you how to find Mose. He'll be waiting with a car. Hand him the five

hundred bucks and just start driving. Don't ask any questions and Mose won't ask any."

As Chris got up, Ellery said, "I'm going to take you down to Headquarters now. I'll make it look like a pinch. I'll be able to smuggle you out and give you a chance for a clean start. I'll give you more dope on Mose as we go along."

**B**EFORE Chris left Headquarters, Ellery said soberly, "Look, chum, I've been telephoning. I know a guy here in the city who knows Mose. It's as complicated as that. This guy I called tells me that it's all set. But I don't trust him, I'm going to see him personally and make sure. Like I said, this guy Schenley must be tagging me now. He knows that I've talked plenty to you. He knows that I brought you down to Headquarters. He'll be checking. Watch your step."

Then, as Chris was leaving him, "Give us a call when you get the crate and get clear of Philly. I'll stick here at Headquarters the rest of the night. I'll leave word where I'll be going for the next few days. Call me again if I can help."

"Thank you, Ellery," Chris said warmly. "It's nice to know that there are guys like you in the world."

Ellery looked a trifle embarrassed, "Hell, chum, I'm a cop. And, after all, cops are supposed to help straighten things out. And I want to see this straightened. Watch your step."

**C**HRIS remembered Ellery's admonition when he approached the corner in Philadelphia and saw the big sign on the used car lot in front of him. Not that he needed Ellery's reminder. He wasn't discounting either Schenley or Hammond. They were men playing



an unscrupulous game. And they had arms that could reach far.

He stood on the corner gazing at the used lot. There was a big sign that ran around the lot; a sign that said, "We pay cash for your car. We have what you want. Terms as low as \$10 down and \$10 a week."

There was a tiny shack midway of the lot. In front of the shack there was a sign that read, "If you want a bargain ask for Mose." Under the sign, standing just in front of the shack, was a short fat man with a bare bald head. He was like another sign, he was so still, with his hands deep in his pockets, his shoulders hunched.

Chris walked up the street, crossed, and came toward the used car lot skirting the shadows. There was a big Lincoln sedan beside the shack where the short, fat man was standing. Chris stopped just in front of the Lincoln.

He kept his hand on the gun butt as he said, "Is that you, Mose. This is Chris Davenport."

He was waiting for it. So he saw the stir of movement in the doorway of the shack, just as the machine gun began to chatter and Mose threw himself down with a strangled yell of panic. He saw, also, the man behind the car on the other side of the doorway. He saw all that as he threw himself back behind the Lincoln.

As he jumped back he jerked the gun out of his pocket and pumped slugs into the doorway.

The machine gun fell with a clatter and the man in the doorway came out, running with short choppy steps, bent over, both hands clutched across his stomach. He didn't quite make the sidewalk when he fell face down.

Chris was still moving when the machine gun stopped. He ran behind the Lincoln and circled the shack. He

could see the man behind the other car and the gun in his hand. Lead whanged into the car beside him. Chris didn't let excitement hurry him. This was old stuff. It was like diving out of a cloud onto an enemy, coolly waiting for the right moment to press the button that would spray death.

The fellow fired three times before Chris pressed the trigger. He watched the man whirl around and drop, knowing that the one slug had been enough.

He raced forward and caught Mose just as he was scuttling into the shack. He caught the lapels of the fat man's coat and almost lifted him clear off his feet as he snapped, "Where's that car you had for me?"

Mose's face was chalk white, his eyes wide and scared as a snared rabbit's. "Oi, what a mess."

"To hell with the mess," Chris grated. "Where's my car?"

He could hear a siren screaming in the distance as a squad car hurtled toward the sound of the gunfire. He snapped at Mose, "The car. Get in touch with Ellery in New York. He'll cover for you."

Mose squirmed in his grasp. "This way. I had it ready. Then these gonoffs came."

As Chris handed him a fistful of crisp bills, Mose whined, "Bullet holes in all my cars, oi! Who pays for that?"

Chris climbed in behind the wheel of the old car. "See Ellery. Tell him I'll pay for all damages."

He stepped on the starter and held his breath until the aged motor caught with a shudder. He let in the clutch and the car went forward into the street, bucking and missing.

He was around the next corner when he heard the siren moaning to a stop. The car was a horrible jalopy.



But it was a car. Having sized up Mose's joint he wondered if there was enough gas in the tank to carry him more than a block or two.

As soon as he dared risk it he stopped and had the tank filled. He stopped again on the outskirts of the city and called Ellery. He sighed with relief when he heard the cop's heavy voice on the other end of the wire.

After he had told Ellery what had happened, Ellery said, "I've been worrying, kid. The boys have been tailing me, watching every move. They must have got to that guy I went to see. I'll be looking that ginzo up again."

Ellery paused. "They'll be keeping close to your tail, chum. That means you've got to keep on watching your step. Because you've got to get through."

After he had hung up Chris breathed a short prayer of thanks for men like Ellery. Then he got into the car and pushed it over the back roads. It was a jalopy. But there was speed left in its old frame. All through the remaining hours of darkness Chris pushed that speed to the limit.

He stopped at a roadside place in Connecticut for breakfast and drank three cups of scalding hot coffee. Weariness ached in his bones and weighted down his eyelids. He wanted desperately to lie down and sleep and knew that he didn't dare. He had to keep going.

**H**E PULLED into a gas station for a refill. He was in Massachusetts, one of the roads that connect the Boston-Worcester Pike with the Newburyport Turnpike. While the station attendant filled his gas tank he went into the men's room.

The window in the men's room was

open a slit. He glanced through it and saw the car pull up across the street. There were two men in the back seat. One of them rolled the window down part way and was watching the attendant pump gas into the tank of the old jalopy.

Watching them Chris thought of the two men who had gunned for him at Mose's used car lot. He went out into the office of the filling station and tried a door that led to the rear. He opened it and stepped out into a littered yard. He crossed the yard and entered the back door of a garage. He nodded to a man who peered at him from under the car and went on through to a street in front.

He was going up the street when he saw a big red bus heading in the direction of Boston. He started to run for it and realized how easy it would be for a fast car to overhaul it and look the passengers over when he failed to appear in front of the gas station.

He walked the length of the town before he found what he wanted, a big truck with a canvas cover over its load. A dicker with the driver and he was under the canopy, the truck headed for Newburyport.

In spite of the jolting of the truck he slept fitfully, waking from time to time as a car was slow in passing the truck; holding his breath waiting for a squeal of brakes to tell him that the truck was being halted.

His heart was in his mouth when the driver lifted the canvas hours later and said, "Here you are, brother. This is Newburyport."

Chris paid him and walked through the town. He was almost through it when finally he saw a small panel truck standing in front of a little green house. The sign on the truck said, "Franklin. Flowers."



He discovered the owner of the truck, a small, dry, withered man, puttering around some anemic-looking begonias. The glimmer of suspicion in the man's eyes changed to eager hunger when he saw the denomination of the bills in Chris' hands.

After he had made a bargain Chris went down the street and ate. He ate hungrily, avidly, in response to the urging of his stomach and the knowledge that the next meal might be a long time coming.

When he returned to the green house the man was behind the wheel of the truck. Chris crawled in back and pulled the door closed behind him. He rolled himself up in some sackings, reminding the driver, "Don't forget. It's Wooley, on the other side of the Bath bridge." Then he relaxed, closing his eyes. He felt sure of this leg of his transportation, and slept all the way up through Maine.

**I**T WAS dusk when he left the florist's truck and started down the side road toward Paddy's Cove, walking with long, ground-eating strides. He had a good ten miles to cover and he wanted the whole of the night to work in.

A mile down the road he accepted a lift from a Bath ironworker on his way home from work. That carried him four miles on his way.

After that he took no more chances. He was getting too close now. And all roads to Paddy's Cove would be watched. He had studied the lay of the Cove on the map. He knew approximately where it lay from the road he was on. After dodging into the bushes and hiding while four cars passed him he found a bush-grown trail that looked as though it might have been a road leading in his direction when

horses and carts made many such roads necessary.

He followed it, with the dusk deepening into darkness. As he went the bushes seemed to grow thicker. Sometimes the road disappeared altogether and he had to halt and make sure of his direction before he plunged ahead again.

He came out finally on a rocky ridge. He crossed that and found a cart road leading from a sheep pasture, between two giant birches into an open field. Across the field he could see the twinkle of lights in the windows of a lonely farmhouse.

He halted under the birches for a few moments as he again figured out the lay of the land. Past the farmhouse he could see the glint of water and figured that for the Kennebec. He crossed the field, his heart thumping when a dog in the farmhouse gave loud tongue to his knowledge that a stranger was in the vicinity.

But the dog didn't come after him and he was shortly following a dirt road that led to a long causeway over a creek. As he crossed the causeway he could see the twinkling riding lights of a ship of some kind anchored in the river.

He knew what that meant. He had learned that from Ellery. Barges and tankers came this far and anchored, waiting for the tide and the word from their wharfage. He could make out that this craft was long and low in the water and his nerves tightened. He knew what that long, low craft would be.

The dirt road led him into a village, a ghostly village of untenanted houses. Some were boarded up. Others were unboarded, their blank windows shining errily in the last of the pale light from the west.



Now he looked for another road. He knew about where he was. Paddy's Cove lay to his left, a mile or two closer to the river's mouth, somewhere about opposite the anchored vessel.

He found his road, another brush-grown trail. Once, he imagined, it had been a well-traveled road between the settlement that had one time existed at Paddy's Cove and this village around him which, too, had once been alive and awake and thriving.

He knew enough of the section to read the signs. Yonder was the Kennebec, once a mighty carrier of commerce to and from the sea. Once, years ago, the proud wind ships had come down to the sea, spreading their white sails to the coming wind, carrying their cargoes to far ports.

He could almost, in his imagination, see them coming in, from the East, from South America and the Islands, bearing their cargoes from far lands, dropping their anchors at the river mouth to wait for the favoring tide to carry the up river to Bath and the towns beyond.

Now it was a dead river, the fishermen and the ship owners gone. Now it was the ideal spot for the carrying on of the trade that brought men like Schenley and Hammond to its shores.

He followed the trail for a mile, then halted. He heard the stir of movement ahead of him. Afar he could hear the hoarse murmur of a voice. He lay in the shelter of a pine for awhile, trying to figure a way of approach. The Benson house at Paddy's Cove lay just ahead. And they were expecting him. Therefore, they would be watching.

After awhile he went back a mile the way he had come, traveling as silently as a ghost. There was another way that would be surer; another way that was his only hope.

He reached the dirt road he had left and followed it till it ended at an old shed that stood awry on a rotting wharf. He could make out a sign over the door of the old building, it read, "M. Rawlins. General Store. Post Office."

From the old wharf he followed the shore, clambering over rocks and skirting indentations until he figured he had traveled about half the distance back to Paddy's Cove. He stopped then, at the top of a steep bluff and began to strip off his clothes.

He took the gun out of his top coat pocket and looked at it for a moment before he reluctantly dropped it back. He took the knife out and laid it carefully on a rock. Then he rolled up the top coat with his suit coat and put them under a dwarf pine, along with his shoes and stockings.

He made a tight bundle of trousers and shirt and scrambled down the rocks to the water, the knife in his hand. At the water's edge he shoved the knife into the bundle, made sure it was secure, then tied the bundle to his head.

Before he went into the water he stood for a second, looking both ways along the shore, fixing its markings in his mind as he shivered in the raw wind that drew in from the river's mouth.

The water bit like fangs of ice as he slid into it and began to swim. He felt the current carry him seaward and breathed a prayer to whatever gods of water there were who were on his side now and had given him the ebb tide.

He swam vigorously, knowing that he must to keep circulation going in the icy chill of the water. As he swam he could feel the sweep of the tide slowing until at last he was swimming in slack water. Far ahead he could see the



twinkle of a few lights and swam toward them.

How long he swam he did not know. But the lights were mocking. They seemed to be dancing away from him. Gradually he realized that he was fighting the tide that had turned as he made his way along the river.

The thought brought fresh strength to his strokes. He had to make this.

Then, suddenly, one dim light was just ahead of him. He swam toward it and felt the pull of the tide lessening, felt the sand shelving under him. He changed his course slightly, realizing that he was getting out of the narrow channel leading toward the light.

## IX

THE light was shining from the window in the front of the big sprawling summer home. It was a line of light along a patch from the front of the house and shone dimly along the length of the narrow wharf. In the path of the light a man walked along the narrow wharf.

He must have heard the noise Chris made in the water, because he turned toward the sea and gazed along the wharf. He was hunched forward, peering into the darkness. Once he straightened, glancing back toward the house. There was indecision and nervousness in the movement.

Chris stood up slowly with the water to his waist. His feet slipped a little on a bare rock as he inched forward, moving each leg slowly so as to make no noise. He reached the end of the wharf and slid the bundle of clothes from his head to the corner of the planking, as far to one side as possible, out of the light. But before he slid the clothes aside he slipped the long bladed knife out of its scabbard.

He crouched below the end of the wharf, remembering what someone had told him at some time in the past about a trick the Ghurkas used when Britain had put some of them in the trenches of the Western front.

He crouched low in the water, keeping his head below the dock level, the knife he held steady in his hand. Crouching, he made little splashes in the water with his hand.

The feet of the watcher padded slowly along the wharf. He was trying to step cautiously, silently, but the heavy boots he wore gave him away.

He reached the edge of the wharf and peered down, straight into Chris' eyes. He was a big man, blond, with his hair in a military haircut, straight and brushlike above his narrow brow. His eyes opened wide. He looked startled as he reached for the gun at his side.

Chris stood up then. One hand caught a thick ankle and jerked the man over the end of the wharf into the water. He made a hoarse, strangled yell as he hit the water. He flung both arms around Chris, threshing and struggling in the water, gasping with the sudden chill of it.

Chris struck twice with the knife, his face grim and tense, and the man stopped struggling.

For a second Chris stood immobile, his shoulder against the dock gazing down at the dead man who rolled and swayed slightly in the tiny swell that lapped at the end of the wharf. Then he turned his head toward the house and listened for some sign that the brief struggle had been heard.

He waited quite a while before he pulled himself onto the wharf. The wind on his wet body made him shiver uncontrollably, his teeth chattering. He tried to control that as he pulled on



shirt and trousers, his eyes fixed on the house from which no sound came.

There was a logical answer to that silence. Chris figured that most of Schenley's crew would be fanned out, covering all approaches to the house from the land. They would hardly expect him to swim in from the open river.

He went along the wharf, his bare feet making no sound. The shivering had passed as the consciousness of danger whipped up the tempo of his pulses. He rounded the house and halted at the corner. He could hear voices somewhere inside the house, a mere murmur of sound that came to him faintly and ominously.

He knew what he wanted to do next. The girl would probably be in an upstairs room.

He found a drain pipe running from the eaves at the corner of the house. Testing it with his hands he found it heavy copper, firmly anchored. Glancing up he saw the blank glimmer of an unlighted window beside the pipe.

He put the blade of the knife between his teeth and started to climb. Memories of pictures in boyhood books, of pirates clambering over the side of a ship with cutlasses in their teeth touched him momentarily with cold humor.

**H**E WENT up the pipe like a cat, his bare feet making only a slight rasping noise on the clapboards of the house. Clinging to the drainpipe with one hand he reached over and tried to pry the window open with the blade of his knife. He wasn't surprised nor chagrined when the window failed to give. He had expected that, since the house was supposed to be closed for the summer.

With the knife in his teeth he got a

handkerchief out of his trousers' pocket and wrapped it around the haft of the knife. His face strained in a grimace of nervous tension as he broke the window just above the middle sash.

Bits of glass tinkled inside to the floor. The sound of the window breaking was loud and calamitous in his ears. His hand trembled as he thrust it through the broken aperture and unfastened the latch. It seemed to him that the window made a hell of a racket as he raised it.

He thrust a leg across the sill and eased himself into the house. He inched across the dark room to where he thought the door should be, sliding his feet on the floor with a caution that was almost painful. A bump into a piece of furniture would be fatal.

He found the door at last, eased it open gently and stepped out into a hallway. Light from below flowed dimly up a wide stairway into the upper hall, showing him a row of doorways to other rooms.

The sound of voices from below came to him clearly. Two men were talking in harsh gutturals. The voices stopped as Chris went along the hall to the head of the stairway. One of the men who had been talking came heavily along the hall and started clumping up the stairs.

Chris pressed himself back into a corner of the hall, the knife ready in his hand. He held his breath as the man passed him, bearing a tray of food.

The man passed Chris and set the tray of food on the floor beside a door and a key in his hand made a tiny click against the metal of the lock as Chris edged silently forward.

He could see the man quite clearly in the light that came up from below; a bony, angular man with sunken cheeks and thin black hair cut close to



his round skull and running down his forehead in a straggling V.

He was turning the key in the lock when Chris stepped forward. He threw one arm around the fellow's neck, tightening his forearm on the man's windpipe, cutting off any outcry. He raised his knife and brought the end of the handle smashing down on his temple.

He stood again for a few minutes, the man sagging, a dead weight in his arms, waiting for some sign that he had been heard below. When there was no sound he turned the knob, pushed the door open and stepped into the room.

His face tightened as he gazed across the room at the little girl who stood with her back to the wall, looking at him out of sober, dark eyes. He raised a finger of his free hand to his lips in a gesture of silence and she nodded gravely as though she quite comprehended what this meant.

The amazing gravity and calm of the child touched him strangely. She looked to be about twelve. And he would have known her for Laura's sister no matter where he might have met her. She had the same eyes, the same lovely pale oval face, the same full-lipped mouth.

She was just a child, but immaturity could not hide the dawning beauty that he saw in her face, nor could it hide something beyond her years that had put character and strength into her childish face.

He eased the unconscious man to the floor and whispered, "Take off your shoes and give them to me."

She nodded, unlaced the shoes, but whispered back, "I can carry them myself."

He bent over the man on the floor and found a gun in a belt holster. Ges-

turing to the child he went out into the hall with her following soundlessly.

He led her into the room through which he had entered the house and breathed softly, "I'm going to lift you out the window to the rain spout. Do you think you can slide down without making any noise?"

She nodded. He noticed that she had knotted her shoelaces together and had hung the shoes around her neck, and he smiled approvingly, encouragingly at her. The job ahead of him looked not quite so desperate now. He had pictured a child unnerved, perhaps hysterical, over the ordeal she had passed through and the added shock of his appearance. He had never expected to find this grave youngster with the steady nerves.

He slid down the rainspout to the ground and joined the little girl. "I hope you can swim," he said.

She smiled a little at that. "I am the best swimmer at school."

Down at the end of the wharf he said, "The water is frightfully cold, child. You'll have to slip out of your dress."

She glanced up at him. He saw the glint of her teeth in the darkness. Her voice was reproving, as though chiding him. "Of course. I know that."

JUST before they slid into the water, as Chris was making a bundle of her clothing, she said softly, "My name is Penelope. Laura calls me Penny. You know Laura, don't you?"

"Yes, Penny, I know Laura. That's why I came for you. My name is Chris."

She nodded and said in her strangely grave young voice, "I knew someone would come. That's why I wasn't frightened—at least not so terribly frightened."



He thought of the dry inhumanity of Schenley and the glitter of glasses that took the place of eyes in his mask and his mouth tightened. Now he had another score to settle with that schemer.

As they swam away from the wharf he said softly, more to himself than to Penny, "Thank God for this tide."

When they were skirting the shore, being carried swiftly along by the tide he turned his head and said, "You can swim closer and put a hand on my shoulder if it will help any."

Her voice came in little gasps. "I'm a good swimmer. I'm all right."

He found the markings he sought for on the bank and scrambled up over the rocks with one hand on Penny's arm. For the first time in the hour he breathed freely. He began to tremble, not so much from cold as from sheer nervous tension. He could feel Penny trembling under his hand.

He helped her up the rocky bluff and found the coats and shoes he had cached under the pine. He turned quickly with the topcoat as Penny shivered into her dress and wrapped the coat warmly around about her.

He slipped into his own coat and laced his shoes. He was just tying the final knot when he heard a shout from the summer house. It was borne to him on the wind, faint and blurred. But he could detect the alarm in it. That meant that Penny had been missed. If they hadn't missed the man at the dock they soon would and that would tell them the rest of the story.

He reached out an arm and put it around Penny and she clung to him with shaking hand, her body convulsed with deep, tearing sobs. He held her close in both arms, cradling her while the storm of weeping swept her. He was glad that she was crying now. She

needed to after the strain she had gone through. A vast respect for this child grew in him as he realized the tremendous effort of will and nerve she must have exerted to have remained calm during the last half-hour.

After awhile her sobbing calmed. Finally she said in a small, choked voice, "I'm awfully sorry, Chris. But I had to cry. I couldn't hold it back any longer. It's been so long waiting. And those men were so terrible."

He held her close and said, "Hush, Penny. I'm not going to let them get you again. We're going to get out of this. We've got a long way to go and they'll be looking for us all along the way. But we'll fool them."

She said suddenly, "I'll bet Laura loves you."

When Chris said nothing she went on, "She couldn't help it. You're so wonderful. Anyway, whether she loves you or not, I do."

She snuggled closer and he felt his heart expand. This child did something to him. She melted part of the hard cold lump that had settled in his chest with Bill's death. The resolve to finish his job was still there, inflexible and undaunted. But the cold savagery was gone.

He was sitting there when he saw the movement on the water and stiffened. He had half-expected that the tanker would turn on a searchlight and sweep the water in an attempt to find them. Now he saw why nothing like that had happened.

Between him and the tanker, in the main channel of the river the black surface of the water broke in a smother of ghost white foam. Something heaved upward, black and gleaming like some dripping monster from the depths of the sea.

For a few seconds the thing loomed



between him and the faint, pale horizon, then it was gone, swallowed by the bulk of the tanker.

Penny asked in a hushed voice, "What was that, Chris?"

"That was why you were being held prisoner, Penny. That was a submarine slipping into the river from the sea to the tanker to refuel."

"But why did they hold me a prisoner? I didn't know anything about it."

"Laura did," Chris said harshly. "So they kidnapped you and told her that if she said anything they would never let you come home again."

She shivered as she said, "Oh," in a tiny, shocked voice.

"You see, Penny," Chris said gravely, "I'm not trying to baby you. You've got to know how very serious it all is and obey me when I tell you what to do. I want you to know how desperately serious it is when you see me do things that may scare and shock you."

"Like—like Rudi? Rudi was the man you carried into the room." She hesitated, "Was Rudi dead?"

"No, child. Rudi wasn't dead. I just knocked him out."

She said, "Rudi was mean and cruel. He used to look at me with his ugly eyes and tell me what would happen if I tried to get away. Rudi brought me my meals. He was the only one of them I ever saw after they brought me there."

He asked her something that had been bothering him for a long time. "How did they get you away from school, Penny?"

"Uncle John—you know, Uncle John Benson, called me at the school and told me to go with the men who would call for me."

She drew a long, sharp breath and said faintly, "Uncle John sells oil. Is

he selling oil to those submarines? And Laura knew? That's why?"

"Yes, child, that's why." As he spoke he mentally made a mark against John Benson's name. Benson was another one with whom he was going to have an accounting.

He got to his feet, saying, "Come on, Penny. We've got to start. We must get away from here before morning. Otherwise they'll catch us again. And remember not to speak above a whisper. They will be all around searching for us."

She shivered. "Yes, Chris, I know."

## X

HE UNWRAPPED the topcoat from her and put his suit coat around her shoulders, getting into the topcoat himself. He slipped the knife in its scabbard and slid the scabbard inside his waist band against his stomach. His fingers curled around the butt of the gun as he walked ahead of Penny, scrambling over rocks, making his way toward the dirt road by which he had come.

He was on the dirt road when he heard the men in the bushes. From the sounds he judged that there were two of them combing the trail that led to Paddy's Cove to the dirt road on which they stood.

"We'll have to run for a little while, Penny," he said softly. He was thinking of the causeway that they would have to cross. He wanted to get over that before the men from Paddy's Cove got close enough to see their silhouettes against the sky on the raised road.

They ran, hand in hand, along the dirt road, their feet making no sound, past the empty, skeleton houses and over the causeway. He stopped at the



far side, panting a little, with relief welling up in him. They had gone over the next hurdle.

He glanced down at Penny and met the glint of white teeth as she smiled up at him. The faith of the child in his ability to evade pursuit was warming and strengthening. Yet he did not hold any false hopes. The worst of the route lay ahead.

The real danger would come when they got through to the main road. For they were now on an island formed by the two streams he had crossed in the ironworker's car. The two bridges were key spots. They couldn't get off the Island without crossing them. Both streams were too swift, too full of jagged rocks and reefs to permit of swimming. He noticed that as he had come over them.

As they crossed the field, he glanced toward the farmhouse. The light had vanished. Evidently the family had long since retired. But the dog hadn't. It was out somewhere in front of the house, barking hoarsely.

Chris wondered if the gang from Paddy's Cove would follow up the clue of the barking dog and guessed that they would. They would not be passing up any existing sign.

The thought made him quicken his pace, across the field and under the two giant birches to the rocky ridge. He found the trail without trouble and pushed along through the bushes with Penny at his heels.

With the road showing a lighter band before him he halted and waited while the car went by, its tires hissing in the gravel; headlights pushing their long spears of brilliance through the blackness.

He whispered to Penny. "We'll have to hide in the bushes every time a car passes. If you see me move, don't stop

to wonder. Just follow me as quickly as you can."

He looked down into her pale little face and squeezed her hand a little. "Tired, Penny?"

She sighed a little. "Not very." Her whisper grew stronger. "I can stand ever so much more, Chris. I know I have to, so I will."

He smiled down at her courageous little figure, realizing that while he had known a lot of brave people in his life he had met none that was braver and nervier than this child. He felt his anger at Schenley and his gang grow hotter and deeper.

With Penny's hand in his he felt stronger, abler and more alert. This child depended on him. He could not let her down.

They hid in the bushes three times as cars passed them. When the fourth went by, travelling in their direction they had almost reached the first bridge.

From his hiding place Chris saw a black figure loom up in the car's headlights, one hand upraised in a command to stop. Brakes squealed and there was an angry exclamation from behind the steering wheel of the car.

He could hear the voice of the man in the road, guttural, calm. "This is police business. A murder has been committed. We are searching in all cars for the escaping murderer whom we know."

He saw the man open the car's doors and peer inside. Then his voice again, "All right. You may drive on. Very sorry to have inconvenienced you."

Chris turned and put his lips to Penny's ear. I am going to take off my shoes and try to creep closer. Do not move under any circumstances. If anything should happen to me, hide until daylight then try to get to a house and



telephone the State Police—at once.”

Penny gripped his arm fiercely, “Don’t let anything happen to you, Chris. Be careful.”

He smiled at her again in the darkness, his voice reassuring her, “Don’t worry, Penny. I don’t think anything will happen to me. I have an idea that I’m smarter than any of these fellows. And I’ve got a lot more to fight for.”

HE LEFT her hidden behind the fringe of bushes back from the road and went forward, crouched low. He got so close that he could see the bulk of the man at the roadside, a little back from the road at the bottom of the bank that sloped away from the road where it joined the bridge.

He eased the gun from his pocket and froze behind a clump of bushes. He knew he couldn’t get closer without being seen. He wondered if there was more than one man, and his wonder was answered by the hoarse murmur of voices at the foot of the bank. There were two men. They were taking no chances. While one went forward to inspect the cars the other stood back in the darkness, ready for any surprise move that might come from within a car.

He shrank back into the bushes as another beam of light flooded the road with white brilliance. Watching the car approach he decided how he could work this. He dropped the gun back into his pocket, slipped the knife from its sheath and inched along the base of the bank toward the man at the bottom as the second man stepped out into the road in front of the car.

The rasp of tires in the gravel as brakes were applied, the angry exclamation of the driver covered the faint sound his bare feet made in the loose sand and gravel.

He came up on the man from behind. One hand went over the fellow’s mouth. The other drove the knife down between neck and shoulder blade into the heart. He struck without compunction, killing coldly and efficiently. It was the life of this wolf against that of the child in the bushes.

He eased the fellow to the ground, the slamming of the car doors covering the sound he made, just as the man in the road stepped back, mouthing his empty apologies.

As the car went purring across the bridge, the man came down the bank. He was peering forward, trying to locate his partner. Evidently the dazzle of the headlights was still in his eyes, making it difficult for him to see.

Chris had slipped the knife back into its sheath and gripped the gun in his right hand. He leaped like a tiger upon the man from the side, just as the man called sharply, alarm evident in his voice, “Adolph! Adolph, where are you?”

Chris’ left stiff-armed the man off balance. He took one step forward, slashing the gun barrel viciously across the man’s temple. He fell, rolled over twice to the bottom of the bank and lay there motionless on his face.

Chris stayed where he was for a moment, alert for the appearance of any others. But the sound of his blow and the fall of the man he had struck down brought no following attention. He knew then positively that there had been only the two men watching this bridge.

He climbed back to the road and called softly, “Come on, Penny. The road is clear now.”

She ran up to him carrying his shoes and slipped her hand into his fingers. She glanced once, briefly, down into the shadows where the two figures



sprawled blackly, but said nothing, gave no sign beyond a faint tremor that she had seen anything.

After he had put on his shoes they walked briskly ahead together, with Chris saying, "There's just one more bridge, Penny. Just one more bridge then we're out of this."

He tried to put a confidence into his voice that he did not feel. For he knew that beyond that second bridge were the main roads and the big toll bridge that crossed the river to Bath. There would be officers on the bridge. But Schenley's killers were desperate. They would chance striking under the very noses of the police. They had to.

Also, the second bridge would not be as easy to pass as the first had been. The first one had been out in the country, away from street lamps and houses. The approach to the second was through a row of houses. There was light there that would make any stealthy approach impossible.

Chris and Penny walked along the face of the row of houses with their tiny patches of lawn in front of them. He halted, pushing Penny behind him, his hand going into the pocket to grip the automatic while cold despair settled down over him.

There was a car parked at the end of the bridge. He could see at least three heads silhouetted in the lights from the bridge. Across the road from the car two more men leaned against a building, waiting. It was a set-up that he could not crack. He couldn't get more than one or two of the men before he was riddled with gunfire.

He thought desperately of going to one of the houses and trying to call the police. But he thrust the idea away from him resolutely. A knock on a door or a ring at a bell would probably mean lights going on over the

door, questions from a suspicious householder. Either of these things would bring the men from the bridge on the run. Chris stood for a long time in the shadows at the side of the road. There had to be a way out. There had to be a way.

It was Penny who supplied it. She pulled his hand, beckoning his head down to her lips and whispered, "Some of these people who live here must have boats down by the river. We could take one of those and get across that way."

Chris nodded. "Smart Penny. You'll be the one to save us yet."

They went back along the road to the last house and cut through the yard to the river bank. Chris could see several boats, tied to tiny wharves and steps at the bank.

He whispered to Penny, "We'll have to find oars, as well as a boat that isn't locked to its moorings."

They found two boats tied with lines but no oars. Again it was Penny who had the idea. She jerked Chris' hand and pointed to a shed at the edge of the water. "We're in Maine," she whispered, "a lot of people just push their oars under the building like that. You see, boats are seldom stolen here."

CHRIS nodded. He found a pair of oars under the shed and worked them out one by one with meticulous care. They were almost in the clear now. One slight sound might be enough to give them away and bring death blasting down upon them.

He had Penny remove her shoes again, so that there might not even be the sound of hard leather on wood. He held the boat steady as she went aboard and sat in the stern seat.

He pulled off his own shoes again and put them carefully into the boat.



He eased the oars in one by one, untied the boat and stepped in, pushing it away from the shore into the water.

The boat seemed to want to cling to the shore. It edged away in what seemed to Chris maddening slowness. Then the current caught it and it began to move swiftly and soundlessly close to the bank, away from the bridge and the men in the waiting car.

They were at the mouth of the small river where it emptied into the Kennebec when Chris spoke softly. "That will get us past the toll bridge, too, Penny. We'll row across, under the toll bridge and land at one of the little wharves at Bath. From there we can get a car of some kind and head for New York.

Exultation began to creep into his voice, "You'll see Laura by tomorrow, Penny. We've beaten them this round. We've beaten them all."

Penny said vibrantly, "I knew you would, Chris. I knew all the time that you would."

He dropped the oars into the oarlocks and began to row. The pull of the current was like a live thing, tearing at the boat with strong fingers, dragging it toward the mouth of the river where the tanker lay, and where, even now, the submarine might be making ready to sink beneath the current and start out on its errand of death on the seas.

Pulling at the oars, fighting the current, he began to realize how utterly spent and weary he was. He tried to think back to the afternoon when he had landed eagerly in New York and realized with a shock that it was only a matter of hours ago, a little more than a day and a half.

Between that hour and this a whole lifetime had passed. Even the death of Bill seemed no more a matter of

recent tragedy. It was as though it had happened eons ago and that he had since followed an endless trail. Events had piled on each other so fast that the day that lay behind him seemed like weeks rather than hours.

And now he was exhausted, fighting a hungry current that was dragging from his muscles the last ounce of energy and strength. He looked over his shoulder at the lights of Bath. They twinkled mockingly across the river; across an immensity of swirling black water. They seemed in that moment as far off and unattainable as the stars that twinkled overhead.

He glanced at Penny. She was leaning forward in her seat, her eyes fixed on him. Suddenly she began to sing in a clear childish voice, a chanting swing song. He found himself pulling in rhythm to the melody with strength coming back into his arms and a warm glow melting the chill in his breast.

Penny finished a verse of the song and said, "That's a song that I learned at school. They told me it was some kind of a boat song. Do you like it, Chris?"

"Sing, child, sing," Chris said huskily. "You're saving us again with your song."

When he glanced around again the mockery had gone out of the twinkling lights. They were nearer and warmer and more hopeful. He turned back to Penny and put his back into every pull of the oars, smiling at her as he pulled.

He came in close to the wharves and the pull of the current was weaker and less compelling. The wharves seemed deserted. Yet, now that he was approaching land again, cold caution was touching his nerves. He tried to push the sensation from him. Schenley's men couldn't be everywhere.



Tying the boat to a piling of the wharf he lifted Penny up to the wharf, tossed up shoes and clambered up to stand beside her in the darkness.

After his shoes were on he walked forward with her clinging to his left hand. His right was deep in the topcoat pocket, gripping the gun butt. And, as he went forward, the sense of uneasiness grew within him.

At the end of the wharf he froze. He could see the three men fanned out in front of him. He started to pull the gun from his pocket, remembered

Penny beside him, and became rigidly still.

Hammond's voice came to him out of the darkness, cold, edged with menace. "Hold it just like that, Davenport. We wouldn't want to have to kill the child. But we'll shoot if you try to start anything."

He felt sick and beaten and old as he watched the three men converge on him.

Beside him Penny's fingers tightened on his and her breath came and went in little gasps.

TO BE CONTINUED IN THE NEXT ISSUE

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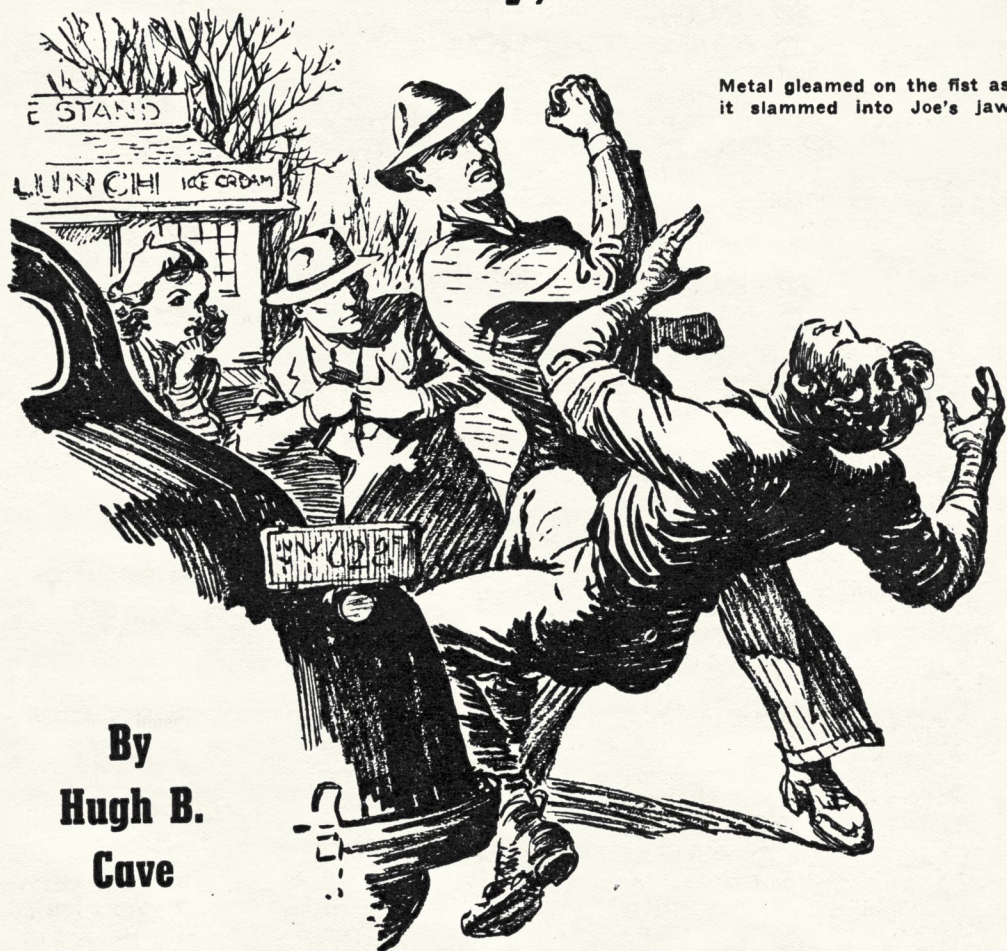


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# Certainly, Sister



Metal gleamed on the fist as it slammed into Joe's jaw

By  
Hugh B.  
Cave

*Because a fellow doesn't look like a movie actor is no reason for his girl to belittle him*

HER name wasn't Marcia. It was Mary Ann Flemming, but she'd seen the name Marcia in a motion-picture magazine and decided to adopt it. Her parents should have consulted her in the matter of naming her Mary Ann in the first place, she reasoned. Of all the plain, ordinary names, that certainly was thee limit!

So, when the fellow asked, "What's

your name, sister?" she said, "Marcia," and smiled at him, showing her teeth, and hoped he would like it. He certainly was handsome.

"Marcia, huh? That's all right," he said. "Suits you. Got a coke?"

She walked along behind the board counter and plucked a bottle of coke out of the icebox. She opened it and dried the bottle with a towel and put it in



front of him, with a glass upside-down over the bottle neck. He'd been staring at her ever since he'd sat down, and he was still staring at her, and it made her feel important. After all, he *was* somebody. You could tell by the way he was dressed.

It wasn't often that anyone of importance stopped by. Route 17 wasn't a main highway; it was just an old road that ran from Harrisville to the Four Corners, and few people used it. This fellow must have taken it by mistake, she told herself. The car had New York plates on it. And a chauffeur. An honest-to-John chauffeur, like in the movies.

"You run this place all by yourself, sister?"

"Uh-huh," she said.

He looked around, nodding his approval. He wouldn't be so quick to approve, she thought, if he knew how hard it was to make a dollar in an out-of-the-way place like this. You couldn't sell gasoline; not enough cars stopped. All you could sell was candy and cigarettes and soda, and now and then a little beer to people who wouldn't squeal that you didn't have a license. It was no joke. And yet she had to keep at it because Joe was so hopeless. They'd starve if they depended on Joe to make any money.

All Joe ever thought of was his seeds and his flowers and his smelly old fertilizers.

"You know," the fellow said, "I kind of like it around here. You got any coffee?"

"I could make you some."

"Okay, make it," he said, pushing the coke away from him.

"Don't you want the coke, mister?"

"No."

"But I've opened it."

"Okay, sister," he said, "you'll get

paid for it. You don't think for a minute I'd cheat a swell little dame like you out of a nickel, do you?"

She said slowly, "Nickels don't grow on trees around here."

THERE was a mirror up over the stove; part of a calendar dated 1935 which she'd left up because she liked the picture on it. It was a picture of a fellow and a girl at a beach, and the fellow had big muscles and a big chest. He looked like Gary Cooper. Joe was thin and pale and always looked sick.

She made coffee and she could see this other fellow in the mirror, watching her. He was certainly handsome. He had dark, smooth hair and a wide mouth and a sharp, straight nose. He was a six-footer easy and he must have money or he wouldn't be running around in a swell car like that. A car like that must cost a couple of thousand dollars. It was the very latest thing with all the fixings.

He knew how to dress, too. He wore his pearl gray hat tipped back at an angle to give him that air of—of—well, to give him that air. He wore a pale green shirt and a dark green tie and his suit was sort of gray-green, with a double-breasted vest and snappy lines. And he was watching her. She could almost feel his gaze sliding up and down her.

She liked it. Joe never paid much attention any more.

"Hey."

She turned quickly. "Yes?"

"Who's the boy friend?"

He nodded toward the house and she looked to see what he meant. She looked just in time to see Joe set down his wheelbarrow and stare toward the stand. He'd been up to that old road again, after his clay, and he'd stopped to get the paper out of the mailbox. He



must be wondering what the swell car had stopped for, because he just stood there for a moment, shading his eyes from the sun and staring.

"Oh—him," Marcia said. "He works for me."

"Works for you, huh? Can he fix a tire?"

"Why, yes, I—suppose so."

"Get him down here."

She didn't want to. For one thing, Joe would be an hour fixing a tire and she wouldn't be able to talk freely to this fellow with him around.

And then, he was sure to call her Mary—he always did—and then this fellow would know she had lied about her name.

She said, "He's not very good at fixing tires, mister. He's kind of slow, I mean."

He smiled at her, showing his white teeth. "Swell. I like it around here," he said.

She called to Joe. She didn't want to, but it was too late now; she'd put her foot in it. She yelled, "Joe!" and used her hands for a megaphone, and he straightened up from something he was doing in a seed-bed out front of the house. He looked at her and when she yelled again he put his trowel on the front steps and came down.

He was a sight. His old shoes were caked with red clay and he had clay all over his trouser-legs. He hadn't shaved this morning, either. He didn't seem very pleased, but then, he always hated to be dragged away from his work—if you could call it work to mess around day after day in a lot of silly flower-beds.

Someday, of course, Joe was going to be rich. Oh, yes, indeed. So *he* said. Someday that tight uncle of his who owned the Harrisville Bank would loosen up and lend him some money;

then Joe would be able to buy the proper tools and things, and really get somewhere. Oh, yes. Someday people would pay fancy prices for the seeds he was developing. So *he* said.

But this morning, for some reason or other, he looked more discouraged than ever.

"This man wants a tire fixed," she said.

Joe glanced at the fellow and said wearily, "All right," and wiped his hands on his trousers. "Which tire is it?"

"The spare. It's in the trunk." The fellow turned on his stool and looked past Joe and said, "Tony, give this guy the key to the trunk."

THE chauffeur scowled at him when he said that. He was a short, chunky man, all shoulders and head. Up to now he hadn't paid much attention, he'd just sat there smoking a cigarette and staring straight ahead of him; but now he flicked away his cigarette and said, "Listen boss, we ain't got all day. For cripe's sake . . ."

"Do as I say."

The chauffeur muttered something and got out, glaring. He unlocked the trunk for Joe and said, "Okay, buddy, okay. The boss says to fix it, so fix it." He stood with his hands hipped while Joe pulled out the spare wheel.

"Looks like you cut it on a sharp stone," Joe said.

"Yeah."

Joe rolled the tire to the side of the stand and dropped it and went back to the trunk for tools. He said, "I'll have to use your irons; we don't have any."

Tony grunted, aimed a sullen glare at the "boss" and deliberately turning on his heel, walked away. He walked down the road a little distance and sat on the white highway fence.



Joe came up to the stand, tugging the morning paper from his hip pocket. He opened the paper and pushed it toward Marcia and said, "Take a look at that. I guess that means the end of everything I'd hoped for." He walked away to fix the tire.

The headlines said:

**HARRISVILLE BANK ROBBED! DARING BANDITS ESCAPE WITH \$70,000 LOOT! TELLER KIDNAPED AS HOSTAGE!**

"Gosh!" Marcia gasped.

It took up the whole front page, because after all, the Harrisville *Times* was only a small-town newspaper. There was a picture of Joe's uncle, who owned the bank, and there was a picture of young Charlie Lake, the teller who'd been kidnaped. There were statements by two people who had been in the bank at the time of the holdup.

The two men had got out of a black coupe and walked into the bank. They had drawn their guns and told everybody to keep quiet. They ordered Charlie Lake to get the money and they made him carry it to the car; and then, without even firing a shot, they drove away. Nobody knew them. They'd worn masks every minute of the time.

"Gosh!" Marcia said. It was all very thrilling—it really was—and yet she felt sad about it. She felt sad because it meant the end of Joe's hopes. His uncle would never be able to lend him money now.

"What's so important, sister?" the man in the gray-green suit said.

She turned the paper around so he could read it. He did, very slowly; then he laughed and pushed the paper away from him. "Hell," he said, "just a small-time stickup. Now just where were we, sister?"

"Huh?"

"How's about that coffee I ordered?"

"Coffee? Oh—yes. I'll get it."

"And how's about you having a cup with me, just to keep me company, sweetheart?"

She almost glanced at Joe, to see if he had heard. She didn't, though. And after all, what if he had heard? Plenty of fellows who came here were fresh with her. They thought they were being funny. And if Joe heard this fellow calling her "sweetheart" and "sister" he wouldn't think anything of it. He wouldn't know it was—well, sort of different—would he?"

"Well?" the fellow said.

"Why, sure," she said. "Sure, I'd be glad to."

"That's more like it."

SHE poured another cup of coffee and put it on the counter. She stood with her back to Joe, just in case he might happen to look up; but he probably wouldn't, he was down on his knees, having trouble with the tire. She hoped the tire would give him plenty of trouble. The longer he took with it, the longer this handsome fellow would stay.

"What did you say your name was, sweetheart?"

"Marcia."

"Marcia. That's all right. What I don't get is why a swell little number like you is wasting her time in a dump like this. You're all right, you are."

"Do you . . . think so?"

"Yeah, you're all right. You ever been to the big town?"

"Not very often," she said.

"You'd ought to. Yeah, you'd ought to." He stared at her and let his mouth curl into a scowl. He seemed to be deep in thought. "You know," he said, "I could go for you, and that's a fact. Sort of like me, do you?"

It scared her, having him ask a ques-



tion as blunt as that, but she managed to say, "Why, I—I like you a lot."

"How'd you like to work in the city, sister?"

"Work—for you?"

"Well, not exactly work for me, no, but I could get you fixed up for a job easy enough. Good job, too."

"Doing—what?"

"Oh," he said lightly, "most anything you feel like—provided you're not *too* high hat. You wouldn't be high hat, would you?" He reached across the counter and hooked a finger under her chin and grinned at her.

"We don't go for that sort of thing, mister," Joe said.

The man in the gray-green suit withdrew his hand and turned slowly on his stool. Joe was standing there looking at him, not really sore, not much of anything . . . just standing there.

"We don't want any trouble," Joe told him quietly. "Just don't get too fresh, that's all."

Marcia wanted to say something. She wanted to say, "Now, Joe, for heaven's sake don't lose your temper!" She stifled it, though, when she saw the smile fade from the fellow's mouth.

"Are you talkin' to me, stupid?"

"I'm just telling you," Joe said, "we don't want any rough stuff."

"Oh. You don't want any rough stuff. Well, maybe the little girl here has different ideas about that. See? And I was talkin' to her, not to you. Now scram!"

Joe said, "I don't think we want to wait on you any more, mister."

"What?"

"You can get someone else to fix your tire."

He walked back to the tire and picked it up, picked up the wheel in one hand and the shoe in the other and walked to the car. Watching him, Marcia saw

that the chauffeur had left his perch on the highway fence and was trudging back along the road shoulder. The man in the gray-green suit, with an odd expression on his face, said suddenly, "I told you to fix that tire, buddy."

Joe stopped and looked at him.

"*Fix* it," the fellow said. For some odd reason he was no longer handsome. His face was pale and from each corner of his downturned mouth a deep line curled up to crease his cheeks.

Joe looked at him for what seemed a long time. Standing there holding the tire in one hand and the wheel in the other, he just looked. Tony came up behind him and said, "What's the trouble?" The other man snapped, "You keep out of this." Then he said grimly to Joe, "Well, what are you waitin' for?"

"For you to leave," Joe said.

The fellow got off his stool. He looked down at his hands and strode forward and said, "Listen, punk. When Marty Gillen tells you to fix a tire—you *fix* it. Understand?" He slapped Joe's face.

Joe dropped the tire and the wheel and put a hand up to his flushed cheek. He was dead white except for the flush. Dead white and trembling. He took a step forward.

"Hold it, brother," Tony said. "Don't get no crazy notions." His voice was ominous.

Joe turned to look at him and stood quite still.

There was a gun in the chauffeur's hand. You couldn't see much of it; the hand hid most of it and the hand was only half way out of his coat pocket; but the muzzle of the gun was a round black hole aimed at Joe's stomach and the fellow said quietly, "You better fix that tire like the boss says."



**JOE WAS** a long time moving. Seconds crawled by while he stood there rigid, staring at the gun, and his face was all white now, even where the fellow in the gray-green suit had slapped him. Marcia was scared. She knew Joe's temper. She knew how hot was the spark under his listless veneer. He'd go along day after day taking her abuse, enduring her nagging, and then that spark would flare up and he'd get mad.

She jabbed her hand against her mouth to keep from screaming. But Joe didn't get mad this time. He suddenly leaned over and picked up the tire and the wheel; then he turned his back on Tony and walked over to where he'd left the tools.

He went to work on the tire and Tony stood a little apart from him, silently watching him.

The man in the gray-green suit returned to his stool, took a paper napkin and very carefully wiped the hand with which he had slapped Joe's face. "For a minute," he said to Marcia, "I thought I was gonna have to get tough with that guy."

He sipped his coffee, paying no further attention to Joe or to Tony. This time, when he reached across the counter and put a hand on Marcia's arm, Joe did not interfere.

"How about it?" the fellow asked. "You want a job in the city, sweetheart?"

"I—I don't know," she said.

"What do you mean, you don't know?"

She knew what she meant, but of course she couldn't say it. He was a city fellow and he wouldn't understand. He'd laugh if she told him how matters stood between her and Joe . . . how they'd been going together now for six years, planning to get married when there was money enough. How for over

a year now, Joe had been taking care of the farm for her and her mother . . . doing the chores and keeping the house in repair, and spending all his evenings doing those crazy lessons for the extension course mailed out by the State Agricultural School . . . and spending every spare hour of daylight in those crazy seed-beds of his.

This fellow wouldn't understand. In the city, things were different. You didn't get to know a man when you were fifteen years old and go with him for five long years and see all his weaknesses before you married him. In the city you lived in a nice apartment and wore swell clothes, and you had lots of men; they took you to shows and out to dinner and to dances; they had lots of money to spend. They weren't always tired out, either. They were romantic, like in the movies.

She looked furtively at Joe and realized suddenly how hopeless it was. He'd never have any money. Even if he did, he'd always wear old clothes and be studying those dumb books; he'd always be talking about seeds and flowers and different kinds of soil.

He wasn't really a man. If he were, he'd have got mad just now, wouldn't he, when this fellow slapped him? Instead of that he was down on his knees, fixing the tire. He—he'd never amount to nothing.

If she got a job in the city, she could send money home to ma. Real money. She could wear nice clothes and live her own life and make something of herself; and this handsome fellow in the gray-green suit . . . well, he liked her . . .

"Would I have to go with you right now?" she asked suddenly.

"Why not?" he said.

"Well, it's so—I mean it's so quick—"



He said, "Listen, sugar. You're in a rut here. If I was to leave you here, you'd never get out of it. The time for you to make up your mind is right now, while the idea's red hot. That's psychology."

"That's—what"

"Human nature, sugar. Look now. You run up to the house and pack a bag. When we get to the city I'll take you over to—" he scratched a match and held it to his cigarette—"to my sister's apartment. My sister's a Sunday-school teacher; you'll like her. You can stay with her until you're in the money and can afford a place of your own. You run along now and get your things together." His smile wrapped itself around her like a warm blanket.

She emptied her coffee cup in the sink and washed it, just to give herself time to think. A girl didn't get a chance like this every day. Most girls never got such a golden opportunity! But it would hurt Joe. After all, she and Joe . . . for five years now . . .

The thing to do, then, was not to say anything either to Joe or to her mother. Just tell them the man was giving her a ride to the city and she'd come home later on the bus. And then, when she got there, she could telephone and explain things to them.

The fellow was staring at her, waiting for her answer.

"I'll . . . get my things," she told him.

SHE looked back, going up the path to the house, and Joe was still on his knees fixing the tire, but he was watching her. She tossed her head and went on. Let him watch, she told herself angrily. Let him stay home alone from now on and study his old books, and wait for his stingy old uncle to lend him the money he wanted. He'd wait a

long time. He'd wait forever, now that his uncle's bank had been robbed.

She ran upstairs, threw some clothes into a bag and went down again. She left the bag by the front door and went into the kitchen, where her mother was sitting in an old rocker, peeling potatoes.

"I'm goin' to town, ma. I'll be back soon as I can."

Her mother looked at the clock, frowned and said, "But there's no bus this time of the morning, Mary."

"I'm gettin' a ride."

"Oh."

Joe watched her as she hurried down the path with her bag. He watched her all the way. The tire was fixed and he was putting it back in the trunk, but he stood there like a dummy, staring at her, as the man in the gray-green suit took the bag out of her hand.

"Mary—where you going?"

She didn't want to answer him, but of course she had to. Otherwise he might create a scene. "This gentleman is giving me a ride to town so I can do some shopping," she said.

Joe slowly lowered the cover of the trunk into place and took a step toward her. It was a tense moment and Marcia held her breath, hoping he would have sense enough not to argue with her. The man in the gray-green suit seemed to be amused. He looked at Joe and looked at her, and there was a little smile lurking at the corners of his mouth. Tony, the chauffeur, said whinily, "Listen, boss, I'm tellin' you for the tenth time we ain't got all day!"

The man in the gray-green suit put Marcia's bag in the car, on the floor in the rear, and held the door open. She glanced fearfully at Joe and stepped forward.

Joe grabbed her arm. "You're not going!"



She wrenched her arm free. "You leave me alone. Joe Hendricks! I'll do what I want to!"

"You're not going."

"And who," said the man in the gray-green suit, "is going to stop her?"

"I am! She's not taking any rides with the likes of you!"

The fellow's smile faded. He gently pushed Marcia behind him and stepped forward. He was a lot bigger than Joe: he weighed more. He said, "Listen, punk, you've made a pest of yourself once too often." His hips twisted and his left hand shot out.

Joe caught the blow on an upflung arm and bored in. He didn't look so small, doing that—or so frail. There was hate in his face and he looked almost dangerous. But the fellow was ready for him.

His right hand whipped up from his pocket. Something glinted on his knuckles just before they exploded against Joe's jaw, and Joe looked surprised. Joe stumbled back a few steps, swayed a little and collapsed, falling first to his knees and then to his face.

The man in the gray-green suit slipped his hand out of something made of brass and leather, and dropped the thing into his pocket. He put the same hand on Marcia's arm and said softly, "Climb in, sister."

In a daze, she did as she was told.

SHE rode in front, between the two men, and for a while no one spoke. She herself was too scared to speak, and yet oddly enough her jumbled, racing thoughts were not of herself, but of Joe. Joe was lying on the ground back there, hurt. Maybe badly hurt. Joe had tried to stop her from going to the city. For the first time in his life he had seemed to—to really care about her.

But that was all behind her now.

The man in the gray suit put his hand over hers and smiled and said, "Well, we're on our way, sister. That's a break for you."

She supposed it was. It meant a job, and money, and nice clothes and—lots of things. But she was scared.

Tony said dryly, "I'll bet that dope never saw a set of brass knucks before, hey?"

"Shut up and drive."

Tony muttered under his breath and then was silent. His foot went viciously to the floor, though, and the car leaped as though stung.

The man in gray said curtly, "Cut it, you fool. Do you want to be pinched for speeding?"

The car slowed. Marcia looked sideways at Tony's face and saw sullen anger there and was frightened. The road became rough with new gravel. Ahead, a red flag drooped atop a wooden horse and a yellow sign with arrows pointing both right and left read: DETOUR.

Tony braked the car and said, "What the hell."

"Which way do we go, sister?"

"Left," Marcia said in a small voice.

It was a wicked road, unpaved, made soft and treacherous by yesterday's heavy rain. A backwoods road, good enough for the ramshackle cars of local farmers—flivvers, most of them—but a trail of torment for a car as low-slung as this. Low-hanging trees hid the curves, and the road was nothing *but* curves.

Tony said through his teeth, "I told you nothin' good would come of this. But you're so damn stubborn. . . ."

"There's a lady present. Button your mouth." He put an arm around Marcia's shoulders as the lurching of the car threw her hard against him. "Let 'er buck," he said, grinning. "It's a



good way to get acquainted. Hey, kid?"

The road forked and Tony said grimly, "Well?"

"Left," she told him.

"Where the hell are we?"

"We'll come out on the main road. It—it isn't far."

It wasn't far. There was a little wooden bridge over Hunting Ridge Brook, a sudden sharp twist to the left, and the mud road blended with a tarred highway. The car sputtered, coughed. It rolled onto the highway, backfired noisily and slowed to a halt, engine silent.

THE fellow in the gray-green suit removed his arm from around Marcia and said impatiently, "*Now* what?"

Tony stepped on the starter, held his foot down hard for a long ten seconds. His face was twisted. He said, "We ain't out of gas; the indicator says almost full. This wagon never got temperamental before. Now if it was the other one, I'd say . . ."

He didn't say it. He opened the door and got out, looked up and down the road and then grimly lifted the engine-hood. The fellow in gray-green watched him for a while, scowling at him, then opened the other door. He said, "You wait here, kid," and slid off the seat.

Both doors were open. The car stood on the road-shoulder and the woods were close. Marcia kept her eyes on the men. They were peering under the up-raised hood, trying to locate the trouble.

She inched over on the seat, put a foot on the runningboard. They weren't looking at her.

She jumped.

The man in the gray-green suit yelled, "Hey!" but she was clear of the car by then, running like a deer for the woods. She jumped a deep dry ditch beside the road and fell on hands and

knees, picked herself up, flung her slim little body through bull-briars that tore like clutching fingers. All the time she was running she expected to hear a gun explode, expected to feel something ripping into her, through her. But after that startled "Hey!" from the man in gray, nothing happened.

Nothing, at least, happened to *her* until her foot caught in a grapevine and she fell sprawling. Then she heard voices.

She looked back. On her knees, she could just see the road and the stalled car. And the two men.

But there were more than two men now. Ever so many more. There were men in the khaki uniforms of State Troopers, grimly advancing in a sort of circle from both sides of the highway. They had shotguns and revolvers and were slowly closing in on the car. Tony and the man in the gray-green suit stood very still with their hands up-raised.

It was like—like in a movie.

She stood up, moaning a little because in falling she had twisted an ankle. She could see better now, and it was a kind of grim slow-motion scene in which something seemed certain to explode.

Something did.

The man in the gray-green suit suddenly stepped clear of the car and thrust a hand into his coat. He yelled crazily, "You'll never get me, coppers!" and all at once there was a gun in his hand. But he didn't use it.

There was a roar like thunder and he stumbled. The gun fell out of his fingers. He turned around slowly, with his head tipped way back and his mouth open, and then his knees bent and he fell on them. The State Troopers closed in with a rush and everything was noisy and bewildering.



Suddenly a man *not* wearing a uniform was leaping the ditch beside the road and shouting, "Mary! Are you all right, Mary?"

It was Joe.

Two or three of the troopers were gathered around the form of the man in the gray-green suit. Two others were leading Tony across the road, toward a police car that was half hidden in the woods. One came over and said, "Is she all right, son?"

Joe said, "Yes, sir, she's all right."

"You're a brave girl," the trooper said. "It took a lot of nerve to get in the car with those two and cross them up."

Another trooper came up. He said to Joe, "Is this the young lady?"

"Yes, sir."

"Fine. Now then, young man, suppose you tell us just what happened."

"Well," Joe said slowly, "I didn't suspect anything was wrong, at first. They drove up to the stand and wanted a tire fixed, and I fixed it while that fellow"—he pointed to the road—"was talking to Mary. It wasn't until I was putting the tire back in the trunk that I noticed the jack-handle."

"The jack-handle was caked with blood, eh?"

"Yes, sir. And the jack itself was caked with red clay. And when I did get suspicious, I saw there was red clay on the wheels. There was even some of it on the wheel I'd been working on."

The trooper frowned a little and said, "What's so special about red clay?"

"I use it in my work," Joe said.

"Eh?"

"I mean . . . it has special qualities for certain kinds of seeds, and there's only one place within miles of here where you can get it. That's an old road up the line a piece, that runs across Catbird Brook and goes in to an old

stone quarry. If you keep going on it, you come out on the back road to Harrisville. But I could see easy enough this car hadn't come from Harrisville *that* way, because the biggest part of that road is patched up with crushed stone, and there'd have been a lot of that stuff wedged in the tire-treads. And there wasn't."

"So," the trooper said, "this car must have come along the main road from Harrisville, turned into that old side-road for a short distance through the mud, and then backed out again. And while in there, they changed a tire—and got blood on the jack-handle. That it?"

"Yes, sir. That's what I figured."

"Then you phoned us?"

"Well, no," Joe said. "Not right away, I didn't. You see, I was hurt pretty bad, and I thought Mary'd gone off and left me. I just sort of moped up to the house to watch the car out of sight. The house is on a rise, you know, and you can see the road for a long way."

His arm tightened about Marcia's waist. "Then," he said, "I saw them take the wrong turn at the detour, and I realized what a smart, brave girl Mary really was. She'd gone off with them to give me a chance to call you fellows. Now she was leading them back through the woods, so you could trap them. So then I did phone you."

A POLICE car was purring down the road and the trooper stepped forward as it came to a stop. It wasn't a very clean police car. Its tires were coated with red clay. Two troopers got out of it and one said, "He was right. We traced the tire tracks. They drove in, changed a tire, turned around and drove out again. But they drove in there for a reason."



"A reason?"

The trooper opened the rear door of the car and Marcia saw a mud-caked figure stretched out on the floor.

"Young Charlie Lake, the bank teller," the trooper said grimly. "From the looks of him he put up a fight, probably when they made him change that tire. Dead now." He reached into the car and held up a satchel, red with mud. "They'd buried him, along with this. The money's all here."

Joe said, "If—if you don't mind, I'd like to go on home. This has been pretty awful for Mary."

"I'll give you a lift."

"No," Joe said, "we'd rather walk."

He drew her away from the babel, his arm still around her waist. He didn't speak to her—not right away—but just walked along in silence, sort of staring into space. She was glad of that. She needed time to get her thoughts together.

They—they thought she was a brave girl. They thought she'd driven away with those awful men just to give Joe a chance to call the police. Even Joe thought so.

She wanted him to go on thinking so, not because Joe's stingy old uncle would surely lend him the money now, but—because the truth terrified her.

He was proud of her; she could see that. If he never learned the truth, he would always be proud of her.

He thought she was brave and smart. He didn't know—nobody knew—that she had crossed those fellows up just for a chance to escape. And then the car had stalled . . . had stalled . . .

"Joe. Why do you suppose the car stalled like it did?"

He looked at her without a change of expression. "Why?" he said. "Well, I suppose the seeds had something to do with it. I poured a fistful of seeds into their gas-tank."

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	No. Here
MURDER HOLDS THE REINS by Donald Barr Chidsey.....	.....
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While war continues to rage in Europe, the threat of fascism grows stronger in America. The FBI and other law enforcement bodies are busy hunting out the would-be dictators. But in addition there is another group of men who are out to save democracy—*The Park Avenue Hunt Club*.

## DEATH WEARS GREEN

By JUDSON P. PHILIPS

## DETECTIVE FICTION WEEKLY

(On sale next Wednesday, April 17)



"You're a murderer . . . a murderer!" she  
screamed

# To Love and to Kill

By  
Walter  
Ripperger

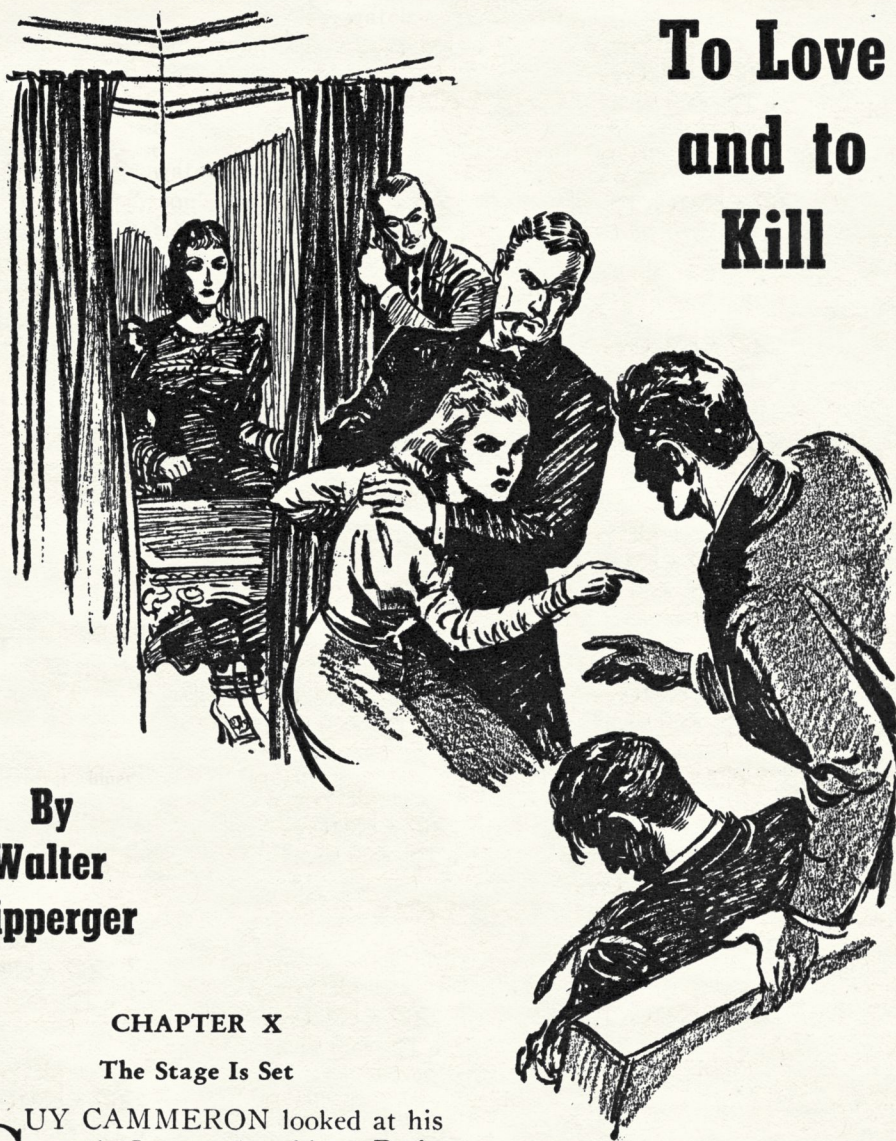
## CHAPTER X

### The Stage Is Set

GUY CAMMERON looked at his watch. It was nine-thirty. Probably none of his guests would arrive for a half hour or so. Absently he wondered who would come. Not that it mattered. As long as Lester Seelig came—and Lester Seelig would come.

Guy lit a fresh cigarette. He was surprised how steady his hands were. Big, strong hands, and not a tremor in them. His mind went back to Mona.

It wasn't her fault, none of it was. She just couldn't bring herself to hurt Steve or to ruin Steve's life. Once he, Cammeron, had tried to tell her that there was no use going on, until he was bled white. The thing to do was to go to the District Attorney. The look in her eyes when he had suggested that had made him say instantly that he had only been joking, that





there was nothing to worry about, that he'd straighten the whole thing out. He'd promised her, and tonight. . . .

Guy dropped his unfinished cigarette into an ash tray, and rose. Idly he looked about the room which tonight would be the scene of a strange happening. It was a comfortable room furnished in accordance with his own taste—an old-fashioned secretary between the French windows that led out onto the terrace; the huge davenport in front of the fireplace flanked by wing chairs; the little side tables here and there; the grandfather's clock in the far corner, ticking away placidly, striking the quarter hours, the half hours, as though time in itself must be a steadying influence on life; the book shelves; the soft rug; the heavy draperies. It was all so simple, so natural, so reassuring.

Merton, combining the functions of valet and butler, came in carrying a huge tray of glasses, some Scotch, brandy, and so forth. He placed them on a side table in the unobtrusive manner that only perfect servants can achieve.

"Clear out this corner," Guy Cammeron said. "I'm putting on a little show tonight. I imagine this is about as good a spot as any for the entertainment." Guy Cammeron spoke casually.

Merton, old and brittle, said:

"Yes, sir." He dragged the wing chair to one side, moved the lamp and the table. "Is that all right, sir? Is there anything else?"

"No, there's nothing else," Guy said, his voice just a little edgy.

Later, the first of his guests arrived. Hildegard Bellamy, a gushing blonde, and her husband, Frederick, a little, pudgy man, with a soft, fat face and kindly, nondescript eyes.

"Are we the first?" Hildegard

gurgled, holding out both her hands. "Do you mind if we have a Scotch and soda right away? Frederick is *so* tired. He's had a hard day at the office.

Guy Cammeron, his eyes flat, murmured polite things without meaning. He was thinking of how many people there were who had no problems and never would have any. Presently more guests arrived. None of these people mattered, except as scenery. Seelig—where was Lester Seelig? It wasn't until the old grandfather's clock chimed a quarter to ten that Seelig appeared. He came straight up to Cammeron. There was a glint in Seelig's amber eyes. His thin lips slanted downwards at the corners. He said nothing, just stood there, sardonic and expectant.

In a whisper, Cammeron said:

"Have you brought the letters?"

Seelig patted his breast pocket.

"What about the money?" Seelig glanced about the room as though to make sure that there were enough people there, so that he was safe from attack.

"The money is coming," Cammeron whispered. "You insisted on cash. I didn't want to cash a check of that size in New York. It might arouse suspicion with my bank—result in ugly rumors. I made arrangements to get it from Pittsburgh."

Seelig nodded. He had a pretty good idea as to what sort of arrangements Cammeron had made. He'd taken some of his customers' securities and sold them out there, where it was safer, and now he was waiting for the proceeds. Fair enough. Obviously he, Seelig, was going to get paid.

"Glad to be able to straighten this thing out for you, old man. I try to take care of my friends as best I can."

"I know," Cammeron said, and walked away.



He bumped into a stocky, mild-faced individual, Tom Travers, vice-president of a department store or something like that. Right now Travers' face had an expression of disgust.

"I didn't know you knew him," Travers said, jerking his head in Seelig's direction.

"Help yourself to a drink," Cammeron said.

He passed on to others. Very few of his guests knew Seelig personally, but most of them knew of him.

A FEW minutes later Big Steve McGarry came in with Mona. Steve was as tall as Cammeron. Steve was more robust but older. There was power in his squarish face and power in his pale, unreadable eyes. He took Cammeron's hand firmly but without warmth.

"How are you, Guy?" His voice was flat, unfriendly. He moved his head from right to left as though his eyes were too rigid, too frozen in their sockets to take in the others without moving his head.

Mona, beside him, overshadowed by his bulk, looked smaller than she was, and more frail. She said, "Hello" as though she scarcely knew Cammeron.

Cammeron, a humorless smile on his lips, said:

"Hello. Glad you could come." For a moment their eyes met, then he looked away. "I'm putting on something that will amuse you," Cammeron said. "I got hold of a medium who knows all about spiritualism. She's going to stage a séance, with spooks and things. I thought it might be different—"

He looked at Big Steve McGarry. Steve probably didn't like him, probably had some inkling of the way he felt towards Mona. He ought not to

feel too bitter. What he, Cammeron, was going to do was for his, Steve's, sake, too. Perhaps those letters, if they ever became public, wouldn't ruin Steve's career, but they certainly wouldn't help it.

Big Steve's eyes fell on Seelig over by the table, mixing himself a drink. Steve's face purpled. A savage look came into his frozen eyes.

"You're not particular," Steve said, "are you?"

"He's all right," Cammeron said indifferently. "I like to have all kinds of people at my parties—particularly this kind of a show."

"What kind of a show?"

"I told you," Cammeron said fretfully. "The room dark, the spiritualist tied hand and foot doing all sorts of stunts." He looked from Steve to Mona.

Except for the first greeting, she hadn't said anything. She looked more desirable than ever. She gave Cammeron an intimate, wistful glance, but stayed beside Steve.

Big Steve, his voice heavy leaden, said:

"You and Seelig being pals doesn't surprise me."

Cammeron stiffened. He started to say something, but Merton came up to him just then.

"The medium is there, sir."

Madame Boullard came in. She was no longer the gin-soaked slatternly, frowzy woman that I. Marmaduke Drake had interviewed. Instead, she had contrived to give herself an appearance of real dignity. She wore a simple black gown. Her hair was tidily parted in the middle and brushed down over her ears. Her makeup was good too. There was pallor in her cheeks and soft shadows under her eyes that gave her almost an ethereal look.



"Good evening," she said in a far away voice.

"I had that corner cleared out for you," Cammeron said, indicating with a nod. "Will that be all right?"

"Yes," Madame Boullard said in a hollow tone.

A boy, carrying a huge suitcase, stood beside her.

"If I could have a stepladder," she went on, "my assistant will put up the curtains."

The boy started to unpack the suitcase, bringing forth trumpets, a drum, a tambourine, and last, a pair of black curtains and a coil of wire. Merton brought a ladder. The boy strung a wire diagonally from the molding of one wall to the other, and hung the curtains, thus shutting off the corner of the room that Cammeron had had cleared. At Madame Boullard's request, Merton brought a light table and placed it behind the curtains. The medium's assistant put the trumpets and the other paraphernalia on top of the table, then placed a heavy armchair on the other side of the table.

More guests came. Those who knew Seelig scowled when they saw him. That hardly appeared to trouble Seelig whenever he noticed it. His sallow face stayed imperturbable, bland, sardonic.

An actor named Featheringham came in. He started to shake hands with Cammeron then he got a glimpse of Seelig and drew back.

"Sorry," he said to Cammeron, "I don't think I care to stay." He made his rather fine mouth into a narrow line, and his eyes flashed with anger. With a short jerk of his head, Featheringham indicated Seelig. "Maybe you don't know who he is," he said with smothered wrath. "He runs that filthy sheet called *Tell-tale Topics*. If I stay here I won't be able to keep my hands

off him." Featheringham was somewhat dramatic about it.

"I'm sorry," Cammeron said. "I'd forgotten about that article he wrote about you. Very tactless of me to have invited him . . . Look," he said, pointing to Madame Boullard. "An honest-to-goodness séance by one of the world's greatest mediums . . . something different. I'm sick of bridge and dancing."

Featheringham shrugged and walked away. Others came, about a score in all. Some of the women were thrilled. The men for the most part scoffed openly.

GUY went up to Mona. He whispered, "Seelig's brought the letters. He's going to turn them over to me later."

For a fleeting instant she rested her hand lightly on his arm.

"Sometimes, Guy, I think it's a pity that I came to, that I realized that I wasn't being fair to Big Steve, that I was running out on him . . . I'm sorry. Thanks Guy . . . thanks for everything." She gave him a quick glance from underneath her long lashes.

Cammeron stood for a minute rigid, like one in a trance. Then he shook himself and mingled briskly with his guests. Obviously the séance was going to prove a success. Animated discussions were in progress all around him. Mrs. Boyden-Boyden had been to a séance once.

"And, my dear, I actually *saw* the spirit of my dead cousin! There's no use trying to tell me that I wouldn't recognize the voice of my dead cousin. And another thing, Sir Arthur Conan Doyle was convinced that there was such a thing as spirits. You can't tell me that the man who wrote Sherlock Holmes would be fooled."



Madame Boullard took the center of the room, asking in a sepulchral tone if they were ready.

Mrs. Boyden-Boyden rushed up to her.

"You do believe in spirits, don't you, and you're really psychic. I can tell by looking at you."

Madame Boullard looked remote as if her spirit was already in another world. Actually, she was wondering when the nonsense would be over and she could go back to her gin bottle.

Seelig, his narrow face suddenly nervous, went for a drink. He sensed some tension in the air that might be due to the presence of the medium; then again it might be due to something else. His hand slipped into his coat pocket and closed over a small revolver.

Out of the corner of his mouth, the actor, Featheringham muttered:

"If she can conjure up spirits that'll knock that fellow's teeth down his throat, I'll believe in 'em as long as I live."

The deep chimes of the grandfather's clock rang out the hour of eleven.

Madame Boullard looked at Cammeron. "I'm ready any time."

Cammeron nodded.

"If you'll all make yourselves comfortable," he said loudly, "we're about to begin." His voice wasn't as steady as would have liked it to be.

The room hummed with excitement followed by silence. Cammeron drew the curtains that hung from the French doors leading out onto the terrace. There was a full moon and he had to shut out every trace of light. He told Merton to close all the doors. The atmosphere in the room grew suddenly, unexpectedly heavy. Very few had any faith in spiritualism, but somehow something else, something indefinable had penetrated into their midst.

With fine dignity, Madame Boullard took her place in the improvised cabinet, seating herself in the chair behind the table.

"If some gentlemen will be good enough to tie me up . . ." she murmured in a faint voice.

Two of Cammeron's friends volunteered. With rope provided by her assistant, they did a pretty thorough job of it. They ran the rope about her waist and around the back of the chair. They secured her wrists to the arms of the chair, and lashed her ankles to the chair legs. Madame Boullard looked wan, almost worried. She was a good showman. This was no time to smile. Not the moment to indicate that it would be no trick at all for her to free her hands on the instant. She even managed to look a little distressed and her voice was uncertain as she said:

"Now if you will light the candle, take the sealing wax . . . if you will . . . if you will please seal the principal knots. . . ."

Her assistant held out a candle and sealing wax. The volunteers obliged. They viewed their handiwork with some satisfaction.

"Now if you will step out," she said, her naturally strident voice low, "and draw the curtains. . . . Please ask someone to extinguish the lights. . . ."

The two men withdrew, pulled the curtains shutting Madame Boullard from view.

Hildegarde Bellamy giggled.

"Isn't it exciting? It's so spooky!"

Guy Cammeron walked over to the switch; he looked swiftly about the room. Some of his guests were sitting down, others were leaning against the wall. Mona stood next to the fireplace. Featheringham wasn't far from her. Cammeron was looking for someone else—Seelig! Seelig, his legs crossed,



was lounging scornfully back in a chair near the clock.

"I'm going to ask you to put out your cigarettes and not to light one during the performance. You've got to be fair to Madame Boullard." Cammeron waited for cigarettes to be snubbed out, took one more swift glance about the room and counted the steps in his mind.

Then Guy Cammeron pressed the switch and plunged the room into impenetrable darkness.

## CHAPTER XI

### Murder in the Dark

OLD Merton opened the door. I. Marmaduke Drake explained that he was a guest. Merton looked dubious. "I'm afraid, sir, that it is—that the séance—is already in progress. My orders are not to admit anyone because—"

With the flat of his hand, Drake pushed the old man to one side and strode towards the door that Merton had indicated with a slight movement of his head. Drake paused long enough to extinguish the light in the foyer, then, noiselessly he turned the knob and stepped inside.

Merton had been wrong. The séance wasn't yet in progress. It was only about to take place. The curtains of the improvised cabinet had been drawn. All eyes were fixed on that corner of the room. No one paid any attention to Drake. Cammeron, with his hand on the light switch and his eyes fixed on Seelig, was doing exactly what Drake was now doing—estimating the number of steps it would take to reach Seelig. I. Marmaduke Drake judged it would be about fifteen. It was then that Cammeron plunged the room into darkness.

From the corner came Madame Boullard's voice, astonishingly hollow:

"Are you there, *Jonathan*?" A pause, then again, "Are you there, *Jonathan*?"

A woman laughed softly, nervously. A second voice, different from Madame Boullard's, said:

"I am the spirit *Jonathan*. What is your bidding?"

The power of suggestion, of self-hypnosis under such circumstances is large. There was some who insisted subsequently that just before *Jonathan* spoke they had felt a rush of cold air, and heard the swish of a moving body.

"Blow . . . blow the trumpet." It was Madame Boullard's command. It sounded magnificently frightened.

Someone chuckled. Nobody paid any attention to that except that Mrs. Boyden-Boyden whispered, "Sh", in an awed tone. But Cammeron knew that it had been Seelig laughing. It pleased Cammeron that he should have laughed. He wasn't going to laugh much longer.

Sepulchral trumpet notes came from the cabinet.

"Enough," said Madame Boullard's voice.

A taut stillness, then the trumpet, coated with luminous paint, sailed into the room and fell dully onto the soft carpet.

"The other . . . the other, *Jonathan*."

Again nerve-wracking, disturbingly mournful notes came from the second trumpet. To most of them it was plain bunk, of course, and yet it was difficult not to be affected by it. The medium was good; she timed every note, each sound just so, waiting the right length of time so as to heighten the suspense. The second trumpet came flying from between the curtains.

"Are you still there, *Jonathan*?"

"I am still here," the empty voice



of the spirit said. Then without warning, the tambourine broke out wildly.

A quavering voice in the audience said:

"Could I . . . could I ask *Jonathan* a question?"

The tambourine sounded wrathful as though infuriated by the interruption. The woman subsided with a frightened, half audible sound.

One of the men who had tied Madame Boullard to the chair whispered:

"Great Scott! She's good. Those ropes. . . ."

The tambourine, phosphorescent, luminous, came hurtling from out of the cabinet.

"The drum," Madame Boullard's voice reached them, weaker and weaker. "The drum. . . ."

A drum rolled madly, incessantly. Once it thumped with an odd, dull sound, a sort of an undertone to the roll, then it stopped. A pause and the drum came slithering along the floor. Another pause that seemed eternal. Then suddenly I. Marmaduke Drake's voice rang out with sharp savagery.

"Turn on the light! Somebody turn on the light!" And even as he shouted, the table that had been in front of Madame Boullard came through the curtains, landing with a splintering sound.

THE lights went on. All eyes were still on the black curtains that hid Madame Boullard. The two men who had tied her up went and pulled the curtains aside. There she was, seated in the chair, tied hand and foot, the seal on every knot intact. There was a ripple of applause . . . then sudden silence.

Mrs. Boyden-Boyden let out an ear-splitting scream. Her mouth kept moving but she made no intelligible sounds.

Over at the side of the room sat Seelig. He was dead now—a ghastly sight with the top of his head crushed in. Behind him, his face chalk-white, stood I. Marmaduke Drake.

Drake's hands were stained with blood! There was blood on the lapel of his light gray suit.

Seconds of unearthly silence, then pandemonium, with women screaming and men cursing. Drake tried to keep his head, to take in every detail of the entire scene. Subconsciously he was aware of Cammeron, standing white-faced, not more than a few feet away. He heard a gruff voice bellowing, "Don't anybody move! Don't anybody move!", and he knew it was Gruber. He heard Gruber's heavy steps coming towards him, but somebody got there ahead of Gruber—Mona McGarry.

Her eyes were stark, her lips were parted. That child-like, trusting expression was gone from her face. It was distorted with fury now. She was pointing at him, Drake.

"You . . . you . . . you," she was saying.

Big Steve McGarry came, took hold of her wrist, and tried to drag her away, but she wouldn't budge.

"He did it," she screamed hysterically, pointing at I. Marmaduke Drake, "He did it."

"A damned good job," Big Steve growled.

Steve was a man of action. He picked Mona up as though she were a child and carried her over to the opposite side of the room and deposited her in a chair.

Now Gruber stood in front of Drake. Gruber's ordinarily genial eyes had all the friendliness of a pair of ice cubes. With his hands on his hips, he stood staring at Drake, letting his cold eyes drift from Drake's face to the



blood on the lapel of Drake's coat, then to Drake's stained hands.

"You don't stop at anything, do you?" Gruber finally said.

"Don't be a damned fool," Drake snarled at him.

Gruber took a look at Seelig slumped in his chair. Seelig's hand was in his pocket. It needed only a glance to assure Gruber that Seelig was dead.

"All right, I'm a fool," Gruber said, his voice solemn, "but you got up this party, Drake. You bought a Mickey Finn. You . . ." Gruber had to shout to make himself heard above the screams of Mona McGarry.

"He did it! He did it!" she was again screaming hysterically. "Cameron hired him. I know. . . ."

Big Steve put his hand over her mouth. Someone brought her some brandy.

I. Marmaduke Drake and Gruber stood facing each other in grim silence, until Drake, his voice like granite, said:

"Sure I bought a Mickey Finn. That's what I killed him with. I hit him over the head with a Mickey Finn."

Gruber went to the telephone and called Police Headquarters. Then he came back to where Drake stood. Some of the men were closing in on them eyeing Drake curiously, even admiring him. If he'd killed Lester Seelig he'd done a good job and deserved credit.

Guy Cammeron kept turning from Drake to Mona. There was a puzzled expression on Cammeron's face—an expression that was more bewildered when his eyes fell on Mona than when they rested on Drake.

Drake reached into his trouser pocket with his thumb and forefinger and extracted a handkerchief. With

that he wiped his hands. Then, unceremoniously, he walked through the little knot of people about him, straight over to Mona McGarry. She had quieted down, except that her teeth were chattering. Drake stood over her, his eyes bleak, his mouth wolfish.

"Don't let him come near me," she suddenly screamed. "Don't let him touch me! He's a murderer—a murderer!"

**D**RAKE didn't move until he felt Gruber's hand on his arm. His mind elsewhere, he allowed himself to be led away. Gruber pulled Drake half-way around so that they faced each other. Drake jerked his arm free.

"Keep your paws off me," he snarled.

"How'd the blood get on your hands," Gruber said, "on your suit?"

"Because I bumped into him in the dark," Drake said. "I put my hands to his head and I knew. You heard me yelling to put on the lights, didn't you? You were in the room, weren't you? You followed me here, didn't you?"

Gruber, his voice flat, said:

"Yeah, I was in the room, but what were you doing wandering around in the dark, feeling of Seelig's head? What did you get up this party for? What was the Mickey Finn for? I'm asking you again."

I. Marmaduke Drake looked around for Cammeron. Cammeron wasn't far away. His face was still white, drawn. To Gruber, Drake said:

"What was he killed with? Where's the weapon?"

The sergeant started. He looked about, taking in the chairs, the sofa and the floor. There was no sign of a weapon. He turned back to Drake. Drake spread his arms. Gruber patted his breast pockets, his hips, and found nothing. Gruber went to the French



windows and pulled the curtains apart. The windows were closed. Whatever had been used to inflict that frightful blow on Seelig's skull, couldn't have been thrown out of the windows. Gruber knew that.

He had arrived a couple of minutes after Drake and had entered the room through the pitch black foyer, and all the while that the séance had been in progress he had stood by the door so no one could have sneaked out. Gruber looked troubled, then his face cleared. The weapon must be around somewhere. It probably had been pushed behind a cushion or something like that.

Just then the police arrived, bringing with them an assistant medical examiner, a little man with tiny, twinkling eyes. The doctor busied himself with Seelig.

Gruber turned to Cammeron.

"What about you?" he barked. "This is your house, and you knew about this séance business. This murder couldn't have happened except for the séance."

CAMMERON made no immediate answer. He turned instead to look again at Mona. She was still sitting in the same chair. One of the women guests was sitting beside her, chafing her wrists. Mona was mumbling. There was a weird look in her eyes—the expression of one hovering on the brink of madness. Cammeron turned and glanced at Drake. Drake looked away.

"I don't know anything about it," Cammeron said in a monotone. He shut his lips tight.

Gruber made a growling sound and helped his men search for the weapon. The doctor halted Gruber.

"He must have died instantly. It was a terrific blow."

"What did it?"

The medical examiner shrugged.

"Something pretty heavy. Something as least as heavy as a sashweight, and it must have been wielded by a pretty husky individual." The doctor's eyes travelled about the room, resting briefly on Drake, on Big Steve McGarry, on Cammeron, on the actor Featheringham, and one or two others.

Drake sat down, his hands in his pockets, his eyes half closed, his legs stretched to their fullest and crossed.

One of Gruber's men came to say that they hadn't been able to find a club or any other apparant weapon.

"There's got to be one," Gruber barked. "What do you think I'm going to look like reporting back that I was in a room where there was a murder and then a sashweight or something like that disappeared right under my nose? Somebody's got it on them." Savagely he glared at the guests. "You can be searched here or I can take you all down to the police station in the wagon. Which will it be?"

Nobody answered.

I. Marmaduke Drake got to his feet. He wandered over to where Guy Cammeron stood and in a whisper he said:

"I never betray a client." He looked meaningly at Cammeron.

Cammeron's eyes narrowed as he stared back at Drake.

"I don't understand you," he said. "If you mean that you think I did it. . . ." He broke off with a gesture of his hands.

I. Marmaduke Drake sauntered over to where Gruber stood.

"And another thing," the sergeant said, scarcely moving his lips, "this guy Seelig had his hand in his pocket when he was killed. His hand was on a gun. He must have expected to get killed."



Drake ignored that. He shot another swift glance in Cammeron's direction. He had given Cammeron his chance. He had in effect warned him, had offered to keep his mouth shut. But Cammeron had rejected the offer; he had denied that he had killed Seelig. Yet Cammeron had done it. Cammeron must have done it! Hadn't Cammeron deliberately tried to trick him, Drake? Hadn't he phoned to say that the party was off so that he'd have the opportunity of killing Seelig without any interference?

"What you and your flatfeet can't find," I. Marmaduke Drake said moodily to Gruber, "I can find blindfolded, and when I say blindfolded, I mean blindfolded."

GRUBER glowered at him.

"This is a great time for wise cracks," the sergeant said angrily. "After I put you in the cooler, you won't feel so funny."

"I'm not feeling funny," Drake snapped back at him, "and you're not putting me in the cooler. I'm going to find that weapon for you."

"How?"

"I'm a little psychic myself," Drake said, his eyes flat, his voice grim. "All I need is to be blindfolded and for the men here to lead me around the room one at a time. Then. . ."

"Are you nuts?" Sergeant Gruber roared. "We've had one show here to-night and that's enough."

"I'm not going to put on a show," Drake insisted stubbornly. "I want you to do as I say."

For seconds Gruber was speechless with exasperation. This was the craziest gag he'd ever heard.

The medical examiner was closing his bag. He straightened up and studied Drake curiously.

"I think it's a good idea," he said.

Gruber glowered at the doctor. He prepared to let out a few well-chosen expletives, but something in the medical examiner's face made him change his mind.

"All right," he growled. "We've tried everything else. Now we're going to have mind reading. This damn thing started with a séance, it might as well end with one." He looked at the men gathered around. "I can't make any of you go through with this thing," he said menacingly, "but I can take you down to the station and have you searched, and I can hold you as material witnesses until your lawyers get busy. What will it be?"

"Bizarre," Featheringham drawled, "absolutely bizarre." He yanked a huge purple handkerchief out of his pocket, went up to Drake and tied it across the latter's eyes.

Drake fumbled for Featheringham's wrist, held it and Featheringham led him about the room. When he had made the round, Drake stopped and took off the handkerchief.

"Who's next?"

Tom Travers, eyeing Drake as though he were confronted by a lunatic, stepped forward and went through the same performance, with apparently no results.

I. Marmaduke Drake, his face a muddy grey, eyed Cammeron.

Cammeron, his voice rasping, said:

"I think that this matter is too serious for clowning."

Drake passed him up and selected Fred Bellamy instead, and after Bellamy, he picked out Big Steve McGarry.

Big Steve glared at him frostily.

"You ought to have been good at pinning the tail on the donkey. If you can read my mind, you won't be flattered."



Drake held out the handkerchief. Big Steve fastened it across Drake's eyes, tying it with a savage yank. Then they started about the room. This time Drake didn't wait to go all the way around before he removed the handkerchief. He stopped, let go of Steve McGarry, and snatched the handkerchief away. For a long time he stood there, rigid, studying Steve McGarry.

Big Steve, his face stony, said:

"Well, anything wrong with me?"

I. Marmaduke Drake, his mouth twisted into a crooked line, said:

"You killed Seelig."

## CHAPTER XII

### Justice of the Shadows

A DEATH-LIKE hush came over the room. Some turned quickly to glance at Mona, Big Steve's wife. She sat there hunched over, apparently not having heard, like one who was in a state of coma, moving her lips, staring into vacancy and saying nothing. Big Steve McGarry, standing beside the grandfather's clock where Drake had stopped, laughed with harsh derision.

"He's crazy . . . drunk," Big Steve bellowed.

Gruber looked at Drake. Then he made a motion with his head. Two plainclothes men quietly ranged themselves alongside of Big Steve.

"All right now, spill it," Gruber demanded gruffly of Drake.

"The clock," I. Marmaduke Drake said in a flat voice, "the grandfather's clock."

"What about the clock?" Gruber demanded testily.

"A little while ago, it struck a quarter to twelve. It strikes the quarter hours as well as the halves and the hours," Drake said drearily. He felt suddenly drained, tired. "I left a place

called Tony's at eleven," he went on. "It's only a few blocks from here. It didn't take me five minutes to get here in a cab. I was in this room at ten minutes past eleven. The clock didn't strike a quarter past eleven, but it struck half-past. . . ."

Sergeant Gruber looked baffled.

"What the devil! Supposing it didn't strike a quarter past eleven?"

"Seelig was killed with one of the weights from the grandfather's clock . . . the right hand one. You'd better be careful how you handle it on account of fingerprints."

The sergeant gaped.

"Say, are you just guessing . . . How do you know it's the right hand one and not the one on the left?"

"It's the right hand one," Drake said. "That's the one that works the gong. It strikes the half, the hours and the quarter hours. I knew even before I did my mind reading act that it was one of the weights from the clock. The clock didn't strike a quarter past, but it struck half past. That could only mean that somebody had taken the weight off before it was eleven-fifteen, and put it back again before it was half-past."

Gruber shot a glance in Steve McGarry's direction. Big Steve was still standing there, immobile. Not a muscle in his face moved.

"If you knew all along," Gruber said bitterly, "that it was the weight from the clock, why didn't you say so?"

"Because I had to find out who it was that had used the weight and I couldn't do that except with that psychic gag."

The sergeant looked skeptical again.

"Listen—" he began, then stopped.

"You see," Drake explained unhurriedly, "what happened was this. While the séance was going on with all that



noise, somebody opened the door to the grandfather's clock, unhooked one of the weights—those weights are damned heavy, you can fell an ox with one of them—brought it down on Seelig's skull, then put it back on the chain in the clock and closed the door. That would only take seconds and all the noise of the tabourine and the drum would cover up the sound. In fact, if anybody heard it he would only think it was part of the act."

From where he stood, Big Steve said out of the corner of his mouth:

"The guy's good—very good, I'd say. Get him to tell you how he read my mind, Sergeant."

The sergeant looked questioningly at Drake.

"I didn't read anybody's mind. That was just a gag. What I did is a very old trick a doctor showed me years ago. Any doctor can do it."

He paused and glanced at the assistant medical examiner.

"You guessed what I was going to do, didn't you? That's why you urged the sergeant to let me try it."

The doctor nodded.

"I SUPPOSE it was the thing that originally suggested the lie detector," Drake continued thoughtfully. "One man knew the thing with which Seelig had been killed. I said that I was going to discover the weapon so I had myself led around the room, past the clock. Of course I knew when I was near the clock because I could hear it ticking, and I held everyone by the wrist with my fingers on their pulses. You understand now. The only man whose pulse would go up when he got near the clock would be the murderer's."

Sergeant Gruber scratched the back of his neck.

"There ought to be some fingerprints on that weight. McGarry probably wiped the blood off on a handkerchief or on one of the curtains, but he had to hold it to do that," Drake said.

Sergeant Gruber, with long, purposeful strides, walked towards the clock. Within a few feet of it Steve McGarry stopped him. There was a wry grin on his mouth.

"All right. There's no rush about the weight, Sergeant. The guy is right. I'm glad I did it and I'd do it again. They don't come any worse than Seelig."

Instead of walking to where Cameron stood, Big Steve went and looked down at his wife. She lifted her head. Her eyes were utterly vacant. Her features were still contorted, but not because of Big Steve. She didn't even appear to recognize him, seemed unaware of him standing there right in front of her. Steve reached over and stroked her hair.

"It's all right, Mona," he said. "Nobody's going to hurt you. It's all right." His customarily hard voice held an odd, soft quality.

Mona moved her head without resentment, and still without recognition.

Followed by Gruber's eyes, Big Steve calmly walked over, took Cameron by the arm and led him to one side.

"You get hold of those letters." Big Steve whispered fiercely. "I won't have Mona's name dragged in the mud. I won't have the papers make a Roman Holiday out of Big Steve McGarry's wife. You and she gave me a raw deal, and this guy Seelig topped it off by blackmailing me for plenty. He showed me some of your letters, said that somebody he knew had them and that he was trying to buy them back from



him. I ought to have taken a crack at you too, but it's just as well I didn't. After . . . after the way this thing turned out there won't be anybody to look after Mona but you. . . ."

Guy Cammeron, his face greenish, with the edges of his teeth together, said:

"Nothing happened, Steve. Nothing except those letters written by me. If you saw some of the letters, you know I love Mona, but nothing happened, though that wasn't to my credit. Mona stuck to you."

Steve McGarry stared at him, disbelief in his eyes, then his eyes went blank.

"All right, I'll take your word for it." His broad shoulders twitched. "I thought I was being smart when you told me about the séance. I did some quick thinking and saw a chance to get rid of a slimy slug, do Mona a good turn and me and a lot of other people."

Cammeron made jerky movements with his clenched hands.

"If you only hadn't butted in, Steve, I was going to kill him, strangle him with my bare hands, then take the letters away from him. Seelig was working both ends against the middle, though I didn't know that. I was tiptoeing towards him right there in the dark when this Darke yelled for the lights." Guy Cammeron stopped. The strain in his face mounted. "And I don't . . . I don't understand Mona," he said, looking at Big Steve. "It's as though . . . it's as though she was . . . sorry Seelig was killed."

For a second a baffled look came into Steve's eyes. Then he shook his huge head.

"Don't try to understand her. Just . . . just take care of her."

He walked a few steps away, surrounded by a score of people, and yet

seeming a lonely figure. Then he went back close to Cammeron. Without raising his voice he said:

"Damn you! At least you know now that I loved her just as much as you did. Maybe I'm not as good-looking as you; maybe I haven't your technique, but . . . *I can kill.*" Before Cammeron could say a word, Big Steve walked away.

**I.** MARMADUKE DRAKE was standing near one of the windows with his back to the rest, looking out into the moonlit night. He was thinking of Mona and there was a ferocious look on his face. He felt someone tap him on the shoulder, turned halfway and found himself looking into Big Steve's frozen eyes.

"I've just been making a lot of noble speeches," Big Steve said, "I might as well finish up with you. You're pretty good. I made some dirty cracks about you, but you can't blame me, and I don't blame you for what you did. I can take it. In fact, if it weren't for the messy business of waiting for a trial for months, of waiting in the death house. . . . If they'd just let you plead guilty of murder in this State and you could have it over with in a couple of hours, I wouldn't mind at all. I wouldn't . . ." He broke off. He and Drake stood there, looking each other in the eye.

Then Drake said:

"It's hot in here. What's the good of having a penthouse on the eleventh floor if you keep all the windows shut?" He opened the French windows and again looked Big Steve in the eye.

Sergeant Gruber was coming towards them. Something gleamed in Big Steve's eyes. He grinned, then said, "Thanks." The next instant he was through the open window. They



could hear his feet thumping across the terrace.

Sergeant Gruber let out an oath, then started after him. So did I. Mar-maduke Drake. But Drake was unbelievably clumsy. He not only bumped into the sergeant, but he actually tripped over his own feet, bringing Gruber down on top of him. They managed to untangle themselves and they got out onto the terrace just in time to see Big Steve McGarry leaping into space.

Drake, a far-away expression in his eyes, went back into the living room, followed by Gruber. Gruber spun him around, cursing him:

"You did it on purpose. You bumped into me and cut me down so as to give him a chance to get away."

Drake, his eyes unfriendly, said:

"I thought I said for you to keep your paws off of me. What do you mean, get away? It's eleven floors to the ground."

The angry retort that was on Gruber's lips was cut off by the appearance of Madame Boullard.

"Say, how long do I have to sit around here yet?" she said indignantly. "I'm getting paid for a half hour's work, not to spend the night."

Gruber said something but Drake didn't hear it. With slow steps Drake made his way to where Mona McGarry sat.

She looked up at him just the way she had looked up at Big Steve. Then suddenly recognition came. Those large childish eyes of hers widened with terror and implacable hate.

"You murderer!" she shrieked, "you murderer! You and Cammeron . . . murderers!" She started to get up; Drake pushed her roughly back into the chair.

The woman beside Mona who had

been chafing her wrists, uttered a protest.

Cammeron came over. Sharply, Cammeron said to Drake:

"Wait a minute."

Drake, his face a mass of savage lines, said:

"The devil I'll wait. I waited until Big Steve got away . . . that's long enough. She made a fool of me, a fool of you, and a fool of Big Steve. It just dawned on me a little while ago."

MONA MCGARRY threw back her head and laughed hysterically. The unpleasantness of her laugh battered everyone else into silence—except Drake.

"When you came to my office," he snarled at her, "I told you I was going to find Nora Dugan. You were scared. I thought you were scared because you imagined I might do something that would hurt Big Steve or Cammeron. You were scared because you thought I'd find out something that would hurt *Seelig*. I didn't tell anybody what I was going to do, but you. Yet Seelig sent a couple of gorillas after me. Why? Because you told him what I was going to do.

"And when the gorillas muff their job and I show up at Seelig's, what happens? Nora Dugan gets killed. Why? Because you told Seelig that I'd find her, just how I'd find her, and Seelig knew I'd do it. I don't know why he had to kill Nora. I can only guess. Then last night I find you coming out of Farrinelli's place. You give me a fine story that I, like a sap, fall for.

"I don't know what you were doing at Farrinelli's but you saw me beat up one of his gorillas and you telephoned Seelig or Farrinelli the minute you got



home. You were afraid that I'd find out there was some tie-up between Seelig and Farrinelli. I don't know what it is and I don't give a damn—not now. But Farrinelli or Seelig thought they had to put me out of the way quick. You turned those letters of Cammeron's over to Seelig yourself, didn't you?"

Gruber laid a hand on Drake's shoulder.

"Take it easy," Gruber cautioned. He passed some slips of paper to Drake. "They were in Seelig's pocket."

"Mind your own business," Drake snarled, jerking his shoulder away. "Who's doing this?" He glanced down at the slips that Gruber had given him. They were Mona McGarry's I. O. U.'s. Drake's mouth took on a more slanting line. "You're one of these fool women that gamble, that can't stop gambling, and Seelig was taking care of you, taking care of your I. O. U.'s, and you were paying him back. You paid him back first with Cammeron's letters, and then. . . ."

There was a strange light in Mona's eyes.

"Yes, I sold them to him," she said with satisfaction. "He was a better man than any of you, than Steve and Cammeron. He had brains. He wasn't afraid, and he loved me."

I. Marmaduke Drake eyed her wolfishly.

"Nora Dugan must have overheard something, must have found out that you sold those letters, and so she had to be killed before I could find her. I told you that Cammeron was going to

kill Seelig. Nobody else knew that, except you and me. You told Seelig that too. And so Seelig comes here armed, because you'd told him what I said. I ought to have seen all this before, but I was stupid . . . so dumb I ought to be on the police force."

Mona McGarry rose, a wild light in her eyes. She looked about, from one to the other, her lips parted grinding her small teeth together. Then she screamed and laughed alternately.

I. Marmaduke Drake, watching her, shivered. Gruber whispered to one of his men to phone for an ambulance. Two others came and stood beside her. Mona broke away. They caught her, held her, despite her struggles and screams.

Mona McGarry had crossed the borderline of sanity and was fighting in the shadows!

Drake, his mouth twisted, watched her and again shivered. He turned to Cammeron, reached into his pocket and brought out a bundle of letters. The outer ones were smeared with blood. He passed them to Cammeron. Cammeron was swaying on his feet like a punch-drunk prize fighter.

"Here are your letters," Drake said, his words devoid of any vestige of life. "It's not my fault if they're a little soiled now."

With that, he started out of the room.

Gruber shouted after him, "Here! You can't go!"

"Who says so?" I. Marmaduke Drake said. He slammed the door behind him.

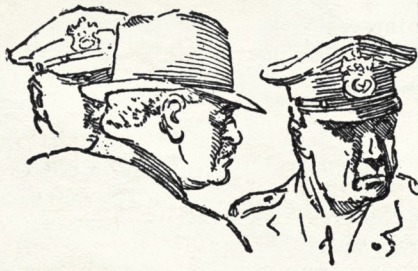
THE END

*Coming Next Week*

## **MURDER TRAP**

**By Preston Grady**





# Once to Every Cop

By

**G. T. Fleming-Roberts**



*The story of a young cop who had shot his  
first man and didn't like the taste it left  
in his mouth*

**I**N THE opinion of the old timers around Headquarters, this new Leath cop had one big liability which the other Leath cops had never been troubled with. This new Leath cop had been raised by his mother.

His name was Larry Leath, and while it was a good enough name it didn't pack the punch that a name like Bill or Steve did. Larry was also good looking—hair that was the glossy blond color of bamboo, a straight nose with flaring nostrils, a sensitive mouth and a cleft chin. He'd got all that from his mother, just like his early training. His eyes were Leath eyes, though, sometimes a hard, light blue and in other lights a pale jade green. He was taller than most of the Leath tribe, but

just heavy enough to slip under the requirement wire when he took his physical.

Larry Leath learned there was some mysterious disadvantage to his up-bringing that day he passed along the hall to get his badge from the police chief. Two of the old timers who had known Leath cops for a long time were talking about him when he passed. One of them said it was too bad young Leath's dad had got shot before he could teach the kid how to fight like a Leath. And the other said, "Well, it ain't exactly the kid's fault he was raised by his mom, I guess."

This young Larry Leath, who was going into the chief's office to come out a cop, flushed a little and kept his eyes on the chief's door. The way he carried himself



was something like a military academy student on dress parade.

The two old timers looked at each other and teetered up and down on their toes like beat-pounding teaches you to do to rest your feet. One of them said, "He's got no temper either." The other said, "Hell, no. His old man would have laid you flat for getting off a crack like that." And the first cop said, "And I'd hate to think what his brother Bill would have done."

When I heard that last remark, I came out of the detectives' room and the two old timers started to talk baseball. I went right on making my cigarette and they kept talking baseball. I'm Bill Leath, Larry's brother, see, ten years older than Larry and on the homicide. The only reason I was pretending I didn't hear what the old timers said about Larry, and therefore didn't do anything about it, was that this was going to be Larry's fight, and what good would it do Larry if I got in the ring in his place?

It wasn't that the old timers had said that Larry was yellow. Even if he had turned out yellow that would have been no triumph for the old cops who had known his father; they would have been sorry. To them a Leath turning out yellow would be pitiful, on a par with a good cop getting gunned down by a hophead, or maybe worse.

There were no grounds to suppose that Larry wouldn't make a good cop. He had come out of police school with flying colors.

I always figured that Larry was just naturally his mother's kid, while I was my dad's. I figured that if Larry turned out to be something besides a cop that would be just all right, because I knew what it was like to try and keep a home going on a cop's pay. I got the jolt of my life when Larry went into police school.

Larry's face was still flushed when he came out of the chief's office, but for a different reason. He had been given the oath and probably a special lecture about

the tradition attached to the Leath name and how Larry was supposed to carry it on. Larry was proud and kept his eyes off his new badge only with considerable difficulty.

I sauntered up to Larry and he got redder when he saw me and his lips grinned, showing teeth that were evenly set and brightly polished. I didn't say anything but just shook hands with him. Then I rapped his chest with my knuckles. "You keep that stuck out like that and you'll be blowing buttons off with every breath."

Larry laughed. He said, "It's great being a cop, ain't it?" And I said, "I don't know. I haven't been one long enough." Then I went out. I was supposed to be looking for a killer named Rudy Cantlin who had started himself a protection racket in which he seemed to be the sole taker—and giver. He had given a Second Street grocer, who hadn't paid for a protection, such a beating the man had died. On my way out to look in on one of Rudy's haunts, I stopped by the old house to talk to Mom.

I HADN'T seen the old place for about a month, not because I didn't want to but because when you've got a wife and kids a lot of things happen to take up your spare time. The little living room was just like always, with the Morris chair that had been Dad's and the patent rocker that was Mother's. The worn lace curtains were newly mended. The third yellow brown tile from the left on the mantle was still missing. Dad had knocked that tile out with a ball bat, teaching me how to play baseball when I was a kid. Now that Dad was gone and his two sons grown up, Mom kind of liked to sit and look at the missing tile, a half smile on her lips. The missing tile signified a part of the bright past.

There were a couple of pictures of Dad on the mantle—the one I used to laugh at with Dad in the old uniform and wearing fierce handlebar mustaches. And then there was another picture in the uniform



that signified his captaincy; a sprig of evergreen was on the top of this frame.

I went over and squeaked the patent rocker and Mom came out of the kitchen wearing a big starched apron. She said, "Well, Bill!" I lifted her up and kissed her and right after that answered questions about Grace and the kids. They were fine, I said, and how was she? Mom was fine and she asked about Larry. I could see that she was glad I had come so she could ask about Larry. That was all right. Larry was still her baby, though he was taller than I. But I'm married, and that makes a difference.

"Did he get traffic detail?" Mom asked.

I shook my head. She wouldn't exactly understand, but if Larry had been given a traffic assignment it would have been an insult to the Leath name. "He's got the old beat," I said. "Isn't that swell?" The old beat, as we called it, was the one that Dad and I had both started on. It took in the toughest section of Front and Second streets, down by the river.

The light of expectancy faded out from Mom's face. "Bill, I didn't want him—"

I put a finger under her chin and looked down into her eyes and then at Dad's picture on the mantel. "He wouldn't have wanted Larry to be blowing his brains out on a traffic whistle," I told her.

Tears came into Mom's eyes, hot angry tears. I held her close while she sobbed out that she was tired of the Leath tradition, and what was it anyway but a hollow ideal that had to do with killing and getting killed—mostly getting killed. I said she could look at me, and wasn't I alive after ten years on the force? Sure, but that was an act of providence, she reminded me, because two years ago I had spent six months in the hospital with enough bullet holes in me to sink a ship.

I said, "Now, now, Mom," not that that did any good. I am the same way when Grace gets to crying. What I say don't make sense or do any good but I feel like I ought to say something. After a while Mom got all that was in her out and dried her eyes. "Bill," she said, "you'll

be in that neighborhood quite a bit, and you sort of watch after Larry, won't you?"

I said I would, and then to justify Larry, I added: "But he's plenty able to take care of himself." Which he proved that first night on his beat.

I WAS still looking for this Rudy Cantlin down around the river front shanty town. On Second Street there was a fish and beer place called the Barge. I got a stoop pigeon who works there as a waiter and yes, he had seen Rudy Cantlin down on Front Street at the Wharf House which is a hotel, sort of. So from the Barge I cut down Primrose Alley to Front Street. I was going along in the dark, leaning back on my heels because the alley slanted steeply down toward the river, when the thick night hush was cut by the blast of a copper's whistle.

My stomach got cold and empty all of a sudden and my nerves screwed tight. That had to be Larry blowing that whistle. I started on a run down the steep slope, and into the mouth of the alley came a man. He was running, his toes digging into the gravel. I yelled out for him to halt. The man fired at somebody over his shoulder and fired at me.

If the same luck rode his first slug that was on his second, I was thinking it was tough for Larry, because that second slug took me through the right forearm and dropped my gun. I couldn't find the gun in the dark. The man in the alley turned and ran back into Front Street. As he turned, I got a glimpse of his profile against the faint glow from the Wharf House window, and the man was Rudy Cantlin.

I didn't waste any time trying to turn my gun up in the dark. I hadn't heard anything out of Larry after that first whistle and I was plenty worried. I legged into Front Street, hanging on to my right arm with my left hand because my right arm felt as though it might drop off, I guess.

I saw Rudy Cantlin running along the wharf where he was just a dodging duck-



ing shadow among the inanimate shadows that were piles. Larry, the young sap, was sticking to Front Street in the light, making a swell target out of himself. Rudy Cantlin tried a shot at Larry from behind a pile and I yelled at Larry to get under cover. He was too excited to pay any attention to me. Standing there just as straight as though he was in the police school shooting gallery, he took careful aim and fired at the zig-zagging Rudy.

Rudy, who had been right on the edge of the wharf, suddenly had a pair of legs that wouldn't hold him. He folded down and flopped into the river. Water reached up and over him.

I caught up with Larry and the two of us knelt on the wharf and turned our flashlights down on the bubbling surface of the deep, oil-filmed water.

"It was Rudy Cantlin," Larry said. His eyes were like pale jade now, shining with excitement. Here it was his first night on duty and he'd had a run-in with a killer. He threw one arm around me and asked if he had done all right; had he distinguished himself?

I said, "Yeah, but you came a damn sight nearer extinguishing yourself, kid."

And then Larry got blood on his fingers from the wound in my arm. "Bill," he said, and his voice sounded a little like a kid's, "you're hurt."

"Not much," I said. "You'd better phone and get the River Patrol on this. I'll stick here and watch for Rudy to take a bow."

"Okay," Larry said. "You're sure you're all right?"

I was beginning to feel sick, but I was close to the river and the Ohio is full of carp at this point, so I told him I was all right.

**T**HE river patrol didn't find the body, I learned later that evening when I was having my arm dressed. It seemed there was an under-tow that would have taken the body a long ways downstream. But to me there was the possibility that Rudy Cantlin wasn't hurt too badly and

might have gone under the wharf, done some submarine swimming, and foxed us.

If another cop had done what Larry had done the papers wouldn't have made much of it. But there was the Leath tradition, and here Larry had pulled a gun on a desperate killer his first night out; it made good copy and Larry's picture looked good above the story. Larry took all this the right way and didn't have to trade for a bigger hat. And it put him right with the old-timers down at Headquarters because it looked as though Larry was born to carry the hickory sceptre after all.

Mom took it differently. She had never complained when Dad had been compelled to shoot a man because she was too busy being thankful that he was alive. But with Larry it was different.

"Bill," she said to me, "you don't understand. Larry's my baby and now he's just killed a man. I know all that about it being his duty, but it just doesn't seem he was cut out for that sort of thing."

Anybody who had ever seen Larry at pistol practice would have realized that those eyes of his had been made to squint over gun sights. But I didn't say this; I just told Mom that maybe the man wasn't dead.

And two months later they found the body. It was two miles downstream from the edge of town, half in and half out of nearly stagnant water. It looked as though the carp had found Rudy Cantlin on their diet list. Time and decay had had their innings, too. If it hadn't been for Cantlin's watch and a few scraps of clothing we couldn't have placed the body at all. There was a bullet crease across the top of the head. Evidently Larry's bullet had done that, knocking the man unconscious so that he had fallen into the water and drowned.

Larry and I had to go to the morgue the following day after the corpse had been cleaned up somewhat for the business of identifying the man. I was a little edgey because I didn't know how Larry would take it—seeing the body of the



man he had killed. His mother's idea—that he wasn't born to be a cop—still persisted, but as soon as I saw him, I knew everything was going to be all right. His face was serious, his eyes blue and grave. He wasn't cocky, but you could see he was all right with his conscience and that was the main thing.

We looked at the evidence, which consisted mostly of the clothing and the watch. We looked at the corpse, but except for its location you wouldn't have known the face was a face.

We were in the hall that separated the morgue from the hospital, talking to Dr. Keller, the coroner's physician. Keller was saying to Larry, "Well, you're not going to let it end here, are you? The Leath dynasty of cops, I mean. Shouldn't you be thinking about getting married?" Larry laughed, but didn't blush. He said he'd been too busy to think about that, and I knew that was the truth.

Then Keller excused himself and went to the hospital door where an elderly nurse was standing there with a pale, pretty young girl, a little on the thin side. What she was wearing was cheap, but that didn't matter because of the way she wore it. She had lots of nice brown-red hair that was not too well hidden by the nutty hat she wore. She carried herself well, but as though she was consciously trying to do just that.

Keller put a kindly hand on the girl's arm. "I realize fully how terrible this is for you, Mrs. Cantlin. . . ."

I didn't hear any more because just then Larry's hand closed tight on my shoulder. I looked at him, but his eyes didn't meet mine; his eyes were following the girl as she walked with Keller toward the door of the refrigerating room. Larry's face was the color of pancake batter.

"Bill," he said hoarsely. His grip tightened. "Bill, is that *his* wife? Bill, why didn't you tell me he had a wife?"

I shrugged. I said, "I didn't know he had one either, but all these toughs have wives or else, I guess. Let's go back downtown."

Larry shook his head. He kept holding on to me, his eyes fastened on the door that had closed behind the girl. When faint sobbing sounds came from the morgue room, I saw Larry wince. He let go of my shoulder and started toward the door of the refrigerator room.

"Larry," I called after him, "don't be a sap!" And when I saw he was going to be one anyway, I took three running steps and grabbed him. He faced me, still pale, a completely bewildered expression on his face. "Let go," he said, but it didn't sound like his.

The door opened and Keller came out, one arm around Mrs. Cantlin. The girl had her handkerchief out and was holding it to her face. She was saying, "Let me go. Oh, let me get away from here, please." Her shoulders were shaking convulsively.

Larry pulled away from me and went to the girl. "Mrs. Cantlin—" he began.

The girl raised her eyes from the handkerchief. They were brown eyes, beautiful in spite of what crying had done to them.

Larry said, "I want—I want to tell you how sorry I am—"

The handkerchief came all the way down from her face. The girl's two hands clenched. She said, "Oh!" explosively. Then, "You—you *murderer*!" She hit one side of Larry's face with her clenched right hand, and when she found his head was still on his shoulders, his eyes still staring bewilderedly, she hit him with the other first. And then she collapsed on the floor. Larry looked down at her and I could hear him swallow.

Late that afternoon I was called into the chief's office and there was a shiny new cop's badge on his desk. He pointed to it and asked: "What in the hell is the matter with that kid brother of yours? He's quit. He just said that if cops were supposed to kill he guessed he wouldn't be a cop any more. And—well, he can't do that! He's a Leath."

I told the chief what had happened in the morgue. The chief massaged his jaw and said he could see how it was and it was too bad that Larry ran up against



something like that right off the bat. He said he guessed all of us had gone through that sort of thing, one time or another, and we'd all got over it. Larry would, too, only the chief had never seen a cop take it that way exactly.

I told the chief I would talk to Larry and see what I could do, but as it turned out I couldn't do anything. I found Larry at Mom's and he had gone right up to his room and told Mom that he wanted to be alone. "What's the matter with him, Bill?" Mom asked me. "Is he in love?"

I said I guessed that was it. And maybe it was. I had heard of love happening all of a sudden like that. Maybe he fell for Rudy Cantlin's wife the first time he looked at her, and realizing how hopeless his situation was, as the man who had killed her husband, it had gone to his head. Only that was too sappy. No Leath could be that sappy. Dumb, maybe, but not sappy.

**I** FOUND Larry upstairs, chewing on the bit of an unlighted pipe. He looked up from his shoes when I entered and his eyes went to pale jade and the lines about his jaw hardened. I knew then I couldn't get any where with him. He was going to be stubborn, like a Leath.

I said, "Listen, kid, this happens once to every cop. When it happened to me, I had to take away an eighteen year old boy who was the sole support of his invalid father. That hit me hard, too, but I got over it. You'll get over it, too, just as soon as you get back to work."

He said, "You don't understand. I've ruined that girl's whole life. I've killed everything that was beautiful and worth while to her. Maybe Rudy Cantlin was a killer and a crook, but he must have been something wonderful to her. He was her everything. I got to make it up to her somehow."

I told him this was something he couldn't make up to her. It was too bad that she hadn't cried on Larry's shoulder and said that she knew that Larry was right and performing his duty and that

it was all right with her. But if he had expected her to do that he was crazy. Any how, he didn't know but what she was as bad as her husband, did he?

But she wasn't that. After a month of Larry's sitting around, writing letters to Dorothy Cantlin, calling on her and never seeing her, hanging around the office where she worked, I went to see the girl myself. I honestly don't know whether it was the death of her husband that had her down or whether it was the hurt she had got finding out that Rudy was a crook, but she certainly was broken up about the thing. Also, she was one of those women who have the art of making a man feel about as big as an ingrown hair on the leg of an ant—cold, haughty, beautiful. Yes, she was beautiful, all right. She hated me because I was the brother of the man who had killed Rudy Cantlin, and while that didn't hurt me much, since I am still in love with my wife, I could see how it would make Larry feel.

"Further," she said, one hand holding the door open suggestively for me, "if that murdering brother of yours doesn't stop annoying me, I am going to have him arrested. Goodby."

I went. Larry didn't stop "annoying" her, though you could hardly call it that. All he did was try to be places where she would be, his eyes pitifully alert for something that he could do for her. But Dorothy Cantlin didn't have him arrested; she just packed up and left town.

Larry, the sap, left too. He had learned about following her and he shadowed her easily enough. I heard from him only through letters that he wrote mother. There was never a word about Dorothy Cantlin in any of them; they were just notes telling that he was well and still eating.

Eleven months later, things were still like that. When I got my leave for vacation, I got out my car, left Grace and the kids at home, drove out to the tank town where Larry was. I found Larry working in a hash house. He was thinner than ever and his hands were soft and red from



washing dishes. I never saw him looking less like a Leath, which is to say less like a cop. He sat down at the table with me while I ate a late dinner. I didn't get to the point until about pie, and then I lit in to him.

"What the hell are you doing here?" I asked him. "Nobody's insisting that you come back and be a cop. But come back and be something. I got a little money stashed away and if you'd like to use it to go to law school, I'll be glad to stake you."

Larry just shook his head. He smiled at me, but it was that sad half-smile I had seen on Mom's face. "I've got to get even with Dorothy," he said.

I nearly strangled on a mouthful of pie. "Dorothy, now, is it? You're in love with her, aren't you?"

He said, "Yes, I am."

"And she's never given you a tumble?"

"I wouldn't expect her to do that," he said, eyeing me gravely. "Nobody would expect her to. All I ask is that I get a chance to make up for what I've taken away from her."

I said, "I'll be damned!" And I couldn't finish the pie.

"Listen, Bill," Larry said, whispering, "maybe that chance will come. She's acting as secretary to a local dairy company. Nobody here knows that she's Cantlin's wife, so they trust her to make the night deposit at the bank. One of these nights. . . ."

I was away ahead of him. One of these nights she was going to get held up and then Larry would rush in and save her. If he got shot, saving her, he maybe figured the score would be settled. I said to him, "Well, let's get it over with. How about me pulling a fake stick-up and then you can run in and be hero?"

"This isn't funny," Larry cut in. And you could see it wasn't funny to him. He got up, took off his apron like he was going some place. I asked and he said he was going over to the dairy office as it was about time for her to take the money to the bank. I went along.

WHEN we were walking over to the office which was up a dark, narrow street that seemed a long way from everywhere, Larry confided that he had seen a tough looking gent watching the dairy office and that he had seen that same man go to the rooming house where Dorothy Cantlin was living.

I said, "Sure, and isn't that about what you'd expect? She is probably just as crooked as Cantlin. Now she's hooking up with somebody else, working as inside dopest for another holdup—this dairy office. They'll crack the dairy safe some night before she makes the deposit."

Larry stopped, turned on me, looked a lot as though he was going to slug me. I was getting plenty tired of his foolishness. I said, "Don't let any fraternal feelings towards me stop you from doing what you're thinking. You've had a licking coming to you for a long time, kid."

But he didn't want the licking. He just walked away quickly and up to the door of the dairy office. There was a car parked out in front of the office, and I saw him give it a quick look-over before going to the door. Then I saw him crouch in front of the door as though he was trying to look through the keyhole. I went up to the door. I said, "What's the matter, kid?"

He put his finger to his lips. I listened with him and heard Dorothy Cantlin's voice husky and hysterical. She was yelling, "No! I'm not going to do it. Nothing that you can do is going to make me do it. I won't. I tell you I won't!"

I think somebody cracked her across the side of the face then; it sounded that way.

Larry and I stood up. I looked at him and he nodded. We backed from the door and then hit it together. We backed and rammed again. The panel gave way all at once and we got half way across the office before I saw there were two men in the room. And then I got an extension tacked on my vacation just about two watch ticks before I could draw my rod. One of the men's bullets hit me somewhere in the side and I collapsed, my gun skating across



the floor damn near to the feet of the other crook.

I went down on my knees and then down the rest of the way. Larry just stood there, his hands straight down at his sides, his face pale. For the guy who had shot me was just one of the men in the room. The one who had been manhandling Dorothy was none other than Rudy Cantlin. You couldn't blame Larry for being stunned. I saw all this through a red mist that kept swimming up in front of my eyes. I saw Rudy Cantlin in the flesh come up to Larry and frisk him. Cantlin was saying, "Well, if it ain't our hero who gets his puss in the papers for being such a good shot."

The other man, the one who had plugged me, laughed and asked if Larry was the cop Rudy had put the fast one over on.

"This is him," Larry said. "You keep an eye on these two mugs. Dot's going to open the safe now or I'll open the side of her cheek."

I was getting things slowly because I was just about half turned off at the time. But what I got was that Rudy Cantlin hadn't collected a slug that night on the wharf. He had just flopped into the water, gone under the wharf, made his escape. Later he had come across some bum who resembled him in build and coloring. He had creased the bum across the skull with a bullet and drowned him in the water. If he had actually shot the bum and killed him, the bullet left in the body wouldn't have been a bullet from Larry's gun, so the hoax wouldn't have gone over. The switch of clothes and Rudy's watch in the dead bum's possession had been the evidence Rudy had left. And then he had hidden the body in a place where it would have taken some time for anybody to find it. The fish and time had taken their due course and Rudy Cantlin was legally dead.

All that was part of Rudy's past. His present seemed to consist of trying to crush his wife's hand. He gripped his lower lip between his teeth as though he was enjoying what he was doing. He kept

saying, "Give, babe." And finally a sob broke from the girl and Rudy knew she would give. He took her into the next room where the safe was. And about that time I heard police sirens.

I looked at Larry. He was still standing there, not far from the desk where Dorothy must have been working on the typewriter. Larry was watching the man who was keeping a gun on us. Anybody could see that the siren song was giving his trigger finger the itch.

The mug with the gun yelled, "Step on it, Rudy! Cops!" When he said that, he turned his head a little toward the door of the room into which Rudy was gone. I saw what Larry was going to do and would have liked to stop him if I hadn't been on the floor and about half turned off. Larry lowered his shoulder and bucked off into the guy who held the gun. And when the man with the gun was off balance. Larry picked up the typewriter from the desk. The crook shot at Larry, and if he had been trying he couldn't have hit the typewriter squarer; the bullet buzzed off the rounded steel frame of the machine. And then Larry threw the typewriter at the man and caught him full in the face.

**T**HE man joined me on the floor and he didn't have his gun any more; Larry had it. There was a crazy gleam in Larry's eye as he picked up that crook's gun. And then it came to me—a way in which Larry might think to square things for what he thought he had done to Dorothy Cantlin. What with the cops almost at the front door, I thought Larry might have the wild idea he could keep the cops back while Cantlin escaped from the back door. As soon as that thought struck me, I yelled: "For hell's sake—"

But there wasn't any time before Rudy Cantlin came through the door, his gun in his hand. Larry just stood there, as straight as though he was on the firing line at the police revolver range. Rudy, in a crouch, shot up at Larry. Larry didn't budge. He just stood there and squeezed the trigger. There came the gun-fire and



a surprised expression flashed onto Cantlin's face. And then Cantlin fell on his face.

Larry dropped his gun. Cops were getting out of the car in front of the office. He looked down at me. "You all right, Bill?" he asked dully.

I said, "I'm just fine and dandy. How are you?" And then I watched Larry walk to the back of the office, look into the room where Dorothy was, and then go out the back door. . . .

I was back at Headquarters a month later, not anywhere near as bad off as I thought I was going to be.

I didn't even get across the room to the chief's desk before Larry walked in. He looked like he had been on the bum.

Just like this, he said: "Can I have my badge back, Chief?"

It nearly floored me. It was just as though he had left his badge over night in a shop to be replated. But nothing floors the chief.

"That's sure fine, Larry." He opened the drawer of his desk, took out Larry's badge, handed it to him. Larry took the badge, looked at it. He polished it a little on his sleeve, turned, started for the door.

The chief said, "Wait a minute. In my back room there's a young lady. She comes here every day, looking for you. Dorothy Oliver. She wants to see you."

Larry just sat down in a chair and covered his face with his two hands. I went to the door of the chief's private room and looked in. The girl was Dorothy Cantlin, all right.

I turned around and saw the chief was rustling some report sheets, clearing his throat. "Yes," he said, "it happens once to every cop. Larry. This Dorothy Oliver, Larry, she's a very attractive young woman. I don't think I'd keep her waiting."

Larry didn't. In fact he changed her name to Leath just two weeks later. It looks like the Leath dynasty of cops is going to go on forever.

## Slave-traders were angels

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**I**N CASE you've been looking for us, we're back here this week. It's all rather complicated, but the printer just called up and told us in no uncertain terms that we had left a blank page in the magazine. For a while we toyed with the idea of leaving it blank and letting the readers draw a picture of the editor on it, but fear of what the pictures might look like made us decide to print a few letters.

If you'll glance at the two letters below, you'll see why we were afraid to have our pictures drawn. We are sure that Mr. Foley would picture us wearing a dunce cap and Mr. Wood would (there's a fine phrase) put horns just over our flaring ears.

#### ROBERT F. FOLEY

DEAR EDITOR:

I have been a constant reader of your DFW magazine for a good many years and this is the only time I ever wrote to you about my complaint. Well, here goes. In the February 17th issue the story by Eric Howard, "Murder Makes A Bid," on page 97, Mike the private dick tells the cop, the gun found by Westover is a Police Positive and says where would a guy like Westover get one. It must have been stolen from a cop. Now there is where Mr. Howard is wrong. Just because it is a Police Positive Revolver does not go to say that it belongs to a cop.

Anyone can own and also get a Police

Positive Revolver from any sporting goods dealer or direct from the Colt Company or Smith & Wesson Company if he has a permit. Some states do not require permits. I myself have a Colt .38 Police Positive Revolver. I bought it nine years ago when you did not have to get a permit when ordering from out of town.

Mr. Howard must remember that anyone can own a Police Positive Revolver, and not only the police or peace officers or any other law enforcing officer.

Now that I have that off my chest I want to say all your stories are good and never miss a copy. Hope you print this in *Flashes* and see if some of the other fans agree with me.

CHICAGO, ILL.

It seems that we remember the subject of guns coming up before. . . . The next is at least a new complaint, and we promise to do something about it. By the way, have you looked on page 112 yet?

#### JOHN WOOD

DEAR EDITOR:

I have just finished reading "Homicide: Honolulu Bound."

A good story but the number of swear words in that story are out of all reason. I have noticed that in many of your stories you allow a good many blasphemies. This is not good taste or necessary in any literature. I have read your magazine for a good many years but must stop unless you blue pencil the words that offend good taste and do not add to the story. I hope you will correct this offense in future stories.

REDLANDS, CALIFORNIA



# Handwriting Secrets

*Character Clues in Pen and Ink*

by Helen King

**Y**OUTH is supposed to be optimistic and ready to lick the world at any time, so it is a little unusual to be told by a young man that there is little future for anyone. Read what Peter S. says:

Dear Miss King:

I am 20 years of age, and of course unemployed. I would like to know what lines of occupation there are left which permit expansion or the furthering of one's ambitions. Almost everything has been done, and it is just a question of putting finishing touches on inventions, science, etc. Television, for example—it is here, and needs but a little perfection. Medicine is a thoroughly overcrowded field, and yet both interest me. Can you give any assistance, or do you think I'm silly?

Peter S.

Dear Peter:

You're not silly; you're just depressed and thus cannot see the opportunities about you. If you can study medicine, by all means do so. How can you feel it is overcrowded—or needs just "finishing touches?" People are still suffering agonies because of cancer; teeth aren't permanent fixtures; paralysis is crippling thousands yearly. Surely you can't overlook such things as these, and feel that you were cheated of your birth-right! If you can only alleviate suffering you will be doing much—overcrowded field or no.

I don't know where you heard about television, but I can tell you the surface hasn't even been scratched. Each new set of engineers, coming in with fresh ideas, improves upon the work already done. If television is "perfected" within the next 20 years, there will be many people in the

broadcasting industry who will be pleasantly surprised.

H. K.

Everyone who goes to the movies or reads the papers at some time hears about forgeries. Handwriting experts appear on both sides of a case, each testifying that his opinion is correct. Enlargements of questioned documents appear in newspapers, and each man tries to figure out the answer. Unless there is a large amount of acknowledged writing to go by, it is unfair for anyone to attempt to determine the identity of the writer.

You may be sure of one thing, however; the plainer the writing, the harder it is to change.

Many businessmen used to practice writing involved signatures, believing that they were insuring its individuality. It is so easy for an experienced hand to toss in flourishes, but so difficult when each letter is plain and clear, and the slightest deviation stands out like a sort thumb!

Another unwritten rule: if you question a document, turn the writing upside down.

Thus you can study the pressure better—pressure being one of the things which gives the amateur forger away almost immediately. For example, study the illustration shown:



*to my sons* (D)  
*to my sons*  
 (Forged)

All of which was prompted by a letter from Fred S.:

Dear Miss King:

Is it possible to detect forgery when just the letter "X" is used? A woman, unable to write, left an "X'd" will, and her disinherited relations question it. Can this be checked?

Fred S.

This was taken from a will which was questioned. The first line was acknowledged to be in the writing of the will-maker. The second was a forgery. Notice the pressure, which for the sake of this illustration, has been accentuated. Mr. D, who wrote the acknowledged lines, was from the old school—when adding pressure to downward strokes was the sign of beautiful writing. The man who attempted to copy his writing was apparently an amateur; although he saw a shading in the pressure, he wasn't clever enough to analyze it. Thus he shaded at intervals, and spent five years as the guest of his state for that error.

Notice next the space between the letters. In Mr. D's writing the spacing is uneven, because he was elderly and found it difficult to maintain a steady pace. The younger man who imitated had better muscular control; he spaced evenly.

Note too that Mr. D's writing seemed to creep up the edge of the paper slightly. Not so the forger. He unconsciously straightened out the line.

Finally, study the ending strokes, on the "s," the last letter shown in the illustration. Mr. D. lightened the pressure as he came to the end while Mr. Forger darkened his. These little slips, as they appeared throughout a four-page will, all helped to convict a man. Thereafter he had plenty of time to realize that it is the little things that count in life.

Dear Fred S.:

It can be verified if you have enough samples of acknowledged "X's". It is a ticklish job at best, but study the pressure; turn it upside down; study the size, the approximate degree at which it slants; and then utter a short prayer.

H. K.

### PURELY PERSONAL

*C.I.D.* Yes, you should be able to master the art of fingerprinting, and tracing individuals through it. You have an eye for detail, and are thoroughly conscientious.

*T.B.C.* Mechanical engineering is more in your line. Never give up a steady income until you are sure of work in your chosen line. It is always easier to get work when you don't really need it. Haven't you found that out?

*Buster.* Study journalism, and keep up with your foreign languages. The way things are going, one never knows what language one will need to know!

*E.L.H.* It isn't possible to send a personal reply if you neglect to give your address! The answer to your question is NO.

*M.K.C.* Alaska is open to the public. If you have money for the trip, you can go whenever you want. But find out what you will need first.

*D.P.L.* Your husband, judging from the very short sample of his handwriting you enclosed, is headed for great things. While his present job may not pay as well as the one which he turned down, he has a great deal more talent for this job.



MISS HELEN KING,  
DETECTIVE FICTION WEEKLY  
280 Broadway, New York, N. Y.

This coupon not good after May 4, 1940.

I enclose handwriting specimen for advice and analysis.

Name..... Age.....

Address .....

A STAMPED SELF-ADDRESSED ENVELOPE MUST ACCOMPANY  
THIS COUPON

(Canadian readers, please send U. S. stamps, or coin. Readers from all other foreign countries should send International Reply Coupon, properly stamped by post office.)

## Next Week Death Wears Green

By Judson P. Philips  
*A thrilling New Adventure of  
The Park Avenue Hunt Club*

## HALF FISH, HALF HUMAN

Such were the inhabitants of an uncharted island found by two young explorers—*uncharted, because for centuries its cities had lain at the bottom of the sea!*

## DON'T MISS THIS STORY!

For suspense, excitement and fantastic thrills read  
"Sunken Cities" in the May-June

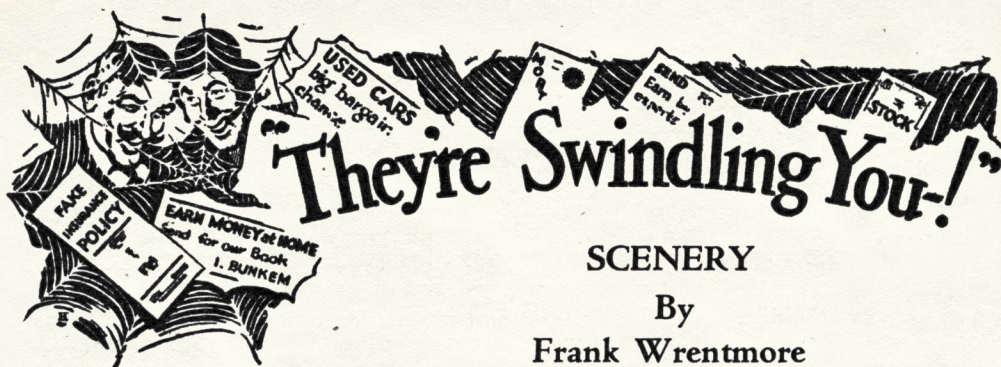
Famous **FANTASTIC** *Mysteries*  
The red star magazine of fantastic classics.

Now on the news stands

15¢

If your dealer can't supply you send 15¢ to 280 Broadway, N. Y. C., and a copy will be mailed to you.





## SCENERY

By

Frank Wrentmore

*This is the two-hundred-and-thirty-fourth 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.*

A FEW seasons ago a New York playwright produced a moderately successful hit on a bare stage—no scenery at all. Of course, the cast was well rehearsed and there was merit to the show, so it went over. Occasionally a swindle can be put over on exactly the same basis. But the big money producers on the stage and in swindles usually require elaborate scenery so that the victim won't have to overwork his brain too much.

The racing swindlers in Miami and Palm Beach who are receiving J. Edgar Hoover's personal attention as this is written set their stage very carefully. One scenario calls for a fake horse-room in actual operation with bettors, house-men, telegraph instruments, tickers and all the other paraphernalia. Every man is an actor and knows his part perfectly.

Substitute a fake stock exchange for the horse-room and you have the old, reliable stock swindle which flourished for so many years—particularly in Denver. Both are identical in build-up and blow-off—the scenery makes all the difference. The take on both of these has run as high as \$250,000 from

a single sucker. A nice bit of change, eh?

So you see how important scenery is. No stage producer can create the illusions put on by swindling experts. In the theater you are always conscious that you aren't part of the show. Other people are playing the roles; you are merely a spectator.

But when you are cast as the potential victim in a swindling routine, you are the star performer. All the other actors are building up your part. You have the actual thrill of either handling thousands of dollars or seeing them—with the promise that they will be yours. You are the honored guest at dinners and parties. You are flattered and cajoled. You are introduced to apparently famous personages. Is it any wonder you fall for the racket?

LET us suppose that "Chubby" Baumhoff got hold of you a couple of years ago. First, there would be an introduction to his dad, a former St. Louis postmaster. Then he would tell you about a patented road map of which 100,000 had been sold to a prominent oil company at \$21 each, and he'd have shown you a letter from a vice-president of the company confirming this \$2,100,000 contract. Well, ye-s-s-s, he might be able to get you a little of the stock, but he had another one which was far better, the "Duluth Utilities



Company," a steam-heating concern in Minnesota.

"Dad" Baumhoff would have confirmed all these things that "Chubby" had told you, and together they would have talked familiarly about a former governor and, if you were really worth while, "Chubby" might take you there on a trip just to show you how influential he had become. He might even introduce you to say the governor's widow. In Duluth, "Chubby" might take you to a "city council meeting" and make you acquainted with some of the "councilmen" who'd chat with you and tell you what a great guy "Chubby" was and how lucky you were to be associated with him.

Of course, at the time you wouldn't know that the Duluth Utilities Company existed only in "Chubby's" mind; that the vice-president's letter was a forgery; that the "Governor's widow" was a phony; that you hadn't attended an actual "council meeting"; that the "councilmen" were a bunch of stooges and that the only fact in the whole farce was that "Chubby's" dad had been the postmaster in St. Louis—and what a postmaster!

In 1927 he headed a St. Louis brokerage house which failed for over \$200,000. Just about the time when it looked as though he'd be criminally prosecuted, he was hit by an automobile and sustained a broken foot. His sons then appealed to the bonding company for sympathy, promised restitution and gave company notes due in 1933 to guarantee it. When 1933 rolled around the noteholders learned that the statute of limitations had expired. The notes were never paid.

No, it wasn't you who had the experiences I have described, but some of the actual victims did. One of them was the doctor who had been called in to treat "dad." It cost the doctor \$9,250. Two country sisters invested \$80,000, but the prize "take" was when "Chubby" induced a brother of his who was living in California to toss \$17,000 into the pot. There were many others.

In a recent trial in St. Louis, "Chubby" and the ex-postmaster were convicted—of all things—of mail fraud! "Chubby" was sentenced to twelve years and fined \$14,000, while "dad," who is now 81, is to undergo a medical examination; his lawyer says he is mentally deranged.

There's scenery for you, as unreal as any that was ever used for legitimate stage purposes. But apparently none of the actors in this real life drama ever stepped behind the scenes to examine the props. They went serenely along until the show was over, only then to awaken to the fact that they had been attending a "benefit"—but not for them.

Curiosity is an admirable trait sometimes. Suppose one of those who invested thousands of dollars with "Chubby" had invested three cents in a stamp and addressed a letter to the oil company which had "bought" the road maps.

There is a way to test everything and those who apply the tests are the ones who save their money. Investigate *before* you invest.

The clipping on which this article is based was sent by George A. Ryan of St. Louis who has received a book of his selection.

**HAVE YOU WRITTEN A PRIZE LETTER?**



# Solving Cipher Secrets



M. E. OHAYER  
"Sunyam"

**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 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. Helpful hints appear in this department each week. The first cryptogram is the easiest.

No. 91—Aeronautical Advance. By †Ixaxar.

HO HA AFHE OKFO FHXBZFUS LFXXHSXA DFN ATTU LFXXN  
LFXXHSX BZFUSA. LFXXHSXA LFXXNHUY LFXXHSXA!  
HAU'O OKHA LFXXNHUY F YTTE HESF F GHOT RFX?

No. 92—Curious Quartette. By °Rengaw.

UMMILITARY VI \*LIDOLV \*B. \*LAFBOK, VJOLO AX IRO HILT  
MIRVUARARY IRO BOVVOL NIEL VAPOX AR XEMMOXXAIR.  
VJAX AX "COOOORTGO," EXOT DK VJO \*JIBBURTOLX. AV  
VUSOX VJO FLACO, UBB GISARY UXATO.

No. 93—Water Babies. By Cosmopolite.

POSZFRU VUUC-PUZ VUFKAUFP, SUXUFOJB VKPXDGUSUV:  
TKPL ELKXL YDSU OLSDNRL DOLUS TKPL; HZSKFU EDSHP  
XZSSBKFR NHYSUJJZP; PCDFRUP LZGKFR RJZPP LZKS;  
XSZYP EKOL PLUJJP ZJHDPO ZKS-OKRLO.

No. 94—Tactful Tactics. By N. Alizer.

HLSFND NAYFXKLBKYK KFGXTR RNUNTGS SNDYLABHLYZ,  
BUGLR SLYVBTTK, BRGSY KXKSLHLGXX BYYLYXRN, FGTR  
AGYFLAP HGLAHLRNAYBT, DBAKBHC HDZSYGPDBEK VGD  
HTNOK. DNOBDR BOBLYK HGAKHLNAYLGXX KGTUNDK!

No. 95—For Seeing Afar. By W2GVX.

OSHSKUDUEG UREGEDREVS LPOP: BEDPUR DSGDUOUKUOZ  
OAXEYTA OXPGDHYRSGO DUTGPH VHPOS, ONE BURXEPB-  
VSXSD VSX HYBSG; EFDSXKSL DUTGPH, ONE BUHHUKEHOD.



## †HONOR ROLL CLUB for 1939

312 *Answers*—†K. Aaba, °Aachen, °Jay Abey, †George L. Adams, °Age, °I'mbak Agen, †Aitchzee, †Alackaday, °Amanovlettus, †Whizz Bang, °See Bee Bee, †T. E. Bicknell, °Warren G. Brown, °Bugler, °Mrs. C. G. Burroughs, °H Le Care, °Blue Hen Chick, °CIPHERMIT, †A. B. C., °Judson H. Clark, °Comrade, °Jos. M. Crosby, °Cryptanalyst, °W. E. Dalton, †Derfy, †Drol, °M. E., °Edmaca, †Cap Elliott, °Arty Ess, °Ezymarc, °Helen P. Foote, °C. F., °G. Fulton, °Michael G. H. Gelsinger, †I. Givup, °The Griffin, †Henry J. Haewecker, °T. Hegarty, †H. N. H., †Hilda II, °G. M. Howe, °Opal Hurt, °H. Hyman, °Alter Idem, °U. U. Jeff, °Mrs. Lynn Kaiser, °Kate, °Keystonian, °Kismet, °Lethargic, °Loydeh, °A. Meredith, °Minerva, °Mossback, †Norvic, °Piscator, †Copper-Plate, °W. F. P., °Primrose, †Quintuplex, °Alvin Robb, †Saco, °Mrs. H. A. Seals, °Kay Vee See, °O. I. See, °Skeet, °Sleepy, °Nick Spar, †M. G. S., °Jack-Stay, °Sunny Tim, °Old Timer, †I. Cipher U., °Mrs. James Wallen, †P. Wee, †H. M. Williams, °Mrs. E. A. Wilson, °H. W., †Y., °Lew Zirn, °A. R. Zorn.

311—†Abuelo, †Codela, †Paul Daeke, †Eber A. Oden. 310—°Los Ang, †Burbank, °How Carso, †Ciphersmith, †Floyd E. Coss, †Heliotrope, †Alroy S. Phillips, °Box Six, °Sam Spiegel, °Doctor X, †7. 309—†Chemystic, °G. E. Long, †Bea Em Sea. 308—°P. J. B., °Nice, A. M. 307—†Agatha, °Jayel, °Alice Routh, °Ike N. Wynne. 306—†Mrs. C. E. Descy, †Enbay, †Hopado, °Jayem, †P. H. T., †Tru-Ver, †Xatl. 305—†Henty, °Retlaw Maldim, °Penny, †Rengaw. 304—°J. C. K., †Dr. Dirk E. Stegeman. 303—†The Buccaneer. 302—†Jay-En-Ess. 300—†Brandywine.

299—†Cryptox, †Tarheel. 298—†Henry F. Dolliver. 297—†Robert Simons, †Soofan, †Reg Williams. 296—°Alpha Bet, †Gnilpik, °Sue de Nymme. 294—†Envy El, °Holly, †Tobey, °Tyro V. 293—†O. H. 291—†Frank S. Burlingame, †Hamcie. 289—°Alice, °R. L. Blaha, †Eeslyn, °My Pal. 288—†Veegee. 287—†Remle Legof. 286—†Chas. F. Bridewell. 283—†Debutant. 282—†Robert De Mougeot, †F. M. Hansen, †Rekroywen, †Steve. 281—†A. M. Fraser. 280—†Alvancy. 279—†Short Sir Cuit. 277—†Nehoc Neb, †Half-Pint, †Volund. 276—†Jack Feuerstein, †Fluncy, °I-dan-ha, °Rena Patton. 275—†Tisen. 272—°Ajax, †Susie Douglas. 271—†Watsy Cal, †W. A. Deen. 270—†Vincent Montalbano, †Anthony T. Ranieri, °Tricky Trimarco. 269—°Mabel B. Canon, †Double R. 268—°Bluejay, †Icy. 267—†Efdee. 266—°Cliff II, †Ty Roe. 265—°Nedyah. 264—†Ima Sooner. 263—°Uncle Jim. 261—†Engineer III, †Joseph K. Geibel, †Jaybee. 259—†Aunt A., °L. S. H. 258—°Herbert J. Huthwaite, †Mrs. J. C. Saunders. 257—†Dickie. 256—†Wash, †Loula Wil-

liams. 255—†Myrtle E. Cote, †George. 254—°Sam Isen. 253—†Ernest H. Carling. 252—°H. H., †Geo. T. Williams. 251—°Joseph E. Conklin. 250—†Efemeses.

AND now we present Part I of our †*Honor Roll for 1939*, listing all cryptofans who submitted answers to 250 or more of last year's series of regular cryptograms, Nos. 1-312. These scores do not include solutions to the "X" specials. The degrees and daggers indicate †*Inner Circle Club* and †*Honor Roll Club* membership. Part II will be published next week!

Current crypts: In No. 91, start with F and OKFO; the phrase HAU'O OKHA; etc. In No. 92, note VJOLO, VJO, and VI. In No. 93, start with EKOL and ELKXL; DOLUS and OLSDNRL. No. 94 offers ending -KYK and pattern BYYLYXRN. Find your own clues in the Inner Circler, No. 95. The key to No. 96 runs thus, 012345 6789. Answers to Nos. 91-96, next week!

No. 96—Cryptic Division. By Vedette.

† E S O ) D N L O ( A  
O C G D

O G E

## LAST WEEK'S ANSWERS

85—Cryptograms improve our grammar, spelling, and punctuation. The only necessities in solving are imagination, the mood, luck, pencil, time.

86—Driverless parked car suddenly started, crossed street, stopped at curb. Spectators suspected spooks! But leaking battery acid had shorted starting switch, and auto had been left in gear.

87—"One four-letter word inscribed on your doors," declared speaker before youth assembly, "tells what you need for success!" Boys turned, saw "pull" (not "push" as orator hoped).

88—Two tumbling turtles tortuously toddled toward Toledo, touring towering, twisting turnpikes. Tuckered team terminated trip thoroughly tired.

89—Baker works whole night under light; bakes flaky cakes. Bloke gawks along, likes sight; fakes fight, takes snack; grins. Clerk perks; jerks pokey joker, jolts wight right—smack!

90—Key: 0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9  
FOREIGN SUB

All answers to Nos. 91-96 will be duly listed in our *Cipher Solvers' Club* for April. Address: M. E. Ohaver, DETECTIVE FICTION WEEKLY, 280 Broadway, New York, N. Y.



## HORROR ON THE NEWSSTANDS

EVERY day we hear writers, editors and publishers complaining that the magazine business has "gone to the dogs"; that the day of the pulp-paper magazine is over. We dispute this statement. The pulp-paper magazines are *not* through, although they have fallen into bad company.

There are today hundreds of magazines of every description sold on the newsstands—the prospective reader is smacked in the eye with a riotous blaze of color that causes him to turn his head and pass by. Many of these are good magazines, with reading matter that compares favorably with anything published today. Why then the averted head, the disgusted snort, and the contemptuous "Oh, the pulps!"?

The answer lies in the horror and sensational magazines, on whose covers you see half-clad women being tortured or attacked by deformed caricatures of men—or the enactment of some perverted crime depicted in terrifying detail. Inside, the contents are much the same—running the gamut of human perversion in sex and sadism. It's these magazines that have tarred all with the same brush. Some publishers who have sold them have suffered in the sale of their more legitimate publications.

Law enforcement agencies have charged that these magazines are a decided factor in crime; that unbalanced, perverted individuals read them and are incited to violence; that even young children can buy them on the newsstands and be easily led into an attempt to duplicate what they read. Small wonder that intelligent readers turn away in disgust.

Attempts have been made to stop the publication of such magazines under the laws dealing with obscenity. But little progress has been made. There are too many technical loop-holes, and even the term "obscenity" is a matter for legal conjecture.

To pass new laws, we feel, would be a haphazard and dangerous experiment—dangerous because such laws can often be twisted to bring trouble to the innocent while the real culprit gets away.

No, legislation is not the answer. Instead, it is a house-cleaning job to be done by the readers and the publishers. Readers can co-operate by demanding that their newsdealers refrain from offering such magazines for sale.

But mainly it is the publishers' job. Publishers should set up their own Bureau of Censorship, where the decency and cleanliness of the magazines can be adjudged beforehand. Such a set-up has worked successfully in the movie industry and there is no reason why it cannot be made to work in the publishing business. Lost readers would come back to the magazines and publishers of stability would regain the confidence of their readers. Readers, on the other hand, would have *good* stories that they need not be ashamed of reading.

The Frank A. Munsey Company has been in the magazine business for 58 years and has always published magazines that were free of horror, sadism, perversion or sensationalism. We shall continue to do so regardless of what our competitors may do. But we believe that it is important to see that all publishers do the same—important to America. We urge our readers to help us in this fight, by asking their newsdealers to stop handling publications that offend. Furthermore, if and when the publishers of America see fit to adopt a definite method of control of offensive magazines, the editors and the publishers of The Frank A. Munsey Company pledge their full-hearted co-operation in making American magazines worthy of the American people.



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24	.83	33	1.06	42	1.45	51	2.15
25	.85	34	1.09	43	1.51	52	2.27
26	.87	35	1.13	44	1.57	53	2.39
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28	.92	37	1.21	46	1.70	55	2.66
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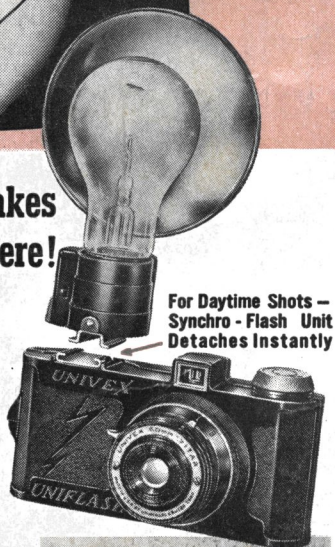
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